



COMOX VALLEY  
**LAND TRUST**

## President's message

The CVLT's annual general meeting is coming up soon and will include presentations on meaningful approaches to lowering greenhouse house gas emissions as well as on natural climate solutions. Please join us via Zoom on Wednesday, June 23 at 7 pm by registering [here](#).

In advance of the AGM, I can report that CVLT enjoyed many successes in 2020/21 despite the uncertainties presented by the pandemic. We doubled the amount of land protected through our Land Protection Program and we doubled the capital invested in our Stewardship Endowment Fund. We formalized our Conservation Science and Research Program. And we created the Comox Valley Natural Climate Solutions Fund that provides us with unrestricted funds to further our important conservation work.



CVLT administers the Comox Valley Conservation Partnership. In 2020/21, this program expanded its involvement in local government policymaking and advocacy for improving environmental conditions in the valley. CVCP was also an active participant in two Municipal Natural Assets Initiative pilot projects affecting the Morrison Creek and Comox Lake watersheds.

The CVCP Education and Outreach Program presented the Comox Valley Watershed Resilience Symposium: Climate Change, Collaboration and Landscape Restoration. CVCP also hosted two online information sessions with Deb Curran and Erin Gray about how to maximize environmental protection through Official Community Plans.

The CVLT board has adopted the Canadian Land Trust Standards and Practices, upon which an anticipated accreditation program would be based. Next steps involve the adoption of policies governing all aspects of the way we work.

Yours in conservation,

Pieter Rutgers, CVLT President



## Do your part for Planet Earth: Support natural climate solutions

Natural climate solutions based on the conservation, restoration, and management of forests, grasslands, and wetlands can deliver up to a third of the global emission reductions needed by 2030. Protecting our local natural areas is an important action we can take to mitigate climate change. That is why CVLT created its [Comox Valley Natural Climate Solutions Fund](#).

To support the fund, we worked with local videographer Scott Bell to create two new videos. You can view these on our [YouTube channel](#) or click [here](#) for the 90-second version or [here](#) for the 30-second one.

CVLT board member David Stapley is a firm believer in the fund. He presented a webinar on natural climate solutions as part of the Cumberland Community Forest Society's Earth Week events and is planning to offer a variation on that presentation during our June 23 annual general meeting.

"Contributions to the fund support the purchase and protection of local natural areas and programs promoting natural climate solutions right here in our own backyard," said David. "What could be more important than that?"

[Please donate now.](#)



## MNAI – Species-at-risk tool

The Comox Valley Conservation Partnership (CVCP) began working with the Municipal Natural Assets Initiative (MNAI) in 2017 when we invited them to introduce the concepts of eco-asset valuations/natural asset management to our community as a part of our 2017 symposium. Since then, MNAI has led the development of three eco-asset valuation projects in the Comox Valley, two of which have relied heavily on our involvement.

The concept is simple. By calculating the economic value of the services provided "for free" to our communities by nature, we can shift our perspectives and begin to recognize the significant role that intact forests, wetlands, soils, and riparian areas play in stormwater management, drinking water supply, coastal flood attenuation and other services. This in turn makes a case for the investment of public works/infrastructure funding to protect, maintain, and enhance natural areas, rather than just park budgets or private conservation financing.



Protecting natural areas because of the services they provide to our communities brings along with it many other tangible co-benefits including the conservation of biodiversity. How can we optimize the protection of natural areas for their environmental services *and* biodiversity values, and what are the most cost-effective tools with the greatest return on investment?



These questions are addressed in a pilot study recently completed by MNAI in partnership with the CVCP in the Morrison Creek Watershed with funding from Environment and Climate Change Canada. The study area was selected because of its rich biodiversity, its importance to rainwater management, and connections to the City of Courtenay's ongoing OCP update process.

The CVCP was pleased to work with MNAI and the amazing expert advisory committee that supported the process. To learn more, check out the completed report [here](#). We know this work will be replicated across Canada in many other communities, and we are incredibly pleased to see our hard work leveraged in this way.

## Going batty for conservation science and research

In 2018 the CVLT and our partners at the Cumberland Community Forest Society co-created the Cumberland Bat Project to determine the presence of bat species at risk and thus bolster land acquisition funding proposals on lands that both organizations were attempting to acquire (in the Morrison Creek Headwaters and Perseverance Creek respectively). Since then, the bat project has snowballed into something much larger and multi-faceted than either partner could have expected. The success of this program has been the catalyst CVLT needed to internally formalize a Conservation Science and Research Program. While our new program remains focused on bat research, over time we expect to grow into other directions as well.

With funding support from the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program, CVLT is conducting ultrasonic acoustic research into the bats of the Puntledge Watershed. This has turned up some exciting results including the discovery of three species not previously reported from Vancouver Island (Fringed Myotis, Mexican Free-tailed Bat, and Eastern Red Bat) and suggestions that the east side of the Comox Valley might be an important migratory stopover during the fall migration of Silver-haired Bats.

CVLT is also hosting the Comox Grid Cell of the North American Bat Monitoring Program. The NABAT program is a continental-scale population monitoring program ranging from



Alaska to Mexico. This work is in partnership with the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy and takes place in June of each year. It also relies on ultrasonic acoustics to record and identify bats to the species-level based on their echolocation calls.

Our enthusiasm for bat research was noted by the BC Community Bat Program who invited CVLT to be the host agency for a newly minted North Island Chapter. We accepted the offer, and through funding from the BC Conservation Foundation and its support from the Habitat Conservation Trust Foundation, are hosting this program again in 2021. Our main objectives are to provide support to landowners with bats in buildings, monitor for the potential spread of White Nose Syndrome into our community and to conduct annual roost counts to monitor the populations of bats, including reproductive success.



Most recently, we have received support from the Royal Bank of Canada Foundation to launch our “Ultrasonic Citizen Science” program. Through this, we are able to provide interested volunteers with their own ultrasonic microphone on a short-term loan, so participants are able to go out to their favourite natural areas anywhere in the North Island region and record the echolocation calls of bats. The data we collect is useful in refining our understanding of which bats are using which habitats, when, and in what relative abundance.

CVLT members and supporters interested in volunteering to help with roost counts or taking one of our microphones out for a nighttime walk are encouraged to reach out to [tim@cvlandtrust.ca](mailto:tim@cvlandtrust.ca) or [northisland@bcbats.ca](mailto:northisland@bcbats.ca). Don't forget to follow the Cumberland Bat Project on Facebook to see our education and outreach opportunities and check out our new Conservation Science and Research webpage at [www.cvlandtrust.ca/science-research](http://www.cvlandtrust.ca/science-research).

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## #mysteryexperiment donation

CVLT was excited to learn in May that we were the recipient of a \$1,000 [#mysteryexperiment](#) donation. TED launched a unique social science experiment in December 2020. It recruited some 300 members of the public via Twitter to take part in [#mysteryexperiment](#).



With funding from an anonymous donor couple in the TED community and under advisement from leading university researchers, TED gave away \$2 million in the form of gifts to select applicants to the experiment—up to \$10,000 per participant. They were allowed to spend the money however they wish: on personal needs or dreams, or by paying some or all of it forward to others. All they had to do is report back to TED how and when they spent the money.

Our benefactor was Comox Valley resident David Buckland (@Davidya\_ca), who gave away \$1,000 a week to various charities. A heartfelt thank you to David for including us.



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The Comox Valley Land Trust is a community-based, not-for-profit organization that works to protect, conserve, and restore the ecologically significant land, waters, and wildlife habitat of the Comox Valley region.

We are members of the Land Trust Alliance of BC and adhere to the Canadian Land Trust's standards and practices. Since our creation in 1999, we have been certified by the Province of British Columbia to hold conservation covenants.

We are a registered charitable organization;  
registration number 872590278 RR 0001.

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation today.

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