

# WHIDBEY CAMANO

## — Land Trust —

FALL 2026



### From First Beach Visits to Lifelong Stewardship Connecting Kids to Conservation

There's a common misconception that being an island kid means spending endless hours exploring beaches and natural spaces. You would hope that's true. But through our work with local schools, we've learned that while they might call this place home, some children have never been to the beach. Through our *Connecting Kids to Conservation* program, the Land Trust is helping change that.

What began in 2019 as a field trip to explore the prairie and old-growth forests at Admiralty Inlet Preserve with fourth graders from Coupeville, has grown into a county-wide educational program serving multiple grades and schools in Island County. What started with just 75 students a year has expanded to reaching more than 1,600 students this past spring alone.



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## Outdoor Education

*continued from page 1*

The programming is provided free of charge to participating schools, and we are fortunate and grateful for the incredible community partners who share their expertise and passion with students, including Sound Water Stewards, Island County Public Health, Island County Marine Resources Committee, and Central Whidbey Fire & Rescue. What's more, thanks to generous funding from Puget Sound Energy, 100+ Women Who Care, the Whidbey Community Foundation, Bass Pro Shop and Cabela's Outdoor Fund, and private donors, we even cover transportation and supply costs when needed, to make sure every class is able to participate.

It was a special thrill this year, to be invited by Friends of Camano Island Parks (FOCIP) to support their Nature Discovery Days on Camano Island, and offer hands-on environmental education experiences to second-grade students from Elger Bay Elementary and Utsalady Elementary schools – our first engagement with the Stanwood-Camano Schools!

So, what do students get to do on these field trips to Land Trust preserves? Under the direction of Andi Kopit, education coordinator, and with the help of dedicated Land Trust volunteers, students participate in interactive, hands-on activities designed to inspire a deeper appreciation for local lands and waters, foster a sense of responsibility

for their community, and nurture a lifelong passion for conservation.

At Del Fairfax Preserve, second graders become tree detectives, donning their inspector hats to investigate forest health. Armed with magnifying glasses, they search for signs of wildlife along the trails and discover the many creatures that share these natural spaces with us. At Keystone Preserve, third graders study macroinvertebrates found in restoration areas, learning how these tiny organisms help scientists understand water quality and support the salmon food web. Fourth graders visiting Admiralty Inlet Preserve explore the prairie ecosystem and discover how healthy upland habitats support the Salish Sea and the species that depend on it, especially salmon. They also learn about the Indigenous peoples who have cared for this land since time immemorial, gaining a deeper understanding of the connections between people, place, and stewardship.

But if you ask the students what their favorite part of the day is, you'll hear the same answer again and again: the service station! Whether they're maintaining trails, picking up litter along the beach, or helping care for restoration areas, students take pride in giving back. Their favorite activity isn't just learning about conservation - it's practicing it, by caring for the land and waters in this place they call home.

# LEARNING ON THE LAND



Nature walks 



New discoveries 



Stewarding the land



Beach visits 



Engaging learning



*Rare prairie now protected at Pacific Rim Institute.*

## **Celebrating Permanent Protection of Beloved Whidbey Landscape**

### **Important Partnerships Making it Happen!**

Thanks to a unique collaboration between the Whidbey Camano Land Trust, Pacific Rim Institute, and a coalition of community partners, one of Whidbey Island's most ecologically significant properties is now protected forever. The Pacific Rim Institute (PRI), near Coupeville, was recently placed under a conservation easement that permanently safeguards 143 acres of the property, including rare remnant prairie, restored Garry oak savanna, and healthy mature forest. It also ensures continued public access to the property's beloved trail system.

The conservation easement grew out of a close collaboration between the Land Trust and PRI's board and staff, whose commitment to the land, its ecological values, and public access made the project possible. The easement also provides financial support that will strengthen PRI's ability to care for this remarkable landscape and serve the community for years to come.

"Protecting the prairie remnant is a dream come true," said Jim Peskuric, chairperson of the board at PRI. "We overcame significant hurdles to make this happen, and we are looking

forward to continuing our mission to protect and restore northwest native grasslands across the Salish Sea basin."

Funding for the conservation easement was provided by the U.S. Navy and Island Transit. Island Transit's contribution came from mitigation funds from the public transit authority's expansion and transition to a low-emissions fleet. "It's an obvious win-win," said Ryan Elting, executive director of the Land Trust. "Collaboration like this shows how permanent conservation can work hand in hand with community progress."

Remnant prairies and Garry oak ecosystems are among the rarest and most threatened habitats in the Pacific Northwest. With this conservation easement in place, exceptional examples of both habitats under Pacific Rim Institute's stewardship will remain protected, intact, and open to the community.

Together, the project partners have ensured that this cherished Whidbey landscape will continue to support native habitats, community connection, and hands-on conservation for generations to come.

# KEYSTONE CORNER

## Keystone Preserve Opening Soon!



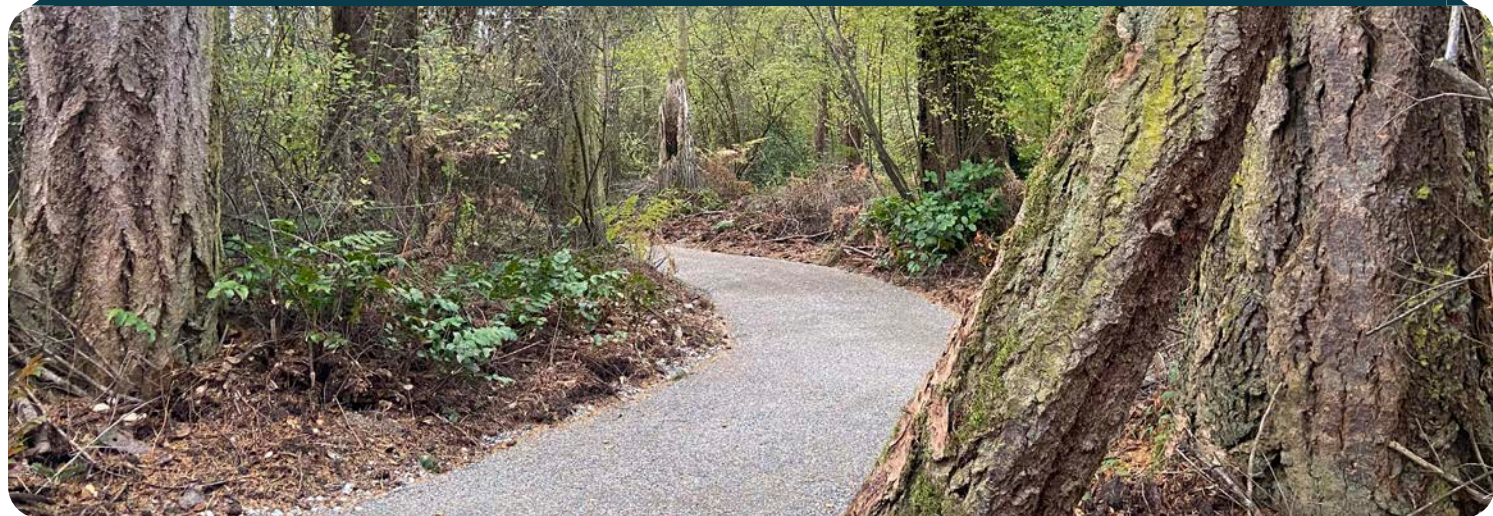
### GETTING READY FOR VISITORS

Keystone Preserve has come a long way since the Land Trust first protected the property in 2022. Over the past four years, countless hours have gone into planning, restoration efforts, trail construction – including ADA-accessible trails – parking infrastructure, signage and more. Most recently, one of the final pieces of the puzzle before opening to the public, completing a new left-turn lane on Highway 525, creating a safer entrance to Keystone Preserve.

These are just a few of the many impressive accomplishments that have brought this special place closer to welcoming visitors. We can't wait for people to experience this island gem for themselves!

Thanks to the Land Trust's stewardship staff and many volunteers who continue to lend their time and energy at Keystone Preserve, the work doesn't stop when the gates open. Trails will receive ongoing maintenance to keep them safe and visitor-ready, while restoration efforts continue throughout the preserve.

Opening Keystone Preserve to the public marks an exciting new chapter, but it's only the next phase in the long story of this remarkable place. Stay tuned for more details on the opening!



*Top photo: View of Keystone Preserve from Admiralty Inlet. Bottom photo: ADA trail at Keystone Preserve.*

# Field Notes

## Ottakes from the Land Trust

### A Year of Island Beauty

Enjoy a year of island snapshots with the Land Trust's 2027 Wall Calendar, featuring twelve months of breathtaking scenery, wildlife, and unforgettable moments from Whidbey and Camano Islands!

A heartfelt thank you goes out to the talented photographers who shared their work in this year's photo contest. Their creativity and passion made this calendar shine. Although we couldn't include every submission, each entry helped make the photo contest a success and inspired this year's exceptional calendar.

Bring the islands into your home or share them with family and friends by purchasing a calendar today! Find a list of local shops carrying our calendars at [www.wclt.org/2027-calendars](http://www.wclt.org/2027-calendars).

### Giving Tuesday 🍁

Giving Tuesday is a global day of generosity taking place on **Tuesday, December 1, 2026**. It's an opportunity to give back to the places that give us so much: the lush forests, natural shorelines, working farmlands, and breathtaking landscapes that make these islands so special.

When you support the Land Trust on Giving Tuesday, you're helping protect wildlife habitat, preserve scenic open spaces, and ensure future generations can experience the natural beauty and sense of place on these islands.



*Calendar cover photo. Harbor seal by Cynthia Rausch.*

Mark your calendar and stay tuned for more details in the coming months. Together, we can ensure these cherished lands and waters remain healthy, vibrant, and protected for years to come.

### The Changing Season

Enjoying nature is always a wonderful experience, but seeing it through a child's eyes is truly priceless, especially when there's a banana slug to discover! During a stroll at Admiralty Inlet Preserve, this young explorer had the chance to observe one of the forest's slowest native residents.

With fall just around the corner, the return of rainy weather means more banana slug sightings and plenty of

opportunities to get outside and explore. It's the perfect season to slow down, embrace the changing landscape, and create lasting memories in nature.

### Fresh Looks

Refresh your trail wardrobe with cozy Land Trust apparel in fresh colors and styles. Whether you're looking for a new favorite hoodie or tee for your next adventure or picking up a thoughtful gift for a fellow nature lover, our Land Trust swag is made for outdoor enjoyment and everyday wear. Every purchase is a great way to show your support for local conservation.

Shop the Land Trust store here:  
[www.wclt.org/land-trust-store](http://www.wclt.org/land-trust-store)



*Young explorer at Admiralty Inlet Preserve.*

**DON'T MISS OUT!**

## Member & Volunteer Appreciation Picnic September 24 at Keystone Preserve

*Members and volunteers, please reach out to Ashley at [ashley@wclt.org](mailto:ashley@wclt.org) to register.*



# What We Leave Behind

There is something beautiful about planting a tree under whose shade we may never sit.

A seed is a small thing. It disappears into the earth, almost unnoticed. Yet, given time, rain, and care, it can become a great fir tree standing above the forest, sheltering birds, holding the soil, cleaning the air, and offering a resting shade for generations to come.

## A legacy gift is much the same.

The people whose names appear below have planted such seeds. By remembering the Whidbey Camano Land Trust in a will, trust, or estate plan, they have chosen to extend their care of these beautiful islands well beyond their own lifetimes.

Their gifts will help protect the farms, forests, shorelines, wetlands, and open spaces of Island County — and will ensure that these places remain here for children, grandchildren, and generations we cannot yet imagine.

Perhaps that is the quiet power of a planned gift, be it large or small: we can give when we no longer need the money ourselves, transforming what remains into something that continues to do good.

*Please remember the Whidbey Camano Land Trust in your estate plan and let us know by calling or texting **Charles LaFond at 360-210-3011 or emailing [charles@wclt.org](mailto:charles@wclt.org)**. You may remain anonymous if you wish. Anyone who has included the Land Trust in their plans, or intends to do so, is welcomed into our Legacy Circle.*

## Meet Our Legacy Circle Members

Anonymous (8)  
Louise Abbott and David Earp  
Mary Anne Adams  
Lorna and Edward Aites  
Marti Anamosa  
Betty Azar  
Linda Bainbridge  
Karen Johnson  
Marilyn Beard  
Linda Beeman  
Joan Benedusi  
Walt Blackford and Shirley Jantz  
Francy Blumhagen  
Lynn Boose  
Joani Boose  
Dick Bowen  
Steve Boyce  
James Boyle and Frances Bainor-Boyle  
Emily Byrum and Brian Hecht  
Tom and Sally Cahill  
Tom Campbell  
Dede Campbell  
Mary Fell Cheston  
Amanda Clark  
Rebecca Collins  
Steven Constantino  
Jill Cooper  
Lenny Corin  
Diana Craig  
Maribeth Crandell  
Ken and Ellen Dickey  
Sharon Dunn  
Harry Dursch and Kirsten Lemke  
John Edison  
Steve and Martha Ellis  
Ryan and Marthé Elting  
Charles Fay  
Melanie and Michael Fink  
Arthur Fleming and Leann Dawson

Laura Foster  
Barbara and Richard Gohlke  
Paul Goldfinger  
Stephen and Elizabeth Guss  
Christie Hammond  
Rob Harbour  
Karen and Thomas Harkins  
Grant and Jody Heiken  
Linda Heinichen  
Joe and Val Hillers  
Judy Howard and Chris Fisher  
Gay Jensen and Robert Plotnick  
Steven Jones  
Diane Kendy  
Robert Kenny and Julia Glover  
Phyllis Kind  
Marty and Bruce Kortebein  
Lea Kouba  
Charles LaFond II  
Lincoln and Barbara Libby  
Georgie Lindquist  
Nicole Luce and Janet Hall  
Nancy Luenn and Glenn Duncan  
Gregory and Ann Lyle  
Judy Lynn  
Carmela and Brian Mabbutt  
Jaci and David Mach  
Bonita MacPhail  
Sallie Rose Madrone  
Andrea Malott  
Janet Marshall-McConnell  
Michael Martonick  
Steven Matthias  
Mary McCutcheon  
Pamela Meyer  
Ronda and Brad Miller  
Susan Moore  
Kathleen O'Neill and Thomas Leschine  
Cary Peterson

Todd Peterson  
Claire Pickard  
Frank Ploof  
Pat Powell  
Scott and Karen Price  
Pam Pritzl  
Jeri and Dan Reiner  
Stephanie Rodden and John Cienki  
Chris Rose  
Sarah Schmidt and Bill Rick  
Michael Seraphinoff and Susan Prescott  
Dyanne Sheldon and Jean Singer  
Marcia Sill  
Tom and Barbara Silliman  
Colleen Skinner  
Jana Kay Slater  
David Smukowski  
Jim Somers and Melissa Merickel  
Adrienne Soule  
Chris Spencer  
Paula Spina  
Mira Steinbrecher  
Kelly and Frances Sweeney  
Annie Thoe  
Ray Thorne  
Tom and Sharon Vos  
Nancy Waddell  
Mark Waterbury  
Dan Weber and Laurie Carron  
Linda Wehrman  
Linda and Larry Whatley  
Lisa Williams  
Lee Williamson  
Anne Marie Winter  
Constance Wolfe  
Diane Wyzga  
Robert York  
Anne Zuckerman  
Susan Zwinger

**Did we miss your name?** Please contact us at [info@wclt.org](mailto:info@wclt.org) or 360.222.3310.



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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

| SEPTEMBER 24*                                                  | OCTOBER 9                                               | OCTOBER 17                                                                                                                                                             | OCTOBER 21                             |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| MEMBER & VOLUNTEER<br>APPRECIATION PICNIC<br>Keystone Preserve | GUIDED WALK & TALK<br>Dog Friendly<br>Keystone Preserve | ORCA RECOVERY DAY<br>Family-Friendly Work Party<br>Keystone Preserve                                                                                                   | WHIDBEY<br>MEET & MINGLE<br>Coupeville |
| SAVE THE DATE                                                  | 2:00 pm                                                 | 9:00 am                                                                                                                                                                | 6:00 pm                                |
| OCTOBER 29*                                                    | DECEMBER 9                                              | ONGOING                                                                                                                                                                |                                        |
| FABULOUS FUNGI WALK<br>Hammons Preserve<br>Clinton             | HOLIDAY OPEN<br>HOUSE<br>Greenbank                      | WORK PARTIES                                                                                                                                                           |                                        |
| SAVE THE DATE                                                  | SAVE THE DATE                                           | New dates added periodically. Visit <a href="http://www.wclt.org/get-involved/volunteer">www.wclt.org/get-involved/volunteer</a> or scan QR code for more information. |                                        |

Scan the QR code or visit [www.wclt.org/get-involved](http://www.wclt.org/get-involved) to register for events and work parties.

\*Don't miss out on these Land Trust member-only events! Become a member today to participate in more upcoming events. **Questions?** Call 360.222.3310 or email [info@wclt.org](mailto:info@wclt.org).

