

TAKING THE LONG VIEW: WESTERN BLUEBIRD REINTRODUCTION IN THE SAN JUAN ISLANDS€ A LAND TRUST'S PERSPECTIVE



the **SAN JUAN
PRESERVATION
TRUST**

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All photos: SJPT unless otherwise noted



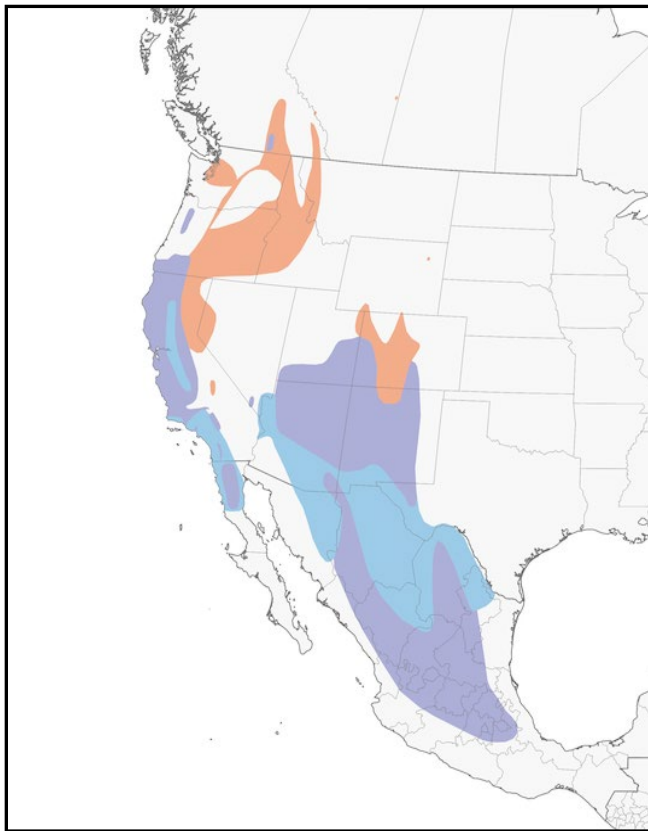
Phil Green

Western Bluebirds: a quick primer

- One of 3 species of bluebirds in N. America (*Sialia mexicana*)
- Cavity-nester (secondary)
- Insectivore - forage on ground
- Winter – fruits and berries
- Migratory – short distance



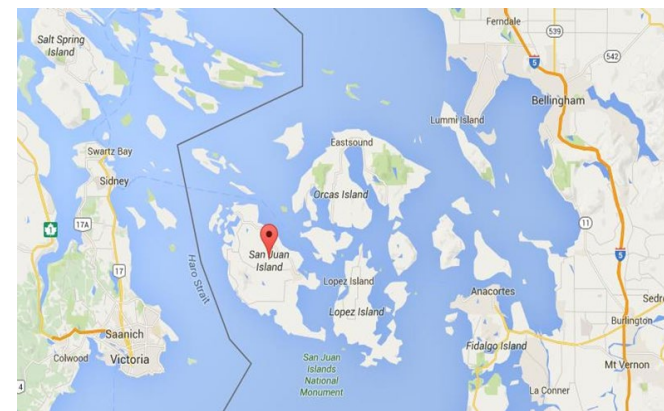
Range Maps: Bluebirds + Garry Oak



From: *Birds of the World*. Cornell Lab of Ornithology Judith A. Guinan, Patricia A. Gowaty, and Elsie K. Eltzroth
Version: 1.0 — Published March 4, 2020



GOERT



- San Juan & Lopez Islands – WEBL last seen in mid 1960's.
- Vancouver Island – WEBL last seen in 1995

Early occupation by WEBL in SJIs: Oak–Prairie Habitat

Historic habitat structure provided ideal foraging and breeding conditions

Considered fcommon‡ to fsomewhat common‡ in the 1930s.



Ross Lockwood



Jane K Fox

Loss of Oaks = Loss of Diversity



- Oak woodlands-- conversion to conifer forest--
- Oak prairie converted to housing and agriculture
- Loss of oaks = loss of cavities
- Loss of cavities = more competition for existing ones
- Arrival/proliferation of species commensal with humans

2007: An Idea Hatches

Restore
Diversity
(ABC,
Eco studies,
SJPT)

% Restoration of breeding
population of WEBL in
historic breeding areas
of SJIs

Advance
Oak-Prairie
Conservation
(SJPT)

% Education and outreach
to community
% Prioritization of oak
habitat in strategic
planning
% Restoration of
degraded oak habitat



Project Timeline

(or...15 years in, we are just getting started!)

2007-2011 First
Round of
Reintroductions

2012
Vancouver
Island
Project
Launches

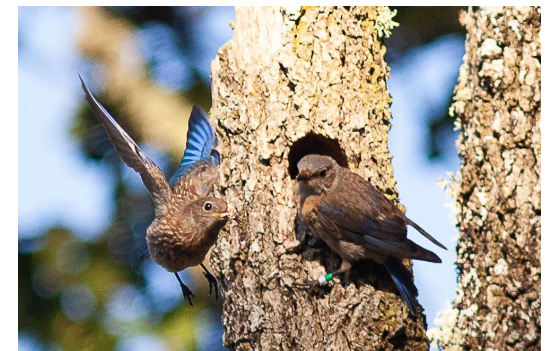


2019- Present
Second
Monitoring
Phase

2012-2013
Monitoring
Phase

2014-2018 Second
Round of
Reintroductions

2022
First
natural
nesting
in oak
cavity



San Juan Island Nesting Locations

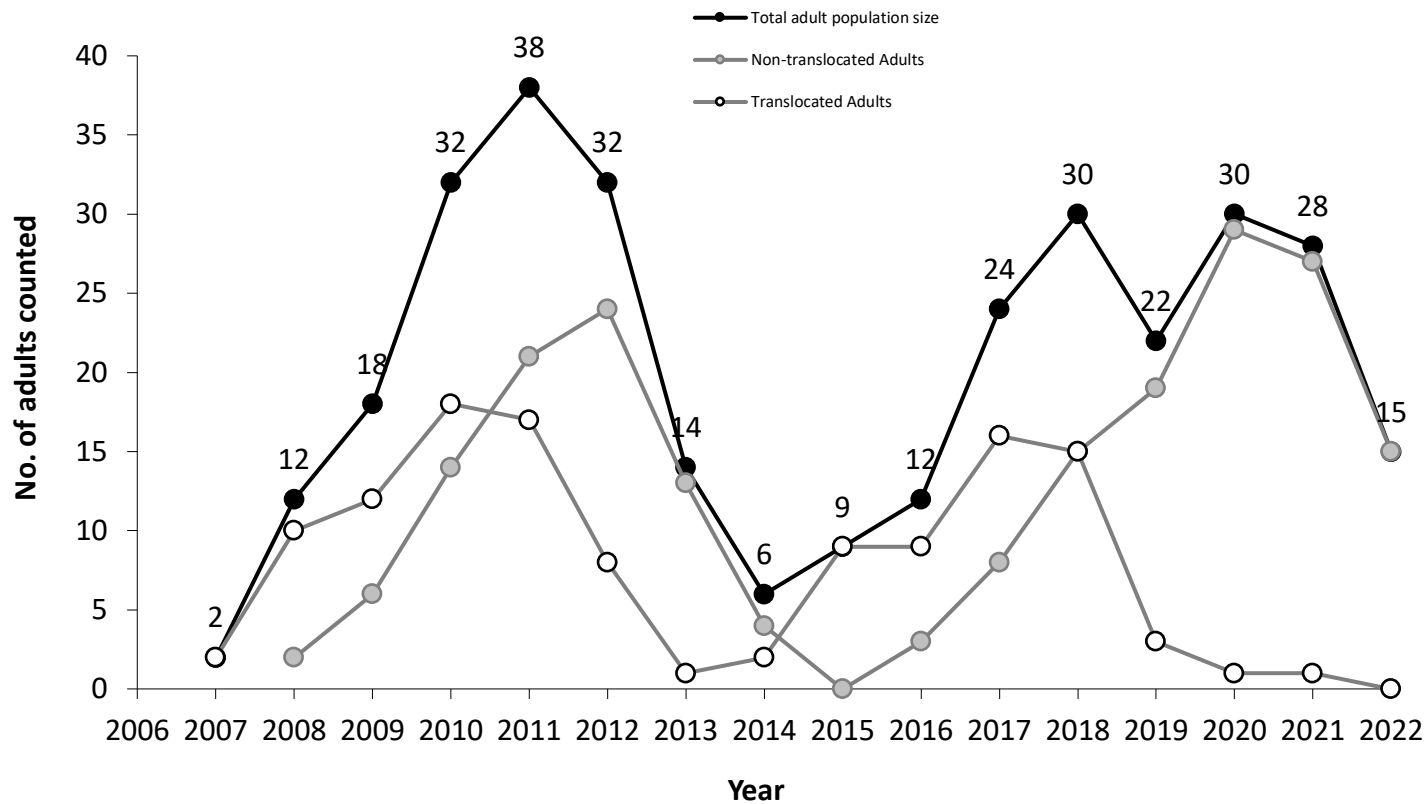


Iconic Species as Engagement Tools



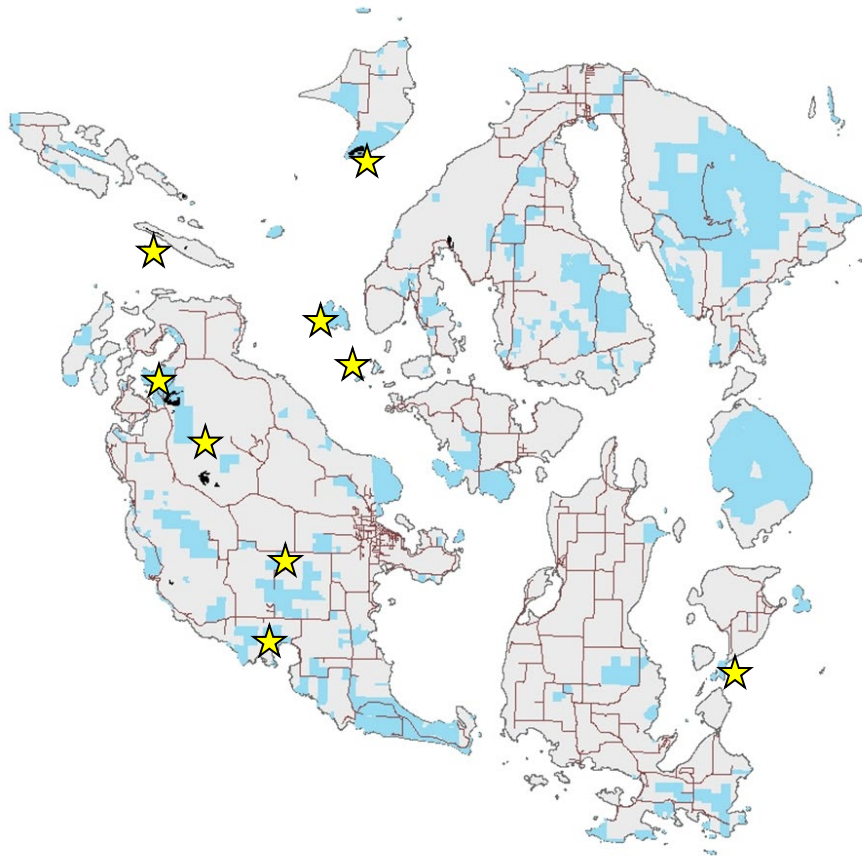
How Are We Doing So Far?

Goal 1: Restoration of breeding population of WEBL in SJIs



How Are We Doing So Far?

Goal 2: Advance Oak-Prairie conservation in San Juan Islands



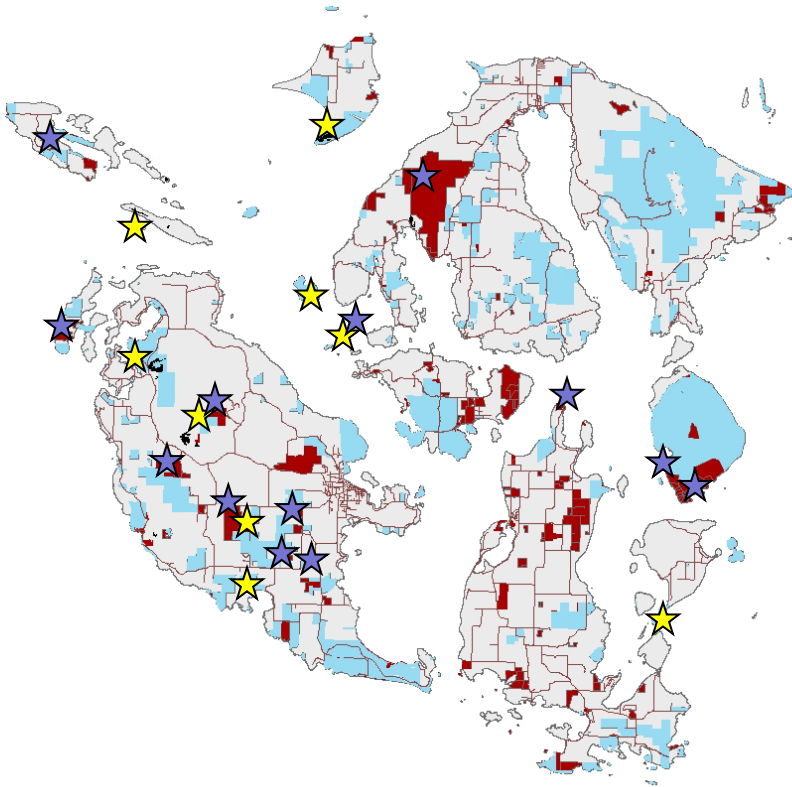
2002

Properties with oak woodland
or savannah (varying quality)
in protected status; SJPT, TNC,
SJCLB, NPS, WSP

Approx. 2,630 acres

How Are We Doing So Far?

Goal 2: Advance Oak-Prairie conservation in San Juan Islands



As of 2022, additional
protection from 2002-2022 has
increased 127% = 5594 acres

Single-Species Recovery: A Worthy Risk for a Land Trust

- Recent (2022) survey of SJPT Board of Directors:
- 100% of respondents agreed that these types of projects, regardless of long timeline and associated costs, have had many multiple benefits to our organization, creating opportunities that touch on our 3 core mission areas: Conserve, Care, Connect
- *“Cost and staff management are my #1 concerns for these long range projects. At the end of the day, any organization must realize and consider these challenges to be fiscally responsible to the project. We must build our budgets in a way to support these projects for the long haul. I believe that is the key to long range success. I do not believe that relying 100% on volunteers will prove beneficial for any longer range species recovery project.”*
- *“Species recovery is a sign of our success as a land trust, protecting important habitats and connectivity, and providing those places for species recovery to occur. We can set an example for others. It also allows for increased connections with our community members and partners, with many educational and outreach opportunities to engage the public.”*



Phil Green



*"The bluebird carries the sky on his
back." - Thoreau*