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# Wild Things

Adventures of a Grassroots Environmentalist

by Donna Matrazzo

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## Selected Material

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It is not enough to describe  
the world of nature; the point is  
to preserve it. What we need  
are heroes and heroines—about a  
million of them—willing and able  
to fight for the health of the land  
and its inhabitants.

Edward Abbey

## CONTENTS

Prologue

### **PART 1. A PASSION OF PLACE**

1. Four-Mountain Mornings
2. The Bald Eagle Watch
3. Not Lost but Not Found
4. Jewels of the Flyway
5. Unto Dust

### **PART 2. COURAGE**

6. Teed Off
7. The Purple Martin Man
8. Of Habits and Habitat
9. F.A.U.N.A.
10. Birdhouse in the Square
11. In Wild Waters

### **PART 3. CHANGE**

12. Still Teed Off
13. The Rescue of Steelman Lake: Field Notes
14. Teach the Children Well
15. Shadow Limbs
16. Earth Sisters
17. This Land Across Time

Epilogue

### **APPENDIX**

Becoming a Grassroots Environmentalist: How to Get Involved  
Conservation Organizations—Personal Favorites  
Selected Reading and Reference  
Acknowledgments  
Literature Cited  
About the Author

# Prologue

There were no woods on Wood Street, where I grew up. Nor any birds. Just one block of sooty homes, choked between the railroad tracks and the steel mill. Houses were so close together that if Mom shook the dust mop too far out the hallway window, it was in Mary Mihalko's living room.

From my home now on Sauvie Island, I look out the kitchen window to my own woods, three quarters of an acre. I felt compelled to honor them with a name: Trillium Woods, for the three-petaled wildflowers that bloom by the hundreds each spring. Baking Christmas cookies, I fling open the window to catch the whistling of tundra swans as they fly overhead toward the lake.

Jutting beyond the outskirts of Portland, Oregon, Sauvie is an alluvial isle about the same size and shape as Manhattan. Sparsely-settled farmland graces the southern half. The 12,000 acres of the northern half are protected as a wildlife area by the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife. Population count: approximately 445 families and 312 species of wildlife.

I had no idea that when I began to see wild things, really see, that they would take over my life. Not just that I would spend every spare moment hiking, kayaking or bicycling to their wild places. Or knock out my office walls and fill them with windows.

But when the wild things became threatened, I was drawn, or thrust (I'm still not sure which) into the vortex of raging conservation battles. In the challenge of keeping Sauvie Island unchanged, I've changed: I've grown wings of my own.

Over these years I've had the pleasure of getting to know hundreds of grassroots environmentalists. Our story, I realized, is all the same: First comes a deep passion of place. Then the courage to speak up when that place becomes threatened. Then change, and all that change enables.

A friend told me this is a book about empowerment.

I think it's simply about learning how to see.

## Chapter 10

# Birdhouse in the Square

Six weeks before the November election, in September, 1992, the Citizens Campaign for Metropolitan Greenspaces is in deep trouble. A poll just revealed that only 18 percent of the region's voters are even aware of ballot measure 26-1. The referendum would create a small property tax, something like ten cents a day for a \$100,000 home, to acquire and protect \$200,000,000 of remaining urban natural areas.

The Greenspaces measure has been overshadowed by the heated state referendum Measure 9, which would require discrimination against homosexuals, and the excitement of the Clinton-Bush presidential race. With little money, and even less media exposure, the campaign seems destined for a depressingly overwhelming defeat.

A few friends and I have been disgruntled with the official campaign for quite some time, and whenever we meet, the conversation veers to creative notions of what might be done. Sharing our frustration, Bob comments to me one evening, "There are at least four groups working to fight Measure 9. Why not form our own campaign group?" Not ten minutes later I'm on the phone with Marcia Hoyt, Alison Highberger and Mary Rose: "How about starting our own campaign? We could be The Guerrilla Gang for Greenspaces!" Yes, of course! All the guerrillas decide to meet Saturday for pasta at Ali's.

After two bottles of wine, spicy tomato garlic sauce over herb fettucini and chocolate-laced cookies, we're warmed to the topic.

"We need to create an event that the media can't ignore," Marcia says, drawing from her years of experience as an award-winning advertising manager.

"Yeah," Ali ponders. "It needs to be something really public and dramatic. Like maybe if we tied Mike Houck to the statue in the middle of Pioneer Square for a week."

"It should be something that relates to wildlife, though," Mary Rose adds.

"We could build a giant blue heron's nest at the rookery at Heron Lakes golf course, and he could live in it," Bob suggests.

"Well, it would be better to be located somewhere really public, where a lot of people would see it. And where the television cameras could get there easily. Heron Lakes is too removed," comments Ali, a television producer.

"Why not build a heron nest in Pioneer Square?" Marcia asks, referring to

downtown's most popular park, often called the city's Living Room.

"Instead of a heron nest, why not have a giant purple martin house, based on Dave Fouts' design?" I counter.

"That's it!"

Marcia phones Houck to see if he'll do it, but he's in Washington, D.C. She leaves him a message, and we laugh uproariously to imagine him calling from the east coast and hearing this proposition.

"I'll call my neighbor Jeff Joslin to see if he'll be our birdhouse architect," I enthuse.

It's past ten, and after hearing the plans Jeff's first question is, "How many bottles of wine have you been drinking?" He follows that with, "I'm your man!"

Marcia phones the Square first thing Monday, to see if the Birdhouse is even feasible. It is, and the Square's promotion manager seems enamored with the concept. Jeff stops by daily, studying the site and working up preliminary drawings. Construction materials will be donated, but we have to raise about \$1,200 to pay for the Square's rental, night security and insurance. Guerrillas that we are, we still don't want to alienate the official campaign or splinter their support, so we meet with their managers, who are so distressed by the poll they welcome contributions of any sort; our energy and good humor become contagious.

Bob suggests we sell campaign buttons at a dollar each and gets a freelance graphic artist to volunteer a design based on the campaign's logo. The artist, himself excited about the projects, instead designs eight buttons, and Bob and I front the \$430. We press the manufacturer to have half of the 2,500 buttons ready for the Salmon Festival, where nearly 10,000 wildlife watchers come to celebrate the return of the spawning salmon on the Sandy River.

Even before Houck returns, some of his friends are concerned about him living in the middle of downtown Portland in a giant birdhouse. "It doesn't send the right message," one warns, "We don't want to be portrayed as eco-freaks." Another says, "Mike's the key person in this campaign, and it doesn't seem a good use of his time." I trust our judgment, but to be on the safe side, phone Janet Cobb, who mortgaged her house to fund a similar campaign in California in 1988, Measure AA, that raised \$225 million for the East Bay Regional Park District in Alameda and Contra Counties, with 38 local city parks also benefiting. She's now the East Bay Parks assistant general manager, and a close friend of Mike's.

"I think it sounds fabulous!" Janet exclaims. "There's no time to waste. When you

don't have money, you have to do outrageous things. I'm taking the rest of my vacation days and I'll be up there Monday to help."

We all eventually agree that Mike will stay in the Birdhouse only the first night. We'll hold a press conference with him the following morning, and then other celebrities will live in the Birdhouse the rest of the week, now shortened, for finances' sake, to five days.

Rain plagues the Salmon Festival, and we sell only \$392 worth of buttons, not even enough to reimburse their cost. Ali and I, who are the most committed (or daft, however one looks at it), decide that we are each willing to cover up to \$600, if need be, to make the Birdhouse a reality. But three days before Jeff's preliminary construction date, we have a major setback. The building firm that we thought was going to donate all the materials misunderstood our request, and only intended to give us some leftover lumber. Jeff estimates that the materials needed will total nearly a thousand dollars. Ali and I agree that we cannot afford to vouch for the extra money.

Janet Cobb's in town and the campaign Steering Committee holds a meeting, which we attend to update everyone. My pride doesn't want to admit that the project may have to fold, but that seems the case. Janet begins the meeting by enthusing profusely about the Birdhouse, and all the publicity it's sure to bring. In dire tones, Ali speaks up about the dollars needed and how the project could die. "If you'd all pitch in, though, we can make it happen!" she encourages. Carol Pinegar—who somehow must have staged this with Ali, although neither will admit it—dramatically tosses a hundred dollars on the table. Mike opens his wallet and adds fifty. Checkbooks emerge—another hundred, 25, 50 dollars, until the pledges total \$850, enough to build the Birdhouse. The Guerrilla Gang for Greenspaces is in business.

Marcia and Ali meet for lunch at my place, each with a list of potential Birdhouse-sitting celebrities, the phone in place on the dining room table. One of the first people we call, Jonathan Nicholas, a popular columnist for *The Oregonian*, advises us that it would be a much better news story to have the same person live in the house all five days. It won't matter, he says, whether the person is a celebrity. We shift our tactics. Who might be willing to live in the Birdhouse? I phone two writers—a novelist and playwright—neither is home. On a hunch, Ali calls an acquaintance, Alan Hunter, an enthusiastic outdoorsman with a four-year-old son, who runs a translation business from his home. He thinks it's an exciting idea and almost without hesitation, he agrees.

The Metropolitan Greenspaces Master Plan is a work of wildlife artistry. Two hundred million dollars would be used to buy an emerald necklace of wildlife habitat

laced throughout a four-county area. The concept was originally proposed in 1903 by the Olmsteds, renowned landscape architects. Today's Greenspaces Plan is a 1990s high tech version. Photographers were flown over the entire region, shooting infrared squares that pinpointed every remaining greenspace. Then, based on fieldwork by wildlife biologists, computer scientists generated enormous GIS maps of all the region's wetlands, uplands and forests, to a detail of ten acres. Computerized land use data was overlaid to indicate public versus private ownership.

The results are daunting. More than 91 percent of the inventoried natural areas are unprotected, with the potential for becoming condos and shopping malls. The frightening reality is brought home by the reports of the field biologists whose study, conducted only a year after the photography, shows that ten percent of the remaining greenspaces are already developed. Janet Cobb is right: there's no time to waste.

The biologists analyzed the maps and gave recommendations for what should be saved, based on the habitats' biological significance, and their connectedness. Bluffs, buttes, canyons, lakes, ponds, rivers, streams, creeks, marshes, forests, wetlands, lowlands, hills and valleys would be linked together in a green chain of jewels. Regional treasures would be protected, like the forest-cloaked Boring Lava Domes, Cooper Mountain with its rare ponderosa pines, and the Sentinel Tree, a giant Douglas-fir estimated to be at least 300 years old. This is a plan even developers can love, because it means, in essence, that if you save enough connected wildlife habitat, you can develop the rest and still maintain the green quality of life for which Portland and Oregon are renowned.

My fondness for the plan strikes closer to home: I think it will help save Sauvie Island's wildlife habitat. Last year more than 750,000 people visited Sauvie's wildlife areas, a number greater than the visitors to some national parks. Its familiarity, its proximity to downtown Portland draw crowds that seriously impact the viability of the wildlife habitat—mountain bicyclists veering off-road through the thicket of woods, fishermen littering with lines that choke waterfowl, people hacking off tree branches to build fires. Not only that, the rapidly increasing numbers have destroyed the sense of solitude. There are places on the island where, even three years ago, I could walk for an hour without seeing another soul; now dozens of people will pass on those same trails. With the Greenspaces Master Plan in place, there will be a wealth of well-publicized other places for people to go and watch wildlife, places nearer their own neighborhoods, places where they can seek their own solitude.

“Okay, let's move these posts into position,” Jeff yells over the clamorous motor of the fork lift. The 500-pound plywood flooring of the Birdhouse is hoisted a few feet in the air, held up by chains suspended from the lift. Jeff shows his diagrams to the crew of seven, who angle the posts accordingly in holes sawn in the floor.

Already past dark, their labors are illuminated by work lights, reflected in the wet



bricked pavement of Pioneer Square. City lights, from Nordstrom's, office buildings and the old Courthouse add a magical touch to the rough-hewn proceedings.

"Watch out!" someone yells as the crew chief deftly operates the lift, raising the floor, which swings slightly, to a height of seven feet. Jeff, wearing a black shirt and jeans, a navy baseball cap, with a tool belt around his waist, swings up on a ladder and drills holes for the massive bolts that connect the floor and posts.

"Be careful of the tools," he admonishes. "They have to be off the ground." Each of Pioneer Square's thousands of bricks is personal, embedded with the name of its donor. Any bricks chipped would have to be replaced, not easily nor inexpensively. So the pieces of the Birdhouse were configured last Saturday at Jeff's island farm, to keep construction work here to a minimum. I imagined everything would be connected in place in an hour or two, but we've been here longer than that already.

Three guys have climbed a ladder up onto the flooring. "I feel like a politician," one of them quips to the crowd of bystanders below. Then one by one, the walls are raised, two sidewalls, next the rear—solid pieces of wood—then the front, with its huge entry hole, giving the structure for the first time the distinct look of a birdhouse. I've seen enough of Jeff's work to recognize his style, sophisticated but a little funky and off-edge. "Right angles are overrated," he says, only half in jest. Yesterday he lost his job; the architecture firm where he worked ran out of projects. He was the last person to be let go. "What timing!" he says with a laugh. "Some people have resumes. I have a giant birdhouse."

"What are you saying's going to be tricky?" the crew chief asks, overhearing part of Jeff's conversation.

"The piece I call 'the tree,'" Jeff explains. "That 16-foot green wedge. It slides through the slot of the roof, but above the roof plane will be the real purple martin birdhouses. They have to get attached there—somehow—after the roof's in place."

Next the fork lift raises the roof. It seems to me to swing precariously, and I'm concerned for the guys inside the walls. The crew chief gently lowers it. "Hold it right there!" someone yells. It stays there, suspended, as the men walk in and out of the hole onto the front deck, looking up. "I think we'll have to cut it," Jeff says. The crew chief gets out from the fork lift and clambers up for a look. Back in the lift, he swings the roof around and down, suspending it about five feet off the ground. Jeff gets beneath it and saws, the roof moving slightly with the force. I watch nervously; if the roof should somehow fall, Jeff would be crushed. Even though the Birdhouse pieces had been built last Saturday, the guys hadn't had time to assemble them, and now the roof doesn't quite fit. When Jeff is satisfied that the problem's been taken care of, the roof is raised again, the guys guiding it upward. The scene has the quality of a barn-raising, the men lifting the pieces into place. A Birdhouse-raising; Ali and I are captivated by its spirit.

It's midnight by the time "the tree" is ready to be moved into place, and only four

guys are left. So Ali and I join in, helping to maneuver the 150-pound triangle, everyone yelling directions at once:

“Back it that way— toward us.”

“I got too much weight here.”

“Don’t move!”

“You pull in the bottom.”

“Six, eight more inches!”

“Hold it! That’s enough!”

Then Jeff rides the tines of the fork life, tied to it, lifted up to the top of “the tree” where he nails a pair of Dave Fouts’ purple martin houses in place. It’s clear how the human-sized Birdhouse mimics these ten-inch versions.

By two in the morning, the Birdhouse is built. We clean up the tools and everyone who’s left walks the stairs at the far end of the Square, looking down at the Birdhouse. “It seems like it belongs there,” someone comments. “Like it should stay there forever.”

“I can’t believe we pulled this off in three weeks,” I whisper to Ali.

“If we could do this, Donna, we can do anything!”

“Case for Better Tweetment” headlines Jonathan Nicholas’s newspaper story. “No cheep shots, please” is the caption on a photo of Alan and his son in the Birdhouse. Four-year-old Zach stars in television clips, climbing monkey-like in and out of the Birdhouse, while Alan talks about his concern for our disappearing greenspaces. The official campaign staff set up a booth, staffed morning through late evening with volunteers selling buttons, distributing flyers and explaining the measure. In the rush of bringing the Birdhouse into existence, we didn’t have time to schedule a full agenda of entertainment, but still managed to arrange for dancers, musicians, Halloween bird-mask making and an appearance by Syd the Red-tailed Hawk.

The evening of the second day I meet Alan for coffee, prepping him for a radio interview tomorrow. During the city’s most popular morning drive-time news show, he’ll be live on the air from the Birdhouse with Les Sarnoff of KINK radio.

“How’s it going?” I ask.

“It’s great! People can see me working in there and I come out on the deck and talk. Kids are fascinated. It’s been really gratifying. People will come by and say, ‘I saw

you on TV and wanted to come and support you.”

“While I was waiting for you I noticed that blond-haired man who walked by and gave you a thumbs-up.”

“Little things like that. It’s really terrific. A lot of people didn’t know about the measure. I’ve been down where the volunteers are passing out information. The response is overwhelmingly positive.”

“What’s it like inside the Birdhouse? Cramped?”

“No, it’s comfortable. There’s room for the drafting table and futon. Some friends have even come up to visit. One thing, though, that was totally unexpected. Because of the vent holes they drilled in the ceiling, the light comes in from all directions. When I go to sleep, it looks like stars or lightning bugs. A total surprise.”

“What does Zach think of it?”

“Zach loves being in the house. Someone asked him what kind of bird he is and he said he’s an eagle. I think he’ll be really sad when he has to leave. He was listening to me talking about how we need to save greenspaces for the next generations, so now he pokes his head out and tells people, “Vote Yes for me!”

Election night, I wait until past nine to go down to the campaign headquarters. Clinton has already accepted the presidency, but none of the local TV stations even bothered to give figures for Ballot Measure 26-1. We’re ahead when I arrive, just barely, and the tone is jubilant. I recognize dozens of people who’ve worked on the plan since the Greenspaces program began. As the district results dribble in, the winning edge decreases, and finally disappears. When I leave around midnight, it doesn’t look encouraging. The next day I can’t find the results in the newspaper, so I phone campaign headquarters. YES: 230,100. NO: 287, 778.

YES: 44.4 percent. Not bad, considering. In other places, similar measures were put on the ballot two or three times before they passed. We’ll have a strong chance next time, since election results will show us how people voted, district by district, and we only need to change the minds of 2.9 percent of the voters, many of whom were likely uninformed, or ill-informed about the measure. Six days after the election, *The Oregonian* publishes an editorial, “Try Again on Greenspaces.” It concludes, “We can’t save what is already gone. The region must act soon to save its natural treasures before they disappear forever.”

Out-of-pocket expenses for the Birdhouse in the Square come to nearly \$2,700.

Adding the pledges and button sales, we're still \$750 short. Ali and I write a letter to 75 possible contributors, saying "We went out on a limb" and ask them to each send us ten dollars. Almost to the penny, our balance is cleared. Jeff has found a new job, with the architecture firm that designed Pioneer Square.

Metropolitan Greenspaces will be placed on the ballot again. I'm hoping the measure will be called 26-1, so we can sell the remaining 1,400 buttons sitting in a box in my office. At a dinner at our house a few weeks ago, with homemade ravioli and two bottles of wine, the Guerrilla Gang toyed with the notion of a Wildlife Walk—hundreds, no, thousands, of people in animal costumes parading through all the communities.

Just another cheep shot for greenspaces.

# How to Get Involved

*This advice is drawn from three workshops that I organized when leading FAUNA, to help conservation activists become more effective. “The Basics of Public Speaking” was developed by Beverly Stein, then an Oregon state representative; and Alison Highberger, then co-producer of KATU-TV’s weekly “Town Hall” show. “How to Start a Friends Group” was a panel that included Jeffrey Gottfried, co-founder, Fans of Fanno Creek; Althea Broome, co-founder, the Wetlands Conservancy; Kathleen Maloney, community organizer who worked for 1000 Friends of Oregon; and Richard Seidman, founder of Friends of Trees. “How to Promote Your Group’s Events” was created by Marcia Hoyt, then advertising manager for Portland General Electric.*

## **Find Some Friends**

The first step in getting involved as a grassroots environmentalist is finding some like-minded people with whom you can share a commitment. If you don’t have a pressing agenda of your own, offer to volunteer for a local wildlife or environmental group. Chapters of national organizations like Audubon, the Nature Conservancy, the Sierra Club and others are always looking for help. Often state fish and wildlife departments and state, county and city parks have active volunteer groups. Maybe you’ve gone to some conservation event you’ve enjoyed—like the Salmon Festival or Wild Arts Festival—where your energy would be appreciated. Whether you have special skills like graphic design or computer programming, or enjoy simple tasks like answering the phone or stuffing envelopes, your contribution will be an enormous benefit.

What if you *do* have a hot issue—a manufacturing plant is dumping sewage in a creek, you’d love to see a trail built along an unused railway, a developer wants to chop down a stately old oak. Begin by seeking out some collaborators. It’s possible to tackle a campaign on your own, but it’s time-consuming, expensive, and can be wearying. To find others, look for people who are directly affected by the issue. They might be neighbors, co-workers or others in the community who would value what you propose.

Organizing pros will tell you that the best way to inspire people to join your conservation efforts is to simply ask—and to ask in person. Face-to-face discussion gives an issue a feeling of importance and it gives you the chance to get better acquainted with the potential volunteer regarding the subject. And when you do ask, be enthusiastic. Don’t apologize or belittle the nature of what you want to see accomplished.

You might be amazed at the support you garner. In Portland, people who were appalled at the imminent destruction of the “Corbett Street Oak” organized Friends of the Oak and drew together 300 members. They saved the tree.

Of course, you’re not likely to gather 300 people in a hurry by asking in person. Other community organizing techniques include inviting people to coffees and potlucks, posting notices in appropriate locations, sending flyers to people who are interested, and networking through the internet.

## **Get Official**

No matter if you're a group of five, you can look impressive on paper, and well you should. Letterhead will speak for you throughout hallowed offices and marbled hallways. You need a name and a logo that epitomize your mission. The Sauvie Island Conservancy's logo is a simple pen and ink illustration of two pintails in reeds, our name, and the subtitle, "dedicated to the preservation of rural life, wildlife and natural recreation areas." This letterhead's total cost was \$16.95—the \$9.95 source of the drawing, *Animals: 1419 Copyright-free Illustrations of Mammals, Birds, Fish and Insects* (Dover Publications, 1979) and \$7 to take the graphic designer to lunch, who volunteered to select type faces and paste up a layout, which we photocopy for our stationery and newsletters.

Behind the scenes, your group can be as formal or informal as you like. If you want to become a non-profit organization, you'll need to file for a 501c3 designation, which includes writing bylaws and forming an official Board of Directors. The non-profit designation, however, severely limits political activism.

Decide on an address or rent a post office box, establish dues, open a bank account, create a membership list, and perhaps initiate a newsletter. Elect officers or designate a key contact person. With most small groups, that person's phone number is the one used for the organization. Determine when and where you'll hold meetings.

### **Weave a Network**

Make connection with existing organizations, especially large conservation groups. When you're trying to get the attention of public officials, it helps to have an accumulation of letters from prominent organizations representing their membership supporting your issue. Suddenly you have thousands of people behind your cause.

### **Do Your Homework**

Credibility will be the cornerstone of your organization. If you're to be at all successful, those you approach to make decisions must be able to trust the information you present. You have to be honest. You have to know not only your stuff, but the other guy's stuff as well.

Beverly Stein says it's integral to become well-versed in the three Ps—Policy, Politics and Personalities. Research the policies behind your subject matter. Intimately understand the history and context of the issue. Be aware of your opponent's arguments. General comments such as "I don't like..." won't hold much sway. You have to be able to focus on the problems in terms of public policy and relevant laws.

Every issue is enmeshed in a political realm. Maybe the governor who supports your cause announces he won't run for re-election and his lame duck status adversely affects your situation. Or there's suddenly public outrage at a polluter's fouling the river and you might coast to victory on the voters' sentiments. Politics and political timing matter immensely. It's important to know your issue's place in the larger picture.

Then you have to consider the politicians themselves. They know who are their supporters. They are human, and while they make decisions based on their integrity, you can work to influence them. Develop a relationship with your elected officials so they trust you. Work on the campaigns of people you'd like to see get elected. Try to find a

champion from inside. Check voting records. Is a particular politician vulnerable right now and needs the support of your block of constituents? Part of your research is finding the right buttons to push with each elected official whose vote you need.

## **Get Political**

Before long, you'll find yourself speaking at a public hearing. If you've done your homework, you have lots of significant things to say. Now you need to focus on how to present your views most effectively.

Don't try to say everything yourself. Organize a lineup of speakers, and make sure many of them are experts in their fields—wildlife biologists, wetlands experts and so forth. Their testimony will carry a lot of weight. It's also very effective to include young people. Determine the time limit the hearing allots for each speaker—often only three minutes, with a buzzer that requires you to finish that sentence then stop talking. Discuss with everyone what aspect of the issue they'll address and have them write out and time with a stopwatch what they expect to say. You don't want to be cut off before you get to the main point you want to make.

To arrange the order of speakers, follow the basic elements of producing a performance: Begin with something that will grab the audience's attention. Then move into a rhythm and flow—perhaps soft-spoken speakers alternated with more energetic and boisterous ones. And give great consideration to who will go last—what thought you want to leave people with. It's often a good idea to save some people (and allotted minutes) for the end to rebut any convincing arguments that arise from the opposition during the hearing.

Dress up. Look your public best. It gives you credibility. Even though you've prepared what you want to say, when you testify, don't read it. Know it well, look directly at the officials, and talk. As Beverly Stein says, "Speak from the heart. There's nothing more appealing." Be positive and upbeat. Give your qualifications and get to the point. Don't take longer than the allotted time. If somebody before you said essentially what you planned to say, don't repeat it. Just add that you support so-and-so's comments. Ask specifically for what you want. Don't attack, and don't burn your bridges. Sometimes you'll lose; don't lash out. Visual aids—maps, slides and videos—can be extremely effective at carrying your message with immediacy. Consider the politicians or officials who have been sitting there for hours. As one commented, "We like to be entertained." Well-researched and powerfully presented face-to-face testimony can be as dramatic as a television mystery and is often more potent at changing minds than hundreds of letters and petitions.

Be thoughtful of your language. Give names to places and remarkable flora and fauna you want to save. Don't say "the drainage ditch." Call it "the tributary of Balch Creek, the source of clean water for..." In all the county reports of the Tualatin mountains they were referred to as "the west hills." I refused to call them hills; "mountains" evokes a stronger emotional response. Language has a symbolism and the words you choose are important.

If you're fighting a well-funded opponent with an attorney, make sure you bring your own "grey suit"—either a *pro bono* attorney who will volunteer to help at no charge, or drum up the money to pay an attorney's fees for a bit of prep work and showing up at

the hearing. We defeated a proposal where we estimate the developer spent about a quarter-million dollars, and we spent \$1,200 on an attorney. Despite your best planning and research, a hearing, just like a trial, can bring forth all sorts of unexpected twists. More times than I can recall, while we were sputtering at some bewildering or outrageous turn of events, our attorney recognized what was going on, knew the legal path through the quandary and ad-libbed brilliantly to save the day.

### **Become Media-Savvy**

Television, radio, newspapers and the internet can carry your message to a vast audience and can have enormous impact on the political climate. Create a media list and plan a communications campaign.

To get television coverage, you need an event that's visual; remember that you're selling pictures. Make it newsworthy, give it a twist. Consciously plan the timing—Saturdays and Sundays are slow news days, and more likely to be covered, but will generate a smaller audience. News broadcasts are typically at noon, 5:00 and 11:00, so you have to allow time for a producer to shoot the event, get back to the station and edit a story in time to get it on the air.

Two weeks in advance, send a succinct, well-written, one-page Press Release. At the TV station where Alison Highberger worked, about one story out of 100 press releases actually gets covered, so you need to make yours as appealing as possible. Send a Media Advisory version of the release a week before the event, and prepare a Fact Sheet to hand out to media people who attend. Then phone the station the day before the event, and again early that morning, between 7:00 and 8:30 a.m.

Spend time in advance prepping people to speak on camera. Learn sound bites; think of crisp, perhaps clever one-line quotes that encapsulate your message. It's good if they're ten seconds or less; avoid being a "motor mouth." Consider what questions you might be asked and plan for answers. Don't wear distracting things, like a big hat. If you feel you've bungled a response, ask if you can try again. Reporters want you to look good. You might find yourself an "expert" they'll call on when similar issues arise.

For radio, follow essentially the same format. The press release you send to a newspaper should include a photograph. Some smaller papers will print your photo and story as written. You also can generate a Letters to the Editor campaign. And many newspapers give space to readers' editorials or In My Opinion columns that are excellent forums for airing your perspective to a large audience.

The internet offers seemingly endless possibilities for getting out a message, including YouTube videos, electronic newsletters and websites covering your issue.

### **Find More Friends**

With any group, burnout is inevitable. Even the most ardent conservationists may drop out for awhile, or have less time to contribute. You'll need to continually renew your supply of volunteers. Sometimes people will hear about you, be inspired by what you're doing and seek you out. Other times you'll have to try and actively encourage people to join. Look for every opportunity to do that—many Earth Day and other environmental events offer the chance to set up a table and recruit volunteers. Prepare a



brochure about your group and arrange a photo display to attract people to your agenda.

### **Develop Pro-Active Projects**

It's not healthy for your own psyche, or your group's image, to feel that you're always "against" something, or trying to stop something. Be sure to include projects that are nurturing: Restore a wetland. Start a land trust, and actually purchase natural areas. Reach out and spread the work to others, speaking at schools, taking students and teachers on field trips, writing educational material. Offer greenspace tours through your city's bureau of parks. Help create wildlife refuges. Work to improve habitat policy. Volunteer for bird counts and field studies. Help with political campaigns of candidates and issues important to you. Besides feeling wonderful and immeasurably spreading your conservation knowledge and values, you'll build goodwill and help create a positive image for your organization.

### **Remember to Celebrate!**

"Who's bringing the champagne?" is one of the Sauvie Island Conservancy's favorite lines. It's important to have fun and celebrate. Mark each victory with a special event—Sunday brunch on a riverhouse, a picnic paddle, a champagne dinner. Even celebrate a loss, because through your efforts, the public must have learned something that will be of value later.

Laugh a lot. Thank each other. Congratulate each other. Let yourselves feel exultant, feel proud, feel delighted that you have truly helped save the world, if just a small part of it. "Think globally, act locally" is environmentalism's motto. You're doing just that. Go often to the place you've protected, and appreciate your work. Thank reporters and public officials. Heap praise on those who have helped.

Look for formal and meaningful ways to recognize people. Last autumn, on a hike through an ancient forest during the Salmon Festival, I was stopped by a plaque set in stone that named these woods "The Pauline Anderson Forest." More than anyone, Pauline had protected our county's natural resources as a county commissioner. One of her most memorable legacies was a fund that allots money from the sale of county property to purchase natural areas. She's retired now, but still vibrant, and alive to see a magnificent forest bear her name. Everyone who passes through there can be inspired by her work.

The earth needs heroes and heroines. When you contribute your time, energy and money to conservation work, recognize that you are one of them. Enjoy, and celebrate!

# Conservation Organizations

## Personal Favorites

### National

#### **American Rivers**

*Dedicated to the protection and restoration of North America's rivers*

1101 14th Street NW  
Suite 1400  
Washington, DC 20005  
Phone: (202) 347-7550  
Fax: (202) 347-9240  
[www.americanrivers.org](http://www.americanrivers.org)

#### **Bat Conservation International**

*Bat education, conservation and scientific research*

P.O. Box 162603  
Austin, TX 78716  
Phone: (512) 327-9721  
Fax: (512) 327-9724  
[www.batcon.org](http://www.batcon.org)

#### **Defenders of Wildlife**

*Saving imperiled wildlife and championing the Endangered Species Act*

1130 17th Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20036  
1-800-385-9712 (toll-free 24/7)  
[www.defenders.org](http://www.defenders.org)

#### **Earth First!**

*Front-line, direct action approach to protecting wilderness*

[www.earthfirst.org](http://www.earthfirst.org)

#### **Earth Island Institute**

*Conservation, preservation, and restoration of the global environment*

300 Broadway, Suite 28  
San Francisco, CA 94133-3312  
Phone: (415) 788-3666  
Fax: (415) 788-7324  
[www.earthisland.org](http://www.earthisland.org)

#### **Greenpeace**

*Actively working to address threats to the planet*

702 H Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001  
(202) 462-1177  
[www.greenpeace.org](http://www.greenpeace.org)

#### **Lighthawk**

***Volunteer-based environmental aviation organization offering aerial perspectives for critical issues***

PO Box 653  
Lander, WY 82520  
Phone: (307) 332-3242  
Fax: (888) 297-0156  
[www.lighthawk.org](http://www.lighthawk.org)

**National Audubon Society**

***Conservation and restoration of natural ecosystems, focusing on birds and other wildlife***

National Audubon Society  
225 Varick Street, 7th floor  
NY, NY 10014  
(212) 979-3000  
[www.audubon.org](http://www.audubon.org)

**National Wildlife Federation**

***Inspiring people to protect wildlife for our children's future***

National Wildlife Federation  
11100 Wildlife Center Drive  
Reston, VA 20190-5362  
1-800-822-9919  
[www.nwf.org](http://www.nwf.org)

**The Nature Conservancy**

***Purchases land around the world for habitat protection***

The Nature Conservancy  
4245 North Fairfax Drive, Suite 100  
Arlington, VA 22203-1606  
(703) 841-5300  
[www.nature.org](http://www.nature.org)

**Sierra Club**

***America's oldest and largest grassroots environmental organization***

85 Second Street, 2nd Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
Phone: (415) 977-5500  
Fax: (415) 977-5799  
[www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org)

**The Trust for Public Land**

***Help with land conservation projects and ballot measures***

116 New Montgomery St., 4th Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94105  
Phone: (415) 495-4014  
FAX (415) 495-4103  
1-800-714-LAND  
[www.tpl.org](http://www.tpl.org)

**World Wildlife Fund**

***The largest multinational conservation organization in the world***

1250 Twenty-Fourth Street, N.W.

Washington, DC 20090-7180  
(202) 293-4800  
www.worldwildlife.org

## Portland Oregon and Region

### **Audubon Society of Portland**

*Promoting enjoyment, understanding and protection of native birds and other wildlife and their habitats*

5151 NW Cornell Rd.  
Portland, OR 97210  
Phone: (503) 292-6855  
FAX (503) 292-1021  
www.audubonportland.org

### **Columbia Land Trust**

*Preservation of lands along the Columbia River, Pacific Coast and estuary, Columbia Gorge and eastern Cascade watersheds*

1351 Officers' Row  
Vancouver, Washington 98661  
Phone: (360) 696-0131  
FAX: (360) 696-1847  
www.columbialandtrust.org

### **1000 Friends of Oregon**

*Education and advocacy as the citizens' voice for sound land use planning*

534 SW Third Ave., Suite 300  
Portland, OR 97204  
(503) 497-1000  
www.friends.org

### **Riverkeepers: Columbia Riverkeeper**

*Restoring and protecting the water quality of the entire Columbia River and all life connected to it*

724 Oak Street  
Hood River, OR 97031  
Phone: (541) 387-3030  
Fax (541) 387-3029  
www.columbiariverkeeper.org

### **Riverkeepers: Tualatin Riverkeepers**

*Working to protect and restore the Tualatin River system*

12360 SW Main Street, Suite 100  
Tigard, OR 97233  
Phone: (503) 620-7505  
FAX: (503) 620-7645  
www.tualatinriverkeepers.org

### **Riverkeepers: Willamette Riverkeeper**

*Working to enable the Willamette to function more naturally, with cold, clean water, and provide healthy habitat for fish and wildlife*

Portland Boathouse:

1515 SE Water Ave #102  
Portland, Oregon 97214  
Phone: (503) 223-6418  
Fax: (503) 228-1960  
[www.willamette-riverkeeper.org](http://www.willamette-riverkeeper.org)

**Three Rivers Land Conservancy**

*Conservation of private natural land in the watersheds of the Clackamas, Tualatin,  
and lower Willamette Rivers*

PO Box 1116  
Lake Oswego, Oregon 97035  
Phone: (503) 699-9825  
Fax: (503) 699-9827  
[www.trlc.org](http://www.trlc.org)

For more information about these and hundreds of other national, regional and local conservation organizations check the *Encyclopedia of Associations* published by Thomson Reuters. In the Portland, Oregon region, access Portland Audubon's *Natural Resources Directory* through [www.urbanfauna.org](http://www.urbanfauna.org).

# Selected Reading and Reference

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