



Initial Biological Survey of the Fite Property

Conducted by
Marrowstone Island
Residents

July 28-August 18, 2018

Overview

During late July and August of 2018, a ground survey conducted by residents of Marrowstone Island cataloged over 100 species of plants and animals, and identified five major habitat types, on a 51 acre parcel known as the Fite property. The significantly historical Fite homestead provides a fabric of interconnected habitat types that potentially support a broad diversity of native plant and animal species on this island in the Salish Sea.

Habitat Types

Within the boundaries of the property are five major habitat types:

- A large **pond/marsh** (China Pond) central on the tract uniformly covered by Broadleaf Cattail. The perimeter of the wetland is populated by Sitka and Pacific Willow, Pacific Crabapple and Western Skunk Cabbage. A smaller wetland to the northwest consists of primarily Salmonberry and Nootka Rose.
- A **mature upland forest** comprised primarily of Western Red Cedar, Grand Fir, Douglas Fir and Bigleaf Maple to the east and southeast of the marsh. Understory includes large numbers of OceanSpray, Red Huckleberry, Dwarf Oregon Grape and Western Sword Fern.
- A **younger forest** to the southwest and west is primarily Red Alder, but includes younger Bigleaf Maple and Grand Fir. North of the central pond is habitat that transitions from the mature woods to the east to the younger mix of Red Alder, Salmonberry and Nootka Rose to the west.
- Between East Marrowstone Road and Admiralty Inlet is a **mature forest** of Western Red Cedar and Bigleaf Maple that leads to a high bluff.
- The **bluff and shoreline** comprise the fifth habitat type. The shore area has a natural rock jetty along with a cobble and sand beach. Offshore are a couple of large rocks on which several pinniped species have been observed to haul out.



Pacific Trillium was found throughout the mature woods.

Animal Species

The following species were identified, from either direct observation or from tracks and signs left behind. The time of year was not conducive to making significant bird observations.

Coast Mole
Columbian Black-tail Deer
Cougar
Coyote
Douglas Squirrel
Harbor Seal
Raccoon
Bald Eagle
Barred Owl
Belted Kingfisher
Bonaparte's Gull
Brown Creeper
Chestnut-backed Chickadee
Cooper's Hawk

Dark-eyed Junco
Glaucous Winged Gull
Great Blue Heron
Heerman's Gull
Mew Gull
Pileated Woodpecker
Red Tailed Hawk
Red-Breasted Nuthatch
Song Sparrow
Spotted Towhee
Swainson's Thrush
Red-Legged Frog
Banana Slug



*Great Blue Heron fishing
in the intertidal zone.*

Plant Species

The following species were identified, some sighted in multiple habitat types.

Douglas Fir
Grand Fir
Western Hemlock
Western Red Cedar
Bigleaf Maple
Madrona
Red Alder
Pacific Willow
Sitka Willow
Beaked Hazelnut
Oceanspray
Oso berry/Indian Plum
Pacific Crab Apple
Red Huckleberry
Salmonberry
Snowberry
Thimbleberry
Baldhip Rose
Hardhack
Nootka Rose

Orange Honeysuckle
Red Elderberry
Salal
Common Rush
Slough Sedge
Broadleaf Cattail
Western Skunk Cabbage
Bittersweet Nightshade
Field Mint
American Brooklime
Aquatic Forget-Me-Not
Seep Monkeyflower

Unbranched Bur-Reed
Water Parsley
Western Sword Fern
Lady Fern
Western Lily of the Valley
False Solomon's Seal
Western Star Flower
Threelobed Foamflower
Broadleaved Willowherb
Pacific Trillium
Trailing Blackberry
Twinflower
Dwarf Oregon Grape
Pearly Everlasting
American Searocket
Coastal Burnweed
Holly (invasive)
Spurge Laurel (invasive)
Common Ivy (invasive)
Cherry Laurel



*Twinflower and Western Star Flower
growing in the bluff forest*

Fungus/Lichen Species

The following species were identified.

Artist's Bracket (two species)
Dyer's Polypore
Oyster Mushroom
Russula sp.
Shaggy Parasol
Short-stemmed Russula
Turkey-Tail Mushroom

Gold Dust Lichen
Membranous Pelt Lichen
Oak Moss Lichen
Old Man's Beard Lichen
Ramalina sp.
Wrinkled Crust Lichen



*Membranous Pelt Lichen
on the forest floor.*

HIGHLIGHTS

Native plants

The majority of plants identified at the site are native to the Pacific Northwest. From the canopy of conifers and maples, through the understory of huckleberry, oceanspray, beaked hazelnut, snowberry, osoberry and mahonia, to the small plants and wildflowers of the forest floor, we observed myriad native forest plants. Notable observations were the carpets of Western Lily of the Valley, wetland wildflowers like Seep Monkeyflower, pockets of Pacific Trillium, and beach wildflowers such as American Searocket and Pearly Everlasting. In addition, a number of invasive species were observed, some widely distributed. A concerted removal of plants listed as noxious weeds would be a worthwhile project for a volunteer's corps.

Large Wetland

China Pond is of biological and historical significance. Historically it was of value to early islanders as a fresh water source, and today it provides unique habitat to myriad plants and animals. While the current pond is thickly covered with cattails, the perimeter has an abundance of alder snags presenting rich opportunities for wildlife, along with numerous skunk cabbage, crabapple and willow. Our survey, and oral accounts, revealed the pond and wetland may have been drained to allow for property development. A ditch appears to have been dug to drain the wetlands into the roadside ditch on Flagler Road. Removing the ditch could potentially restore the wetlands to a more natural state and greater biological diversity.

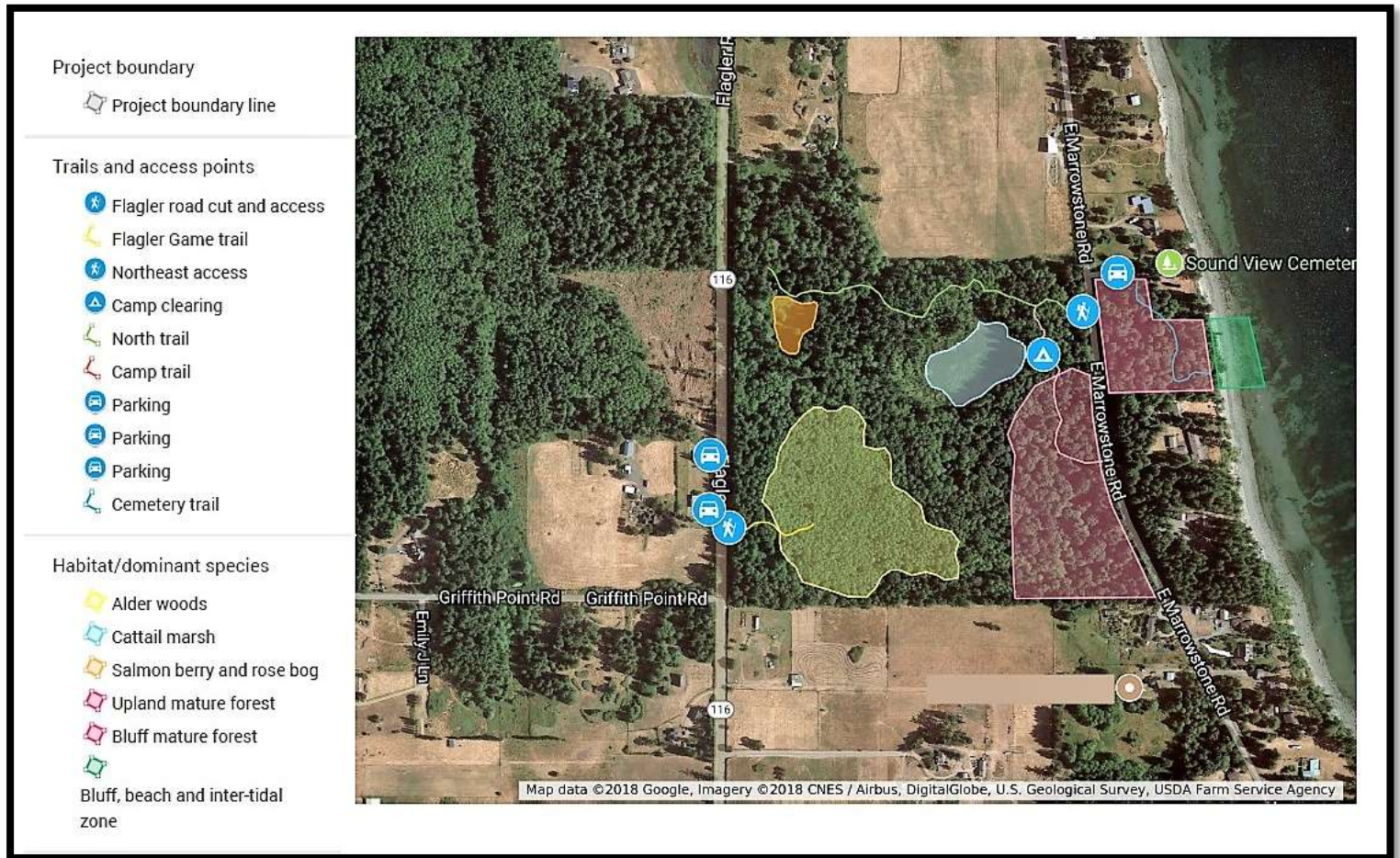
Mature Forest

There is stump evidence the property once supported massive old growth, likely felled over one hundred years ago. The oldest trees on the parcel appear to be around 100-120 years of age. The shading of the high canopy in the mature forest creates a low-light habitat for thick stands of sword fern and natural clearings with carpets of small native plants and wildflowers.

Coastal Bluff

The bluff on the easternmost part of the property faces onto Admiralty Inlet. It appears to be a typical glacial till bluff that has recently sloughed a large piece onto the cobble beach below. There is a presence of some stabilizing native vegetation at the top of the bluff. We did not see any evidence of nesting birds, although adjacent parcels have Rough Wing Swallow and Belted Kingfisher nesting holes.

Google Map of Survey Project



Associated Web Links

- The survey project site on iNaturalist, listing species photo documented, is located at www.inaturalist.org/projects/marrowstone-island-project. This includes a link to the above Google map.

