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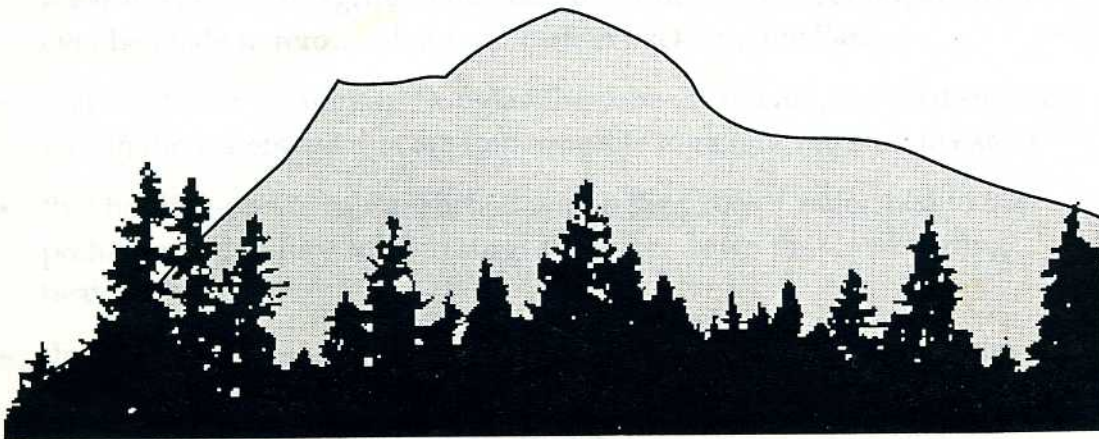
The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

Newsletter

February 2000

'99 Rankin  
Mr./Mrs. K.W.  
4285 Cedar Hill Rd. Victoria  
V8N 3C7

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## Annual General Meeting

7:30 May 4, 2000

Richard Hebda,

Curator of Botany, Royal B.C. Museum

"Fostering wild flowers in Mount Douglas Park"

### President's Greetings

This is a time to look ahead. But 'til when? Climatic changes within the next century and further may change the vegetative composition of the Park and, at the very least, its shoreline in ways we cannot predict, far less control. Perhaps, however, we can begin with a wish-list of what would be ideal within the more immediate future:

- that less reliance be placed on the use of private cars within the urban community—in particular, that eventually the section of Cordova Bay Road running through the Park be closed to traffic, or made accessible only to public transport.
  - that the Park shoreline be left to the elements of nature to determine, regardless of the integrity of the road that runs above it, and that no effort ever be made to reroute that road further back into the Park.
  - that built-over portions of Douglas Creek be uncovered, and that surfaces within the watershed that are impermeable to rain be reduced in extent.
  - that holding-ponds be established within the Creek's watershed to trap pollution and reduce sudden surges of water down the Creek during heavy rainfall.
  - that householders within the watershed become more sensitive to the harmful effects on fish habitat within Douglas Creek of flushing deleterious substances into storm drains.
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- that public access to the Park from Blenkinsop Road be improved, possibly through the acquisition of further property.
- that the radio mast on top of the mountain eventually be dismantled.
- that adjacent fields not be handed over to development, and no further building be allowed right up to the edge of the Park.
- that the Park be extended down to the natural treeline where not bounded by that treeline already.
- that the sides of roads leading into the Park be in keeping with (i.e. present no harsh contrast to) the natural environment they approach.
- that forms of recreation such as mountain-biking be *effectively* banned from the Park, or if practicable confined to certain routes, when it becomes evident that their unrestricted practice has been destructive.
- that inroads into the Park of invasive species—such as broom, gorse, ivy, daphne and holly—be checked.
- \* that a larger pool of volunteers than we have at present become available for work on park projects.

Is all (or some) of this too starry-eyed? You may wish to add or subtract. As they say on TV these days, we would love to have your comments. You may e-mail us at [sso@pinc.com](mailto:sso@pinc.com)

Wishing you all a Happy New Year, Century, and Millennium.

### Letters to the Editor

These newsletters can't be telling you everything you want to know about Mount Douglas Park. Why not write to us, care of Ken Rankin (4285 Cedar Hill Road, V8N 3C7) with your queries, comments, complaints, suggestions. We welcome any letter that is not clearly libellous.

## A Millenium Walk

New Years Day dawned cold and bright and, after the party, a brisk hike through the woods seemed a great way to start the year. It began with a stroll past the motel along the cliff edge to see the recent damage to the banks near the quarry. The remarkable feature was how dry the area was and how gently the stream from behind the motel flowed over the rocks to the beach despite the previous night's rain. At the quarry, the absence of the chain link fence, the new trail, the bike lanes, the view point, the clear and safe crossing; all integrated together to make this transition one of the successes of the last couple of years, There's still work to be done with the vegetation and pond but it's clear we are on the right track.

The trail from the quarry leads straight up towards the summit through the gullies and over slippery rocks, and all is quiet except for the occasional car or disturbed bird. After the vigorous climb the trees give way to an outcrop of rock overlooking Cordova Bay and the Islands. Looking north all is lonely beauty, but turn south and in the last hundred metres to the summit the environment changes completely. People come and go in all directions, snatches of conversation drift your way as you get closer to the summit; father to daughter as they descend...and it's a great place to bring a book and read in summer," mother to child ".....please be careful, you'll fall! mind the rocks....." and so on. The constant crowd mills around the summit, but the individuals stay about five to ten minutes—long enough to take in the panoramic view, to place homes and lives in a larger context. One family comes to celebrate the millenium with the launching of a helium balloon containing their message for the new year in the hope of a reply from who knows where.

Down the steps to the car park the pace is slow as people pass each other. Round the corner of the observation deck, down the summit trail, and back into rock and trees and silence. The going is easy now, the slope is steep and the hikers few; they are coming up the trail (and their favorite question is "how far is it to the top?"), along the edge of the wash out ( something has to be done here) in the hope of seeing some woodpeckers, but no such luck.

On the gentler lower slopes a steady stream people comes up the trail from Glendenning, many with large happy dogs who revel in the rare freedom from the

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leash and the smells released from the undergrowth by the rain of the night before; each passing brings a smile and a new greeting.

Down the broad path between the tall trees to the Glendenning entrance. The hike took about ninety minutes in all, but the memory of it will last a lot longer. The sense of continuity in the presence of surrounding change; of more and more people finding the same pleasures in the same area as the people who came here a hundred years ago. Not a bad way to start a new year and a new millenium.

## The Old Quarry

What's happening at the old quarry?. Those of you who pass this point regularly will have seen much work, lots of chaos and many delays over the last two months. Now there are some significant improvements.

Firstly, the old chain link fence is gone and the trail has been rerouted, resurfaced and edged with rock so that walkers have a clear and interesting path through the open space and up into the woods. The rock also forms the boundary for the fire trucks when they use the hydrant, and the surface on which they park has a new open-cored structure that allows grass to grow in the cavity, but provides enough strength to support a fire truck . It looks a bit raw at the moment, but the new growth will blend it into the surroundings quickly. There was one setback during this phase of the changes due to heavy rainfall. Part of the new trail slipped down the slope, leaving a line of separation which had to be repaired and a drain added—a good indication of the problems we have with water near the surface in this area. Which leads to the second set of operations begun in the new year.

Massive drilling rigs suddenly appeared and started to drill holes on the seaward side of the road. They were sinking small sensors into the banks to provide the engineers with details about movements within the cliff face. Yes, this question of slippage and instability is on the agenda again. In the fall, some of the upper reaches of the cliff slipped down to the beach to await the winter storms which carry such debris into the sea. From the observations made by the consultants it appears that the toe of the cliff has remained in place but these periodic showers of rock and soil, loosened by their fall, accumulate in front of the toe and are easily swept away. At

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this stage, the engineers want a clearer picture of what is happening and the risks involved of doing nothing. Once the data has been collected and analyzed there will be some recommendations for action.

## The Beach

As a change from the dark and wet woods of winter, take a walk along the beach at low tide. Enjoy the company of eagles and great blue herons, the occasional seal and otter. As you wander along the sand and amongst the rocks watching the changing scene over the Gulf Islands and Mt. Baker beyond, think about how best to preserve the natural qualities of this unique area within the park. Let us know your thoughts and ideas; we are going to need them when the engineers bring in their recommendations about instability in the cliffs that rise from the shore.

## Transmitter Site Report

All four cellular telephone companies now have installations on the Mt. Douglas transmitter site. The original two occupants were BC Cellular and Cantel. "Fido" was next and the most recent arrival was Clearnet. You might have noticed the addition to the underground transmitter site building last year.

Our input to the process was simple: "When finished, visitors should not be able to see that there has been an addition to the building." And it appears that Saanich accomplished that task successfully!

Now BC Tel and Cantel are requesting a new antenna arrangement on the tower, along with additional conduits between the transmitter building and the tower. We are not happy with the present conduits as they are quite visible from the parking lot. We will be pursuing a complete overhaul of this area, with the goal of completely hiding the old and new conduits. Not only is this desirable from the Park visitors' viewpoint, but it is also desirable from the transmitter site maintenance perspective.

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## Acquisition

At the time Mount Douglas Park was transferred to Saanich, the major trail that circled the Park perimeter was outside the Park boundaries on the entire west side, although many park users thought then, and still think, that the trail is within the park.

In fact, it was impossible to walk anywhere west of the summit and remain within the Park.

We brought this to the attention of Saanich and, through consultation with Mayor Murray Coell, Director of Parks and Recreation Don Hunter (both no longer with Saanich) and Land Commissioner Wayne Randal, a long term strategy was put in place to acquire the heavily-wooded high ground on the entire Blenkinsop Valley side of the Park.

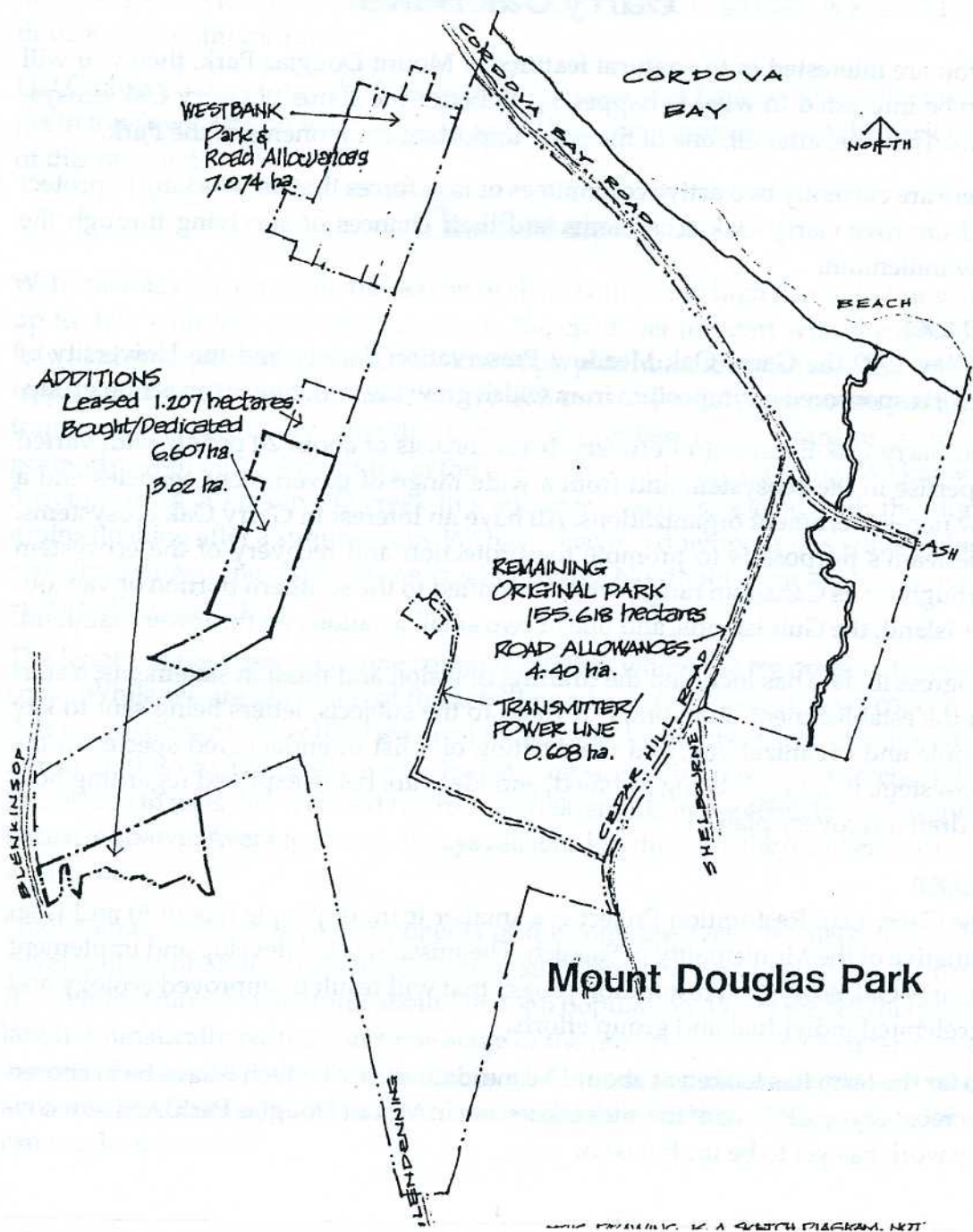
We reconfirmed this strategy with Mayor Frank Leonard when he took office.

The map on the opposite page shows the success of this strategy.

With the exception of one area, the entire Park circle trail, including Little Mount Douglas, is now within the Park. (The provincial government, through the efforts of Andrew Petter, has provided a long-term inexpensive lease of one of the parcels.)

Saanich Council is to be congratulated on its wise decisions to acquire this old-growth forested area; not only is it an asset to the Park, but it now provides visual protection for the entire Blenkinsop Valley, since all of the acquired land is the higher ground above the valley floor.

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# Mount Douglas Park

THIS DRAWING IS A SKETCH DIAGRAM. NOT



## Garry Oak News

If you are interested in the natural features of Mount Douglas Park, then you will also be interested in what is happening to better the status of Garry Oak ecosystems. They are, after all, one of the more important components of the Park.

There are currently two active committees or task forces that are working to protect and improve Garry Oak ecosystems and their chances of surviving through the new millenium.

### **G.O.E.R.T.**

In May 1999 the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society and the University of Victoria sponsored a symposium from which grew the initiative for an action group.

The Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team consists of about 20 people with varied expertise in the ecosystem and from a wide range of government agencies and a few non-government organizations. All have an interest in Garry Oak ecosystems. The team's purpose is to promote the protection and recovery of the ecosystem throughout its Canadian range, which is limited to the southern portion of Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, and one or two small locations on the lower mainland.

Progress to date has included the drafting of vision and mission statements, a start on the establishment of a library devoted to the subjects, letters being sent to key people and organizations, and the drafting of a list of endangered species in the ecosystem. Funding is being pursued, and ideas are being explored regarding how to draft a recovery plan.

### **G.O.R.P.**

The Garry Oak Restoration Project is a smaller team of people (about 6) and is an initiative of the Municipality of Saanich. The mission is to "develop and implement a Garry Oak ecosystem restoration project that will result in improved ecology and accelerated individual and group efforts."

So far the team has looked at about 13 candidate sites, of which 8 have been chosen for recovery work. Two of the sites chosen are in Mount Douglas Park. Active recovery work has yet to be undertaken.

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Most of the G.O.R.P. team are also members of G.O.E.R.T., so there is and will continue to be communication.

Hal Gibbard, a director of the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society, is the man to get in touch with if you want to know more. His phone number is on the back page of this newsletter.

## The Creek

Well, once again we are into the season of clean waters and high flows. To bring you up to date with this summer's events in the creek, let me start with the coho fry. July's fish-trapping results of 106 fry in 4 traps, plus numerous fish seen outside the traps, has dwindled to December's 9 fry in 3 traps, plus fish seen outside of some traps. It is not easy to say what the decrease in numbers really means or, more importantly, what percentage of fry in the creek we are actually trapping. We know of 3 significant fish kills in the creek this summer—each associated with the storm drains flushing after a summer rain. We have seen one downpour this winter which actively changed the shape of the creek channel. No doubt some fry were swept away in that torrent.

The length of the creek has some complex habitat; where the fry *can* stay there are some. While we are uncertain of the actual numbers, for now our main concern is that fry are present. Over time we need to increase the numbers. The average adult return on this coast for coho smolts leaving the stream is about one percent. What this means to us is that we need to produce 2000 smolts in the creek to see 20 adults return to spawn. Averages aren't always reliable, but these are the numbers we need to aim for.

Smolts and adults are two components of the coho life cycle. We need to see the development of all the life stages, each in sufficient numbers to support the next. It's an interesting way to think about our coho population. When we see this population dramatically reduced in some stage of the life cycle, we need to intervene to increase the survival rate. This summer we have seen population decreases associated with the flushing of the storm drains (probably related to water quality). What can we do about this?

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We have just had a meeting with Deputy Municipal Engineer Rick Lloyd. The major topic of discussion was best management practices (BMPs) available for handling stormwater. It happens that a planned development in the watershed is required to institute some kind of BMP, possibly a wetland, to manage stormwater from the site. We hoped that the Deputy Engineer would agree to increase the extent of the BMP so as to pick up drainage from an additional 10% of the total watershed and send it through the wetland. The design process would be complex and difficult, but implementation would improve the water quality significantly. Unfortunately, bylaws in Saanich haven't yet made the leap into the 21st century, but we believe the flow of history is with us and we're still working on it.

Moving on to other things that have happened this summer—We have installed two staff gauges, one upstream and one downstream of the Ash Road bridge. I have been reading them as often as I can. In conjunction with the readings, we have been measuring the flow of water. At some point, by reading the staff gauges, we will know how many cubic metres per second are passing through the channel, but periodic readings of the staff gauges do not adequately reflect the real hydrologic events in this stream. The rapid rise and fall of discharge rates renders this type of monitoring difficult. A heavy rainfall can drain off the impervious portion of the watershed in a matter of hours. To attempt to be more precise about hydraulic events in the creek, we are going to install a hydrometric station that can measure flows at short time periods. This will give us the type of information we are looking for, and the information can then be used in the design of BMPs, related to water quality, and can be used to help design woody debris structures in the creek channel.

Baffles were installed in the Ash Road box culvert this fall. They work well: in fact, it is a marvellous design. To date, one has been knocked out, probably by a large piece of wood passing through. So we have a bit of repair work to do next summer.

We are planning an eyed-egg transplant into the creek some time in February. These partially-developed coho eggs represent the smolts for 2001. They will hatch out, living the remaining portion of this winter, the following summer and the winter of 2000/2001 in the Creek. Even in a more natural environment numbers diminish over time. In this environment, some will be poisoned and of course some will be swept away. Each rainfall fills the habitat with rubbish. We carried out one trash

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cleanup of the creek on September 26; Saanich Parks looked after the removal of the bagged litter. I would like to have another cleanup in early February, weather permitting. It seems to me that we should at least start the transplants off right by cleaning out the rubbish beforehand. We'll have done what we can to give them a good habitat. From there out, we take it a step at a time and cross our bridges as we come to them. We and the smolts still have a long way to go.

### **Broom Bashing, etc.**

We had an unusually good turnout of volunteers on November 21 to pull broom at the mountain summit. In part this was due to an infusion of Girl Guides. As a result of our efforts on this and past occasions, quite a considerable meadow-area between the top parking lot and the lookout has now been restored for the seasonal blooming of flowers. A few of us came back on the following two Sundays to prepare the pulled broom stems for the Saanich chipping machine by cutting off their roots.

Ivy has now become a greater threat to native vegetation. In some areas, it completely covers the forest floor and is steadily advancing into others. Saanich Parks Department has been organizing ivy pulls in an area occupied by a rare plant community just off Durling Place, but the infestation is equally advanced in many places elsewhere in the Park.

One way, at least, to slow down the invasion is to strip the ivy from trees, for it is on these that the seed-bearing leaves develop. This is something that we all can do individually, a little at a time, when out walking in the Park. Special attention can be given most usefully to locations where the ivy is just starting to take over. A pair of secateurs is effective for this purpose, but more often than not bare hands suffice. Eventually, however, a large-scale effort will have to be mounted to overcome the problem.

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## "Cedar"

In the summer of 1942, already suffering from the heart condition that would kill her in 1945, Emily Carr spent eight days in Mount Douglas Park, living in a Depression-era cabin behind the tea-house

During those few days, she produced fifteen large and many small oil-on-paper sketches.

"Cedar" was painted from one of those sketches, "a canvas that is monumental without being heavy, crowded with layers of foliage yet possessing a feeling of space, and rich in interior forest greens yet neither dark nor gloomy.

"Cedar" is now in the Vancouver Art Gallery.

