

Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team Annual Report 2011-2012

Our unique strategy

GOERT's recovery planning approach considers ecosystems as well as individual species at risk. Recovery planning in Canada has historically taken a species-by-species approach, but national initiatives now recognize the importance of incorporating a wider scope in some circumstances.

The ecosystem-based approach makes sense in this case, as so many species at risk occur in the same geographical area in Garry Oak and associated ecosystems.

Like an ecosystem

Like an ecosystem, GOERT functions through relationships. Thanks to the dedicated work of individuals from the community, non-profit groups, businesses, and all levels of government, we have achieved much toward protecting Garry Oak ecosystems and species at risk for the future.

In 2011-12, more than 80 individuals contributed their time and expertise to the Recovery Team or one of its working groups.



Juvenile
Western
Bluebird at
Cowichan
Garry Oak
Preserve,
spring 2012.
Photo by Bill
Pennell

2011-2012: A Year of Partnerships!

A snapshot of our accomplishments involving private and non-profit partners

23 different agencies contributed cash and in-kind support to the 2011-12 stewardship efforts, allowing GOERT to continue species at risk monitoring and restoration activities at eight key sites: Harling Point, Camas Hill, Westridge Strata, Harewood Plains, Playfair Park, Leefield Road, Nanaimo Estuary, Gordon Head, and Trial Island.

More than 45 landowners with known or suspected occurrences of species at risk on their properties were contacted by GOERT staff and provided with guidance and resources to help them contribute to stewardship efforts.

We contributed to the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the Fairwinds Lakes District in Nanoose Bay, which contains one of GOERT's priority sites, resulting in the securement of significant portions of the Garry Oak trees and habitat.

GOERT joined other partners in contributing to the development of a multi-stakeholder strategy to protect vulnerable Coastal Douglas-fir and associated ecosystems.

Four years of collaboration among agencies, organizations, academic institutions, and other individuals resulted in the launch of our highly-anticipated restoration guide, *Restoring British Columbia's Garry Oak Ecosystems: Principles and Practices*.

GOERT held discussions and provided species at risk occurrence and protection information to developers in the Nanaimo, Metchosin, Saturna Island, and Port Alberni areas.

A generous grant from the Victoria Natural History Society gave us the support we needed to launch the pilot year and make the bluebird re-introduction project a reality! We are grateful to all who contributed to the first year of *Bring Back the Bluebirds*.

Recovery goals

Long-term goals

Establish a network of Garry oak and associated ecosystem sites and landscape linkages

Improve and secure the status of all species at risk in Garry oak and associated ecosystems in Canada so that they are no longer at risk of extinction

Short-term objectives

Develop the information base necessary for ecosystem and species recovery

Protect and manage sites and species at risk to minimize immediate losses of ecosystems and species

Motivate public and private protection and stewardship activities by supplying critical information to appropriate audiences

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A snapshot of our accomplishments involving private and non-profit partners

GOERT worked with District of Saanich staff to protect a population of Threatened Purple Sanicle from trampling in Glencoe Cove Kwatsech Park through signage and fencing.

With assistance from Parks Canada Agency and Environment Canada, we brought together provincial and federal partners, local governments and First Nations, for three successful dialogue sessions about species at risk and ecosystem recovery across jurisdictional boundaries.

We worked with town councilors and the staff of View Royal to create a restoration plan for a new natural area park containing a Garry Oak woodland.

We participated in the grand opening of Moorecroft Regional Park and look forward to working with the Regional District of Nanaimo to create a recovery plan for the Garry Oak habitat there.

In response to GOERT's recommendations, the Town of Comox added a policy to the Implementation Strategy of their Official Community Plan to undertake a comprehensive environmental survey and mapping of coastal sand dunes in con-

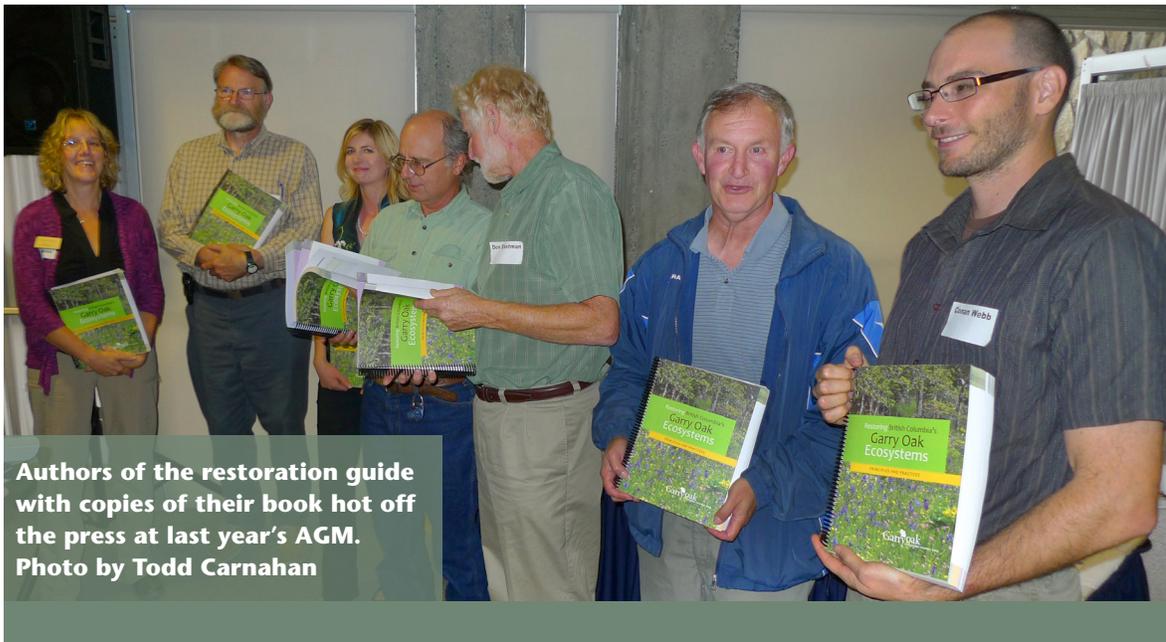
junction with the Comox Valley Regional District. The intention is to create a Development Permit Area to strengthen protection for Garry Oak and other ecosystems on dune substrates across both jurisdictions.

We discussed the impact of various development proposals on species at risk with the District of Saanich. GOERT staff and members of our RIGs actively participate in the Environmentally Sensitive Area mapping technical advisory group in Saanich.

We worked with the City of Courtenay and a potential developer to protect Vanier Grove, a seasonally wet, deep-soil Garry Oak-Sitka Spruce plant association at the northern extent of Garry Oak range. The site is now for sale and we hope to assist the City and local organizations in its acquisition.

GOERT Staff 2011-2012

- Shyanne Smith, replaced by Rebecca Mersereau, *Executive Director*
- Betsy Rose, *Financial Administrator*
- Carolyn Masson, *Communications Coordinator*
- Chris Junck, *Species at Risk Outreach Specialist*
- Holly Clermont, *Conservation Specialist*
- Kathryn Martell, *Conservation Specialist*
- Todd Kohler, *Species at Risk Recovery Planner*



Authors of the restoration guide with copies of their book hot off the press at last year's AGM. Photo by Todd Carnahan

Thank you to all our supporters

Government

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Parks Canada Agency
Town of View Royal

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Many thanks

to all the individual donors & members who provide much-needed and valued support. Your contributions are critical to our success.

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Director at Large

Brian Reader, replaced
by Conan Webb
Recovery Team Chair

More highlights

We prepared three multi-species action plans to guide recovery activities for these ecosystems: maritime meadows, vernal pools, and Garry Oak woodlands.

Our annual Research Colloquium, which featured presentations and poster displays on Garry Oak ecosystems, brought more than 100 students, academics, and practitioners together to share their interests and findings.

GOERT, The Province of BC, and The Nature Trust of BC partnered to develop a restoration plan to enhance portions of the Nanaimo River Estuary Conservation Area to create more suitable habitat for Endangered Coastal Vesper Sparrows.

We provided important information about the status and protection of Garry Oak ecosystems and species at more than 20 events.

GOERT volunteers put in more than 600 person-days, contributing to in-kind assistance valued at more than \$525,000 in 2011-12. Thank you!

New & upcoming resources

Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Garry Oak ecosystems, **Model Bylaws**, and **Site Records** for priority sites will be launched at a series of workshops in November.

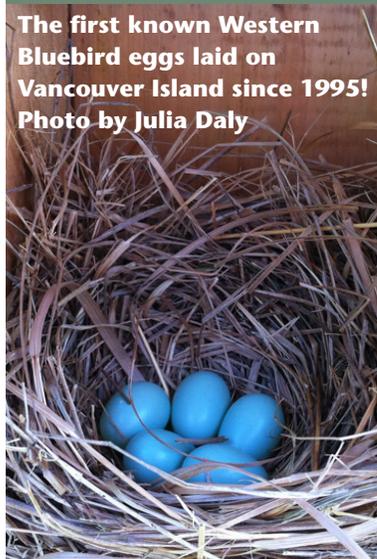
In our **species at risk field manual**, these species have been added or updated: Victoria's Owl-clover, Dense Spike-primrose, Brook Spike-primrose, Common Bluecup, Nuttall's Quillwort, Rayless Goldfields, Coast Microseris, Rosy Owl-clover, Fragrant Popcornflower, Water-plantain Buttercup, and Audouin's Night-stalking Tiger Beetle.

Nine inserts have been added to our **invasive species field manual**: Small Hop-clover, Purple Dead-nettle, Subterranean Clover, Common Catchfly, Winter Moth, Gypsy Moth, Cyclamen, Tree of Heaven, and Common St. Johnswort & Aaron's Beard.

Our comprehensive restoration guide, **Restoring British Columbia's Garry Oak Ecosystems: Principles and Practices**, is available online at www.goert.ca/restoration. Print copies will be available again in the future.

What's Next? Some of GOERT's projects for 2012-2013

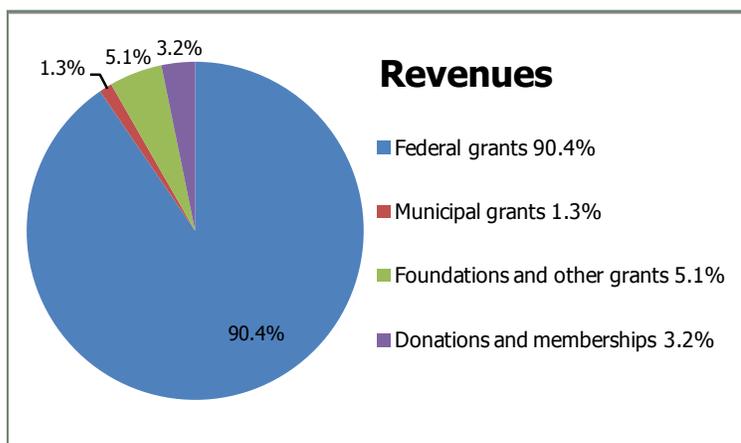
The first known Western Bluebird eggs laid on Vancouver Island since 1995!
Photo by Julia Daly



We have launched an exciting and ambitious five-year project to re-introduce Western Bluebirds to their historical range on Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. Through the *Bring Back the Bluebirds* project we hope to re-establish a self-sustaining breeding population and raise public awareness of species at risk in Garry Oak ecosystems.

GOERT and partners are working toward finalizing and endorsing the updated *National Recovery Strategy for Garry Oak and Associated Ecosystems and their Associated Species at Risk* in order to coordinate and direct the conservation efforts of all stakeholders over the coming years.

We will be taking several new resources on the road and launching them at workshops for local government planners and managers: a suite of best management practices for working in and around Garry Oak ecosystems, a model bylaw document to help government agencies enact protection for Garry Oak species and ecosystems, and comprehensive records of priority sites requiring protection and restoration.



Special thanks to members who served on the Recovery Team, RIGs, and Steering Committees in 2011-2012:

Aimee Pelletier	Jennifer Psyllakis	Nick Page
Andrea Schiller	Jenny Balke	Nicole Kroeker
Brad Hawkes	Jessica Hellmann	Patrick Lilley
Brenda Beckwith	John Cooper	Peter Arcese
Brenda Costanzo	John Dick	Raj Prasad
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