

Camassia Natural Area, Little Rock Island, and Sandy River Gorge Preserve

YEAR
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by Shelley Matthews

Camassia Natural Area: bordered by West Linn High School to the north and Willamette Falls Drive to the east, in the city of West Linn.

Little Rock Island: a basalt rock outcrop island in the Willamette River 3 miles upriver from Willamette Falls at river mile 30.

Sandy River Gorge: southeast of Oxbow Park, at river miles 14 and 17, between Lusted and Gordon Creek roads.



BEFORE

*Scotch broom on
shore of Willamette
River near Little
Rock Island*



AFTER

*Scotch broom
removed*



BEFORE

English ivy and blackberry prevent establishment and expansion of at-risk plants such as risk pale larkspur and white-topped aster, and other native species.



AFTER

Native vegetation thrives in absence of invasive species.

All three locations shared the same goals and benefits: to remove non-native plants and allow growth and expansion of native species, to restore the areas to their original natural state, and to protect biological diversity.

Camassia's meadows and woodlands support a number of plant species that occur only rarely in the Willamette Valley, including pale larkspur (*Delphinium leucophaeum*) and white-topped aster (*Aster curtus*). They occur in scattered subpopulations on the thin, rocky soils of the

preserve and are federal species of concern. Habitat restoration activities included removing invasive Scotch broom, English ivy, holly, and Himalayan blackberry so native species like larkspur, aster, and Camas lily could re-establish the area.

Little Rock Island, Rock Island, and the adjacent western shore of the Willamette River support the largest remaining population of pale larkspur. The island is in a relatively scenic and sparsely developed section of the Willamette River. The plant communities on the island are in relatively natural conditions and have an interesting mix of western and eastern Oregon species. However, prior to this project, critical populations of larkspur were at risk from encroaching Scotch broom. The goal of this project was to remove all Scotch broom from the island.

The Sandy River Gorge is adjacent to Oxbow Park and consists of 436 noncontiguous parcels separated from each other by either public or private land or the river itself. The Sandy River is habitat for diverse aquatic and terrestrial wildlife. Of greatest importance within this preserve is the low elevation old-growth forest and the rare amphibian species that live in the habitat provided by the preserve. Restoration activities included removing Scotch broom, Himalayan blackberry, ivy, and holly from the Nature Conservancy's tracts within the preserve, just upriver from Oxbow Park at River miles 14 and 17.

Benefits

- Improved habitat conditions for native plants and animals.
- Enhanced hiking, bird-watching, and wildflower observation for visitors.
- Little Rock Island: Protected the largest remaining population of pale larkspur.
- Sandy River Gorge: Preserved old-growth and second-growth forest and habitat for the slender salamander and other sensitive species.

Budget

Total Proposed – \$20,136

Total Actual – \$22,136

Metro/U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service grant award – \$5,000

Grant Dollars Spent - \$5,000

Helpful Hints – what worked, what didn't

- Adapt plant removal techniques to the ecological variables (type and depth of soils and solid composition) existing at each site. Also, determine the proximity of the species targeted for removal to other species to determine whether roots might be entangled and will require special removal techniques.
- Remove as much of the blackberry roots as possible, to prevent re-sprouting.
- Maintain either consistent team members or team leadership among the work crews to keep morale high and to minimize retraining by the project manager.

Partners

The Nature Conservancy

The Northwest Service Academy

Contact

Eddie Huckins, The Nature Conservancy, (503) 230-1221

Timeline and Tasks

March - October 1996	<u>Camassia</u> : Remove Scotch broom from plateau areas, English ivy from forested areas, and non-native species from the “trail triangle.”
June - August 1996	<u>Little Rock Island</u> : Secure barge service for Scotch broom removal, arrange for work crew transportation to and from island, remove Scotch broom.
July – October 1996	<u>Sandy River Gorge</u> : Arrange transportation and equipment for work crews, coordinate volunteers, remove invasive species.