

LOOKING TO NATURE AS WE ADAPT

ADAPTATION: adjusting or changing to become more suited to an environment

Are you “adapting” to our new normal? You’re not alone. All species experience periods of adaptation or change. Some changes result in permanent physical alterations, such as ocotillo plants that lose their leaves to decrease water loss in the dry heat but can grow new leaves in a week if they get enough rain. We’re all changing our habits to adapt to a pandemic and lessen the chance of spreading the disease. Most are temporary adaptations, but we may see some changes, like remote work places, remain.

Need Stress ‘Releaf’?

Close your eyes and imagine a place that is peaceful and quiet or free of stress.

If you’re like most of us, that place is probably somewhere in nature: a shade dappled forest, a stretch of sun-drenched beach, or maybe a mountain view.

The past several months brought radical change to most of us and confined us at home for long periods. While medical experts were learning more about COVID-19—how contagious it is, how it spreads—many of us have stayed home to stay safe. Many parks and trails were closed for a time, as well. All the inside time has heightened our sense of worry and uncertainty, and made us long for the outdoors.

Continued on page 3 ►



*What does
‘adaptation’
mean
ecologically?*

*Guess what,
you’re doing it!*

Photos: Walking trail at Randall Preserve. Bigleaf maple.





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WE'RE UNITED BY A SENSE OF PLACE

Often, we seek time in nature to disconnect from it all. Today, I would suggest that time in nature can also help us connect to it all! As new challenges arrive at speeds never seen before, we long for connections to others, to the outdoors, to clean air, and to a shared understanding of our future.

Connection to "place" has been a foundational element of Capitol Land Trust's existence. My hope is that during this unique moment, our community is rediscovering this connection, while paying closer attention to what's happening in our backyards, enjoying local outings to nearby trails, and building deeper relationships with our neighbors. I also hope it is a time for us to come together around a common love for the land: a shared value that fosters community and makes us stronger.

This collective connection to place has kept us focused on our core work this year. While in some cases we've had to adapt the way we do our work, we've continued to complete new conservation projects, care for our conserved lands, and offer opportunities for our community to interact with nature through our public-access preserves and digital content.

We're also updating our 5-year strategic plan this year. The last update of the plan led to the opening of our public-access preserves and increased community engagement. This next iteration will serve as a guide on how we can deliver on our desire

to connect people and conserve land during a time of uncertainty.

We know there are still rough waters ahead and are grateful to everyone who has strengthened CLT over the years. You, our volunteers and supporters, will be the ones to see us through this current storm. We recognize that strategic land conservation is essential to ensure that our region continues to be a place that sustains us.

Thank you.

Dave Winter, Executive Director



"This fall, we wish you all a strong sense of connection, empathy, and inspiration from this place we call home."



ADAPTATION

... Continued from front page

Ah, the great outdoors!

How we crave the feel of the breeze slipping across the water to cool our faces or the crunch of leaves under our hiking shoes. The sight of wildflowers showing their colors and glory, or the sound of wind in the pines can set us at ease. When it feels like the world is in turmoil, a walk in a forest of ancient trees or along the beach next to the timeless ocean calms us and brings a better perspective. It can take us out of ourselves and connect us to a sense of continuity: wildflowers bloom, birds build their nests and raise their young, trees drop their seeds and then their leaves in expectation of another season and more growth.

Photo, opposite page: Dave Winter photo by Cooper Carras.

Photos, this page, top left: Sydney Sims and her dog hike the trails at Darlin Creek Preserve.

Upper right: Evening family fun at Randall Preserve. Lower photo: Lupine along Johns Creek Trail.



For some of us, there is a new understanding of the importance and desire for outdoor places—places to relax, stretch our legs, let the kids run and play, and get some fresh (safe) air.

This time makes us appreciate having places to experience nature.

Whether your favorite place is a local park or a mountain top, we all need the calming respite that nature provides.

“Darlin Creek... has always been a place for me to clear my head and think... especially now, when my other routines and comforts are no longer possible, the preserve has remained a safe place to escape to and regain a small sense of normalcy.”

► Sydney Sims,
Darlin Creek Preserve
neighbor

Partnership spotlight: Puget Sound Estuarium

Every fall about 300 middle school students transform Bayshore Preserve into a living classroom. Much of their focus is on Johns Creek and its estuary. The students observe how a stonefly does pushups to bring oxygen to its gills, race apples down Johns Creek to measure stream flow, monitor the effects of salty estuary water on vegetation, and even feel the squishy body of an anemone in traveling touch tanks!

We call this program Bayshore FieldSTEM®, born in 2015 from a partnership between CLT, the Shelton School District, and Pacific Education

Institute. In 2017, Puget Sound Estuarium joined the team. They brought with them a mission to foster learning opportunities that inspire people of all ages to connect with, protect, and enjoy the unique estuary environment of Puget Sound.

Puget Sound Estuarium has adapted quickly to the limitations of our current reality. Over the summer, they modified their Estuary Explorers Summer Camp to include daily online activities and led small-group field trips at CLT's Inspiring Kids Preserve.

“Like many education nonprofits, the Estuarium has undergone a major transition because of the COVID-19 pandemic. It turned our hands-on, in-person approach to environmental education upside down, sparking a cascading effect throughout our organization.

We adjusted by providing virtual versions of our K-12 field trips, volunteer orientations, Pier Peer program, Discovery Speaker Series, exhibits and more. Many of the programs we built for current circumstance, like our Tiny Tides Story Time and Arts and Crafts with a naturalist, will be done in person at the Estuarium whenever that becomes possible again.



Capitol Land Trust's Bayshore Preserve conserves 74 acres, including the lower portion of Johns Creek, 27 acres of salt marsh, 4,000 feet of shoreline and 47 acres of 'upland' grassland, oaks and forest of the former golf course. Its natural features and history make it a beautiful place for connecting with ever-changing ecosystems.



FieldSTEM is a registered trademark of Pacific Education Institute.



The programs themselves represent the way that we faced the impacts of COVID-19, by growing and changing in quarantine in order to come out of this stronger and with more to offer our South Sound community members than ever before.”

► Paris McClusky, Executive Director, Puget Sound Estuarium



Autumn Adaptations

As students settle into remote learning this fall, we're finding ways to support them and keep them connected to the natural world. With Puget Sound Estuarium's help, we're reworking the Bayshore FieldSTEM experience for students to access virtually.

Shelton teachers—and teachers beyond—will have access to engaging videos and activities about Bayshore around topics like stream life and estuary habitats. Teachers can schedule live-stream animal feedings with the Estuarium and have discussions about animal adaptations while the educator shows the animal from a live-stream video. Students also can virtually explore the often unseen life forms in Johns Creek from their homes. In addition to stoneflies doing pushups, caddisflies can be found peeping from their homemade shells made of small pebbles or grass!



While nothing can replace the feeling of being on the land with their peers, students and families are encouraged to walk the preserve and witness local phenomena after engaging with the video activities. To help guide this visit, CLT and the Estuarium are developing an interactive walking map of Bayshore that promotes self-guided activities and encourages observation skills. What kinds of plants are growing along Johns Creek after the area was restored from being a road? How old was a Douglas-fir tree when it began its new life as a future nurse log? (Hint: you can tell by the number of rings present on the stump!)

We hope some students will be inspired to visit the preserve themselves and walk the trails with family and friends. If they do, they also can access a Wi-Fi hotspot in Bayshore Preserve's parking lot that Mason PUD installed to increase community internet access.

Photos, opposite page, from left: Student throws apple into Johns Creek for group to measure speed of stream flow, Bruce Livingston. Estuarium Summer Camper studying the forest floor, Estuarium. Students explore tidal life in touch tanks with educator, Bruce Livingston. Photos, this page, top left: Magnifying nature. Top: Stonefly. Right: Stump and future nurse log at Bayshore Preserve. Bottom: Studying macroinvertebrates.

When screen time becomes too much and the call of the outdoors echoes in your ears, come experience the land with us.

Parents, teachers and organizations looking for a way to get kids outside can contact CLT to schedule small group stewardship parties on a conserved property. Stewardship parties respond to the needs of the land and enhance habitat and recreation opportunities through trail maintenance and environmental restoration. Not only are the activities great exercise, they also are opportunities to learn about local plants, animals and conservation!

Brisk November air will be with us before we know it. As a new season floats in with the Puget Sound fog, chum salmon begin making their way up Johns Creek to spawn. The salmon run usually begins at the beginning of November, varying year to year with the fall rains. Witness

nature's incredible event at Bayshore Preserve from the bridge crossing Johns Creek under the sweeping limbs of big-leaf maple trees.

Get outside year round! Sign up for our Trail Stewards program. By registering you or your family as Trail Stewards, you commit to visiting the same public-access preserve once a month to let us know the condition of the trails and other infrastructure there. With your help, we can keep these preserves safe and enjoyable. Regularly monitoring trails is a great way to get kids outside using their observation skills and helps develop a meaningful connection to a special place.

Contact Mary mary@capitolandtrust.org for more information on any of the opportunities mentioned here.



The Hammersley Inlet summer chum that utilize Johns Creek, comprise one half of all the summer chum production for the entire state of Washington! Keep an eye on our Facebook page and we'll let you know when the salmon have arrived.



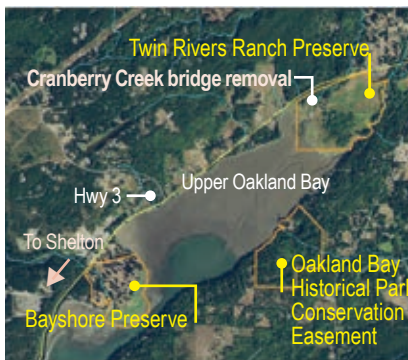
Photos this page: From top left: Never too young to be out at Randall Preserve. Sydney Sims helps mulch at Inspiring Kids Preserve. Middle school students volunteer at IKP. Lower center: Father and daughter team up to plant trees at IKP.

Photos opposite page, top: Torrent of water flows over bridge during heavy rains. Bridge support logs block creek. Bridge surface removal.

Cranberry Creek Flows Freely

With a little bit of finesse, some persistence, and a whole lot of help from our project partners, Capitol Land Trust removed the failing bridge at Twin Rivers Ranch Preserve this summer. Removal of this 55-foot log bridge that was collapsing into Cranberry Creek gives juvenile Coho salmon and other fish easier access to spawning and rearing grounds further up Cranberry Creek. The bridge removal project is a pivotal moment in the ongoing habitat enhancement work that began at Twin Rivers Ranch Preserve 10 years ago.

Next up: Planting shrubs and trees along the streambank to support fish and wildlife by cooling water temperatures and dropping nutrients into the creek.



Many thanks to our project partners!

- ▶ Mason Conservation District
- ▶ Natural Resources Conservation Service
- ▶ Squaxin Island Tribe
- ▶ WA State Conservation Commission
- ▶ WA State Department of Ecology



The former bridge site is near the mouth of Cranberry Creek, which flows into the northeast end of Oakland Bay. Now that this partial barrier is removed, fish can migrate unimpeded to the headwaters of the creek.



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Photo: House wren feeding baby.



SUPPORT LOCAL LAND CONSERVATION!

THERE ARE SO MANY WAYS

Some of our supporters have asked what they can do to help CLT's local land conservation thrive during this time of uncertainty:

- ▶ **Give a cash gift:** Your gift will be put to immediate use.
- ▶ **Consider gifting appreciated stock:** There can be tax benefits to giving appreciated stock, making it a win-win situation that both benefits you and the causes you care about. Check with your professional tax advisor to make sure this giving strategy makes sense for you.
- ▶ **Join the many people who have included CLT in their will or living trust documents:** When you make a planned gift to CLT, you play a direct role in ensuring local land conservation continues well beyond your lifetime.

To learn more, email info@capitollandtrust.org.