

## Strength in Numbers:

### The Evans Family's generous support of the Cutthroat Trout Migration Study

by Megan Connor, *LTWC Watershed Stories Intern*

The Evans family came to Oregon in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century and settled on land near Junction City with Ferguson and Eber Creeks running through their property. In 1942 Rollin Branyan Evans and Frances Rae Evans wed and started to build their family. Rollin and Frances had three children—James, Richard, and Maryrae. Hardworking, dedicated, and with an inherent passion for community, the Evans family has played a major role in the Junction City area. Recently, Richard “Dick” Evans and his wife, Gretchen Evans, donated \$15,000 to the Long Tom Watershed Council (LTWC) to support the improvement of cutthroat trout by funding the Cutthroat Trout Migration Study.



*Richard B. Evans*

As a senior international business advisor and former President of Alcan Inc., Mr. Evans is a successful businessman living in San Francisco, California, but he never forgot his rural Oregon roots. Richard Evans is also an avid fisherman and supports local organizations working to improve native fish and their habitats.

“I had no idea that anything like the Long Tom Watershed Council existed,” said Richard Evans, “and one thing that struck me about the organization was their enthusiasm, passion, and interest in working to better the local watershed. My sister, Maryrae, has built a strong relationship with the Council and I knew that the watershed had a need for funding. My wife and I were very impressed with their dedication, and we felt that the Long Tom Watershed Council’s Cutthroat Trout Migration Study was something that we could whole-heartedly support.”

The Long Tom Watershed Council is a local organization in the Eugene area that focuses on improving water quality and watershed conditions in the Long Tom River basin with the support and actions from local community members like the Evans family. Just like the Evans family,



*This nearly 12” cutthroat trout was trapped at tagged at Maryrae & Andy Thomson’s (Dick Evans’ sister & brother-in-law) on Ferguson Creek in 2010.*

cutthroat trout are an important part of the Long Tom River basin’s heritage. Cutthroat, however, are facing challenges from changes to water quality and habitat conditions. To learn more about the watershed’s cutthroat trout, their biology, and population trends, LTWC partnered with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife in 2010 to launch the Cutthroat Trout Migration Study.

The mission of the Migration Study is to track the seasonal migration patterns and life histories of cutthroat trout in the Long Tom River basin, especially in Bear and Ferguson Creeks, with the goal of trapping and tagging 700 total cutthroat trout. The results of the study will help LTWC and its partners understand and

prioritize fish passage corrections and habitat improvements for trout and other native species.

Since 2010, LTWC volunteers have trapped and tagged more than 450 cutthroat and has recaptured more than 100 fish (sometimes multiple times). Traps are set from late fall through spring and are checked three times each week. Live trout are captured and then PIT tags (similar to microchips in pets) are inserted into the fish. Five antenna stations have been placed in both Bear and Ferguson Creeks to detect the fish as they swim by, with plans to install another in Amazon Creek. LTWC has been collecting the information and is working with the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to improve the obstacles that the fish face on their migratory journeys.

Between 2011 and 2012, 159 new Cutthroat Trout were captured and tagged. One particular finding from the study is the variation in the sizes of the largest cutthroat trout found in different parts of the watershed. In Bear & Ferguson Creek, no cutthroat trout were captured over 12 inches, but in 2013, trout as large as 12 and 13 inches were tagged in small tributaries to the Long Tom River near Monroe. This is exciting news for people who remember catching large trout in the area, and LTWC hopes to learn where these larger fish are coming from.

LTWC is working to restore cutthroat trout habitat and improve access to spawning and juvenile rearing habitat. Richard Evans fondly reminisced about one of his favorite childhood memories of fishing on Ferguson Creek. “I remember a few summers when I was in junior high or high school that the Cutthroat Trout were huge! They had to have been about 15 or 16 inches! I remember spending my time out on Ferguson Creek and catching multiple fish then bringing them home to cook for a family dinner. I hope that the Migration Study will help us understand how to help make the fish sizes larger.” While there’s no guarantee of larger trout in the future, the hope is that habitat improvements to the stream reaches and spawning grounds trout use will help their populations thrive.

The involvement and support of numerous volunteers and watershed neighbors has made this important research possible. “We wouldn’t be able to collect this data in the first place without the dedication of the more than 75 volunteers who’ve participated in the study,” said Rob Hoshaw, Operations Manager and Volunteer Coordinator for LTWC. “The Evans family is giving us the capacity to oversee the project for two more years, including coordinating volunteers and analyzing and presenting the data,” Hoshaw explains. The eventual goal of the study is to publish the findings of the Cutthroat Trout Migration Study in a scientific journal. The generous support of Richard and Gretchen Evans leverages many hours of volunteer service and allows this research to continue through 2015. Learning more about cutthroat trout will assist LTWC in its efforts to improve trout habitat and ensure that future generations have an opportunity to enjoy this beloved native fish.



*Richard's sister, Maryrae Thomson, with Richard & Gretchen's grandson, Noah, at the Thomson property along Ferguson Creek.*