

Summer 2024 Internship Opportunity

TITLE

Community-Engaged Care for Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species in an Urban Nature Park

Organization

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Society

Project Background & Overview

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Society (a charitable, non-profit) stewards 160+ acres of wetland and Garry Oak meadow in critical migratory bird habitat with roughly 10% of the municipality's rare, threatened, and endangered species represented on site. (For example, Western Painted Turtles and Yellow Montane Violets).

We have 8K+ visitors to our educational Nature House and 70K+ site visitors each year given our location as an accessible urban greenspace in Victoria, BC bordered by the Patricia Bay Highway 17, three bus stops and a main cycling route (Lochside Trail) -- just 6km north of the city's downtown core.

In a normal year, we have 17K youth and other learners in our educational programming. We have been a leader in teaching environmental stewardship and restoration for nearly 50 years (incorporated in 1975), with many of our programs being adopted by other local organizations and the municipal government. We have about 250 volunteers that support our activities with a volunteer value in 2022 of \$154K. We are looking for ways to increase our impact, as the city densifies.

Important Overarching Issues:

Currently, municipal governments are responding to provincial targets to increase access to housing. Human density increases are planned within the so-called "Urban Containment Boundary" a system designed to prevent sprawl, and make use of existing transit infrastructure. However, there are tensions between increasing human pressures where they overlap with sensitive habitats and/or species that exist within this boundary. This issue is playing out globally and has far-reaching implications for humanity, both with respect to biodiversity conservation and our future resilience within a changing climate.

Climate Action and Sustainability:

This project will help to address how city dwellers might be galvanized for increased beneficial nature engagement and improved care for non-human species.

Project Contributions to Large Sustainability Issues:

Ensuring that there is ready access to and possibility for engagement with high-integrity nature for marginalized people within cities is an equity issue. As the majority of humanity now lives in cities this issue is of critical concern.

Project Description

Purpose:

To lay foundations for understanding how contemporary communities can best support habitat for rare, threatened and endangered species in the urban context.

Why:

In 2023, 57% of the world's population lives in cities. By 2050, this number will rise to 7 of 10 people in cities.* It is a pressing issue to understand how we might nourish ourselves and our non-human kin within the current constraints of urban life, or to begin to reimagine more holistic ways to interface with nature in our modern context.

How:

Through literature review and possibly interviews with visitors to Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

When:

May – August 2024

* <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/urbandevelopment/overview>

Project Scope

We are looking for a scholar to conduct a meta-analysis of practices from other urban parks (geographically and / or throughout history) that have protected rare, threatened and endangered species on their sites. We are particularly interested in any commentary on this work through the lenses of reconciliation and racial and economic equity.

Possible Key Questions:

1. What promotes understanding and awareness of the importance of nature across cultures? Class status? Other?
2. Are there examples from other countries or throughout history where particular species have been remarkably well-cared for within cities? What aided or was particularly beneficial in those instances? Are those practices transferable or scalable? Could they be employed within the context of Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary?
3. What (if any) intersectional tensions exist between Indigenous and various newcomer worldviews with respect to nature?
4. How is environmental conservation work best done to dismantle inequity and promote belonging?

Deliverables

Deliverables include a short presentation to the Team (Powerpoint or other) and a final report.

Time Commitment

Possible Project Timeline:

May 1 – acquainting to place and research

May 15 – acquainting to place and research

June 1 – research

June 15 – research

July 1 – research – outline report

July 15 – draft report and short (10min) presentation to staff team

Aug 1 – revisions and final report

Aug 15 – final report

We anticipate that this project will take ~250h to complete; 15.6h for each of the 16 weeks, however this could be laid out asynchronously to accommodate a flexible work arrangement.

Required/Preferred Skills and Background

- Excellent research and writing skills
- Demonstrated interest in sustainability
- Experience conducting stakeholder engagement events, including facilitation skills, is an asset
- Familiarity with research methodologies and survey techniques
- Community engagement experience
- Strong analytical skills
- Ability to work independently
- Deadline oriented
- Project management and organizational skills
- Demonstrated experience in research data synthesis
- Comfortable interacting with strangers to conduct public/in person surveys
- Criminal Record Check required *[note that the project partner is responsible for reimbursing the successful candidate's reasonable expenses to get a criminal record check done]*

Additional Information

The description above represents generally what we are seeking for this position, however we are open to applicants who may have other skills to share. We encourage applicants with various backgrounds to apply.

UVic Sustainability Scholars Program

All current UVic graduate students are invited to apply for an impactful sustainability research project. Sustainability Scholars Program internships are designed and mentored by partner organizations and paid at a rate of \$30.87 per hour (after deductions) for 250 hours from May 1 to Aug 15. Explore details on our [website](#) and review eligibility criteria before applying. Contact Laurel Currie, Program Manager, with any questions: sustainability-scholars@uvic.ca.
