

SPRING 2020 | Vol. 28, No. 1

# InLandNEWS



Where does your water  
come from? p.6

Photo by Gerrit Vyn Photography

# RESTORING: Gleason's Marsh

By Catherine Henze, Volunteer

On the surface, Gleason's Marsh, a 252-acre property west of Cataldo, Idaho, seems to provide ideal habitat for ducks, geese, swans, Great Blue Herons, widgeons, and many other waterfowl. It is teeming with wildlife thanks to its plentiful wetlands, lush grasses, and shrubs for nesting cover. Home to everything from mallards to moose, it has seemed an ideal stopover for millennia for migrating birds, who rely on it to rest and feed as they go along the Coeur d'Alene River corridor and in some cases to their Arctic nesting grounds.

The property, adjacent to state wildlife lands to the north and south, is far from isolated. The heavily used, paved Trail of the Coeur d'Alenes goes right by it, and users can stop at the Black Rock Trailhead to peer onto the property. Moreover, drivers can glimpse it from Highway 3, where 1400 cars pass per day. I visited the Coeur d'Alene river corridor on a cold, crisp February afternoon, and was delighted by a cacophony of birds in the basin. Overhead, determined geese in V formations were framed by a brilliant blue sky. This seemingly idyllic setting, however, harbors a toxic secret.

Tragically, many of the birds do not make it out of the marsh. The inviting wetlands are toxic—the reality of the Coeur d'Alene river corridor. Tundra Swans use their long necks to feed on the bottom of the marsh, where legacy mining-related contaminants from Silver Valley mines are in the sediment. Similarly, diving and dabbling ducks tip up and ingest the same toxic sediments as they forage for roots and seeds. The result: waterfowl feeding here often become sick or die.

Ongoing conversations in 2009, 2013 and 2015 strengthened his resolve to save the swans.

Through funding from the USFWS (as part of the Restoration Partnership), the Conservancy's conservation agreement on Gleason's Marsh is the first, and most important, step toward restoring a clean, functional wetland. Next, comes clean-up led by the EPA, and then, the all-important habitat restoration, led by the Restoration Partnership ([www.restorationpartnership.org](http://www.restorationpartnership.org)), a group of Natural Resource Trustees consisting of the



**“Tired of seeing swans die on his property, the landowner worked to protect his land for restoration.”**

The Idaho landowner, who inherited it from in-laws in the 1980s and will pass it on to his children, wants to see it preserved for the ducks, geese, and swans who have flocked there for millennia. He says he is “tired of seeing swans die on my property.” The US Fish and Wildlife Service in partnership with Ducks Unlimited introduced the landowner in 2004 to the idea of dedicating his land to wildlife and habitat restoration, and he liked it.



Department of the Interior, Coeur d'Alene Tribe, State of Idaho, and U.S. Department of Agriculture.

This property will provide the Restoration Partnership the opportunity to create a bastion of hope for waterfowl within the largely contaminated Coeur d'Alene Basin.

The story of Gleason's Marsh would indeed remain a nightmare were it not for the dedicated partnership of Ducks Unlimited, USFWS, the EPA and you, the Conservancy supporters. Since 1991, Inland Northwest Land Conservancy

has identified, protected and safeguarded important land in our region. Thanks to you, our supporters, and your decades of support, the Conservancy was at the ready when the Restoration Partnership called for our help.

Thank you! Together, we will make Gleason's Marsh a haven once again.

Note: Gleason's Marsh is private property, not open to the public. ■



**#WeAreINLC**  
Volunteer,  
Judy Stafstrom



**#WeAreINLC**  
New Board Member,  
Vange Ocasio Hochheimer

“For Willow Warrior volunteer Judy Stafstrom, conservation is "about the 'We,' not the 'Me.'" Read more about her volunteer support in Conservation News on our web site. ”

“I like the impact that INLC has made in conserving vital land. I support the mission. And I look forward to working together with other community constituents in the development process of our region. ”

# THE BIRDS ARE BACK IN TOWN! And You Can See Them

By Catherine Henze, Volunteer

Every morning I walk to Spokane's Manito Park, sit on a bench overlooking the duck pond, and listen. In March and April I am struck by an auditory shift. Winter's quiet has given way to a mesmerizing soundscape. The twitters, tweets, and calls of residential and migrating birds—American Goldfinches, Mallards, House Finches, and robins—all add to a melodious symphony, emanating from the towering ponderosa pines down to the shimmering water.

Billions of birds participate in the spring migration. Some travel just a short distance while others, such as Arctic Terns, fly many thousand miles, from the Arctic to the Antarctic; some "residential" birds do not migrate at all. Males usually arrive at breeding areas before females. Although waterfowl migrate by either day or night, most song birds—including the stunning Lazuli Bunting, common in the Spokane area—are nocturnal migrators. In the Inland Northwest most migrations start in February and continue until early June. Then, in reverse, the birds start heading south in late July through September.

Bird enthusiasts eagerly anticipate migration. Typically, Okanogan Land Trust co-founder Walter Henze, who keeps a detailed spreadsheet of bird arrival dates, writes, "I look forward to hearing

and seeing the return of the migratory birds in the spring. It gives me great comfort." INLC's Chris DeForest asserts, "I got hooked on Reardan's Audubon Lake years ago when an Audubon Society member described those heroic journeys of determined migrating birds."

## Canyon Marsh and Gleason's Marsh

Natural areas with plentiful water are critical for both migration stopovers and nesting destinations. Such a place is the Coeur d'Alene river corridor, including Canyon Marsh and Gleason's Marsh. Returning Tundra Swans (featured in the Gleason's Marsh story on page 6) herald the migration.

According to Gonzaga Professor Jon Isacoff this area hosts numerous species of migratory and residential waterfowl. Ducks include Mallards, Gadwalls, Cinnamon Teals, Redheads, Ring-necked Ducks, and Ruddy Ducks. In addition, some 30-40 species of migratory songbirds breed here, most conspicuously Red-winged Blackbirds, Tree Swallows, and robins.

Waterfowl generally arrive first, most often by March, followed by Killdeer, bluebirds, Say's Phoebes, and Red-winged Blackbirds. Most of the migratory songbirds arrive between late April and



Photo by Jeanne Dammarell



Photo by Jeanne Dammarell



Photo by Jon Isacoff



Photo by Steve Johnson

mid-May. They come from locations as close as Coeur d'Alene and Pend Oreille lakes and as far as South America. Courting and nesting, for both waterfowl and songbirds, occur soon after.

The birds depart during the summer and fall, beginning with long-distance migratory songbirds who leave during August. Waterfowl stay through September and October but, given favorable conditions, may not leave at all.

Among easily seen birds, Black-necked Stilts (common shorebirds) are remarkable because they have the longest legs of any bird compared to their body size except flamingos. Their height provides an advantage in spotting food, which they bend down to sweep up with their uniquely shaped long bills.

Next, Red-winged Blackbirds are highly polygynous and have distinctive calls. Males arrive in February to March and the females later. They frequently form large flocks in order to feed, often on farm lands. You'll often see them swaying on cattails.

Arguably the most iconic migratory bird, Canada Geese migrate by either day or night and many are residential. Goslings begin hatching in early April. They are beloved by many for their majesty, yet despised by others as a result of problems inherent in a rapid population increase.

### Great Viewing Areas Near Spokane

The Inland Northwest, part of the Pacific Flyway, is a fantastic place to see migrating birds. Thanks to your loyal support, your Conservancy has protected over 21,000 acres of the land and waters they need. Within minutes of downtown Spokane three public properties, created or aided by your Conservancy, offer superb viewing: Reardan's Audubon Lake, Turnbull National Wildlife Refuge, and the Slavin Conservation Area. Each offers wetlands, lakes, and forests, and has an extensive web presence with bird lists. Visit Conservation News on our web site, [www.inlandnwland.org](http://www.inlandnwland.org), for more details about these unique local bird havens and how your support has made them come alive. ■



Visit the Spokane Audubon Society for more information about bird migration in our area. [www.audubonspokane.org](http://www.audubonspokane.org)



Former board president and long-time friend of the Conservancy, Rob Hawley and his family, recommend **The CornellLab Merlin Bird ID app** to help you learn about the birds in your own back yard. <https://merlin.allaboutbirds.org/>



# GROUNDING IN NATURE: A Place of Healing

If you close your eyes and picture your “happy place,” what do you see? For many in the INLC family, that happy place is in nature, a place we return to repeatedly, if only in our minds. For Dr. Stephen Johnson and his late wife Jeanie their happy place has been the basalt cliffs of Palisades Park. Theirs is a love story, dating back to their senior year of high school. Jeanie boarded her horse on West Mission Avenue near the current Rimrock to Riverside project area.\* During their courtship the two of them would climb atop Jeanie’s big Appaloosa horse, Sainter, and ride him bareback through the undeveloped land of Palisades Park and the surrounding trails. The couple eventually married and welcomed three children into their home.

Over the years that followed they repeatedly returned to Palisades Park. It was their place to go during the good times and the not so good times. The trails and views provided a special place to unwind and breathe. Instead of participating in Bloomsday each year, they would watch the runners come thundering down Pettit Drive from their high perch. When Jeanie began her battle with dementia, Palisades offered peace and a place to watch spring flower blossoms, summer sun, autumn leaves and winter snow—consistency in a time of hardship for the couple. Although Stephen lost his sweetheart late last year, he still visits Palisades Park and is blessed with decades of memories with Jeanie in this spot.



Stories like this remind us of why our collective connection to the land is so vital. Land brings people together, gives us renewal and holds our most cherished memories. Stories like that of the Johnsons happen every day throughout our region and we are honored to work with you daily, to protect these special places far into the future.

\*Rimrock to Riverside is an INLC initiative to connect Palisades Park to Riverside State Park, creating a greenspace and wildlife corridor from Indian Canyon all the way to Nine Mile Falls. To support our work at Rimrock to Riverside, visit our web site, [www.inlandnland.org](http://www.inlandnland.org). ■

## Find your happy place...

Land brings people together, gives us renewal and holds our most cherished memories.



# RICHARDS: The Trickle-Down Effect

Before sitting down to read this article, go grab a drink of water from your tap. Bring it back and sip it while you learn about one of your Conservancy's most recent success stories, right here in your own back yard.

"The Richards property is the tranquil meadow gateway to Hayden Lake." Longtime Hayden resident and Conservancy board member Julie Johnson shares her story. "For over 28 years our family, friends and visitors have enjoyed walking along the dike road that separates the lake and wetlands to take in beautiful views in every direction." Residents of Hayden and those familiar with Honeysuckle Beach enjoy views of the Richards property all the time, likely without even knowing its broader significance.

Instead, the land will remain undeveloped under a permanent conservation agreement and in private hands, with people allowed to walk along the dike road as they have for many years. Thanks to the family and the Conservancy, the Richards farm will remain a tranquil haven, an oasis in our crowded world. "We, and all who cherish this refreshing stretch of land," Julie says, "rejoice that the property will remain pristine for future generations." And next time you enjoy that cool, clear water from your tap, we hope you will cherish this land and its protection of clean drinking water for all of us! ■

## "The Richards property carries 45 million gallons of water into the . . . Rathdrum Prairie Spokane Valley Aquifer."

This tranquil setting, home to deer, horses, and 80+ species of birds, is the only outlet for Hayden Lake.

Incredibly, every day, the Richards property carries 45 million gallons of water from Hayden Lake underground, into the deep gravels of the Rathdrum Prairie Spokane Valley aquifer. This is almost half as much as Lake Coeur d'Alene contributes to the aquifer. The mighty aquifer supplies 500,000 people in Idaho and Washington with drinking water! That glass of water you just poured likely originated, at least in part from the Idaho foothills, through this pristine, protected land.

For decades, the Richards family has made its home on their tranquil 67 acres. Those acres could easily be transformed into dozens of houses crowding the lane and squatting over the aquifer, with dozens of new docks dotting the lake shore.



◀ Hayden Lake

▲ Shady lane leading to Honeysuckle Beach



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For more information visit our website at [www.inlandnwland.org](http://www.inlandnwland.org) or follow us on Facebook at [InlandNWLand](https://www.facebook.com/InlandNWLand).

**INLAND NORTHWEST LAND CONSERVANCY**  
 Strengthening communities, honoring lands

**Mission:** Connecting people to nature by conserving lands and waters essential to life in the Inland Northwest

**Vision:** We envision a future of interconnected natural habitats throughout the Inland Northwest, supporting thriving populations of native plants and wildlife, enjoyed and respected by the people who also call this region home

**COVID 19 - Conservation Continues**

With all the challenges of the last few weeks, it is hard not being able to gather with YOU our community of supporters. We miss connecting with you through our Grounded in Nature hikes and Volunteer Stewardship projects. And we have made the hard decision to cancel our fall fundraiser, Appetite for Conservation.

Instead, we are creating a series of online campfire talks, Zoom with a View, to share stories from the land, community, and good cheer through the coming months. Visit our website for more information. We'll look forward to gathering digitally, at our own homes, under the stars, warm drink in hand, cozied up under a blanket to spin yarns about some of our favorite places.

Although the economy is uncertain, the need to protect lands and waters continues, unabated. If you are not

already a sustaining member, sending a routine gift to the Conservancy, please add us to your budget for automatic monthly or quarterly gifts. We hope this will allow you to incorporate your contributions into your budget and help us make up for the lost income from having to cancel our annual fundraiser. Thanks to your history of support, the Conservancy is well positioned to weather an economic storm and we rely on you, our loyal friends, to help replenish our coffers for the future of land and water protection!

We'll get through this together while continuing to protect the lands and waters essential to life in the Inland Northwest. Thanks for staying by our side!

Sincerely, Dave Schaub, Executive Director