

Broom 9-12 10 Nov
AGM - Feb 12

'96 Maurice
Claude
2200 Lorne Tce
Victoria V8S 2H8

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

NEWSLETTER

September 1996



Report From The President

Acquisition of land on the west side of the Park was reported in a previous newsletter. On the same side, however, the natural arboreal limits of the forest that covers most of the Park still lie, in some places, outside park boundaries. One of our present concerns, accordingly, is that the park boundaries be extended, by acquisition or other means, to these limits. Happily, Saanich Parks directors appear to be making further progress towards this end.

Among our other objectives are the restoration of fish habitat in Douglas Creek, the elimination of broom, and an increase in the Garry oak tree population. As the rest of this letter shows in more detail, our activities in these respects have become somewhat interventionist as opposed to merely protectionist. The ambition is to restore to the Park a balance from which, in the last thirty years or so, it has declined.

How to keep users and Park mutually friendly, how to harmonize recreational, aesthetic and ecological values to the advantage of all is a continuing concern. Our discussions with Saanich Parks directors have ranged over such topics as the siting or re-siting of trails, trail signage, bicycle racks at park entrances, and garbage bins. We understand that the Parks Department is on the point of displaying a map of the principal trail-loops at major points of entry to the park, for the general guidance of park users.

Trails

There has been some progress on the matter of trails in the Park.

Saanich Parks and Recreation have neared completion of a colour-coded map that includes the Park's trail system and natural features. The map will be posted at the main parking lot, and at the Churchill Drive and Cedar Hill X Road entrances to the Park. It should help all of us to better navigate the park and expose the Park's diversity to guests and newcomers.

The map will also show future changes to the trail system:

1. Where Irvine Trail and Norn Trail currently meet, a trail will be extended to connect to an existing trail (also labelled Norn Trail) which begins at Churchill Drive. From this location a viewpoint will be marked leading the hiker to the scenic bog area filled with skunk cabbage and grasses. The existing wooden bridge crossing the bog will be removed to eliminate further destruction to the bog. East from this viewpoint, an existing path crossing the bog will be upgraded to allow for a safe clear walkway.
2. A new parking lot will be constructed on Cordova Bay Road, where the gravel pit is located. This should relieve some of the congestion at the Churchill Drive and Cedar Hill X Road parking areas. Two gravelled trail entrances will lead into the park from this lot. One will extend south to meet the existing gravel trail and the other will extend north to the fire access road next to the motel. This portion of the trail may not be completed until next year, depending on whether the money is available.

Well that's the update for this newsletter. Hope to see you at the next AGM or on the trails. Happy trails.

**If you haven't yet purchased your 1996/97 membership,
why not do it now?**

Mount Doug Park And The Gordon Head Local Area Plan

Until now, Mount Douglas Park has not been included in any Local Area Plan. The position of the Society is that the Park should be included in the Local Area Plan of every community it borders, because it serves and is of concern to them all. We're happy to say that Saanich Planning Department has included Mount Douglas Park in the review of the Gordon Head Local Area Plan, now in its early stages.

Early in September, Past President Darrel Wick sent a memo to Saanich Planning Department and to the Gordon Head Ratepayers Association, making these recommendations:

1. Continue the proposed Coastal Greenway along Mount Douglas Park beach and add a beach access from Mount Douglas Park.
2. Cancel the subdivision that appears on maps of the area southwest of the motel, since the area is now park, and cancel the road right-of-way to Cordova Bay Road in favour of an access to the Park.
3. Protect and restore the tree canopy on Shelbourne Street north of Blair. A new line of trees was to replace the trees removed when Shelbourne was widened: new trees were planted, but there was no follow-through. A restored canopy of trees on Shelbourne Street not only enhances the neighborhood but creates an appealing and appropriate entrance to Mount Douglas Park.
4. The Local Area Plan should acknowledge the stream stewardship for Douglas Creek that has been undertaken by the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society, and the problem of drain pollutants from residential areas should be addressed in the Plan.

Tree Planting So Far

The Society has undertaken a program of tree planting in the Park. Last November, volunteers planted 146 Garry oak seedlings over a patch of meadow previously cleared of broom. Since then, some of these seedlings seem to have disappeared. The rest have been watered during the summer months, once in July and once at the end of August. Further planting is planned for an adjacent area now largely covered by blackberry bushes.

Tree Appreciation Day

Saturday November 2 1996

Planting at Mt. Douglas Park

9:00 a.m. – noon

We will be planting Garry oaks in
the small meadow off Cedar Hill Road.

Meet at the Fire Road gate off Cedar Hill Road.

Bring a shovel and a wheelbarrow or wagon if you have one.

For information, if you would like to participate,
and for last-minute changes,

please call

Bob Bridgeman 477-7464 (evenings)

Tree Planting

Saturday, November 30, 9:30 a.m.

We will be planting the area east of Douglas Creek, along the trail. There has been heavy windfall there, and before the Park was under Saanich management (and before the Society was formed), there was excessive tree-cutting.

Meet in the driveway at 1491 Edgemont.

Bring a shovel and a wheelbarrow or wagon if you have one.

For information, if you would like to participate, and for last-minute changes,

please call

Pam Lewis 658-5039

Broom Clearing

To date, our volunteers have cleared broom from the level area next to the fire gate on Cedar Hill Road, and also from the summit of the mountain. These areas were chosen partly for their accessibility to the municipality's chipping machines and partly because they are relatively quarantined from reseeding by other patches of broom. Last May we managed to clear about half of the broom from the hummock on the east side of the summit parking lot. On a previous occasion we cleared about a quarter of the broom from the hummock on the west side. As can be seen, there is still quite a lot of work to be done even in these rather limited areas.

The Creek Restoration Project

Once a week since the beginning of March 1996, we have monitored the water quality in Douglas Creek. After collection, all of our data has been sent to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (D.F.O.) in Vancouver for review. To date, nothing we have found about the water quality precludes the possibility of salmon living and indeed spawning in the creek. However, in mid- August, when we conducted a benthic invertebrate survey, we only found pollution-tolerant species; the utter lack of intolerant species indicated that there is a problem and it probably has to do with the quality of the water.

In mid-September, we assisted D.F.O. in electroshocking trials at two locations in the creek: at sixty five meters upstream of the Ash Road bridge, no fish whatever were found, while some fifty meters upstream from the creek mouth five sculpins were captured, examined and released unharmed. So the good news is that the creek does support fish, but the very paucity of that life above the creek mouth and its absence above the Ash Road bridge, highlights the problem of water quality again.

The stream keepers model allows us to gather useful information on water chemistry; we can monitor for dissolved oxygen, pH, turbidity and temperature which are all good indicators for the overall quality of the water. Unfortunately, we do not have the technical expertise nor the equipment to explore the more complex pollution problems we suspect exist in the creek. Our watershed area is approximately five hundred hectares and most of it has been developed for housing. It isn't too difficult to imagine what sort of pollutants are leaching into the creek through the storm drain system. However, it is much more difficult to prove the existence of these pollutants and to show their specific effects on the water quality.

With this in mind, we are negotiating with Camosun College to integrate the creek into the list of environmental projects conducted by students in their Environmental Technology program . Our hope is that students may create a more
