

COLUMBIA LAND TRUST

WINTER 2018

Fieldbook

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ISSUE 03

Conserving and caring for vital lands, waters, and wildlife of the Columbia River region through sound science and strong relationships.

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Columbia Land Trust has earned accreditation from the Land Trust Alliance, which recognizes land trusts that adhere to national standards for excellence, uphold the public trust with rigorous ethical standards, and take steps to ensure that conservation efforts are permanent.

Columbia Land Trust conserves and cares for vital lands, waters, and wildlife of the Columbia River region through sound science and strong relationships.

Cover photo: Snowy owl. Photo by Scott Carpenter
Inside cover: Steigerwald Lake National Wildlife Refuge



Rethinking Conservation

I used to assume conservation was some abstract idea that existed in remote parts of the wilderness, where people like me don't go—or couldn't even get to without a hefty supply of rugged camping gear. How wrong I was!

Altruistic ideas of natural beauty and habitat restoration seem to thrive quite well on paper, but in my first few months as Columbia Land Trust's engagement program manager, I've learned that the beauty of fearless conservation is in action—harnessing shared visions of our future into real change—in all types of spaces, with all types of faces.

As I gain a deeper understanding of how conservation actually happens, I'm noticing a major theme in this process: relationships within community. It takes trust between neighbors, friends, and even those we once considered foes to craft a shared vision for tomorrow that isn't an abstract notion but a call to action. The choices organizations and people are making across our region will shape conservation throughout the twenty-first century, inspiring us to recognize new definitions and styles of conservation.

This issue of *Fieldbook* explores some wonderful stories about our organization and its relationships. We take a look at how the Land Trust takes action on conservation projects, and how relationships help guide those actions. We see what happens after conservation action has been implemented, and we get a chance to learn how community-centered environmental organizing is redefining what conservation looks like.

This is just some of what the Land Trust is doing to turn ideas into reality. Join us as we keep moving forward, growing, and nurturing our projects and our relationships in the places where we live.

“...the beauty of fearless conservation is in action—harnessing shared visions of our future into real change—in all types of spaces, with all types of faces.”

Rahul Devaskar

Engagement Program Manager



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LOCATION:
Elochoman River

DATE:
10/25/2018

TEMPERATURE:
50° F

DEPTH:
5ft

a |

JUST DRIFTING THROUGH

An Underwater Exploration of Newly Improved Salmon Habitat on the Elochoman River

On a damp late-October morning, I found myself standing thigh deep in the Elochoman River north of Cathlamet, Washington. Rain dripped from moss-covered branches as I yanked on my dry suit's tight neoprene hood, adjusted my mask and snorkel, and delved beneath the surface. The current was stronger than I expected, but I made my way over the giant maple leaves carpeting the riverbed and toward a hulking mass of logs and boulders. A lone fish about the length of my hand came into view. It faced me, fins waving for a moment, before moseying on along a craggy wall of roots and rocks.

The land along this river has seen dramatic changes in the past 150 years. Notches in old cedar stumps in the forest recall the turn of the twentieth century, when loggers standing on springboards felled the massive trees by hand. Other trees bear the marks of traditional bark harvesting by indigenous people. What was once a temperate rain forest gave way to

pastureland until the 1950s, when—like much of the surrounding area—it was planted for timber.

Over time, forestry operations and infrastructure degraded both the river and lands alongside it, which were thickly planted with rows of Douglas-fir, resulting in a lack of diversity in tree species, sizes, ages, and stages of decay. Logging roads and a new bridge constricted the river's flow, and since the area's old-growth trees had been cleared decades before, few trees made their way into the river. Salmon and steelhead numbers plummeted.

Columbia River tributaries like the Elochoman once braided back and forth across wide floodplains, and fallen trees from the riverside changed the river's flow, forming pools, gravel beds, islands, and side channels. These features outside a river's swift-moving main channel offer crucial habitat for salmon to spawn, grow, and rest as they migrate.





“Logs from the restoration forestry project were used to create these massive wood-and-boulder structures, which help establish new and better fish habitat.”

In 2012, Columbia Land Trust acquired 148 acres along this stretch of river and forest with the goal of improving habitat for fish, including coho and fall Chinook salmon, winter steelhead, coastal cutthroat trout, and Pacific lamprey, plus waterfowl, elk, deer, and threatened northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet. We saw a straightforward opportunity to balance the equation of too much wood in the forests and not enough in the river.

With planning from Trout Mountain Forestry, Natural Area Manager Jeff Malone led a project to thin the Douglas-fir stands. Rather than clear-cut, they practiced restoration forestry, harvesting some trees to allow others the room to grow larger. They also left logs on the ground and snags—standing dead trees that provide habitat for birds and other wildlife. In addition, they planted western hemlock, spruce, and cedar to more closely approximate the historic composition of the area’s forests.

Malone then worked with Natural Systems Design and a contractor team led by Henderson to install 15 large engineered logjams (ELJs) in and along a 2,000-foot stretch of the river. Logs from the restoration forestry project were used to create these massive wood-and-boulder structures, which help establish new and better fish habitat. This also involved removing road fill from along the river and excavating historic side channels.

By the fall of 2017, with the heavy in-stream work complete and the riversides planted, all we could do was wait and see if fish would make use of the new habitat. A year later, Malone, a few colleagues, and I packed some snorkels and dry suits to investigate.

The river was running lower than usual, but we observed new pools forming around the logjams as planned. Though it was too early in the season to see spawning adult coho salmon or winter steelhead, we hoped to spy trout or juvenile salmon as we floated facedown along the icy stream to visit each ELJ. Malone was pleased to see fish where we expected them.

“With all the permitting, budgeting, and coordinating, it’s easy to lose sight of the big picture,” says Malone. “In just five years, we’ve implemented some short- and long-term fixes that have changed the trajectory of the entire property.”

Downstream, I managed to wedge myself against a log that recently caught on an ELJ. I was amazed to find a dozen juvenile coho and a few adult trout lined up at the base of a riffle. They took turns gulping up insects while wriggling against the current.

In that moment, I witnessed a mere punctuation mark in the primordial story of Pacific salmon. With enough shelter to feed and grow, these coho will journey from this pool, down river, and out to the open ocean, then back again to continue the cycle.

I floated weightless for a few more minutes, suspended in an ever-unspooling strand of time between this river’s wild past and its newly possible future—a future with salmon runs swelling and forests growing massive, mossy, and old. After releasing my grip on the log, I drifted in silence, then stumbled up the stony riverbank on numb feet, feeling small and at peace within the vast intricacies of nature in the Pacific Northwest. 🌿

Thank you to our project funders: USFWS North American Wetland Conservation Act (NAWCA), Salmon Recovery Funding Board (SRFB), Seattle Audubon Society’s Martin Miller Fund, Lindblad Expeditions–National Geographic Fund, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), and JW & HM Goodman Family Foundation.

› Watch underwater footage at:
columbialandtrust.org/elochomansnorkel

a | *A coho parr near a recently installed logjam.*
 Photo by Jay Kosa

b | *Land Trust staff snorkel past recently installed ELJs in search of fish.* Photo by Jay Kosa



Amplifying Voices of the Columbia

Columbia Riverkeeper's
Ubaldo Hernández Builds Leadership
in the Gorge with Hood River's
Latino Community

BY DEZ RAMIREZ

Ubaldo Hernández is one of those people who invokes a sense of hope in you when you're done talking with him. You feel hope that we as a society can persevere through hard times, that we as people can make a difference in the world, and that people *do* care about environmental conservation.

Optimistic? Maybe. But being a social activist since the age of 16, Ubaldo might just be confident in change because he's been working toward it for so long. He's currently the community organizer at Columbia Riverkeeper, plus he produces *Conoce Tu Columbia (Know Your Columbia)*, a weekly Spanish-language podcast that discusses local environmental and social justice issues. The show broadcasts on Radio Tierra, a station that reaches areas along the Columbia Gorge and near Mount Hood, including Stevenson, Carson, Parkdale, Hood River, and The Dalles.

I met up with Ubaldo at Columbia Riverkeeper's new digs on Hood River's waterfront, and we chatted about mountain biking, environmental leadership, his work as a community organizer, and the Columbia Gorge's resilient Latino community.

What brought you to Columbia Riverkeeper?

I came to Columbia Riverkeeper in March 2017. They were looking for somebody to develop outreach with Hood River's Latino community. I've been in the Gorge for 24 years and been a social activist all my life, focused on social justice. Environmental issues go hand in hand with this. When I talk to people, I tell them environmental injustice is also a social injustice.

How did you end up in this part of Oregon?

I came to this area in 1994. One of my brothers was living here, so I came straight to White Salmon, Washington, fell in love with the outdoors and decided to stay.

What was your first outdoor experience like?

My first outdoor experience was in the Gorge, mountain biking. A few years after I moved here, I made a friend who was a mountain biker, and was also from Mexico. He invited me to go out with him, so I bought my first mountain bike from Walmart. It was super heavy—I didn't know much about it—but I wasn't sure if I was going to like mountain biking and didn't want to spend \$800 on a bike right away. We went to Syncline on the Washington side. It was hard, my first time, but I really liked it and started mountain biking more. I liked the feeling of being out, enjoying the views, exercising, and being rewarded with the descent.

What are some ways you're approaching your work as a community organizer?

I meet people, have a coffee with them, talk about our community and about ourselves. I build a relationship with them. Every single Latino I have met in this area is aware of climate change; they are aware of the necessity of protecting natural resources. I approach this work by, first, showing respect to the community. In order to build trust with our [Latino] community, we need to respect it. A lot of Latinos who grew up here want to be accepted and seen as members of the community. Part of the outreach means seeing that and valuing that. When we try to talk to Latinos about environmental issues, we need to realize there is a lot more going on in their lives. Racial profiling, immigration, health care, education—all of these problems are a priority. Environmental issues are not when we have those other things to deal with every day. If environmental groups at least acknowledge and accept these issues and show support, then that's enough for the [Latino] community to say, "Okay, you care about us...we'll listen."

What's a goal you have with your work?

Develop a Latino environmental leadership program, which we've already started. Figure out what the [Latino] community wants and needs, and develop an awareness on protecting natural resources. Get a variety of Latino voices [at] the table, and see how we can find a common ground and an action plan.

Tell me about your podcast, *Conoce Tu Columbia*.

Conoce Tu Columbia is a podcast where we talk about environmental issues, social justice, and culture. We provide information to the [Latino] community so they can make



“Get a variety of Latino voices [at] the table, and see how we can find a common ground and an action plan.”

c |

informed decisions. I recently had Rodrigo Juarez, an immigration lawyer, on the show, who talked about the family separations happening in the U.S. We also had the founder of youth-based environmental action group Earth Guardians, Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, on the show. A goal is to explore video work once we have more resources and equipment. I would like to have a show where members of the Latino community are sitting, talking about environmental issues, and being filmed.

What keeps you inspired?

Successes, like seeing Latinos involved and participating in environmental work. Seeing more Latinos in environmental jobs. What keeps me inspired is knowing people care. I know people will step forward. We just need to provide people with information so they can take action. ♻️

➤ Episodes of *Conoce Tu Columbia* are available at conocetucolumbia.org and can be heard monthly. Visit radiotierra.org for air times.



c | Ubaldo Hernandez takes a quick mountain biking selfie in the Gorge.



SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

Snowy Owl

BY JAY KOSA

Nature has a knack for defying convention. Stunning contrasts, fascinating juxtapositions, and curious exceptions to every rule have resulted from 3.8 billion years of evolution. Take for instance the sight of a pearl-white snowy owl perched on the sandy dunes of the Oregon coast. Every few years the raptors make their way to the Pacific Northwest, captivating seasoned photographers and beachcombers alike.



Scientific name:
Bubo scandiacus

IDENTIFICATION

Snowy owls owe their name to their white plumage (with varying amounts of black markings), which offers camouflage against the snow-covered terrain of their breeding grounds in the North American high tundra. They sport a rounded head and striking yellow eyes and are the largest owl by weight in North America.

LIFE

Snowy owls feed primarily on lemmings, small rodents in the northern tundra, but also eat other rodents and birds. They are irruptive migrators, meaning they travel farther distances some years than others. During winters when lemmings are scarce, they range south to the shorelines and fields of the continental United States, including the dunes of Fort Stevens State Park at the mouth of the Columbia River.

STATUS

A combination of remote nesting sites, massive territories, and irregular migration patterns make data collection for snowy owls extremely difficult. They are listed on the 2016 State of North America's Birds Watch List, which identifies species at risk for extinction without conservation action. As with many arctic birds, climate change could push the snowy owl's winter range farther north. 🌱

➤ Learn more and view climate change models of potential migration shifts at www.audubon.org/field-guide/bird/snowy-owl.

d | Snowy owl in flight. Photo by Scott Carpenter

VIBRANT SPACES, HEALTHIER PLACES

The Backyard Habitat Certification Program Joins APANO in Blending Art, Nature, and Health in Southeast Portland

BY JAY KOSA

On a sunny Saturday in November, Backyard Habitat Certification Program (BHCP)* staff were excited and honored to join the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) in transforming two pedestrian bridges over SE Division Street in Portland's Jade and Midway Districts. APANO, a grassroots organization uniting Asians and Pacific Islanders to achieve social justice, hosted an event at which members of the local community placed indigenous plants around the bridges' pillars and staircases.

The plants complement new murals that have transformed the bridges' columns into vibrant public art celebrating the diverse cultures of the neighborhood. The murals also highlight safer pedestrian routes on outer SE Division Street, one of the city's most dangerous thoroughfares.

"These bridges highlight the Jade and Midway communities and start conversations about the pedestrian dynamics of SE Division Street," said Candace Kita. "Our aim is that the combination of native plants and vivid art by local artists creates a more inviting atmosphere and increases the utilization of the bridges."

BHCP technician Karen Schwartz of Calendula Garden Design planned out the planting sites, while The Green Seed LLC prepared the sites for 100 indigenous plant species, including common camas, oceanspray, Oregon grape, kinnikinnick, and sword ferns. "We're thrilled to join efforts with APANO and other partners on this project," said Susie Peterson, BHCP manager with Columbia Land Trust. "It's just one example of how we can work together to lift up communities."

BHCP's partnership with APANO on this project dates back to early 2016, when APANO brought together Oregon Solutions, Columbia Land Trust, Multnomah County, city agencies, and other local stakeholders to launch the Jade Greening Project. With support from the Knight Cancer Foundation, this community-led visioning process aimed at



addressing environmental health disparities stemming from air toxins, and a lack of walkability and accessibility in the Jade District community.

APANO invited the Land Trust to join them in exploring how installing indigenous plants could provide ecosystem services and help make neighborhoods healthier. The recent plantings along SE Division Street build on pilot plant installations in the neighborhood in 2016 and are the result of ongoing dialogue.

Through projects like these, the Land Trust and our partners at the Audubon Society of Portland are grateful to play a small role in the critical, place-based process of greening the Jade and Midway Districts. 🌱

We are grateful to our partners at Metro and the Portland Bureau of Transportation for their funding support in transforming the bridges.

**The Backyard Habitat Certification Program is a collaboration between the Audubon Society of Portland and Columbia Land Trust.*

e, f | *Volunteers and staff plant sword ferns, Oregon grape, and other plants surrounding the colorful columns of the pedestrian bridges. Photos by Jay Kosa*

e |

f |

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE PEOPLE

Relationships and Community Remain at the Heart of the Land Trust's Projects

BY DEZ RAMIREZ

Life is full of relationships. We're finding ways to relate to one another on a daily basis in our homes, jobs, and lives. We also have a relationship with the natural world around us, and if you're a resident of the Pacific Northwest, this relationship can be close—something good you get to experience on a daily basis.

When we pursue projects and buy land, we also create relationships. We collaborate with local communities and landowners so together we can conserve and care for lands, waters, and wildlife.

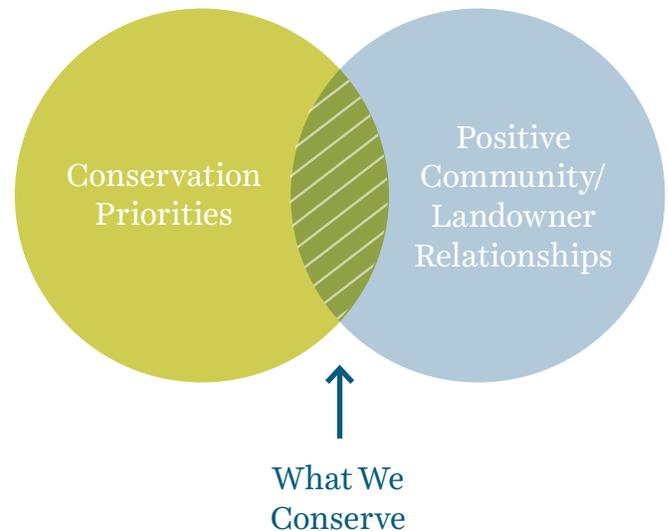
“We're working with families and people who have a connection to the land and stories to tell.”

There is a complex technical side to this process, but there's also an emotional, human side to it. The technical part, is technical: think legal analysis, environmental compliance, documentation of resources, conservation value, stewardship time, internal approvals, etc. If you were buying a new car or a home,

this is the part where you cross your fingers during the home inspection and sign a ton of serious paperwork with a lender.

“First, we look at the five regions that we work in and take a look at what needs to be conserved through a nature, habitat, and ecosystem lens,” said Conservation Director Dan Roix. “Once we identify an opportunity, then we go out and talk to landowners and see if they are interested in working together. Sometimes they are and sometimes they aren't.”

With the goal being to figure out how to conserve the most valuable piece of land with the resources we have, we start by asking ourselves some basic questions: What's on the land? Where is it? How big is it? Who owns it now? Can we afford it?



“With each piece of land, there comes a relationship with the property owner” said Roix. “For some, it's a real estate transaction. But for others, it's more. We're working with families and people who have a connection to the land and stories to tell. Learning from the landowners and combining their knowledge with our own science helps us understand the land better—the great parts about it as well as the risks.”

Spending time with people in the community, thinking about the language we use, and building trust are essential components of what we do.

“Part of the joy of this work,” said Conservation Lead Nate Ulrich, “is focusing on how we're using land to bring people together. How do people experience a place? How did they historically experience a place, or could they, even? How might they be able to experience it in the future?”

As we strike a balance between logistics and relationships, our work moves forward with conservation at the heart of it. 🌿

g | *Columbia Land Trust volunteers taking time to work the land at Cranes' Landing. Photo by Paul Peloquin*

THANKS!

Thanks to everyone who joined Columbia Land Trust on our tours and volunteer days in the field this year. Together, we replanted forests and wetlands. We explored Northwest culture and history along with natural wonders ranging from wildflower meadows to faraway galaxies. Join us in 2019 for more adventures.

Check our website for 2019 Tours & Volunteer Days
columbialandtrust.org

Save the Date

EAGLES, SALMON, AND TRIBAL TREATY RIGHTS TOUR

January 26, 2019

**Share photos of the
people, places, and
wildlife that inspire you.**

 @ColumbiaLandTrust
#fearlessnature

*A scene from this fall's salmon tour
along the Sandy River. Photo by Gabriel
Olson, Owl 'N Tree Photography*



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THE GIFTS WE LEAVE

*A note from Charlene Hiss, a Columbia Land Trust donor, volunteer,
site steward, and supporter since our founding in 1990.*

In life, it is hard to gauge our successes and failures. What will be my legacy when my life is over? I've been fortunate to have the means to contribute to the Land Trust both now, when I have the satisfaction of seeing all the accomplishments that my contributions support, and in the future, when my bequest will continue this important work. I hope to give the Land Trust the means to not only continue to preserve and steward the lands I love, but to inspire, engage, and educate people in our region about how we can foster the life around us.

Whatever else I accomplish or don't accomplish in life, I have the peace of knowing that I have done something positive toward my most fundamental life goal, which is to work for the benefit and welfare of all living creatures.

Join Charlene and her partner Ed in making a lasting impact
on the nature of the Northwest through a will, trust,
or other planned gift. To learn more visit:

COLUMBIALANDTRUST.ORG/PLANNEDGIVING