

Goin' for the habitat

By KRISTI PIHL
Staff Reporter

The Camano Wildlife Habitat Project isn't resting on its laurels.

Founder Val Schroeder and the group are striving to reach their goal of 1,000 certified backyard wildlife habitats on Camano Island. The island already has 708 as of mid-May.

To become a certified wildlife habitat through the National Wildlife Federation, the property must provide food, water, shelter and a place to raise young, Schroeder said. Some sustainable gardening practices must also be used.

Plants that provide food are preferred over birdfeeders, she said. A water source can be as simple as having a flowerpot with rocks along the bottom and filling it with water.

A perfect yard isn't necessary, Schroeder said. Instead, landowners should make choices.

The Camano Wildlife Habitat Project is a way to do something about the destruc-

tion of wildlife habitat, rather than seeing it happen and feeling helpless, Schroeder said.

After Schroeder read about Tukwila becoming a certified community wildlife habitat in 2002, she decided if Tukwila could reach the wildlife habitat status, so could Camano Island. Friends of Camano Island Parks sponsored the project.

Camano Island became a certified community wildlife habitat through the National Wildlife Federation in April 2005.

For Sandy Koffman, the project stopped her from making a big mistake.

Koffman's original plan for her new Camano Island home was to remove the brush on the property, put in grass and get a riding lawnmower, she said. But after taking the first class with the project, Koffman said she and her husband trashed those plans.

The decision saved the Koffmans both time and money. They preserved what the property already had to offer as wildlife habitat, and enhanced it with additions.

"We had a vision of living in a forest,

but we are living in a living forest," said Koffman, a steering committee member for the project.

Roxanne Paul, senior coordinator of habitat programs for the National Wildlife Federation, described the Camano Wildlife Habitat Project as innovative.

On Camano Island, residents developed a neighborhood backyard habitat aspect that no other community has done, she said.

Neighborhoods that have 25 percent of its properties as certified backyard habitats receive a Neighborhood Wildlife Habitat designation and sign. This promotes the idea of connecting yards into a corridor for wildlife.

The goal of 1,000 yards is a stepping-stone to the goal of preserving the island in harmony with nature, Schroeder said. She hopes the project will leave a legacy for future generations.

For more information, contact the Camano Wildlife Habitat Project at 387-2236 or camanobwh@yahoo.com.

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