

The Inside Story on Protecting Nature in

Oregon



Spectacularly situated between the oceanfront Carl G. Washburn Memorial State Park and the heavily forested Rock Creek Wilderness in the Siuslaw National Forest, Big Creek's key wildlife habitats are now destined for public ownership instead of a coastal resort. © Paul Englemeyer

Resort to restoration

Coastal property protected from development and destined for public ownership

Paul Englemeyer of the Audubon Society is considered a coastal know-it-all. In a good way. For several decades he, and others, had their sights on a conservation gem: a property known as Big Creek. It was also a developer's dream and zoned for a resort. The Nature Conservancy has tried to buy it before. Twice. Third time's a charm.

Over breakfast with the landowner, Englemeyer learned the owner was again looking to sell, and he passed the word along. Negotiations ensued, and recently the Conservancy succeeded in purchasing the 193-acre coastal property. Big Creek is partly dense forest important for rare species like the marbled murrelet, and partly an open coastal meadow providing critical habitat for the imperiled Oregon silverspot butterfly.

(continued on p. 2)

contents

Resort to restoration	1-2	Hope takes flight	3
Oregon's best idea	2	Kids take a stand for nature	4

Special Insert:

2010 natural history excursions

Oregon's best idea

Dear Friend,

I hope you saw Ken Burns' documentary about our national parks on public television. To call our national parks "America's best idea" seems rather audacious, doesn't it?

Burns makes a powerful case. Creating a system of national parks to conserve wild America was an innovation that changed the face of our country. It also changed our relationship to the land, providing important places where scientific ideas about ecological integrity and the stewardship of wild places could be shaped and tested.

It makes me wonder. How are these same powerful ideas transforming Oregon? Can we envision a future for our state in which the ecosystems that sustain all life are valued and protected for generations to come?

An important part of the answer has to be a dedicated source of funding Oregonians can count on to back up our vision. Funds that will pay to protect and repair habitats, safeguard important natural areas, and create opportunities to bring people close to nature.

Eleven years ago, Oregon voters passed a ballot measure that dedicates 15 percent of the Oregon Lottery to natural areas and parks. It was popular and passed with 67 percent voting in favor. Today these funds are at work restoring habitats, acquiring natural areas, and creating and improving state and local parks. The measure has proven tremendously successful.

The natural area funds, distributed as competitive grants by the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board, have supported critical acquisitions including Zumwalt Prairie Preserve, the Table Rocks near Medford, and coastal Big Creek (*see story*). They're also supporting hundreds of stream restoration and other projects advanced by community-based groups such as watershed councils. The parks funding has helped protect thousands more acres of important habitat.

However, this crucial funding source for parks and natural areas sunsets in 2014 — unless Oregon voters elect to make it permanent. That's why, in the coming months, you'll hear about The Nature Conservancy working with a broad coalition to renew Oregon's dedication of lottery funds via a statewide vote in the fall of 2010.

A secure, healthy future for Oregon's great diversity of life, and a permanent fund to help achieve it — would it be too audacious to call that "Oregon's best idea?" I don't think so. If you'd like to join us in making it happen, please go online to nature.org/VoteNature, or give us a call.



Russell Hoeflich
Vice President and Oregon Director

... Big Creek protected



In addition to habitats critical for coastal coho salmon and the threatened Oregon silverspot butterfly, Big Creek's varied landscape also supports rare species like the marbled murrelet. © Rick McEwan

(continued from p. 1)

Straddling a stream providing key habitat for salmon, the property is spectacularly situated. It lies between the oceanfront Carl G. Washburn Memorial State Park and the heavily forested Rock Creek Wilderness in the Siuslaw National Forest.

About 20 years ago, and 30 miles away from Big Creek, Englemeyer was climbing trees for a research team. From a limb in a coastal old-growth stand, and with trusty binos in hand, he spotted the first known Oregon nest of the endangered secretive seabird — the marbled murrelet.

It's a little bird with a big fan club. According to Englemeyer, the bird can fly up to 60 miles an hour, can dive 120 feet deep to catch fish, and fly to nest sites up to 50 miles from the ocean to feed their young.

"I found myself becoming an advocate for this little seabird. Its life history is so amazing, so connected to the land and sea, and we live all around it," Englemeyer said. "That's part of the reason [Big Creek] has been a long time conservation target for the coastal community."

The marbled murrelet has been spotted there. So have the butterflies.

Named for the silver patches beneath orange and black wings, the Oregon silverspot butterfly once thrived in coastal grasslands along the West Coast. Today there are only four known populations of the species in Oregon.

"[Restoring the site] is going to take work, but we have great partners and the new property provides the opportunity to make a big difference," said Debbie Pickering, the Conservancy's ecologist who's been watching silverspot butterfly populations — and working to expand them — for over 20 years.

The property is destined for state or federal ownership. In the meantime, Pickering and her multi-party team

are crafting management plans to guide partners until the ownership transition. Soon crews will start clearing invasive species, planting native grasses and butterfly nectar plants, and begin stream restoration, too.

The sellers were Vic and Linda Renaghan. Vic Renaghan had dreams of developing what he calls an environmentally friendly, handicapped-accessible resort. But after 31 years of frustrated attempts, he opted for the next best thing, he said. "The only organization I could see, that would recognize my concern for the land and threatened species, and do work I was interested in — minus the development part — was The Nature Conservancy," he said.

Although different than his original intent for the property, Renaghan said he's thrilled with the deal. "The trees will grow in good health, the butterflies will be kept safe, and it just feels like the right thing to do," he said. "I'm just delighted. I really am."

The national and local Audubon societies, Oregon Parks and Recreation Department, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), U.S. Forest Service, Mid-Coast Watersheds Council and Oregon Department of Transportation are key project partners.

The Conservancy purchased the property for \$4.07 million. The cost was partially covered by a \$2 million grant from the Oregon Watershed Enhancement Board and funds from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, private donations and a loan from the Conservancy's internal revolving fund. The USFWS also committed to the project, and the Conservancy and Oregon Parks and Recreation Department will continue seeking funds to repay the loan.

To help protect and restore Big Creek and other ecologically important lands and waters for future generations, go online to nature.org/oregon/support.

Hope takes flight: Oregon silverspot butterflies released at Cascade Head

by Cynthia Beckwith, associate director of philanthropy

A folded wing is all it takes to delay the next step in an Oregon silverspot butterfly's life. It means she's not quite ready to catch the breeze that's blowing across Cascade Head Preserve this afternoon.

But for another, slightly more developed butterfly, the timing is perfect and she floats up, lands on a nearby flower and draws the attention of a male butterfly patiently waiting nearby. The two make an instant connection, and I suddenly realize how fortunate I am to be at Cascade Head today with ecologist Debbie Pickering — particularly since Debbie's still releasing and counting butterflies that have been reared in captivity.

I've been to Cascade Head before, but I've never seen an Oregon silverspot butterfly. This year my timing was perfect.

Even before our group ducked out of sight off the top of the headland to check on the three butterfly cages, we'd seen dozens of silverspots fluttering around as we hiked and lunched atop the coastal headland. Some butterflies were battered and weary while others seemed fresh and spirited. Regardless of their appearance, each one elicited enthusiasm from our group.



A newly emerged Oregon silverspot butterfly rests on its rearing cage at Cascade Head before taking flight across the preserve's coastal grasslands. © Cynthia Beckwith/TNC

As we approached the cages, where pupae have been slowly emerging throughout the last few weeks, there was a palpable energy among the group. We've all seen butterflies, but there's something about seeing a threatened or endangered animal in the wild; the odds are against them, yet as they go about their life, they seem oblivious to the challenges we know they've endured.

As we watched Debbie gently fold back the mesh top on the first cage, I think we all felt privileged to witness these fragile creatures taking a critical step in

their individual and collective life cycle. Some bravely flew straight up into the light wind, while others clung to the mesh hesitantly, appearing to reconsider their decision to leave the safety of the cage. For those of us watching expectantly, the butterflies symbolized our own hopes that fragile ecosystems and species, with a little help from people, can endure.

Go online to nature.org/oregon for extended coverage of the Conservancy's work with Oregon silverspot butterflies, including a slideshow of Cynthia's butterfly release photos and a video about the captive rearing program.

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To reduce our impact on the environment, The Nature Conservancy now offers an eco-friendly delivery option that enables you to receive many Conservancy publications via e-mail, including this Oregon newsletter.

To sign up, submit an online form today at support.nature.org/OregonNews — and please accept our thanks for everything you do to help preserve life on Earth.

Give to conservation in ways that benefit you, too



Upper Table Rock in southwestern Oregon © Rick McEwan

The Nature Conservancy offers you a number of ways to help ensure our natural world will be protected for future generations, while also creating benefits for you. Here are some tax-wise options for you to consider:

Gifts of Stock: By transferring long-term appreciated securities to The Nature Conservancy, you qualify for an income tax deduction for their full fair market value and don't pay capital gains tax.

Gifts of Real Estate: The Nature Conservancy accepts two types of real estate: land you would like to see protected and real estate you permit us to sell, with the proceeds going to support our work. These gifts may provide a charitable income tax deduction and savings on capital gains tax, while eliminating the time and effort of

maintaining and selling the property. Real estate gifts can take several weeks to process, however, so plan accordingly for a 2009 gift. Minimum gift \$100,000.

Gifts that Provide Income: The Nature Conservancy offers a variety of gift plans that pay you and/or your loved ones an income for remaining lifetimes. You may also receive an immediate income tax deduction and tax-free income. Minimum age 50, minimum gift \$5,000.

For more information about any of these gift options, please contact Wes Milligan, director of planned giving, at 503 802-8100 or wmilligan@tnc.org. You can also [complete and submit this inquiry form](#), and learn more at the Conservancy's planned giving Web site, nature.org/legacy.

The Nature Conservancy cannot render tax or legal advice. Please consult with your professional advisor before making a charitable gift. PORPM091007001

The mission of The Nature Conservancy is to preserve the plants, animals and natural communities that represent the diversity of life on Earth by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

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

Last Great Places Society

We extend our deep appreciation to members of Oregon's Last Great Places Society — and to others listed here who have contributed gifts of \$10,000 or more since August, 2008 — for maintaining The Nature Conservancy's capacity to preserve the diversity of life on Earth.

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* of The Oregon Community Foundation

Kids take a stand for nature

On a warm afternoon last spring, young friends Henry Welt (*right*) and Nadia Schwartz, both 5 years-old, worked hard to help protect nature in their own backyard and beyond. They set up a lemonade stand and, charging 25 cents for each big red cup, decided to donate proceeds to The Nature Conservancy. Within a couple hours, they had \$17.25 in a jar. Nadia was in charge of taking the money.



Henry always tells his mother that “we need more nature,” so donating proceeds to the Conservancy seemed like a natural fit for the young entrepreneurs, she said. Following the fundraising effort, his mother, Kecia Welt, took Henry to Cascade Head Preserve on the Oregon Coast. He declared it the most beautiful place he'd ever seen.

To a round of applause, the two suddenly-shy kids presented their earnings at a recent staff meeting. They then filled out membership forms in careful, crooked handwriting before skipping outside.

For more information about how you or your team can help protect Oregon's ecologically important lands and waters, [go online to nature.org/oregon/volunteer](http://nature.org/oregon/volunteer).