



# 2022 Annual Report

## Thinking Back, Looking Forward, Together.



Twenty years ago, the generosity and vision of the Green family allowed us to conserve nearly 1,000 acres of land at the confluence of the McKenzie and Willamette Rivers. Over the years to follow, this project changed the scale at which

the McKenzie River Trust works and dreams. Since that time, the reach of our work has extended well beyond the McKenzie watershed, but our inspiration still comes from community-minded landowners, partner organizations, and supporters like you. Your generosity provides us with the means and the confidence to take on more complex initiatives, expand the reach of our services, and forge new and innovative partnerships on behalf of the land, water, and people of western Oregon.

Strong partnerships have enabled us to respond to the unique opportunities of the last 22 years. And perhaps more importantly,

thoughtful collaborations can better prepare us for the challenges ahead, especially those posed by a changing climate. At our core, McKenzie River Trust still has eyes for land, water, and the plants and critters that enliven the earth. But those eyes have grown more numerous, helping broaden our perspective on what caring for land and water means to the communities of people who equally put the “life” in life on earth. I hope the stories that follow strengthen your resolve to support land and water conservation. After all, you are the McKenzie River Trust.

*Joe Moll*

Volunteers come together to care for land and water by removing invasive scotch broom plants at the Willamette Confluence property.





# Protecting Land from the Cascades to the Coast

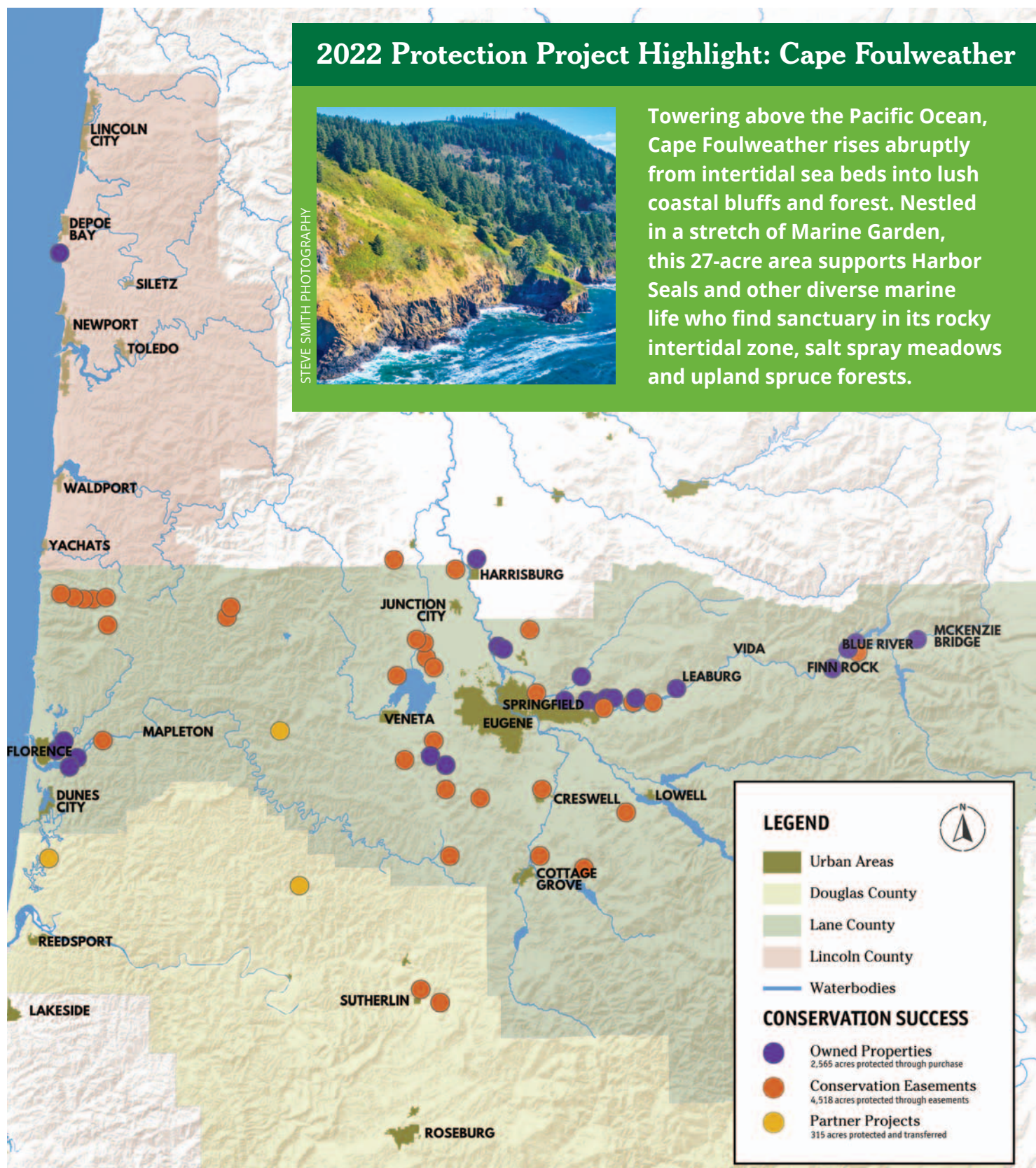
Since 1989, with the support of people like you, we have protected nearly 9,000 acres of land across western Oregon. With offices in both Eugene and Newport, our staff and partners are working across the region to help protect and care for the lands and rivers we all cherish.

## 2022 Protection Project Highlight: Cape Foulweather



STEVE SMITH PHOTOGRAPHY

Towering above the Pacific Ocean, Cape Foulweather rises abruptly from intertidal sea beds into lush coastal bluffs and forest. Nestled in a stretch of Marine Garden, this 27-acre area supports Harbor Seals and other diverse marine life who find sanctuary in its rocky intertidal zone, salt spray meadows and upland spruce forests.





# History Shapes a New Future for the Siuslaw River Estuary



Laura Brophy (left) visits Waite Ranch in 2011 as a part of her research to better understand and map the estuaries of Oregon.

For more than 20 years, wetland scientist Laura Brophy has been pioneering research on the wetlands of Oregon's central coast. Beginning at a time when technology was just beginning to expand with new tools and resources for understanding our landscape, she has turned questions into new understanding to generate some of the most widely used scientific data for the region. Reflecting on more than two decades of research, Laura highlights the impact of advancing technology to understand coastal wetlands. "In the early 2000s, we began to better understand the ecology of tidal wetlands. And by the 20-teens, we had the tools and experience to accurately map these areas – and we found that many of them were historically tidal swamps. This is when we really began understanding the scale of loss. By studying and mapping the estuaries, we found that over 90% of these tidal swamps had been lost."

As both a technical researcher and a field ecologist, Laura has brought a unique lens and approach to unveiling a lost understanding of how areas such as the Siuslaw estuary functioned before European settlers moved west. Now this research is being put into restoration practice at McKenzie River Trust as

our partners prepare to break ground on a tidal restoration project 10 years in the making.

Forested tidal swamps of the central coast, with their spreading Sitka spruce trees, are a unique estuary feature, especially in the Siuslaw Watershed. The forests are formed among shifting tides that can rise and fall as much as 8 to 10 feet daily. Fed by reliable freshwater flows from the coast range, these forests are able to flourish in brackish waters and formerly lined the river from the upper estuary to the lower tidal marshes. Researchers have found that the soils in these brackish areas are highly ecologically productive.



Staff and partners monitor sediment accretion in 2013. Research and monitoring of the area have helped inform the restoration project design for Waite Ranch.

With lower salinity, soft-bodied invertebrates are able to thrive in the high-nutrient forested environment. As the tide pulses daily, these critters are pumped from the soils and into the wetland channels where they are available for salmon moving between fresh and saltwater environments.

Having focused so much of her efforts on understanding and mapping the historic wetlands of the Siuslaw Basin, Laura is excited that restoration is on

the horizon for Waite Ranch, a historic forested and shrub tidal wetland turned cattle ranch in the 1800s. "When we were studying soils at the ranch, I was working on the upstream end of the site taking samples. My auger sank into the ground like butter. I had to stop and absorb what it meant. This site is still carrying its history as a tidal swamp. It was right there in the soft soil below me. I had to pause in that moment and appreciate that beautiful connection to the past." Looking to the future, Laura hopes that the area becomes an integrated system working with natural forces in place. "To see an in-balance system functioning with the pulse of the tides is deeply soul satisfying."

With the help of Laura's research, McKenzie River Trust and our partners at the Confederated Tribes of Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians and the Siuslaw Watershed Council, are ready to break ground on restoring nearly 200 acres of this unique habitat lost over the past century. Supported by more than a decade of research, this project will reconnect the land back to the rivers and tides that have shaped it for thousands of years.

# Leaving a Legacy for Land and Water



ELIZABETH GOWARD

Judy and David Berg at their home in South Eugene, Oregon

Local couple Judy and David Berg have always had a passion for the natural world. As a teenager, Judy realized that her life's dream was to make a contribution. How that would manifest itself became clear only years later when she followed a graduate professor's invitation to study African elephant behavior in atypical captivity. From African elephants to river otters and beavers, Judy spent forty years researching endangered species, and writing two creative non-fiction books on the natural history of these

animals. "Seeing my first otter emerge from a hole in the ice was one of the most exciting moments of my life." Judy's dream was being realized. Her passion was contagious, and upon retirement, David began a volunteer career developing conservation project databases that would extend over 11,000 hours during 15 years.

Having contributed to conservation efforts across the globe, Judy and David knew that they wanted to give back. "Freshwater systems are essential to the entire range of biodiverse wildlife species – microorganisms, mollusks, fish, amphibians, birds, and mammals – that call them home. Rivers became especially important to us during Judy's field research on river otters and beavers in the upper Colorado River watershed. That importance never waned," shares David. "When we moved to Oregon twenty years ago, we were thrilled to find that the vision of McKenzie River Trust to protect and care for this precious resource aligned with ours.

We were happy to dedicate a portion of our estate to their care through the Confluence Legacy Club with the satisfaction that our vision would be realized and Judy's dream fulfilled."

When asked why Judy and David have chosen to invest locally through McKenzie River Trust, David shares that "Biodiversity extinction and climate change are the most severe threats facing the planet today. By preserving freshwater systems through projects like Green Island, the Willamette Confluence, Waite Ranch, and North Fork Marsh – and even marine systems like Cape Foulweather – McKenzie River Trust flexes its arm in the fight against extinction by providing habitat for the diverse wildlife that call these places home. Efforts funded by our – and others' – gifts to the Confluence Legacy Club provide the income to support these projects and ultimately fulfill the dream of wildlife conservation."

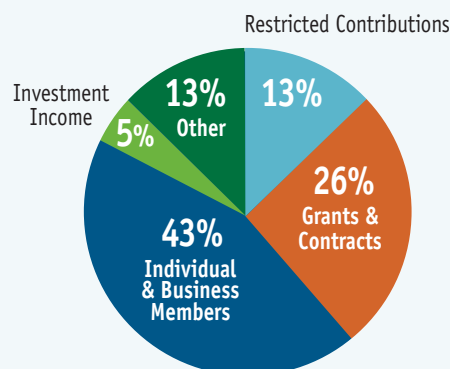
If you have listed McKenzie River Trust in your estate plans, please let us know so that we can welcome you to the Confluence Legacy Club. To learn more about planned giving, please visit us online at [www.mckenzie river.org/legacy](http://www.mckenzie river.org/legacy)

## FINANCIALS

Declining financial markets led to \$1.79m of unrealized investment losses in 2022. We hold our investments long-term for the purpose of caring for conserved lands and expect to recover these losses in future years. Investment losses have been excluded from these charts.

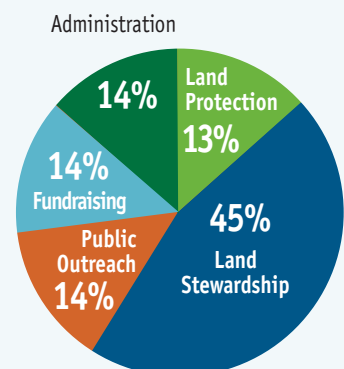
### 2022 INCOME:

**\$2,899,960**

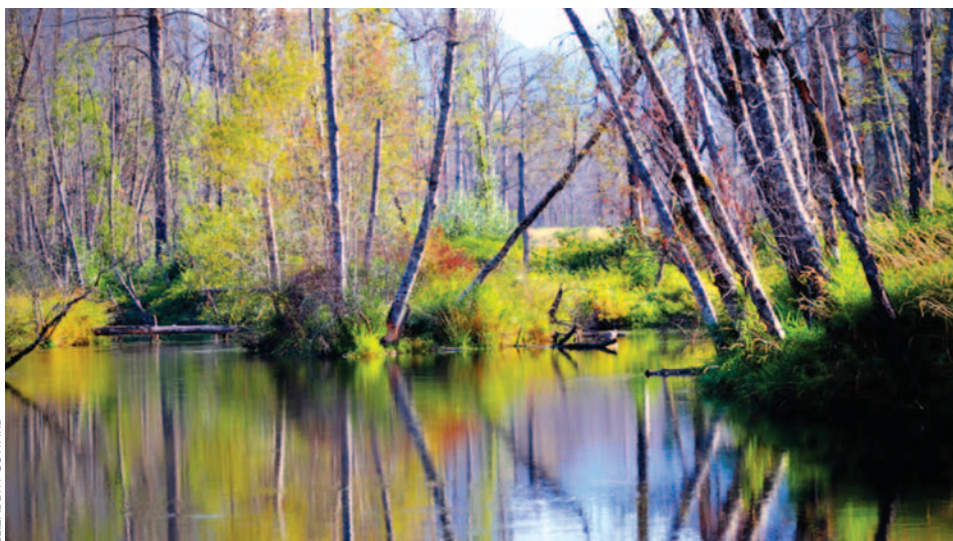


### 2022 EXPENSES:

**\$2,469,226**







A young forest emerges along the McKenzie River, spreading hope and renewal in the wake of the Holiday Farm Fire.

## After the Fire

In the two years since the September 2020 Holiday Farm Fire, residents of the McKenzie River valley have worked steadily to rebuild community. That was evident this past year both in the number of construction projects that moved forward and in the collective gatherings of people pulling together to heal the land. One of those collaborations was the Pure Water Partners (PWP).

The Pure Water Partners arose from discussions following a 2010 Lane County assessment of floodplain development. Based on the idea that landowners along the river are in a good place to care for it, the Eugene Water

and Electric Board (EWEB) convened partners including the McKenzie Watershed Council, the Upper Willamette Soil and Water Conservation District, the Willamette National Forest, and MRT to develop a program of financial and technical assistance incentives for floodplain stewardship. The Holiday Farm fire initially shifted the group's attention to emergency response efforts which has led to long-term investments in restorative planting and care for the impacted landscape. Landowners along the water who have been affected by the fire are eligible for support with landscape design, tree and shrub planting, and fire-wise forest management consulting and services provided by PWP members.

Anyah Preston joined MRT in 2022 to focus on PWP stewardship efforts. "When I first encountered the watershed and the people calling it home, I was blown away by the overall positive mindset of the community. The McKenzie River Valley really came together to not only recuperate and clean-up after such a devastating fire, but to also build their community and watershed back better. We have had an overwhelming amount of participation in the program over the last few years, and I think we can attribute the engagement of the community and landowners back to their commitment and love for the river itself. The McKenzie River is a special place to many, something I learned after just a few trips up Highway 126. Getting to work side by side with landowners, the main stewards of the environment, and watch as new native plants regenerate alongside all of our riparian restoration efforts has been the most rewarding part of it all."

In 2022, the PWP worked with 129 landowners to complete 124 planting projects. In the coming years, PWP staff will work with landowners to ensure these areas recover fully so the banks of the McKenzie River will continue to inspire and nourish for generations to come.

### VOLUNTEERING BY THE NUMBERS



**483**  
Volunteers

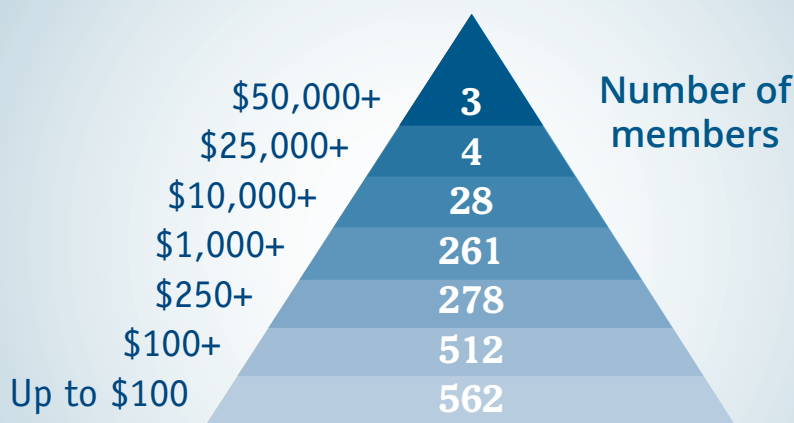


**4,855**  
Hours Worked



**86**  
Volunteer  
Projects

### COMMUNITY GIVING



# Burning for Bumblebees



BRENT ROSS

Participants learn about native pollinators through an Oregon Bee Atlas Training in 2022.

McKenzie River Trust protects and cares for thousands of acres of land across western Oregon, investing in the long-term stewardship of these places and the plants and animals who call them home. From Roosevelt elk to twelve-spotted skimmers, our stewardship team works throughout the seasons to not only protect but

improve habitat across our service area. In 2022, this dedication extended to learning more about native bumblebees through collaborative efforts with the Pacific Northwest Bumble Bee Atlas and Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians. With more than 500 species of bees calling Oregon home, this area is home to nearly 30 species of

bumblebees alone. These charismatic pollinators are integral to the health of the lands around us. After attending a training in June, Land Steward, Brent Ross, along with long-time Bee Atlas and MRT volunteer, Steve Soltesz, launched an initial season of monitoring on the recently acquired Willamette Confluence Property. Reflecting on the work, Brent shares that “we’re particularly interested in how bumblebee populations change over time, especially in areas that are being managed with ecological burning. This first season was the first touchpoint of what will hopefully be a longer-term study looking at the benefits of returning good fire to the landscape. Not just for native plant communities, but the threatened bumblebees who rely on them for survival.”

## An Outdoors for Everybody



JOHN HELMER

Local Eugene area club, the Wednesday Wheelers, get out on the land at the Willamette Confluence Preserve.

Local bird experts, Dan and Barbara Gleason, have always been interested in inclusivity, as both grew up with family members who experienced limited mobility. But in 2019 their interest

became more personal when Dan was diagnosed with leukemia. Although he is now in full remission, the battle left him visually impaired and with poor balance. These new challenges presented Dan

and Barbara with an opportunity to explore new ways to connect with the birds they love and take advantage of the “healing nature of nature.”

Inspired by Dan’s own adaptations to his passion for birds and his eagerness to get people outside and connected to the natural world, MRT has partnered with the Gleasons and local volunteer John Helmer to deepen our investments in programs that connect people of all abilities to the lands we protect. Through programs like “Nature Your Way,” limited mobility bus tours held in partnership with Willamalane and the City of Eugene, and adaptive recreation trainings for volunteers and tour guides, we’re expanding the reach of our outreach programs so that everybody, no matter their ability can connect with the lands and rivers we cherish in western Oregon.



# Waite Ranch Supports Purple Martin Research on Oregon's Coast

Purple Martins are migratory birds in Oregon. Researchers are conducting a 4-year study to learn where they overwinter in hopes of addressing population decline for the western subspecies of this stunning swallow.



JEFF HUTH

Protecting critical habitats in areas like Waite Ranch allows McKenzie River Trust to partner with the scientific research community to better understand the plants, animals, and systems that surround us. Dr. Sarah Rockwell, a Research Biologist at the Klamath Bird Observatory, is one of the lead researchers set on finding out where the western populations of Purple Martins (*Progne subis*) migrate to during the winter. Beginning in 2020, with support from McKenzie River Trust volunteers, the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Geological Survey and Purple Martin Conservation

Association, Sarah has been strapping Purple Martins up with lightweight GPS backpacks in hopes that they will lead the local scientific community to their unknown winter home.

The “backpack” is actually a leg-loop harness with a very small GPS device attached. The technology for such a small GPS unit was only recently developed. In 2013-2014, the device was first used to study the migratory route of the small Ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapilla*) on the east coast with findings published in 2015. This research project in the Siuslaw watershed is the first for Oregon's Purple Martin populations which are part of the western subspecies. Similar research has been conducted for east coast populations and this project will help to fill in regional data gaps for this migratory species.

Researchers like Sarah suspect that the western United States subspecies of Purple Martins spend their winters in Brazil based on a small amount of previous data, but they don't know precisely where. In fact, not much about these birds are known compared to their eastern counterparts. There is currently

very little data about where they go, or why their populations are declining. By finding out precisely where they migrate in the winter, conservationists can work across borders toward protecting this special species.

Until there is more information about where the Purple Martins overwinter, the cause of their population decline is only speculation. However, many aerial insectivores such as the Purple Martin have been showing steep population declines in recent years. There is growing concern that the application of pesticides in industrial agriculture may be killing off the food that many birds need to survive. Climate change is also a consideration. Adult insects are



JOE METZLER

A female Purple Martin wears an ultralight tracking backpack as part of the PUMA research project.

triggered to emerge during particular seasonal shifts. With climate change, their emergence timing may be different than it has been in the past. There is concern that insect-eating birds like the Purple Martin's aren't adapting quickly enough to this change in insect emergence patterns.

This project is possible through the collaboration of the Klamath Bird Observatory, the Siuslaw National Forest, and the United States Geological Survey, with a special thank you to Joe Metzler, for his critical volunteer leadership in the project.



JOE METZLER

The PUMA research team works at night to equip purple martins with GPS-tracking backpacks in hopes of learning where they overwinter.



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## McKenzie River Trust welcomes you to join us on the land.

### Explore Green Island!

Take a walk near the place the Willamette and the McKenzie Rivers meet. Observe 15 years of tree-planting work on Green Island, a habitat for beaver, river otter, and over 150 species of birds. If you're looking for a special place to connect to nature this year, join in the fun on the second Saturday, March through December, and explore the Living Rivers in your backyard!

### Explora Green Island!

Tome una caminata cerca de donde los ríos Willamette y MacKenzie se encuentran. Observe los 15 años de trabajo de la plantación de arboles en Green Island, un habitat para el castor, la nutria de río, y mas de 150 especies de pájaros. Si esta buscando por un lugar especial para conectarse con la naturaleza este año. Unete a la diversión cada Segundo Sábado del mes empezando desde Marzo hasta Diciembre, y explora los Ríos vivos en tu jardín!



TIM GRAUDIER BEAUTIFUL OREGON



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