



distinguished conservator



AMERICAN GOLDFINCH

PEOPLE: Patricia Otto restores property, educates community.

BY EMILY WEINER
THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

Dear President Spangenberg:

As I watched my daughter receive her award I thought of the day when you inducted me into your "HALL". Lovely day! I've been enjoying the honor ever since, even including it on the design of my cemetery marker.

Next April, health permitting, I plan to be in the audience if Joe Hickey's life of distinction is being acclaimed. Every ornithologist who reads knows who Joe Hickey was. Every citizen who followed the Wisconsin DDT hearings knows that without Joe Hickey that biocide would not have been banned in our state or two years later in our country. I know. I was there!

The bright honor you bestowed on me will surely tarnish if Joe Hickey's name is not in the Scheeckle Reserve along with mine....Also, as one of the past presidents of CNRA, I urge you to add that remarkable man to your group of eminent people in the Wisconsin Conservation Hall of Fame.

Sincerely,

Dr. Patricia Otto was named 2000 land steward of the year Sunday by Whatcom Land Trust.

Otto has devoted the past 10 years to reshaping 90 acres of her property near Lake Whatcom, restoring habitat for Pacific Northwest native plants and animals. She has built 30 wood duck nesting boxes and several swallow boxes and bat habitats, and she and her husband, Dr. David Wisner, have dug two ponds and restored native vegetation.

Otto educates children and community groups about wildlife restoration, bat life cycles and habitat needs and native plants, and works with Veronica Wisniewski installing and maintaining nest boxes on private and public lands, including Whatcom Land Trust properties.

Wendy Walker, a board member of Whatcom Land Trust, said Otto is a role model, inspiring her to follow in her footsteps.

"We can't just expect governments to protect all the land," she said. "I think a wave of the future is that private landowners will change the way they look at their land from a thing they own, as a commodity, to a complex web of living systems of which they are stewards."

The Whatcom Land Trust said Otto has been a dedicated volunteer, preserving and protecting land in Whatcom County through individual actions and community outreach.

"I do it because it's in my heart," Otto said. "My primary love is in observing and trying to enhance the wildlife and native diversity around me."

"I think that I feel a part of the natural systems around me. When I see those natural systems thriving, it makes my own soul feel good. If I could participate in the smallest way in helping those systems do their own natural processes, that just makes me feel wonderful."