



South Sound Program Highlights April – June 2013

The Center for Natural Lands Management is committed to conservation within the South Sound region, the Willamette Valley/Puget Trough/Georgia Basin ecoregion and throughout the Northwest. The Center performs outstanding stewardship, protects key conservation parcels and promotes a conservation community of cooperative partners.

South Puget Sound Prairies are Nation's first-ever Sentinel Landscape

We are pleased to announce that South Puget Sound prairies have been awarded a national designation as the first-ever Sentinel Landscape. Sentinel Landscapes are a convergence of priorities between the U.S. Departments of Defense, Agriculture, and Interior. The Sentinel Landscape Partnership restores and permanently protects significant habitat for rare and endangered species and enables the Department of Defense's training mission to continue.

This designation is part of a larger award, called the Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (REPI), which Joint Base Lewis-McChord, the Center for Natural Lands Management, and partners won this spring. The REPI award brings an additional \$3.5 million to South Sound for land acquisition, stewardship endowments, and complementary actions to benefit prairie habitats and rare prairie species. In addition to DoD, the project has benefitted from great support from local partners including Thurston County, USFWS, NRCS, and regional Congressional staff.



Scatter Creek-Violet Prairie Preserve is CNLM's most recent acquisition in Washington.

CNLM Acquires Prairie Preserve in Washington

CNLM recently acquired Violet-Prairie Scatter Creek near Tenino. The 104-acre property includes grasslands, oak woodlands, and riparian habitat along a half-mile of Scatter Creek. The property was historically used as a dairy farm, and the majority of the property is currently pasture. The property is anticipated to be restored to high quality prairie. In addition to the Mazama pocket gopher population already present on the property, restoration will potentially lead to an introduction of Taylor's checkerspot butterfly. This property was purchased in cooperation with Joint Base Lewis-McChord through Army Compatible Use Buffer funds and will be the first property to receive the Sentinel Landscape designation.

Larger Historic Presence of Annuals on Upland Prairies



Annuals such as true babystars (Leptosiphon bicolor) historically had a larger presence on the South Sound prairies.

A quick walk through the prairies in western Washington leaves the impression that they are dominated by perennial species. The few annuals one encounters are usually non-natives. Yet data from a study completed by CNLM staff and others suggests that historically, these prairies may have presented quite a different aspect. Researchers compiled a list of ca. 300 native herbaceous species that known from our prairies. About 32% of these were annuals, contrasting with only 14% out on our prairies today. This suggests that annual forbs may have represented significant diversity in the prairies. Although it is impossible to determine how widespread these species were historically, many have no recent records, and nearly a third are known from only one or two current occurrences. Data from recently burned sites suggest both cover and species richness of annuals may double after a single fire. As fire is increasingly used to manage these prairies, scarce native annuals could benefit from inclusion in future restoration efforts across this region.

Rare Species Progress

Translocated lark produces offspring - We are seeing more signs of success with the genetic rescue project. Oregon male was one of the streaked horned larks translocated from Corvallis to 13th Division prairie on JBLM. This season, he has successfully produced an offspring! His second nesting attempt produced three eggs, which all hatched. Since then, at least one of the fledglings has been observed outside of the nest being tended to by his mate. Last week, Oregon male was observed tending to another one of his fledglings well away from the nesting location. We are encouraged by the introduction of new genetics into the South Sound population of streaked horned larks.



Pictured as nestlings, these larks have now fledged the nest, and will be heading south or west for the winter.

Insect “Infestations” at Glacial Heritage – Our partners at the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) recently visited Glacial Heritage Preserve and observed an infestation across multiple areas at the site. “I found the parasites to be widespread across the site, at times occurring in such high densities I could scarcely walk for fear of stepping on them,” said WDFW biologist Mary Linders. “[The insects] were found parasitizing both harsh paintbrush and English plantain, and could be found in all locations that I searched.” While this may sound alarming, it is actually very good news! The critters Mary observed were Taylor’s checkerspot butterfly larvae. For photos of the larvae, check out our [Facebook page](#).