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Land trust completes decade-long effort to conserve 400 acres on Mill Creek Ridge

With the acquisition of 115 acres, Columbia Land Trust ensures a stunning landscape of oak woodland and wildflower meadow habitat will endure for generations.

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VANCOUVER, WA— [Columbia Land Trust](#) today announced the conservation of 115 acres of wildlife habitat on Mill Creek Ridge, located southwest of The Dalles in Wasco County, Oregon.

Mill Creek Ridge is a gorgeous expanse of oak woodlands and wildflower meadows rising from the gnarled basalt flows that narrow the Columbia River. In the spring, brilliant purple lupine and gold balsamroot wildflowers blanket the hillsides, with the bright-white peaks of Mount Adams and Mount Hood punctuating sweeping vistas to the north and south. The ridge's woodlands and native grass prairies support pollinators as well as migratory and resident birds, including meadowlarks, bluebirds, and woodpeckers.

“Mill Creek Ridge is home to a rich and diverse array of wildlife,” offered Land Trust Executive Director Glenn Lamb, “wildlife that recalls a time when abundance flowed forth unconstrained by human forces.”

For more than a decade, Columbia Land Trust has identified Mill Creek Ridge as a priority conservation area. The ridge is a crucial feature of a wildlife corridor that runs southwest to northeast. When areas of the hillsides sporting dramatic views were zoned for second home development, the Land Trust was spurred into action to avoid losing the largely intact native habitat.

Between 2006 and 2015, the Land Trust conserved more than 300 acres of the ridge across multiple properties, but one large intervening parcel still divided the protected areas. On Friday, February 26, the Land Trust acquired that key 115-acre parcel, completing the long-term goal of connecting up-ridge and down-ridge conserved lands.

After years of collaboration with supportive area residents and funders, the conservation team has now permanently protected more than 400 contiguous acres of scenic vistas and increasingly rare native habitat for wildlife at the edge of the East Cascades. The [Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board](#) provided \$140,800 in funding for the acquisition, in addition to \$50,000 from the [American Bird Conservancy](#) through funding

from the Neotropical Migratory Bird Conservation Act. The acquisition was also made possible through a generous donation from local landowners.

“Mill Creek Ridge is a stronghold for Lewis’s woodpecker, one of the highest priority birds for conservation in North America,” says Bob Altman, Pacific Northwest Conservation Officer with the American Bird Conservancy. “We are excited to be a partner in Columbia Land Trust’s efforts to protect the beauty and legacy of this important conservation area.”

With this project completed, the Land Trust’s work now turns to ongoing stewardship of the land. Stewardship staff will help the spectacular array of native plants flourish by controlling weeds, monitoring tree health, and planting where necessary, which in turn will support wildlife dependent on the native habitat of Mill Creek Ridge.

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About Columbia Land Trust

Founded in 1990, [Columbia Land Trust](#) conserves and cares for the vital lands, waters and wildlife of the Columbia River region through sound science and strong relationships. With the support of 3,000 members, the Land Trust has conserved more than 28,000 acres of land in 14 counties along the Columbia River, from the John Day River near The Dalles to the Pacific Ocean. The Land Trust employs a positive, collaborative approach to protect and restore crucial wildlife habitat, working forests and farms, and urban spaces.