A time for New Beginnings

As the world faces unknowns and sequesters, Oregon’s wetlands, estuaries and waterways endure. They are working hard, despite challenges, to provide clean, diverse, healthy habitats for our salmon, beaver, shellfish, birds, and for us. Serving as natural, purifying filters and respirators, they foster life above, below, around, and within. They nurture microorganisms, grasses, and nutrient-rich sediment. Their health supports our health. Join us in conserving and restoring these critical lands.

The Wetlands Conservancy
To The Wetlands Conservancy Friends and Supporters,

Happy May–American Wetlands Month! How fitting that my first day as the Executive Director of The Wetlands Conservancy was May 1st. I write this to you all only a few days into my tenure with The Wetlands Conservancy, and already I am so grateful for the opportunity to lead this amazing organization into the next chapter!

Many friends of mine reacted with surprise when they learned that I was going to transition jobs in the middle of a global pandemic. But I thought, what better time for change, the whole world is changing. I know the future is uncertain, and we don’t know what the “new normal” looks like, but I am hopeful that some of the change we see results in more people coming together to protect the things they love. We know that our precious wetlands and wild places have been under threat, and now in this time of incredible change, we must prioritize these places and ensure they are here for decades to come.

I have a lot to learn still about wetlands ecology and this strong community I am now a part of. I look forward to connecting with you all, our partners, donors and volunteers, in the coming weeks and months, virtually or otherwise. The incredible team that is the Wetlands Conservancy staff and board have welcomed me with open arms and are busy helping me absorb all the amazing knowledge they possess. They have started work on an updated strategic plan, and I look forward to wrapping that up and sharing that with you all very soon.

I grew up in upstate New York, and my father loved nothing more than being outside in the woods. From him, I learned at a young age that these places are vital to our own lives, and that we have a duty to protect and steward them. I have spent the past 20 years of my career engaging kids and adults with their natural landscapes, believing that to care about a place one must first experience it. Through this work, I was exposed to wetlands in the high desert, coast, and valleys.

I am thrilled to bring my leadership and operations skills to an organization directly conserving and managing these important natural resources.

All the best,

KATIE RYAN, Executive Director
Wetland restoration involves a wide range of interest groups and constituencies who may have different or opposing aims. Can you share some of the techniques you have used to reach common ground to move projects forward? When working with diverse groups, I find the most useful technique is to find common ground and move forward from there. The landscapes we live, work, and play in are powerful, and everyone who spends time in them becomes connected to them in some way. That is the common thread we all share.

Among our organization’s core values is a focus on diversity, equity and inclusion in environmental conservation. As an executive director, how do you move an organization forward to be more inclusive and participatory? Equity is one of the most important issues to focus on today, and not one that is easily solved. It really requires a shift in organizational culture and priorities. I will work to be sure there are training and growth opportunities available for board and staff throughout this journey. And truly at the heart of this work is partnerships with people, getting to know the people who are connected to and care about wetlands, and learning how they want to interact with those places and our organization.

What are a few of your personal favorite wetlands in Oregon? Tough question! The wetlands of the Malheur National Wildlife Refuge and of the Hart Mountain National Wildlife Refuge is where I first learned to “bird” and really fell in love with the high desert. I also love the coastal wetlands and estuaries, and have spent time teaching students in the estuaries surrounding Newport and Tillamook. And, ever since my first visit to see the Bald Eagle migration 20 years ago, the Klamath Basin wetlands have held a special place in my heart.

This Q&A was conducted by Pat Kaczmarek, The Wetlands Conservancy’s new Marketing/Development Manager. Pat joined The Wetlands Conservancy in April and is managing communications and fundraising efforts for the organization. Pat has an extensive background working with Oregon non-profits in both the environmental and social services fields. You can contact Pat at patkaczmarek@wetlandsconservancy.org, or give her a call at 503.975.7742.
Founded in 1991 by the Environmental Protection Agency, May marks the annual observance of the ecological, environmental and economic importance of wetlands. It is a time to both celebrate one of nature’s most productive ecosystems and recognize the myriad, wonderful ways wetlands enrich the environment and our lives. Here are a few reasons why wetlands matter.

**Wetlands are to the environment what your kidneys are to your body.**

Wetlands remove excess nutrients, toxic substances, and sediment from water that flows through them, helping to improve downstream water quality and the overall health of waters in our communities.

Natural wetlands have also been effective in removing harmful contaminants—such as pesticides, harmful metals and landfill leachates—and excessive stormwater runoff. So effective at improving water quality, wetlands and estuaries have been referred to as the “kidneys of a watershed.”

**They provide important habitat for wildlife.**

Depending on where you live, you might find beavers, otters, cougar, deer, bats, snakes, turtles, frogs, newts and salamanders, all kinds of birds and many types of fish, shellfish, insects, and more!

**Wetlands come in all shapes and sizes**

Coastal and inland—both salt and freshwater—wetlands are in all 50 states. They include marshes, bogs, estuaries, swamps, mangroves, mudflats, peatlands, mires, ponds, fens, deltas, billabongs (oxbow lakes), lagoons, and floodplains.

In Oregon, we have over 954,000 acres of wetlands and just over half of them are protected—conserved by land trusts, federal or state government, tribes or are private owned.

**They are under attack**

Wetlands face numerous challenges—global warming, sea level rise, drought, species declines, increasing storm severity, energy and infrastructure development, driving the need for conservation. Recent federal rollbacks of the Clean Water Act expose over 166,000 acres of Oregon wetlands to development, pollution and misuse.

**They call us to listen, watch, learn & celebrate!**

Even now, when access to some wetlands may be limited, there are many ways you can learn more about the magnificence of these natural areas: Learn more about Oregon’s wetlands—read articles and watch videos here, bit.ly/WetlandsResources. Visit a wetland close to you—take our Passport Challenge & share your experiences with a photo!

**WETLANDS MATTER! CELEBRATE!**

www.wetlandsconservancy.org
AMERICAN WETLANDS MONTH

5th Annual Photo Contest

May is the month to recognize and celebrate the wonderful ways wetlands enrich the environment. They provide rich habitat for wildlife. They are places in which many animals and birds build nests and raise their young. Migrating birds stop-over in wetlands to rest and to feed. In May, wetlands are alive with new animal and plant growth. Now is a great time to visit—and don’t forget your camera!

American Wetlands Month reminds us to appreciate our neighborhoods, communities and state. Even while sheltering at home, photographers find ways to capture the beauty of nature. This year we will feature “close to home” nature photography as one of our categories. Take a moment to find the beauty and diversity close to home, or in an Oregon wetland environment.

May 1–31

Photo Contest Categories

- Things with Wings
- Botanical Beauties
- Views & Vistas
- Terrestrial & Aquatic Life
- Close to Home

This year, we hope you can also help The Wetlands Conservancy with a donation along with your photo submission! Learn more at https://wetlandsconservancy.org/photo-contest-2020

Previous photo contest winners: top right, Lake-in-the-Dunes, Bill Marshall; right, White-faced Ibis, Kay Scheuer Steele; bottom left, Lila McCombs.

The 2020 Wetlands Passport Challenge

To help you get out enjoying and photographing nature this May, we are announcing the 2020 Wetlands Passport Challenge. Did you know, the Portland metro area has some of the best urban wetlands in America? So get out there and explore them during American Wetlands Month. Visit our website to see a list of 6 great wetlands in the Portland area that are currently open to the public. We have information on where to walk, park, and view wildlife. Download our Wetland Passport for your kids to fill out during your visit, they may make you visit more than one to fill their passport with stamps. But this year, we are approving our Wetland Ambassador Certificate if you can get to just one wetland on the passport this month. If you have not been out exploring this spring, most area parks and trails are open. However, nature centers and restrooms are closed. So plan in advance, and please observe social distancing. Be kind to other hikers by using a mask when passing on the trail. Download the 2020 Passport at: http://wetlandsconservancy.org/stewardship/wetlandmonth/

A donation to support The Wetlands Conservancy’s programs is greatly appreciated.
Inside a Community Scientist Volunteer Training Program

Have you ever seen photos of our volunteers donning waders, holding giant white spoons or walking sticks and wondered...what on Earth are they doing? They’re probably searching for beaver dams or peeking at frog eggs (using those spoons). Have you seen their ear-to-ear smiles while stuck in waist-deep mud or walking through an icy pond and wondered if you would enjoy being in their shoes, or, waders?

Our community science program has grown immensely in the past 7 years, and there’s a good reason why people get hooked on the wader-lifestyle. Community science is a way for people to explore local wildlife, learn new skills, contribute to data, and see natural areas that are often off-limits to the general public.

First step: sitting on a chair in a warm room

We always start our programs with an indoor training to let folks know what we’re asking them to do, why it’s important to us, and how it will influence the work being done to improve our natural areas. Veteran volunteers add their wisdom; new recruits are free to ask questions or just sit and listen. With guaranteed social distancing, discuss your interests with our staff.

Second step: guided field work

Once you’re ready to try on your first pair of waders, you’ll throw a few handfuls of socks into your backpack, then a change of clothes, and meet our staff at a wetland. We take things slow, because that’s how we gather good data. If there’s a leaky wader or a new obstacle we may leave a site early, or adapt our plans. Usually, the biggest distractions are the plants and wildlife.

Third step: getting out on your own

Community science work is generally focused on one species or task, but the things you see and the people you’ll meet will ignite your curiosity and produce many more questions than answers. If you’re someone who wants more time to explore, we can set you up to visit wetlands without The Wetlands Conservancy staff (but you’ll generally need a safety-partner)! As a small staff, we greatly appreciate having more eyes and ears in the wetlands.

Support our community science work with a donation to The Wetlands Conservancy at www.wetlandsconservancy.org/give.

MARGOT MONTI
2020 Community Science Volunteer

www.wetlandsconservancy.org
Have you heard about the Dragonfly Migration Partnership?

If you love water, streams and wetlands, you have taken the first steps toward knowing about dragonflies, and amphibian eggs masses. And, if you are lucky, maybe you have actually seen a Cardinal Meadowhawk dragonfly or maybe a Pacific Giant Salamander. But today, I want to turn you on to a partnership that I am exploring – the Dragonfly Migration Partnership (DMP).

Are you aware that some dragonflies actually migrate like Neotropical songbirds and Monarch butterflies? A couple of years ago, I was on a salt spray meadow on the coast scoping out Oregon Silverspot butterflies. And then, like honking geese heading to Alaska to their breeding grounds in their awesome “capital V” formation, I actually observed thousands of dragonflies in visible migration— they were heading south.

Now, you can join a project at your local wetlands to study how dragonflies make these amazing rigorous, multi-generational migrations. If you’re lucky, and engage in the dragonfly migration partnership, maybe you will see them heading south in the future or returning to your local wetland after their winter stay in Central America. Dragonfly Pond Watch is a volunteer-based program of the Migratory Dragonfly Partnership (MDP). The organization investigates the annual movements of five major migratory dragonfly species in North America: Common Green Darner, Black Saddlebags, Wandering Glider, Spot-winged Glider, and Variegated Meadowhawk. You can find out more about this community science project at: http://www.migratorydragonflypartnership.org/index/dragonflyPondWatch

Interested in other wetland projects? The Wetlands Conservancy is conducting egg mass surveys to detect amphibian species viability and surveying for beaver activity in a variety of watersheds. Look for these opportunities in the future on our website at www.wetlandsconservancy.org.

Egg mass surveys, beaver monitoring, and dragonfly studies are a few of the future volunteer opportunities at The Wetlands Conservancy. Join us!
Invest in Oregon’s Greatest Wetlands during these uncertain times with a gift to the Wetlands Conservancy. We cannot protect these lands without your help.

Visit www.wetlandsconservancy.org
or call 503.227.0778