

This is KPTZ 91.9FM in Port Townsend, Washington. I'm Nigel O'Shea bringing you news and commentary from the Jefferson County *Beacon* for Wednesday, January 21, 2026.

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Jefferson Land Trust Preserve Manager Carrie Clendaniel pauses along a faint trail in the Quimper Wildlife Corridor at the west end of Port Townsend, concern etching into her face as she gazes left to right, then up towards the treetops. Clendaniel said, "This is not a complex, diverse, healthy forest. We need more diverse conditions for more diverse wildlife, so a mix of large diameter trees, a diverse forest understory, standing snags, and nurse logs." Snags are standing dead or dying trees that are vital for biodiversity and serve as a crucial habitat element in forest ecosystems. A nurse log is a fallen, decaying tree that provides essential nutrients, water, and shade, creating a fertile "nursery" for new seedlings, moss, fungi, and other plants to sprout and thrive in a forest ecosystem. The monumental task of transitioning the lands that JLT owns, manages and protects to healthier, more resilient conditions spurred Clendaniel and Jefferson Land Trust to partner with land trusts, tribes, and county parks to use recording devices that capture bird calls to gather data about forest health.

These seven organizations, which now call their project the Listen Up Collaborative, procured a \$50,000 grant from the Cornell Lab of Ornithology to fund audio devices that Jefferson Land Trust Preserve and other partners strap to trees on their managed lands to monitor bird calls.

The Listen up Collaborative organizations are: Jefferson Land Trust, Greater Peninsula Institute, Northwest Natural Resource Group, Bainbridge Island Land Trust, the Point No Point Treaty Council, Jamestown S'Klallam Tribe, and Kitsap County Parks. Acoustic recording devices capture the bird calls, and software is used to analyze them. The acoustic devices can capture bird data over a much greater area than cameras, which only capture what's right in front of them.

Each of these organizations monitors bird calls on lands that they manage. The group aims to improve forest habitat by monitoring bird calls across 4,533 acres of protected land in Kitsap and Clallam counties: on islands, in monoculture forests, along restored floodplains, and on land that has endured intense agricultural and timber use. Jefferson Land Trust Preserve monitors and treats lands they own in the Quimper Wildlife Corridor that stretches from Fort Warden to Middlepoint Road, as well as properties across Jefferson County as far south as along the Duckabush River. Clendaniel last set out audio recorders in spring 2025 and collected 15,800 recordings from nine conservation areas.

Clendaniel sees forests across her work territory struggling to recover the health and resilience they had before settlers began altering forest conditions two centuries ago. Clendaniel said, "A big theme we're seeing across all of those forests is that they were heavily logged." Clendaniel added, "The audio analysis, along with forest health inventories, have led us to implement practices including forest thinning to stimulate more robust tree growth; and creation of standing snags, constructed nurse logs, and habitat piles to mimic features that would otherwise exist in old, complex forests." Shortly before Clendaniel's forest tour with *The Beacon*, she was felling small-diameter trees with a chainsaw to provide more sunlight in dense patches of the woods. Open patches are necessary for new understory growth and for adjacent trees to increase in diameter and develop larger treetop crowns. These small, freshly cut trees are arranged in small piles to become nurse logs, which are excellent habitat for newts and salamanders. Clendaniel said that historically, a walk through these forests would find one stepping into a nurse log every five steps. Now, she said, not even five percent of the forest floor has nurse logs.

Clendaniel said, "Within the Collaborative, we're trying to accelerate the development of these complex forests that are going to be critical for the wildlife that specialize, that don't have those places left in our landscape.

We'd like to see over time that we are getting more birds who depend upon more complex forest conditions. Together, monitoring and active land management are helping us make progress towards that desired future condition of a structurally and species-diverse forest that is resilient to climate change – whatever that may bring.” For more information about the Jefferson Land Trust, visit <https://saveland.org/>.

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KPTZ 91.9 FM brings you local news at noon and five Tuesday through Thursday partnering on Wednesday to bring you stories from the Jefferson County *Beacon*. This is Nigel O'Shea, thanks for listening.