

COLUMBIA LAND TRUST

# Fieldbook

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

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American Dipper  
*Cinclus mexicanus*





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

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.



Cover photo: American dipper. Photo by Scry Eye Photography  
Inside cover: Forest at Wildboy Creek, Skamania County, WA.  
Photo by Lenkerbrook Photography

## Climate Action Where We Live

*This issue, our muse comes from Stewardship Director Ian Sinks*

Not far from where I live are sentinels of a previous age. Scattered in patches in hard-to-reach places, where lava flows, steep slopes, and administrative boundaries made these areas of old forest unavailable for harvest. Trunks five feet across rise out of the duff, centuries in the making, speckled with the spectacular green of vanilla leaf and oxalis. Equally large trunks lay along the ground, slowly becoming soil, but not before providing important habitat for wildlife for many decades. And the silence! Noise from the modern world cannot penetrate these old forests, where often the only sound comes from the plaintive buzz of the varied thrush. These are some of the places I go where I can disconnect, recharge, and learn.

Columbia Land Trust employs “conservation forestry” on many of its lands to achieve older forest habitat objectives. It is a term generally used to describe a forest-management strategy employing thinning, interplanting, and creating features such as snags and downed wood to improve the habitat and conservation value of the forest. It can accelerate the development of forest structure, provide jobs in the woods, feed the local mills, and contribute to funding the future stewardship of the forest.

“...these habitats that provide so many functions and benefits also secure thousands of tons of carbon every year.”

Conserving forests also is a key strategy to address the urgent issue of climate change. As a natural climate solution strategy, these old forests store massive amounts of carbon in not only the trees but also the downed wood and the soil. When science and events around the world increasingly make it clear that the situation is worse, perhaps far worse, than we think, it is easy to lose perspective and even hope. But it is sitting in the silence of these places that actually gives me hope. The work of the Land Trust has conserved tens of thousands of acres, planted hundreds of thousands of trees and shrubs, and these habitats that provide so many functions and benefits also secure thousands of tons of carbon every year. Direct action in the place we live.

As a woodworker and resident of a wooden house, it's not that I don't appreciate the practical realities and benefits of timber production. It's that I know the answer lies somewhere in the middle of these two needs. It's in this space that the work of the Land Trust finds its most meaningful impact.

And we all need places to go where we can listen to the silence.

**Ian Sinks**, Stewardship Director



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# NATURE KNOWS BEST

## Natural Climate Solutions Represent a Key Strategy to Combat Climate Change

BY JAY KOSA

If you're reading this, it's a safe bet that you care about the environment (thank you). It's also a safe bet that in the process of staying informed about the challenges of pollution, habitat loss, and global climate change, you've recently found yourself feeling overwhelmed by the sheer gravity of it all. It seems as if every day we learn how changes are happening faster and more severely than we feared even the day before.

The science is clear: we have 11 years to make sweeping changes that will keep global warming well below 2 degrees Celsius and thus avoid catastrophic consequences. The scale of both the challenge and the solutions required can be immobilizing. After all, what can one person do to make a difference?

It turns out nature may provide the most straightforward solution for us all: if protected, forests, grasslands, and other natural lands can remove carbon from the air naturally. For our part, we can each make a difference by investing in natural climate solutions, namely conserving, restoring, and better managing land.

For 30 years Columbia Land Trust has been motivated by the myriad benefits of conserving and restoring land, including clean and plentiful water, healthy air, local food, wildlife habitat, and a balance of recreation, scenic, and economic

values. Today we more fully appreciate the fundamental benefits of carbon sequestration across conserved lands, and particularly in forests. "In the Pacific Northwest," says Ian Sinks, stewardship director for the Land Trust, "forests on the west side of the Cascades are high-biomass forests—some of the best acre-for-acre carbon sinks in the world. We have big trees that can store carbon in their structures both above and below ground."

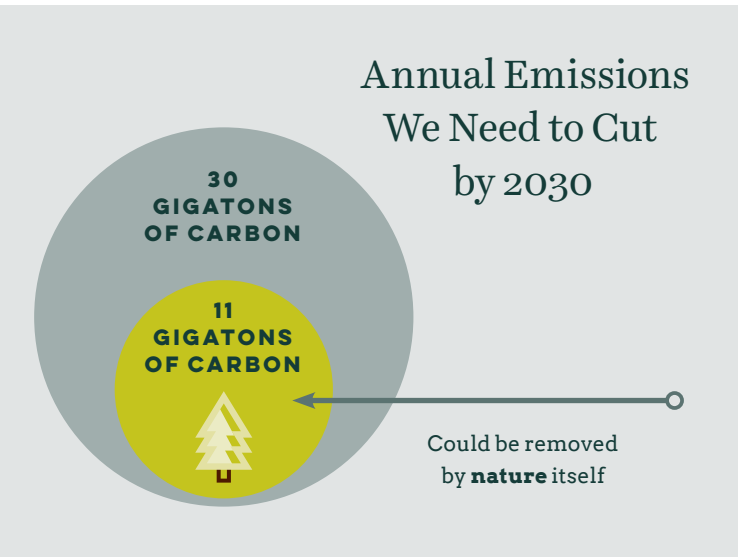
In other words, local actions to conserve and restore our forests are a form of climate action with global significance. Currently the Land Trust manages roughly 12,000 acres of forests and woodlands, and we anticipate conserving about 10,000 more acres in the next three years. The climate crisis, and opportunities to both store carbon and adapt to changes in the landscape, are informing our priorities around what we protect and how we manage land moving forward, blending conservation with climate solutions.

Based on a conservative estimate, the forests and woodlands conserved by Columbia Land Trust alone—not including all the wetlands and farmlands—remove 12,000 tons of carbon per year, the equivalent of taking 2,600 cars off the road. We are identifying and prioritizing more carbon-rich tracts of forest to conserve in the years ahead.

In addition, the Backyard Habitat Certification Program, which we manage with Portland Audubon, offers people in their own communities in the Portland-Vancouver metro area the resources to transform their lawns into gardens rich with shrubs and trees. The individual scale is small, but the aggregate carbon sequestration value is significant. Plus, trees in the urban landscape can offer critical shade, help clean the air, and even help manage stormwater—building resilience to increasingly severe heatwaves and floods.

Natural climate solutions add up. The Nature Conservancy estimates that we will need to cut 30 gigatons of carbon from our annual emissions by 2030 to keep global temperature increases well below 2 degrees Celsius, and roughly 11 gigatons could be removed by nature itself. We can cut one-third of current greenhouse gas emissions simply by protecting, restoring, and better managing land and water resources. This is why the IPCC's recent report, *Climate Change and Land*, outlines the need for better land management across uses.

The lower Columbia River region is as diverse in its communities as it is in natural landscapes. This diversity also highlights the need for climate solutions that are fair and equitable. Rural communities of the Pacific Northwest face distinct risks from climate change, including drought, wildfires, and changes to crops and trees that can be grown. The region's tribes and indigenous communities are seeing climate change threaten culturally important species from salmon and other First Foods to western redcedars. Communities of color and low-income communities nationwide are disproportionately affected by the impacts of climate



change. In cities, the poorest areas also tend to be the hottest and vulnerable to intense storms. When we evaluate possible climate solutions, we all must work to ensure benefits and opportunities are shared fairly since the risks of doing nothing are not.

“Forests on the west side of the Cascades are high-biomass forests—some of the best acre-for-acre carbon sinks in the world. We have big trees that can store carbon in their structures both above and below ground.”

Ian Sinks, stewardship director for the Land Trust

In this era of global climate disruption, relying on natural climate solutions is critical, but this alone won't be enough. The remaining two-thirds of the global equation for averting any further climate crisis requires a rapid shift to clean energy. Such a shift will require bold changes in both policy and human behavior. Still, investing in local conservation offers an opportunity for each of us to make a real, tangible difference today.

To paraphrase author and scientist Robin Wall Kimmerer, despair robs us of our agency, but restoration—and conservation—offer an antidote to despair. We thank you for supporting conservation. When you're feeling overwhelmed, know that by acting locally, we all can care for the lands and waters that give us so much, and make our future a lot brighter in the process. 🌱

a | Recently conserved forestland along Washington's Wind River. Photo by Jay Kosa  
b | Data provided by The Nature Conservancy. A gigaton equals 1 billion metric tons.



# Re-wilding Wildboy Creek

**O**n a warm July morning, Cherie Kearney and I meet at a downtown coffee shop in Washougal, where it seems everybody knows her name. We head north out of town, our route hugging the bends of the Washougal River, passing turnouts for swimming holes on one side and signs for new housing developments on the other. Eventually, we make our way through a patchwork of dense forests and clear-cuts and arrive at a serene lake formed by Kwoneesum Dam.

As we walk out across the dam, the scenic waterfall pouring from its spillway to Wildboy Creek below distracts from the sheer scale of the structure. The dam underfoot stands 55 feet tall.

In 1965, the Camp Fire organization built Kwoneesum Dam at the confluence of three creeks in order to create a recreational lake for a new girls' camp. Girls from across the region spent

## Columbia Land Trust and The Cowlitz Indian Tribe Are Partnering to Remove a Dam and Restore the Headwaters of the Washougal River

BY JAY KOSA

summers swimming, sailing, and canoeing there until the late 1980s, when the camp closed and the land was sold to an industrial timber company. Today the lake and the dam persist, blocking threatened Coho salmon and steelhead from seven miles of upstream tributaries while also holding back valuable sediment from downstream fish habitat. Despite its pleasant surface appearance, the shallow, stagnant lake increases the river system's water temperature, which also hinders fish and other wildlife.

The Cowlitz Indian Tribe and the Land Trust were alerted to the property sale and saw the opportunity to collaborate. The Tribe's Natural Resources Department had been doing restoration work elsewhere on the Washougal and knew that the dam was a single barrier imperiling the ecological health of the entire system and the recovery of culturally important salmon and steelhead. For Columbia Land Trust, the Washougal River is a priority conservation area. Chances to both purchase a large forest and remove a dam in the watershed don't arise often.

Based on the shared vision of a restored and revitalized Washougal watershed, the two groups formed a partnership: The Land Trust will raise funds and build support to buy the 1,300 acres of forestland that includes Kwoneesum Lake, and the Tribe will play a leading role in raising the funds for restoration and dam removal.

"The Washougal River is more than just a location that I'm familiar with," says Peter Barber, restoration ecologist with

the Cowlitz Indian Tribe. Like Cherie Kearney, Barber refers to the Washougal River as his home waters. "It's like a good friend you've known all your life. It's my home away from home, and I dearly wish to see it in a healthier state." Barber grew up swimming, inner-tubing, exploring, and steelhead fishing in the same river he's working to restore today. Both he and Kearney appreciate how much their local communities and constituencies—ranging from

elected officials and tribal leaders to neighbors and business owners—support this project. The river not only provides drinking water to the City of Washougal but also is cherished by locals and the broader region for its scenic beauty and recreation value. "Everyone sees a little bit of what they love in this project," says Kearney. "For some, it's the vision, for others it's the process of removing a dam and radically transforming nature for the better, and for others it's about habitat and fish, seeing salmon return to their ancient spawning grounds."

In addition to restoring this section of the river system, the Land Trust will implement a conservation forestry approach that combines forest practices with watershed health. The site is in the heart of a timber-dependent rural community, and Land Trust forest management will contribute to regional jobs, mills, and tax revenues.

For the region's rivers and forests, the goal of both partners is a return to a more natural state—a place where water once again meanders as it did for millennia, a place where the river courses without impediment for salmon, a place where wildlife have room to roam, a place integral to the unique identity of the Cowlitz people.

The Land Trust has a narrow window of opportunity to conserve the land at Wildboy Creek. We have already raised more than half of the \$3.8 million necessary to acquire the land and implement its land management and restoration strategy. Our goal is to purchase the dam in early 2020, then

work with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe to remove the dam over the next two to three years.

For Kearney, the Washougal River is a thread that ties her life's work in conservation to the place where she put down roots 30 years ago—the place where she knows the names of trees, the birds, and the people, and counts them all as community. "This is a 500-year vision, to take a place like this and see it into the future so it can be wild. We have very little wilderness and very little wild-ness left in our lives," says Kearney. "I appreciate that it's a challenging time for us all as we consider the future of the planet. I also think it's a call to action to restore places like this."

► Learn more about the importance of restoration in our interview with Tanna Engdahl, spiritual leader with the Cowlitz Indian Tribe (page 8).

► Also, be sure to watch our new video, Meander: Restoring Wildboy Creek, at [columbialandtrust.org/wildboy](http://columbialandtrust.org/wildboy).

c | Kwoneesum Dam nearing completion in 1965

d | Kwoneesum Dam spillway. Photo by Lenkerbrook Photography

e | American dipper, a common sight at Wildboy Creek. Photo by Scry Eye Photography



You can conserve places like this.

As we enter this season of giving, you can make a difference for the people and the wildlife of the Northwest by making a gift to Columbia Land Trust.

Your support makes projects like the restoration of Wildboy Creek and the Washougal River possible throughout the Columbia River region.

 **GIVE TODAY**

Use the attached envelope or give online at [columbialandtrust.org/donate](http://columbialandtrust.org/donate)





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“...we think there’s nothing in these urban spaces, until we look closer, and then we find that there’s resiliency and evolution happening.”

Danielle Miles

# A PLACE TO CALL HOME

Danielle Miles Creates an Unexpected Habitat for the Oregon Slender Salamander

BY RACHAEL STEINKE

Life persists in unexpected places. Danielle Miles, a biology teacher at David Douglas High School and Backyard Habitat Certification Program (BHCP) participant, witnessed this phenomenon one afternoon in her Southeast Portland backyard.

While moving things around, Miles lifted up a set of aged cornhole boards and came across what appeared to be numerous worms wriggling in the dirt. Deciding to relocate them, Miles quickly realized these tiny creatures weren’t worms at all. They each had a tiny set of arms and legs: salamanders—an exciting discovery for Miles in her urban backyard habitat. Unsure of the exact species, Miles—who also used to work at the Johnson Creek Watershed Council—showed images of the mystery salamanders to friend and colleague Laura Guderyahn, an ecologist at Portland Parks & Recreation. The tiny creatures were identified as the Oregon slender salamander, an uncommon species of amphibian that is thought to exist only on the slopes of Oregon’s Cascade Range. Salamanders conjure up images of dense, moisture-rich forests, places they typically call home, but this was a unique case of habitat choice. How did this little-known amphibian end up in a densely populated urban neighborhood dominated by paved roads and housing structures? We may never know for sure, but Miles’s platinum-certified yard is a prime example of why the BHCP exists. “It’s just a testament,” she said, “to how we think there’s nothing in these urban spaces, until we look closer, and then we find that there’s resiliency and evolution happening. Creating a situation where wildlife can hold on is a tangible thing we can do.”

Miles’s yard may currently be the unofficial westernmost documented sighting of the Oregon slender salamander, although how many of them call the place home now remains a bit of a mystery. They usually disappear back into the earth when things get too hot, too cold, or too dry, so Miles just makes sure to keep a peaceful environment for the salamanders, whenever they feel like wriggling back around. 🌿

➤ Learn more about making your yard a backyard habitat at [www.backyardhabitats.org](http://www.backyardhabitats.org). The Backyard Habitat Certification Program is a collaboration between Columbia Land Trust and Portland Audubon.

f | Backyard Habitat Certification Program participant Danielle Miles



h |

## SPECIES SPOTLIGHT

### Oregon Slender Salamander

BY RACHAEL STEINKE



g |

#### SCIENTIFIC NAME

*Batrachoseps wrighti*

#### IDENTIFICATION

The Oregon slender salamander has a long, thin body with small pairs of arms and legs. It is typically between 3.5 to 4.5 inches in length. Its eyes are considered relatively large when compared to its small head. Dark in color, the adult is often brown with patches of coppery red that form a band along the entire length of its body. Its underside is black with clusters of silvery blue flecks. In its juvenile form, it can easily be mistaken for a worm at first glance due to its appearance and small size. Unlike some other species of salamanders, the Oregon slender salamander has four toes on its hind feet.

#### LIFE

Due to its elusive nature, much of the Oregon slender salamander’s habits remain a mystery. It is endemic to north-central Oregon, specifically the west slopes of Oregon’s Cascade Range. It is generally found in forests where

there is an abundance of decaying wood and moisture, preferably beneath a closed canopy. Surprisingly, sightings also have been documented in the suburban landscapes of Southeast Portland and Gresham. In these unexpected habitats, the salamander seeks shelter in dark and damp locations. Its diet consists mostly of insect larvae, spiders, and worms. The female lays between 3 and 11 eggs, which are about 4 millimeters long.

#### STATUS

The Oregon slender salamander is listed as a sensitive species in Oregon State and federally listed as a species of concern. Due to its limited geographic range, it is particularly at risk of human-caused disturbances. 🌿

g | The Oregon Slender Salamander, a tiny four-toed amphibian

h | The Oregon Slender Salamander. Photo by Caz Zyvatskauskas



# LISTENING TO THE SUN

A Conversation with Tanna Engdahl,  
Spiritual Leader of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe

BY DEZ RAMIREZ

“You can hear the sun. You sit quietly, and you can hear the sun because the earth reacts to it and it makes the sound of the sun hitting the leaves and the grasses and the trees.” – *Tanna Engdahl*

As Columbia Land Trust moves forward on its ambitious goal of conserving 1,300 acres of land along Wildboy Creek in partnership with the Cowlitz Tribe, we also made sure to take time to sit and listen to those who have had a relationship with this land and its natural systems for generations.

It was a great privilege to have a deeper conversation with spiritual leader Tanna Engdahl this past July as she shared her perspective on respecting the land, its past, and its future.

**What are you feeling as you walk around and take this place in?**

We are currently sitting at a site where three streams meet and flow into the Washougal River. Ordinarily, if you have even two bodies of water that join, you would have a native village at that site. I believe that we are sitting on ancient campgrounds of Native Americans...In fact as I say that now...I'm getting a chill. Of course, we're not alone here. Our ancestors, they like to join us on these little walkabouts. I'm feeling the essence of the people who may have been here, people who understood the movement of water, and understood how water must meander to be healthy, and to serve the earth. Native people probably prayed here, offered ceremony here, and thanked the Creator for the site on which we are standing. I think this is a very profound area, and it is an area worth bringing back to its natural state.

➤ Be sure to watch our new video, *Meander: Restoring Wildboy Creek*, at [columbialandtrust.org/wildboy](http://columbialandtrust.org/wildboy).

**Can you share what you mean when you talk about the spirit of a place?**

The spirit of place is a life force that is older than time. It is a combination of sound, what the earth has formed, seasons...We have spiritual solace, we have spiritual connection, and if we quiet our mind, we also have an understanding that we've got to do everything we can to help this planet survive.

**From the Cowlitz perspective, why is this land critical to conserve?**

We have people [in the Cowlitz Tribe] that are passionate about restoring the earth where it's been damaged and abused and scarred. There are men and women trying to rehab places to bring back our salmon. For our tribe and coastal tribes, salmon is the foundation



of our existence. It was one of the most amazing gifts from the Creator, and kept generations alive. Our aim is to bring salmon-bearing streams back. Bringing its habitat back is honoring the earth, the Creator, and our ancestors...I would hope that the partnership between the Cowlitz Tribe and Columbia Land Trust becomes a force that can return this water system back to its natural state. We want to go back to this river's past and drag it into the future, so that it can fulfill its own river destiny.

**Climate change, species loss, dam removal—it all feels so big. What are your thoughts on this?**

Everyone can do something. Everyone can do a little part. Don't look at the scale, don't think it's too big. Don't go there. Go with what you can do to make one little bit of a difference, and you might be joined by thousands of people that want to make that little difference too. One day you might look back and see a whole big difference. Look at what you can do. 🌱

i | Tanna Engdahl on site at Wildboy Creek.

# LET'S GO

SIGN UP | [ColumbiaLandTrust.org](http://ColumbiaLandTrust.org)

Tour

FREE

## CHUM SALMON SPAWNING

Friday, December 6, 2019

VANCOUVER, WA

Walk along the shores of the Columbia River to witness the annual return of Chum salmon to Woods Landing—one of three chum spawning sites stewarded by Columbia Land Trust. You'll learn about the life cycle and biology of chum from Land Trust staff while watching these incredible fish spawn near the banks of the river.



THANKS FOR JOINING US AT  
**WILD SPLENDOR**

More than 315 donors, corporate sponsors, and volunteers came together for Columbia Land Trust's annual gala, Wild Splendor, on Thursday,

October 3rd. Our fearless supporters raised more than \$400,000 to preserve wildlife, provide clean water, and conserve the lands we love. Together we celebrated our sense of place in nature with a cocktail hour featuring our Patagonia Mystery Bag fundraiser, an exciting live

auction, and an inspiring program featuring the premiere of our new film, *Meander: Restoring Wildboy Creek*.

**Thank you** to all our sponsors, guests, and volunteers for making this evening a success!



Tour

\$75

## EAGLE VIEWING TOUR

Saturday, January 25, 2020

LYLE, WA

Join us as we travel through the Columbia River Gorge for a full day tour to the Klickitat River. View bald eagles that gather in the winter to feed on salmon. We'll learn about the conservation and restoration of several sites in the Columbia River Gorge with Land Trust Forest Conservation Director Cherie Kearney. We'll also hear about the region's ecology and native species including overwintering waterfowl, pika, and western pond turtles from Clark College Professor of Biology Steven Clark.

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

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Chum salmon spawning at Woods Landing. Photo by Jay Kosa





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For more information on how to make gifts from your IRA please talk with your tax consultant and contact Keith Daly, Advancement Director at [kdaly@columbialandtrust.org](mailto:kdaly@columbialandtrust.org) or (360) 213-1203

River otters. Photo by: Sarah Kelman  
(Glidergoth Photography)