

# LIVING LANDS

Helping Land Trusts Conserve Biodiversity



## LIVING LANDS NEWSLETTER

FALL 2007

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Nisqually Land Trust Executive Director, Joe Kane, overlooking forests protected by the Mount Rainier Gateway Initiative  
*Photo courtesy of Joe Kane*

## NISQUALLY LAND TRUST: ENGAGING COMMUNITIES IN CONSERVATION

*AN UPDATE FROM A 2007 LIVING LANDS BIODIVERSITY GRANT RECIPIENT—BY JOE KANE*

Two years ago, the Nisqually Land Trust was called upon to help solve a crisis: A timber company had permits to log a heavily forested ridge along the highway through Ashford, Washington, the mountain hamlet at the main entrance to Mount Rainier National Park.

Ashford's economy relies on tourism, and a two-hundred-acre clearcut visible from the center of town wasn't a vista likely to put "heads in beds," as the local innkeepers put it.

We convinced the timber company to hold off for three months, and at the eleventh hour won a \$1.4 million Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund grant to buy out

the clearcut. But that didn't completely solve the problem: The listed species the grant was intended to protect—spotted owls and marbled murrelets—were the same species that many locals blamed for killing the area's forest-products industry.

To make habitat protection work long-term, we had to do more than simply lock up a piece of land. We had to be sure the community was fully on board. With support from a Defenders of Wildlife Living Lands Biodiversity Grant, we began developing a management plan based on the three pillars of sustainability: environment, community and economy.

*(continued on page 2)*

**Living Lands**  
*Helping Land Trusts  
Conserve Biodiversity*

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*(Nisqually Land Trust, continued from page 1)*

To lay the foundation for that plan, our sister organization, the Nisqually River Council, organized monthly community forums in Ashford. Everything was on the table. Ashford needed public bathrooms for the 1.5 million visitors who came through town every year on their way to the national park. Ashford needed a performing-arts center to keep those visitors in town for longer than it took to relieve themselves on the neighbors' lawn. Ashford needed help keeping its elementary school open. Above all, Ashford needed jobs.

Out of these forums grew the Mount Rainier Gateway Initiative, a 5-phase, multi-partner effort that calls for the permanent protection of 4500 acres of privately held timberlands that surround Ashford. The Initiative proposes to secure a forested wildlife corridor that will connect large expanses of protected state and federal lands. The Initiative will also secure the scenic vistas so essential to Ashford's economic well-being. And it will revive working forest lands and manage them for ecologically sustainable timber production, certified by the Forest Stewardship Council, that we hope will anchor a new kind of forest economy.

Meanwhile, earlier this year, with the support of the River Council and the Land Trust, Ashford gained state funding for its performing-arts center. Those public bathrooms are scheduled for completion in 2009. The school is still open. And last July, the Land Trust won \$5.6 million for Phase Two of the Initiative, which—if our negotiations are successful—will permanently protect another 922 acres.



Threatened wetlands on the former estate of Granville Allen, the first Superintendent of Mt. Rainier National Park  
*Photo courtesy of Joe Kane*

## LIVING LANDS PROJECT WELCOMES NEW MANAGER

**D**efenders of Wildlife is pleased to welcome Aimee Weldon as the new project manager for the Living Lands Program. Aimee comes to Defenders from Virginia, where she served as the Virginia Important Bird Areas (IBA) Program Coordinator for the National Audubon Society. In this role, she identified and worked to conserve the most important habitats for Virginia's birds through partnerships with land trusts, community groups, conservation organizations, and state agencies.



*Aimee Weldon*

Aimee completed her graduate work in zoology at North Carolina State University where she studied the effects of habitat fragmentation and wildlife corridors on a variety of plants and animals, with particular emphasis on songbirds. In large part due to a childhood spent exploring the woods, meadows and ponds of her parents' farm in rural Minnesota, Aimee developed a unique passion for conserving and restoring America's private lands and the diverse wildlife that depend on them. She is excited to have the opportunity to work more closely with land trusts to strengthen our collective role in this timely and important effort. Aimee can be reached at 202-772-3265 or via e-mail at [aweldon@defenders.org](mailto:aweldon@defenders.org).

## DEFENDERS SPONSORS 'BIODIVERSITY TRACK' AT RALLY

The Living Lands team again drew a strong turnout at this year's Land Trust Alliance Rally in Denver, Colorado. Over 240 people attended Defenders' six Biodiversity Track sessions. This is the second year in a row that Defenders has sponsored a diverse line-up of speakers to present on a suite of biodiversity topics relevant to land trusts.

Conservation planning was a key focus of the track and several presenters provided practical examples of how they have used the new State Wildlife Action Plans (SWAPs) to guide where and how to focus their conservation efforts (session B01). These plans have led to innovative partnerships that extend beyond state boundaries and leverage valuable partners and funds such as the Upper Midwest Wildlife Habitat Protection Initiative. This initiative connects multiple conservation partners together in strategic land protection coupled with public communication (or 'amplification') within SWAP priority areas across five states.

Mapping and decision support tools are also becoming increasingly easy to



Upper Midwest Wildlife Habitat Protection Initiative priority land protection regions



Fen habitat conservation priorities delineated by the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy for their 2007 Biodiversity Grant project

access and use for land trusts. Such capabilities are fast becoming essential components of a land trust's toolbox, but for many they can be daunting to navigate. Experts from several conservation groups attended this session to describe some of the most useful mapping and landscape prioritization tools available such as NatureServe's Vista, Defenders of Wildlife's new Conservation Registry, and GreenInfo Network's LandtrustGIS (session A01). Land trusts at all levels of technical skill can take advantage of the powerful capabilities of these tools and begin engaging in biodiversity conservation planning.

Such planning exercises invariably inspire interest in restoration and management. The enthusiasm for this topic was clear as Nate Fuller, of the Southwest Michigan Land Conservancy, provided an entertaining presentation on the trials, tribulations, and successes of developing a stewardship program for Mitchell's Satyr butterflies (session C01). Mace Vaughan, of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation, separately described the fascinating world of native bees and the often-

overlooked dual contribution to both farmers and wildlife of conserving bee habitat. (see 'Insects...' p. 4) (session D01). Conservation finance experts described how to fund such restoration projects by learning how to navigate the 'alphabet soup' of government incentive programs such as the Farm Bill (session E01).

The track concluded with the latest updates from the 2007 recipients of the Living Lands Biodiversity grants (session F01). Recipient land trusts are working on specific projects that increase their capacity for biodiversity conservation and that are in-line with their state's Wildlife Action Plan priorities. Funding, generously provided by the Biophilia Foundation, helped to cover the cost of training restoration biologists, assembling community forums to build support for protection of significant lands, conducting baseline biodiversity inventories, and drafting habitat management language for easements to name just a few of their many accomplishments. (See 'Nisqually Land Trust...' p. 1 and 'Washtenaw Land Trust...' p. 5 for highlights of two projects).

If you have a project that fits with goals of the Living Lands program, see page 5 for an opportunity to apply for 2008 Biodiversity Grants.

We enjoyed meeting or reconnecting with all of you. If you missed us at Rally, be sure to catch us again at the upcoming regional LTA conferences.

You can download all of these presentations at: [www.defenders.org/livinglands](http://www.defenders.org/livinglands) under Biodiversity Resources or through RallyNet at: <http://www.lta.org/>.

## INSECTS WORKING ON THE FARM: CONSERVING NATIVE BEE BIODIVERSITY BENEFITS FARMERS AND WILDLIFE

### *Native Bees or Honeybees?*

**M**any farmers need insect pollinators to produce marketable fruits and vegetables such as apples, almonds, berries, cucumbers, melons, squash and sunflowers to name a few. In fact, animal pollinators are required for more than 70 percent of crop species worldwide. In the United States, pollinator-dependent produce, and meat and dairy from animals fed on alfalfa, represent about one in every three bites of food that we consume!

The European honey bee usually gets most of the credit for providing this service; however, recent research is demonstrating that our native bees are also important pollinators, responsible for an estimated \$3 billion in produce each year in the United States. Given the recent declines in the bee-keeping industry due to parasites, disease and Colony Collapse Disorder, the role of native bees in our agricultural economy has taken on a whole new importance.

### *Native Bees Provide Important Services*

Wild native bees already occur on most farms, contribute to current crop yields and can provide an insurance policy for farmers' pollination needs. In fact, when there is enough habitat on or near a farm, native bees can provide all of the pollination needed by certain crops, even those with heavy pollination demands. For example:

- More than 80 different species of native bee have been shown to pollinate berry crops in the East.
- Native bees adequately pollinated 90 percent of the watermelon farms studied in New Jersey and



A leaf-cutter bee, native to New York  
Photo courtesy of American Museum of Natural History

Pennsylvania.

- Native bees can increase cherry tomato production, a crop not visited by honeybees, by nearly 50 percent through specialized pollination techniques
- Hybrid sunflower seed yields have doubled when pollinated by native bees and honey bees, compared to honey bees alone, due to more effective cross-pollination between male and female rows of sunflowers.

### *A More Productive and Sustainable Future*

Clearly, these oft-overlooked animals are an important part of our farming landscape; however, they are often not fully appreciated for the work that they tirelessly perform for free. Modern 'clean' farming techniques remove native pollinator habitat by eliminating the small fields, scrubby hedgerows, lightly grazed pastures and field borders of traditional farms. Needless to say, valuable pollinator services are lost as well. The good news, however, is that through little effort, farmers can provide a haven for native bees that will result in greater crop yields for many crops, possibly lower costs for renting

pollinators, and a pollination insurance policy when honey bees are scarce – not to mention the benefit to other native wildlife species.

Increasing pollinator diversity may be as simple as leaving weedy borders between fields, maintaining standing snags or allowing cover crops to bloom. The results can be significant. In one study, canola farmers who left 30 percent of their land in natural habitat made more money than those who planted their entire field with canola, clearly demonstrating the value of this free resource.

### *A Clear Benefit to Farmers and Wildlife*

The economic benefits of restoring pollinator habitat for farmers are clear, but native wildlife is also an important beneficiary. Pollinator habitat provides important habitat for a variety of other sensitive species that depend on fallow areas such as birds, small mammals, native plants and other insects – including honey bees and others that help manage crop pests. Early successional birds in particular, can use even small areas of suitable habitat. Such enhancements additionally contribute to healthy ecosystems by shading streams, conserving water, reducing erosion and buffering winds.

Pollinator conservation is a true win-win for both farmers and wildlife and an important tool for land trusts interested in protecting both working lands and the diverse wildlife they support. To learn more, visit [www.xerces.org](http://www.xerces.org) and follow the links to 'pollinator conservation'.

*This article was adapted from an article by Mace Vaughan, Conservation Director of the Xerces Society for Invertebrate Conservation.*

## WASHTENAW LAND TRUST PROTECTS ENDANGERED BUTTERFLY HABITAT

The Washtenaw Land Trust, based in Ann Arbor, Michigan, recently protected 123 acres of rare fen wetland habitat with their Living Lands grant. This grant funded the appraisal and survey of a working centennial farm, which is home to the endangered Mitchell's satyr butterfly-along with other species of special concern in Michigan including the Eastern massasauga rattlesnake, Blanding's turtle and the eastern box turtle. The protected woodlot on the property is also one of the few remaining beech-maple climax forests in Michigan. The project involved a partnership with the Washtenaw Land Trust, U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Michigan Natural



Example of fen habitat in Michigan

Photo courtesy of Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Features Inventory, and has resulted in a permanently protected home for the fen and its unique inhabitants in southeast Michigan.

## WE NEED YOUR HELP

Defenders of Wildlife is conducting a study, funded by the National Council on Science and the Environment, to determine the costs of protecting lands through purchase or easement for the purpose of conserving wildlife habitat or biodiversity. The results of this study will help us better understand the level of resources necessary to protect our nation's wildlife habitat and to use this information for public policy purposes.

We are asking for your assistance in estimating transactions and management costs associated with obtaining and maintaining your wildlife conservation properties. We greatly appreciate your assistance in this effort!

Please visit our Web site at [www.defenders.org/livinglands](http://www.defenders.org/livinglands) to fill out the survey.

## CALLING ALL LAND TRUSTS: 2008 BIODIVERSITY GRANT FUNDING AVAILABLE!

The Living Lands project seeks to support and increase the capacity of the land trust community to conserve biodiversity on private lands through financial and technical assistance. Over the long term, we envision a network of land trusts, working with private and public partners, to protect, restore and manage our living lands for biodiversity.

The purpose of our biodiversity grants is to assist land trusts in advancing **one specific project** with significant biodiversity values, such as protecting at-risk habitats or at-risk species. Grant projects should further a land trust's efforts to attain permanent protection and habitat restoration and/or management on a specific property to ensure long-term biodiversity conservation.

We will consider funding applications that include one or more of these types of activities:

1. **Build Capacity:** Develop new skills relevant to biodiversity conservation by working on a current project, while building capacity for future projects. Examples: develop an easement document and/or a conservation plan that includes habitat restoration and management; learn how to do restoration or

management of an at-risk habitat.

2. **Remove a Barrier:** Resolve a short-term, major obstacle in a current project with high biodiversity value. Examples: complete an appraisal; complete a biological survey or wetland delineation; cover debt service on a loan.
3. **Habitat Restoration:** Restore or manage at-risk or significant native habitat. Habitat restoration and protection within working landscapes is of particular interest.

Applicants may request up to \$10,000 to advance a specific project with significant native biodiversity value. A 50% match (1:2) of cash or in-kind contributions is required.

For the full Request for Proposals, Grant Guidelines, and Application, please visit our website at: [www.defenders.org/livinglands](http://www.defenders.org/livinglands) and click on 'Pilot Project Funding' or contact Aimee Weldon at [livinglands@defenders.org](mailto:livinglands@defenders.org) or 202-772-3265.

Applications are due on January 15, 2008.

## COMING SOON: A NEW TOOL FOR LAND TRUSTS

**D**efenders of Wildlife and many partners are currently developing the Conservation Registry, a free Web site that will allow you to map and track your land trust's conservation projects online. Part of the user-friendly data entry uses Google maps technology, so no GIS experience is required. Land trusts, among other organizations, can view their projects in relation to other conservation lands and track actions such as restoration projects, management plans and land acquisitions. Privacy features enable you to decide how much, if any, information to release publicly, allowing you to privately manage



Conservation Registry Homepage

projects in your service area. The Web site can also be used as a valuable public tool to share project information with partners, potential collaborators, and funders. Use the features to identify gaps, create joint projects, and to raise community support for your work.

Public release of the Web site is expected to occur in the winter of 2007/2008 beginning with a pilot in the Pacific Northwest. For more information on background and development, please visit

[www.conservationregistry.org](http://www.conservationregistry.org).

## Living Lands—Helping Land Trusts Conserve Biodiversity

**L**iving Lands is a Defenders of Wildlife project working to increase the capacity of local land trusts to protect, enhance and restore native wildlife habitat and biodiversity.



Defenders of Wildlife is collaborating with the Land Trust Alliance to assist local land trusts through a variety of approaches, including technical and financial assistance.

The Living Lands project assists local land trusts in making strategic decisions about “where to work” to conserve high-priority native habitats and species and “how to work” to use effective land stewardship to restore and manage native habitats for their long-term benefits.

The Living Lands project also involves individual land trusts, state and federal agencies, conservation groups and other groups and individuals that support land trusts in their habitat conservation efforts.

***Vision:** A network of land trusts, working with private and public partners, to protect, restore and manage our living lands for biodiversity.*

***Mission:** To support and increase the capacity of the land trust community to conserve biodiversity on private lands through financial and technical assistance.*

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