

The Inside Story on Saving the Last Great Places in

Oregon



The addition of 6,065 acres at Zumwalt Prairie in Northeast Oregon will bring the property to more than 51 square miles, making it our largest Oregon preserve. © Rick McEwan

Zumwalt Prairie Preserve grows with new addition

A signature Oregon landscape teems with wildlife, including abundant birds of prey, drawing scientists eager to study a remarkable place.

The Nature Conservancy is poised to purchase 6,065 acres from a private owner to expand its Zumwalt Prairie Preserve in Oregon's Northeast corner. Adjacent to the existing preserve, the addition features prime native grasslands, woodlands and creeks in the heart of Zumwalt Prairie.

The property includes most of the headwaters of Pine Creek, with over 13 miles of streams important to endangered runs of Snake River steelhead. It also harbors the last refuge of the Columbian sharp-tailed grouse before it vanished from Wallowa County in the 1940s, and will play a role in efforts to reintroduce

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Special Insert:
 2006 Volunteer Newsletter

Zumwalt Prairie Preserve grows . . .



Phil Shephard, the Conservancy's Northeast Oregon stewardship director (center), discusses conservation issues and strategies with community members and others during an "open house" public tour of Zumwalt Prairie Preserve. Additional tours will be offered this spring. © Rick McEwan

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the once common grassland bird.

In the shadow of the Wallowa Mountains near Enterprise, Zumwalt Prairie is considered the largest intact swath of native bunchgrass prairie in North America. It hosts one of the densest concentrations of nesting birds of prey on the continent, including golden eagles, ferruginous hawks and other raptors that raise their young on abundant ground squirrels thriving among the deep-soiled prairie grasses.

Prolific prairie songbirds include savanna sparrows and meadowlarks, and roaming herds of elk and deer share the expansive prairie with black bear and cougar. Rare plants include the endangered Spalding's catchfly and Wallowa needlegrass.

"The more we learn about Zumwalt Prairie, the more excited we are about contributing to the conservation of such an extraordinarily diverse place," said Russell Hoeflich, the Conservancy's Oregon director.

The Conservancy purchased its original 26,920-acre Zumwalt Prairie Preserve in October 2000. A major fundraising campaign attracted hundreds of donors and raised over \$15 million to cover the purchase price, staffing and facilities costs, plus a stewardship endowment to support long-term management. The signed option to purchase the addition requires raising \$3 million, with the transaction slated to close September 29, 2006.

"We are relying on our generous members and our partners, both public and private, to help us raise the necessary funds to make this critical acquisition a reality," Hoeflich added.

The added 6,065 acres will make Zumwalt Prairie Preserve the largest private nature sanctuary in Oregon, encompassing nearly 33,000 acres, equivalent to more than 51 square miles. The preserve has

become a magnet for hundreds of scientists, volunteers, resource managers and others who visit each year to study the ecology and witness a unique landscape.

In remote Wallowa County, the Conservancy has built ties to the community by enlisting a council of local advisors and by contributing to ecological restoration efforts off the preserve. "When we came, we pledged to be a good neighbor, including paying property taxes, hiring and contracting locally, managing the land well, and contributing to the local economy," said Phil Shephard, the Conservancy's Northeast Oregon stewardship director.

"You are living up to the terms of agreement when we welcomed you to Wallowa County," said county commissioner Ben Boswell at a recent public meeting. "You know, to have a good neighbor you have to be a good neighbor, and everything seems to be working out."

Major stewardship and restoration strategies on the newly acquired property will include biological inventory, weeds management, prescribed fire and stream corridor rehabilitation. The site will also be assessed for its potential as a "grass bank," which could provide grazing for neighboring ranches while their lands are rested or slated for restoration work.

To provide public access, the Conservancy has created a hiking trail on the preserve, and "open house" public tours will be led by Conservancy staff May 20 and June 10 this year. Volunteer work parties are scheduled for May 20-21 and October 14-15.

For more information and a photo gallery, go to nature.org/oregon.

New refuge benefits John Day River salmon

A group of well-intentioned landowners, working with The Nature Conservancy, tribal partners, and an unfortunate toxic spill have converged to boost imperiled runs of salmon and steelhead trout in the Middle Fork John Day River.

The result is a 310-acre conservation easement including four miles of the river and its floodplain, plus 1.5 miles of tributary creeks important to bull trout. Partners will improve habitats on the property by restoring stream channels and controlling invasive species, and by restricting activities that could degrade the river and riparian areas.

The Conservancy will hold the easement in perpetuity. The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation will participate in planning and restoration. Funding for the \$180,000 easement purchase came from mitigation for an acid spill in another tributary of the John Day. Landowners Peter Paquet, Dave Bany, Jack Rust and Tim Boyle, keen to support conservation, agreed to accept significantly less than the appraised value of the easement.



Habitat restoration for Middle Fork John Day River salmon and steelhead trout will increase thanks to a recent conservation easement. © Harold E. Malde

The property is 10 miles downstream from the 1,200-acre Dunstan Homestead Preserve, where the Conservancy has worked to restore floodplain and river habitats since 1990. Another upstream partner on the Middle Fork, the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, is working to restore habitats on 1,900 acres including six miles of river. The John Day River is the longest free-running tributary of the Columbia River and Oregon's largest river system reserved exclusively for wild fish, with no hatcheries.

A \$400,000 endowment for stewardship on the Middle Fork, donated to the Conservancy by Jerry Guthrie in memory of his late wife Betty, will support essential planning, research and restoration needed to keep the salmon returning to the John Day River.

Conserving a rainforest and a way of life

Gift helps preserve landscapes and livelihoods in Canada's vast Great Bear Rainforest

Surrounded by giant cedar and spruce in an empire of salmon, wolves and ghostly white bears, Stephanie Fowler and Irving Levin were awed by possibilities. As Oregonians and part-time residents of Salt Spring Island, they consider the rainforest home. Visiting the Great Bear Rainforest, they saw a chance to help save the largest coastal temperate rainforest in the world – in partnership with people who have lived there 10,000 years.

Spanning 250 miles from north Vancouver Island to Alaska, the Great Bear is born from the dynamic interaction of ocean, mountains, rain and forest. In recent decades, industrial logging and other practices have taken a heavy toll on the land and on the First Nations who depend on its resources.

“The economic challenges facing the First Nations are not distinct from the conservation challenges,” said Stephanie. “That’s why Irving and I decided, through our Renaissance Foundation, to support a great initiative that combines conservation with native business development.”

After a decade of struggle, the British Columbia government and partners have announced a new national park protecting five million acres outright and a process



Irving Levin (left) and Nature Conservancy trustee Stephanie Fowler explore Canada's Great Bear Rainforest by kayak. © Greg Meland

to ensure ecologically sound management of an additional 10 million acres. The Nature Conservancy raised close to \$60 million for the initiative. Fowler and Levin pledged \$1 million to support the Great Bear campaign.

“Dedicated people like Stephanie and Irving are protecting a vast ecosystem while strengthening local communities,” said Russ Hoeflich, the Conservancy’s Oregon director. “This is a model of what conservation must become in the 21st century.”

For more information about the Great Bear Rainforest, visit nature.org/canada.

Your state tax refund can help

Remember you can help save Oregon’s last great places this season by donating some or all of your state tax refund to The Nature Conservancy. Simply follow the instructions on the Oregon Personal Income Tax Forms and inside the instruction booklet. Your refund can be a gift to future generations. Questions? Please call us at 503 802-8100. Thank you!

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Leaving your legacy for future generations



Nature Conservancy volunteer Alisha Bacher at Juniper Hills Preserve. © Adam Bacher

By supporting The Nature Conservancy, you have helped to protect natural areas in Oregon and around the world. Another way to ensure the remaining last great places are preserved is to include The Nature Conservancy in your estate plan.

With a bequest in your will or living trust, you can make a statement about your values and what you wish to leave behind. You can also make the Conservancy a beneficiary of a retirement plan, such as an IRA, 401(k) or 403(b). We provide the expertise to make your gift as simple as possible, while you enjoy the knowledge you are leaving a legacy for future generations to treasure and enjoy.

For more information about including The Nature Conservancy in your estate plan, please contact Wes Milligan, director of planned giving, at 503 802-8100 or wmilligan@tnc.org. You can also fill out this coupon and mail it in the enclosed envelope.

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The Nature Conservancy is a leading international, nonprofit organization that preserves plants, animals and natural communities representing the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive. Since 1951, we've been working with communities, businesses and people like you to protect more than 117 million acres around the world.

The Nature Conservancy in Oregon

Red-tailed hawk
(*Buteo jamaicensis*)

© Rick McEwan



Member Households
22,874

Last Great Places
Society Members
42

Acres protected
484,326

Acres managed
133,445

Preserves and cooperatively
managed areas
48

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503 802-8100 nature.org/oregon Melissa Roy-Hart, Editor.

Last Great Places Society

Members of Oregon's Last Great Places Society, each contributing annual gifts of \$10,000 or more, maintain the Conservancy's capacity to preserve the diversity of life on Earth. We would like to thank the following Last Great Places Society members for their visionary support

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For more information about the Last Great Places Society in Oregon, please contact Cynthia Beckwith, director of donor relations, 503 802-8100.

Eugene high school students help save great places

Since 1999, students of the Rachel Carson Center for Natural Resources at Churchill High School in Eugene

have volunteered 300 hours annually to help restore the southern Willamette Valley's best remaining example of native wet prairie habitat. Alongside teachers Tim Whitley and Helen Haberman, classmates remove invasive plants, thin woody vegetation, and collect and plant native seed at The Nature Conservancy's Willow Creek Preserve.



Students of the Rachel Carson Center in Eugene volunteer annually at the Conservancy's Willow Creek Preserve.

© Matthew Benotsch/TNC

"The consistent dedication exhibited by these young volunteers is an inspiring peek into the future of conservation work," says Willamette Valley stewardship coordinator Matthew Benotsch. "We really can't thank everyone at the Rachel Carson Center enough for the ongoing success of this partnership."

For more information about how you or your team can help save Oregon's last great places, please see our 2006 Volunteer Newsletter, inside.



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