



ISLANDS TRUST FUND

News Release

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December 18, 2012

2012-04-ITF

NORTH PENDER COUPLE DONATE NIGHTHAWK HILL CONSERVATION COVENANT

VICTORIA — This holiday season, there is good reason to celebrate on North Pender Island. Andy Nowak and Mary Reher have donated a conservation covenant through the Islands Trust Fund's NAPTEP program, a significant gift that permanently protects an arbutus-lined ridge and mossy forest on their island property. The sanctuary and beauty of Nighthawk Hill Conservation Covenant will remain forever for not just Andy, Mary, and any future owners, but also for the unique species the covenant is named for and whose habitat it protects.

The property is named for the Common Nighthawk which in spite of its name is federally listed as a threatened species due to the increasing use of pesticides and dwindling habitat. Andy and Mary discovered a nesting Nighthawk camouflaged in the bushes close to their home and were careful to give the mother space to raise her young. Since then, the Nighthawks have returned annually, soaring along the ridge above the couple's home, greeting Andy and Mary at dusk with their wild calls. "It's their hill – Nighthawk Hill," said Mary. "We just happen to be here to share their home."

In deciding to protect their land, Andy and Mary considered the difference between a land steward and a landowner. They are often reminded of the fragility of island ecosystems; that humans can destroy so much in the blink of an eye. Thankful of their good fortune in finding their property when they did, and having benefited from the peace and memories the land has given them, Andy and Mary felt they wanted to give something back.

"Ownership of this land is just an illusion," said Mary. "We're all just passing through, while the nature around us keeps going. As stewards, we should take as little as possible. By protecting this land with a covenant, we feel like we're giving back a little piece to the 'Creator'. It's a practice in generosity and thinking bigger than just ourselves."

"The biggest reward of the covenant to me is the knowledge that this beauty I see every day out the window will remain forever," said Andy. "It might change with succession as ecosystems do, but it will never change by the hands of a human being."

The conservation covenant protects the natural ecosystems of the couple's property by restricting what they and future owners can do on the undeveloped portion, such as removing native plants, using pesticides, dumping garbage or building in the covenant area. By registering their covenant through the Islands Trust Fund's NAPTEP program (the Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program), Andy and Mary, and any future landowners receive an annual 65% reduction in property taxes on the covenanted portion of the land. The couple received assistance through the Nancy Waxler Morrison Biodiversity Protection Legacy Fund with most of the costs of the covenant. The Pender Islands Conservancy Association co-holds the covenant with the Islands Trust Fund.

"The Pender Islands are a hub of grassroots conservation activity, where ecosystems and the broader community are the benefactors of the incredible work of the local conservancy (PICA) and very generous donors through the legacy fund left by Nancy Waxler Morrison," said Tony Law, Chair of the Trust Fund

"A Conservancy for Canada's Islands in the Salish Sea"

Bowen, Denman, Hornby, Gabriola, Galiano, Gambier, Lasqueti, Mayne, N. Pender, Salt Spring, Saturna, S. Pender, Thetis

Board. “The registration of Nighthawk Hill Covenant on Andy and Mary’s property marks the 14th conservation covenant on North Pender Island. Pender Islanders have demonstrated an astounding ability and resolve to protect the ecosystems of their islands while maintaining private land ownership. Their work here is a model for the rest of the islands.”

The Islands Trust Fund is a regional conservancy, preserving landscapes of Canada’s islands in the Salish Sea. To learn more about how the Islands Trust Fund works with island landowners to conserve land and about the NAPTEP program, please contact the Islands Trust Fund at 250-405-5186 (Victoria) or toll free through Enquiry BC at 1-800-663-7867 (or 604-660-2421 in Vancouver), or visit them online at <http://www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/>.

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