



The 2009 AmeriCorps Conservation Team at Zumwalt Prairie Preserve in September.

From left: Jenny, Corey, Michele, Andrew, Dane, Rob, Kai, Melissa, Nik, Ari, Sean and Melody.

© Kyle Strauss/TNC

GENERAL NEWS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Welcome to another edition of *ACT now*. We're excited to share our new team photo with you as all 12 ACT members were finally in one place at one time — when the team converged at Zumwalt Prairie Preserve for an all-team project last week. Read more about this gathering on Page 3.

August saw many ACT members attending volunteer work parties across the state. Several members assisted with invasive species removal at Cascade Head Preserve which provides important habitat to the rare Oregon silverspot butterfly. Besides seeing a close-up shot (*Photo of the Month, at right*), you can find out more about this threatened butterfly on Page 2 in our species highlight.

Our *Alumni Corner* this edition features 2007 Portland Preserves ACT Member Christina Schull. See Page 3 to find out why she's been traveling across Oregon and Washington studying vegetation patterns.

The members of the ACT program have been putting in many hours this summer, and somehow we're already nearing the end of Willamette Valley Field Assistant Jared Considine's term of service. Jared started his 675 hour term with us in May. Upon completion of his AmeriCorps term later this month, he hopes to study forestry at Oregon State University. We thank Jared for his service, and wish him well in his future endeavors.

Read on for other stories about our ACT members and the places they work so hard to protect and restore. I hope you enjoy this edition of *ACT now*.

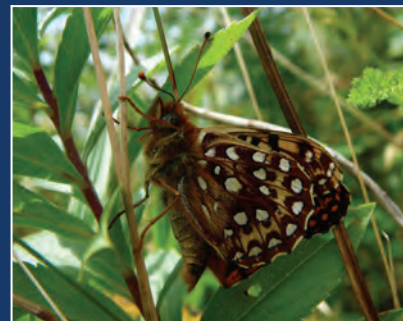
Kyle

-Kyle Strauss, ACT Coordinator



Jared Considine outside the Conservancy's Willow Creek office in Eugene. © Kyle Strauss/TNC

PHOTO of the month



© Ari DeMarco/TNC

It's not often one gets to view an Oregon silverspot butterfly this close, but ACT Member Ari DeMarco had the opportunity recently when she attended a butterfly release at Cascade Head Preserve north of Lincoln City. Thanks to a captive rearing program at the Oregon Zoo, more threatened Oregon silverspots are joining wild populations. Read more in the *Species Highlight* on Page 2.

working WITH VOLUNTEERS



© Kyle Strauss/TNC

Volunteer Jim Lee (*left*) and ACT Member Kai Victor pull invasive teasel plants at Popcorn Swale Preserve north of Roseburg. Teasel and other invasive weeds can displace native species, including the preserve's namesake rough popcorn flower, an endangered species. A biology teacher for 12 years, Jim now works for Douglas County Soil and Water Conservation District, but still finds time to volunteer for the Conservancy in the Umpqua Valley. Thanks Jim!

AROUND THE STATE

SPECIES HIGHLIGHT

Oregon silverspot butterfly *Speyeria zerene hippolyta*

Listed as threatened under the Endangered Species Act, the Oregon silverspot butterfly inhabits coastal salt spray meadows that contain its larval host plant, *Viola adunca* (early blue violet). This habitat is rare due to land development, fire suppression, natural succession, and loss of violet populations from competition with exotic grasses.



ACT members (left) observing silverspot adults (right) ready for release at Cascade Head Preserve.

© Melissa Reich /TNC; © Nik Danilchik /TNC

Captive rearing projects to boost butterfly populations are underway at two regional zoos: the Oregon Zoo in Portland and the Woodland Park Zoo in Seattle. With the Conservancy, they are rearing silverspot larvae for release.

At Cascade Head Preserve, cages filled with silverspot pupae are placed out in the grasslands in mid-summer. Daily until the end of September, staff and volunteers come to check these cages for newly emerged butterflies, record their sex and health, and release them into the wild.

This season ACT Members Nik Danilchik, Ari DeMarco, Jenny Bieger and Melissa Reich volunteered for a day and witnessed the release of about a dozen butterflies. Hopefully these adults will survive in the wild, and become a more common sight along the trails of Cascade Head Preserve and other coastal sites.

Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center (ORNHC)

Melissa Reich is keeping busy with updates to the Heritage database, assisting Botany Data Manager Sue Vrilakas with rare plant records. At the end of July, she traveled to the coast to collect aquatic plants for the Lewis and Clark State Park herbarium. In August, she and ACT Member Jenny Beiger attended a Cascade Head Preserve volunteer work party, pulling invasive Queen Anne's lace from the pinnacle. Melissa has also started her Individual Member Development Project (IMDP), serving as a Vaux's swift monitor for the Portland Audubon's Swift Watch at Chapman Elementary School. Two nights a week she will observe these birds funnel into their roost chimney at sunset, and estimate the total number of swifts present (which can be as many as 35,000 birds!).



Melissa collects vegetation samples at Lewis and Clark State Park. © Christina Schull

Portland Area

Jenny Beiger and **Corey Gargano** have been working almost exclusively on treating Japanese knotweed throughout the Sandy River Basin, by both land and water. Working with a group of interns and volunteers, the Portland Preserves team is nearing the completion of all targeted knotweed sites. Jenny is leading a successful outreach effort throughout the basin, gaining support for future knotweed and priority site restoration work. Corey is working with volunteer stewards and youth crews on the design and construction of a new trail through the City of Sandy Park, a priority restoration site along the river.



Jenny Bieger pulls invasive weeds from Cascade Head Preserve. ©Melissa Reich /TNC

The Coast

Nik Danilchik continued to collect data from wells across the North Coast Land Conservancy's Circle Creek property. The data will allow managers to better understand the hydrology of the site, and help decide if removing old levees will benefit the creek's salmon habitat.



Nik collects data along Circle Creek near Seaside. ©Kyle Strauss /TNC

Willamette Valley

Jared Considine's stewardship activities in the mid-Willamette Valley have been focused on seed collection, weed removal, and projects such as mowing thistle and vinca around the outbuildings at Yamhill Oaks Preserve. At Kingston Prairie Preserve, he and Institute for Applied Ecology partners collected seed from sensitive species. Philomath Prairie's oak savanna habitat should benefit from the wire fencing Jared installed around 20 small oak seedlings and saplings to protect them from mowing, spraying and herbivory. Jared adds, "Since this is my last monthly update, I would like to thank all the staff and fellow ACT members for their hard work and support this season."

Ari DeMarco and **Sean McKenzie** have been quite busy collecting seeds for Willamette Valley restoration plantings and, in lieu of a 'regular' update, they're sharing lyrics from a song they penned: "Grab a bag and collect those seeds, fulfill our propagation needs. We'll plant the forbs out in the sun — now restoration has begun! Let's partner with the NGOs, and plant the grass seeds in neat rows. Through all the adversity, protecting biodiversity. For the habitats in duress, we'll sow the seeds of success. Who'll protect our public land? Team AmeriCorps can!"

AROUND THE STATE (CONTINUED)

Northeast Oregon

During a scorching hot two weeks, **Dane Dostert** and an Oregon Youth Conservation Corps crew (OYCC) put in 30 trail posts along public access trails at Zumwalt Prairie Preserve, chopped Scotch thistle in the canyons, and collected native seeds for the Camp Creek Restoration Project. Throughout August Dane held a weekly volunteer day mobilizing supporters for more seed collection and aspen exclosure repairs. He also readied the Enterprise vehicle fleet for fire season and participated in some fuels reduction at Litch Place, part of the newly acquired Hells Canyon inholdings. In the office he worked on the volunteer database and prepared for the all ACT project (see below).



Dane Dostert and OYCC members clear Scotch thistle at Zumwalt Prairie Preserve. © Brent Wydrinski

TEAM SPOTLIGHT: Zumwalt Prairie Project

During the first week of September, the entire ACT crew came together in remote Northeast Oregon to help out at Zumwalt Prairie Preserve. Having the team together not only allowed for everyone to catch up in person, but also for a lot of work at Oregon's largest privately owned nature preserve.



Dane Dostert (left) and others listen to instructions on data collection. © Kyle Strauss /TNC

Over two long days, the crew managed to collect data from over 200 points spread across thousands of acres, despite three flat tires. Splitting up into pairs, ACT members hopped fences, climbed buttes, and walked many miles to measure grass heights in various pastures grazed by cattle. The data will help Conservancy managers better understand grazing patterns across the various preserve habitats and develop best management practices.

ACT members also assisted with monitoring of aspen groves, which are heavily impacted by browsing from cattle and wildlife. This information will help assess effectiveness of fences used to protect important habitats.

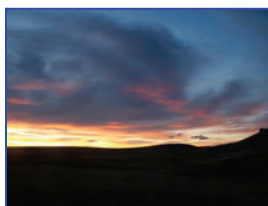
After work, the members also enjoyed beautiful sunsets and star-filled skies, despite the nearly full moon. The trip ended too quickly for some, who decided to spend Labor Day weekend backpacking in the nearby Wallawas.

Zumwalt Prairie is the largest remaining example of bunch grass prairie left in North America. To learn more about its management go to

www.conserveonline.org/workspaces/ZumwaltPrairieWorkspace.



Conservancy staff Liza Jane Nichols and Rob Taylor (from left) help ACT members identify the bunch grasses of Zumwalt. © Kyle Strauss/TNC



Sunset over the prairie was followed by near full moons during the trip. © Kyle Strauss/TNC

ALUMNI corner

In each edition of ACT now, we highlight what former AmeriCorps Conservation Team members are doing after their service year. This issue, we feature:

Christina Schull

Christina was a 2007 ACT member with the Portland Area Preserves. Recently she has been working with the Oregon Natural Heritage Information Center, collecting data from the Oregon coast to as far east as the Boardman Grasslands.

In August she, ACT alum Lindsey Koepke and current ACT Member Melissa Reich helped collect over 200 plants from Ecola State Park up to Cape Disappointment, to add to the National Parks



Christina collecting data along the Oregon Coast. © Melissa Reich

Serice herbarium in Fort Clatsop. The group also collected data of sensitive and invasive species, along with forest-alliance data for another project dealing with mapping national parks.

This work led Christina to Mt. Rainier, where she has been working to map the alliances and associations of forests, shrublands, and sub-alpine meadows. Some of the work involves going to predetermined sites and verifying vegetation type(s). At other times it involves collecting data of homogenous plots large enough to correspond with satellite imagery data. "It's interesting because you're able to really observe patterns and changes in the landscape," Christina says. "Last week we were able to see how hybridization and elevation change affects different tree species."

"Overall, this season has been really great," she adds. "I've been learning a lot, using new equipment, identifying plants, and getting a good overview of the wide range of Oregon flora. It's really neat when you identify a flowering grass in Eastern Oregon and then, several months later, you see it again, on a mountaintop in a meadow, just starting to flower. The work has been really fascinating, and I've gradually made my way from desert grasslands to coastal and mountain habitats and ecoregions. I'm excited for what's next."

AROUND THE STATE (CONTINUED)

Southwest Oregon

Kai Victor continues the invasive species battle in Southwest Oregon, completing this year's teasel treatment at Popcorn Swale Preserve near Roseburg, and assessing current weed infestations at Ewauna Flat Preserve in Klamath Falls. He's also been assisting in a joint project between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife and The Nature Conservancy, monitoring the endangered plant *Astragalus applegatei* (Applegate's milkvetch). Kai's efforts include WIMSing near current populations, writing weed proposals, and conducting windshield surveys looking for potential milk-vetch habitat.



Kai Victor with a bag of invasive teasel seedheads removed from Popcorn Swale Preserve.
© Kyle Strauss /TNC

Central Oregon

This month **Rob Lindner** has been helping with a study of an older tree stand the Deschutes National Forest is planning to manage for restoration and fuels reduction. He's been devoting a lot of time to the Oregon Fire Ecology project as they wrap up in the Deschutes and prepare for work in the Ochocos. Rob's also busy planning for a Nature Conservancy wildlife workshop in November, focused on dry forest restoration and forest dependent wildlife.

Portland Office

Michele Blackburn continues compiling and sorting through extensive salmon life history information for an analysis illustrating habitat use, habitat requirements and threats/limiting factors affecting the survival of coastal fall Chinook and coho salmon in Southwest Oregon. In addition to research on threatened and endangered species, Michele continues to support the Conservancy's freshwater program with production of a second manuscript for publication about the Oregon Groundwater Assessment. For this project, Michele is creating ArcGIS maps illustrating current and future threats to groundwater dependent ecosystems and conducting subsequent data analyses. Currently, Michele is compiling case studies on the effects of climate change for freshwater resources in the southeastern U.S. and Australia's Murray-Darling Basin.

Klamath Basin

Melody Warner, along with other Klamath Falls staff, recently attended a training bout problematic weeds and their treatment methods in Klamath County. Afterward, she started removing invasive species at Williamson River Delta Preserve. She also started assisting with grab sampling this month, as well as continued helping with the mini-sondes deployment to monitor water quality.

Blue Mountains

Andrew Wallace spent much of August driving a few miles downriver of Dunstan Homestead Preserve to the Conservancy-managed RPB conservation easement, where we're working to relocate the main channel of the Middle Fork John Day River. He has taken lots of project pictures to monitor progress. Andrew has also worked alongside his supervisors and various staff representing The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla, the North Fork Watershed Council, the Freshwater Trust, and the U.S. Forest Service, collecting mussels from the Middle Fork before they were buried under several tons of fill dirt to make way for the new river channel. A total of 300 mussels representing three genera were collected and relocated to a safe spot upriver. In between these projects, Andrew has found time to walk the fences on the RPB easement looking for places where cows keep coming in. And he's pulled enough invasive medusahead rye to know that it does not turn you to stone on sight; it takes a number of hours of bending, crouching, kneeling and reaching for that to happen!



Jerry Ebeltoft, Margaret Carey and Andrew Wallace suit up in neoprene in order to study and collect mussels from the cool flowing Middle Fork John Day River. © Amy Charette

Want more information on the Conservancy's ACT program?

Contact: ACT Coordinator Kyle Strauss, phone: (541) 842-0284, e-mail: kstrauss@tnc.org or contact The Nature Conservancy, 821 SE 14th Ave., Portland, OR 97214, nature.org

The Nature Conservancy is a leading conservation organization working around the world to protect ecologically important lands and waters for nature and people. In Oregon, the Conservancy owns or manages 46 nature preserves and has helped protect over 500,000 acres of important habitats, with support from more than 20,000 member households. Learn more at nature.org/oregon.