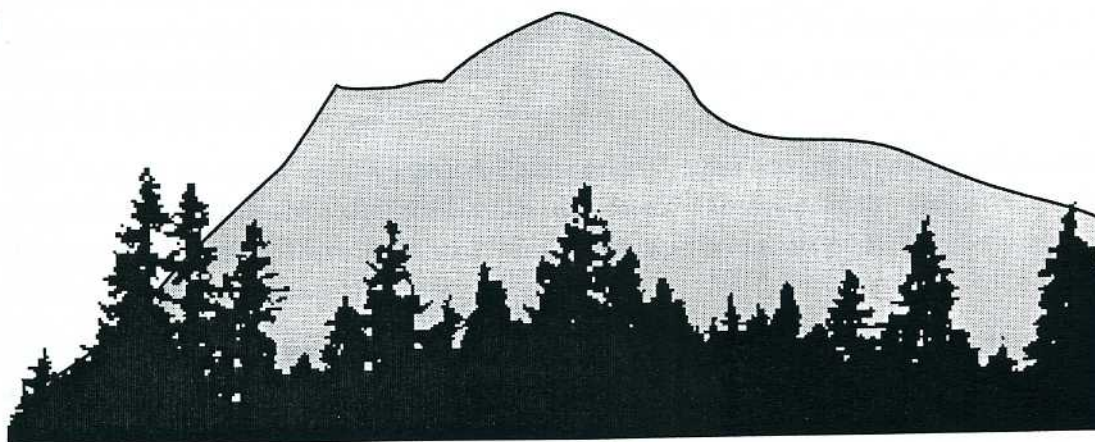

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

NEWSLETTER

November 1998

'98 Maurice
Claude
2200 Lorne Tce
Victoria V8S 2H8



A Different Kind of Vandalism

Over the past month or two, notices have been found pasted to many trail signs in the Park, expressing concern about the recent addition of bicycle lanes on Cordova Bay Road and to the "parkway" connotation.

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park did not put up these signs.

We do not question the right of this person, or any person, to an opinion. What *is* in question is the right of anyone to deface a natural park with personal notices. It would have been a more responsible action to follow the legitimate routes of protest that are readily available.

Memberships

Please-check the mailing label on the front page of this newsletter. If it reads "98" then your membership comes to an end with the year. If there is a "C" then you have received a complimentary copy. To both groups, we hope you continue to benefit from wandering in this very special park, have enjoyed these newsletters and would like to support the Society for another year. To do so, please send a membership fee of \$5.00 per person to the Treasurer: for details see the cut-out form on the last page.

To those of you who have paid in advance, we thank you for the vote of confidence you have given the Society and you should find "99" or "00" in the upper left hand corner of the front page; we don't believe we will have any trouble with the year 2000 using this method!

With respect to donations, we accept them at any time, but most people pay their membership and make a donation with one check. Please indicate, either on your check or membership form, how many memberships you would like and how much you would like to donate.

For the last year we have been issuing receipts with the following newsletter; they are attached to the second page. If you have not received yours, please contact the Treasurer, Graham Shorthill, at 658-5873



Aid From The Skies

After a lengthy wait, the massive concentration of cut broom on the west side of the Park has finally been reduced to a paltry pile of chips. Thus came to an end a three-stage operation.

In the first stage, some park users, but not from our Society, had spent several months cutting broom over slopes that flank the Mercer and the Munson Trails. The evidence of their labour took the form of 40 piles at widely distributed locations over that area. The presence of these piles struck the Parks Department, as well as ourselves, as a likely fire hazard. Hence the aim in the second stage of the operation was to remove them to a central position in readiness for disposal by a chipper that would have to be hoisted in by helicopter. The relocation was effected during the month of May by about 22 volunteers (half from the Society, half not).

The third stage had to be postponed to Friday, October 16, since in the intervening time the helicopter service had been required for fighting fires elsewhere. On the day of the lift, the cloud base was just high enough to allow the helicopter to pluck the chipper from where it was stationed in the top parking lot, take it down the west side of the mountain, and lower it into position. It took the Saanich crew working with the chipper from shortly after 8:00 a.m. until 4:30 p.m. to dispose of all the material. Thereafter the helicopter returned and hoisted the chipper back to the top parking lot.

The financial burden of this somewhat costly operation was shared by Saanich Parks Department and Beautiful British Columbia magazine, both of whom deserve thanks for their support of the project and participation in its successful completion. ChekTV recorded the final event and aired it on the news program that evening.

Nominating time again

The Annual General Meeting of the Society doesn't take place until well into the new year, but we have already set up the nominating committee, which is headed again by Pam Lewis, 658-5039. If you are in agreement with the aims of the Society and would like to be more actively involved, please get in touch with her.

The Creek

Pollution

The weir near the head of the Creek is in place and has been functioning since mid-September. It is far better than anything we've had before to control heating oil spills into the creek. It should make mopping up oil spills, at least at low flows, more effective.

The persistent problem of non-point source pollution is an even tougher one to reckon with. Saanich Roads Department, which deals with pollution in and through the storm drain system, has come up with an interesting possibility. They are testing a product relatively new to the market which, when spread upon water, coagulates floating pollutants into a rubber-like substance which can then be gathered off the water. It is an expensive product: experimentation will show when it can be used most effectively.

Unfortunately, water-soluble chemicals (latex paint, for instance) create even more problems. Once chemicals are dissolved into the water column, they are virtually impossible to remove. It is an interesting notion to consider that if you have a constant source of pollution being introduced into a body of water, then by increasing the body of water the concentration of pollutants decreases. A drop of food dye in a half-glass of water will show that. Fill the glass and the dye is diluted. If we could find a source of groundwater in the watershed, it could help us manage water-soluble pollution going into the creek. Ultimately a number of small-effect strategies may help solve difficult water quality problems. We are interested in your ideas.



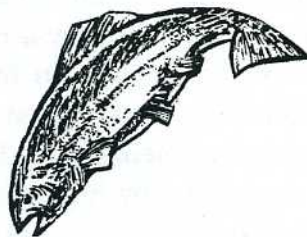
Trash

Saturday, September 27th, the Society helped to celebrate B.C. Rivers Day by organizing a cleanup of the Creek. Nine friends of the park started at the weir and picked up rubbish all the way down the Creek channel to Cordova Bay. We collected about one-half of a compact pickup load of the usual plastic rubbish. Saanich Parks and Recreation kindly looked after its disposal.

Now, in November, there is again much rubbish in the creek. It is a problem we had hoped the weir would solve to some extent. It is a bit awkward to pick trash out of the creek at this time, because we have fish in there and it is not a good idea to be tramping around in the channel. We need to fine-tune the garbage trapping efficiency at the weir. One other thing that we can all do is to pick up the rubbish in front of our houses. That's the stuff that washes down the catch basins with the rain, and thus into the Creek channel.

Restoring Habitat

We have finished surveying the portion of channel we planned to create fish habitat in. After extensive consultation with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans and Saanich Parks and Recreation, we settled on six recent windthrows to introduce into the creek channel as large woody debris. Saanich Parks and Recreation arboreal crew bucked the trees and moved them in closer to the channel where we, as amateurs, could handle them more easily. They did a good job, making it much easier and safer for us. We will be talking to them again next summer.



Putting this large woody debris into the creek is a tricky business. A stream is a dynamic system, and when the energy equilibrium is disrupted by making changes to the channel, corresponding changes occur elsewhere in the channel. This is particularly so in this stream, with its radically altered watershed creating an energy regime out of proportion to the size of the stream.

Bearing these things in mind, our ambitions have been modest. We have tried to set up debris catchers—key logs to start accumulating small woody debris. The resulting debris structures can be compared to coral reefs, in the sense that food chains evolve around the sites. These debris also provide key high water habitat that coho can shelter in during wet winter storms. Perhaps in future, when we know more about how this stream works, we can manufacture structures with more complex functions, such as scouring pools and recruitment of spawning gravel.

The large woody debris was put into the channel in two sessions, one on October 3rd and the other on October 10th.

Fish Release

On October 31st, twenty friends of the park released 800 coho fry into the creek. The fish were released from the Ash Road bridge up the creek until just shy of the fire road culverts.

Our fry had a bit of a rough introduction to their new home—the water in the creek was definitely murky at the time of release. As well, and at the same time, a mysterious floating yellow-green scum appeared on the surface of the pond behind the weir. The situation seemed urgent! We called the Fire Department, who called the Roads call-out person. We all appeared on the scene. The call-out chap from Saanich did a bit of detective work and decided that this strange scum was actually *pollen*. A Saanich arborist later confirmed this: it seems that we've had an unusual weather year and some evergreens are now releasing pollen. Sorry for the false alarm, fellows!

On a follow-up walk the next day we found the Creek was crystal-clear again. Fish were seen in a number of places. We have picked out four live-trapping sites. Through live trapping we can evaluate the state of health and the numbers of the coho population. These fish will imprint on this stream, and if they survive to the smolt stage will migrate into the ocean in the spring. Coho usually return to spawn in their natal stream two years after leaving as smolts.

The brochure

Our brochure (along with the orange crack-and-peel fish to be used to remind residents not to pour toxic fluids into residential drains that feed into storm drains) is now being delivered to all residences in the watershed. The 10th Garry Oak scout troop has taken on the task of delivering the brochure to about 6300 addresses.

The brochure was created by the Society. Printing and delivery was paid for by a grant from the Urban Salmon Habitat Program. The text focuses on neighbourhood water quality issues and attempts to create awareness of the we-all-live-in-a-watershed concept.

We would like to know your opinion of the brochure—was the message effective? what issues did we miss? which do we need to build on or reiterate? We will be releasing a second brochure after Christmas, and the feedback of our members will be of value in deciding some of its content.

How about getting into the water right up to your neck?

For the past three years, Bob Bridgeman has spearheaded the restoration of Douglas Creek. He's had assistance from many different people, to whom he is more than ready to give credit for the impressive achievements that have been made.

However, his work on the creek—all the way from taking training himself, passing it on to others, collecting information and support, monitoring the water and the fish, surveying the creek and assessing and dealing with pollution, right down to and including the physical labour required on the project—has occupied an enormous amount of his time and effort.

He likes what he's doing, and no one could persuade him to stop, but what we'd like to find for him is someone who is also interested in streamkeeping and the creation and restoration of fish habitat, to be an assistant and a partner to him.

If that could be you, please get in touch with Ken Rankin, 477-8007.

The Old Quarry

The consultant on this project, Maria Grau, has begun the first part of her work of collating information about this site by drawing together details from the Engineering and Parks Departments of Saanich, preliminary input from the Society and the opinions of independent professionals.

There is clear and unequivocal agreement about the removal of the chain link fence and there is a universal desire to see any planting in this area done with native species only.

Of course, there are areas of disagreement and concern. The latter includes the stability of the banks that rim the rear of the quarry. Any major change in activity here could lead to their collapse. The strong recommendation from Hal Gibbard, a professional biologist, is to act conservatively by planting species which would bind the soil and strengthen the banks while not attracting any additional people to this part of the quarry.

The one unknown at the moment is the fire hydrant at the side of the road by the trail. It serves two roles—it provides water to extinguish local fires in the conventional way, but it is also used to fill the reservoir further up the mountain. The Fire Department needs access to it so that it can be maintained (flushing, etc.) and used in an emergency. We believe that both of these objectives can be achieved by treating this hydrant like any other alongside a busy road. After trying unsuccessfully to have a joint meeting with representatives of the Parks and Fire departments, we have written directly to the Fire Chief and hope to have the matter resolved soon.

Once that has been achieved we can move on to the second and third phases of the work; namely, the preparation of a list of native species which would thrive in this area, and then a prescription for planting them so that volunteer labour could do the job successfully.

The Park Road

On Tuesday 10th November 1998 Mayor Frank Leonard and Saanich South M.L.A. Andrew Petter will officially open the redesigned section of Cordova Bay Road through the Park, bringing to a very successful conclusion two years of intense work by many different groups.

Despite much talk over the years about altering the nature of this road, the significant moment came when Mayor Leonard called for the creation of a special section of road through the park. In response, Hugh McKay, the Municipal Engineer, coordinated a very effective interdisciplinary committee of staff from Planning, Parks and Engineering. They first produced a set of principles and then a plan to implement them. Independently, the Society had gone through a similar exercise and the first hint of future success came when we compared notes and found we had come to essentially the same conclusions. There were several meetings and adjustments, with input from adjacent ratepayers associations and relevant committees.

Finally, plans are wonderful but have to be financed. Hence Saanich went looking for a cost-sharing deal with the provincial government. The combined efforts of the municipality and Saanich South's M.L.A. Andrew Petter were successful, and we now have a new section of road which contains many innovative design features.

The benefits include bicycle lanes in two directions with a minimum loss of trees; safe pedestrian crossings; and integration of the picnic area into the park as a whole. More subtly, narrowing the vehicle lane width created some passive traffic calming; a rough estimate of the average speed on the uphill section is now about 50 kph and 60 kph on the level section; before, it was about 10 kph higher in both sections.

As with all changes there is a downside, and in this case it is the loss of two trees (where we hoped to save them all) and an increase in the amount of blacktop we now have under the canopy of trees. However, we believe that the benefits the public has gained from this redesign far outweigh the debits, and we hope you agree.

There is work still to be done—clear indications to cyclists that they can turn left near the quarry to the old view road; and placement of logs on the sea side of Cordova Bay Road to prevent parking, so we don't have a repeat of last winter's debacle

where drivers of 4-wheel-drive trucks churned up the soft soil in their efforts to remove loads of wood they had acquired (illegally) by cutting up fallen trees. Also, as part of the passive traffic calming measures, it was agreed to have signs along roads leading to the park—Ash, Cedar Hill, Cordova Bay and Shelbourne—to alert travelers that they are approaching an area of great natural beauty significantly different from the surrounding urban landscape. To achieve the maximum benefit from this road it will be necessary to sweep the bike lanes frequently. As this also improves the drainage system, it will have a high priority. Allied to these finishing touches is the need to remove the yellow-painted concrete barriers at Ash and Cordova Bay roads, replacing them with a cast curb, and to provide a bike link from the picnic area directly to Ash Road. Centra Gas plans to bring a gas line through from Royal Oak to near the motel in the new year. In doing so, they will disturb the edge of the road. Once they are finished, the surface will be restored and we will work to have a simple gravel covering installed at that time so that people can walk safely from Royal Oak Drive to the park and join the trail system close to the motel.

Congratulations to all the participants in this project!

October Broom Bash

This is the time of year when we pull (instead of cutting) broom. We now have at our disposal a selection of back-friendly tools called “weed wrenches” that come in different sizes. Our society owns one, and we have been borrowing two from the Parks Department, one from the Christmas Hill/Swan Lake Conservancy, three from the Friends of Knockan Hill Society, and one from John Olafson and Lynda Beare. Thanks to all who have been making their equipment available to us.

We have continued to focus our efforts on areas adjacent to the top parking lot. Our volunteers cleared more in that locality on October 10 and 31. Both events attracted media attention.

Please keep the Saturdays of November 14 and 28 in mind as dates for more broom pulling. Nearer these times, further details will be issued by Jane Owen and Celia Esmond when they phone around for volunteers. Alternatively, you may phone Kenneth Rankin at 477-8007.

Board of Directors 1997/98

| | | | | |
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| Historian | Pam Lewis | 4626 Cordova Bay Road | V8X 3V7 | 658-5039 |

Membership

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

\$5.00/person

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

_____ Postal code: _____

Please fill in this form and mail it to: Graham Shorthill
4623 Cordova Bay Road
Victoria, BC V8X 3V6