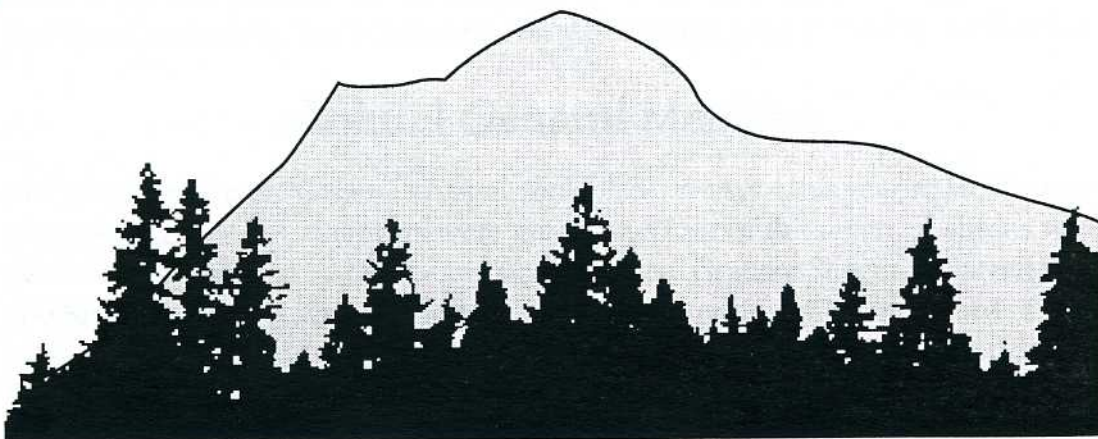

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

Newsletter

June 2000

'04 Maurice Claude
2200 Lorne Tce
Victoria V8S 2H8 B.C.



An Award for The Friends...

Over the past decade, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has been holding biennial day-long meetings attended by streamkeepers' groups on South Vancouver Island with, from time to time, the odd Fisheries scientist, Minister, Departmental Manager, and Funding Society official thrown in. These meetings are for the exchange of information and the celebration of a common purpose.

The last meeting took place on Saturday, May 27. On this occasion, The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society was presented with a plaque bearing the inscription:

For outstanding service to
the fisheries resource in Canada
and dedicated support of the
Salmonid Enhancement Program



And An Award for Bob



Bob Bridgeman has been awarded a Saanich 2000 Environmental Award in the category of Individual Citizen Environmental Achievement, in recognition of his stewardship of the Creek in the Park and his fight against invasive species there.

The award will be presented by Mayor Frank Leonard at the Council Meeting on June 12. Bob will also be honoured on the evening of the following day at the Eco-Star Community Environmental Awards meeting held in the Crystal Gardens.

Annual General Meeting

The Year 2000 Annual General Meeting took place on May 4 this year, at McMorran's Seaview Room. Annual reports were given, and four of the seven positions were available, as provided by the Society's constitution. Graham Shorthill, Darrell Wick and Sheilagh Ogilvie were re-elected, and Kay Porter now joins the board. Claud Maurice now steps down: thank you, Claud. Richard Hebda, Curator of Botany, Royal B.C. Museum then spoke on "Fostering Wild Flowers in Mount Douglas Park."

Braefoot Development

Properties along the east side of Braefoot Road, and by the adjacent corner with Mount Douglas Cross Road include wetlands, Garry Oak parkland, and wildlife habitat. These features comprise one of the corridors that give wildlife potential access to and egress from Mount Douglas Park. For that reason, we have been monitoring proposals for further development in that area.

Our first step was to ask Council for representation on a committee of concerned parties that were to develop proposals for the future of that area. Though our request was granted by Council, the initial provisions for the committee contained a structural bias. Environmental groups such as ourselves, the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society and the Quadra/Cedar Hill Residents Society were to be allowed only to make representations before a core group consisting of property owners and the Gordon Head Residents' Association, whose recommendations would go before an Open House meeting and then, with or without further modification, to Council. We appealed this bias, and now we and the other two groups have been granted equal status with the committee's other members.

We are concerned not only that wildlife corridors be maintained, but also that any drainage of wetlands conform to Best Management Practices as currently understood. In part to enhance biofiltration of pollutants, these practices discourage the diversion of water into piping or covered channels.

Ivy

As you know, ivy is one of the most pernicious of non-native species invading Mount Douglas Park. Volunteer efforts cannot completely eradicate it. So, together with the Friends of Knockan Hill, we have applied to the Provincial Capital Commission for funding to employ a crew of four to remove ivy from our respective Parks. Altogether the crew would put in about 60 shifts of 4 hours each shift. The workers would be supplied by an organization called Hearts, which concerns itself with the training and employment of mentally-handicapped youths.

We have also asked Saanich Council for funds to employ two students to pull ivy in Mount Douglas Park. To promote public awareness of the threat the species poses to native forest vegetation, we have designated two ivy-covered areas that are fully visible to passers-by as test plots for ivy eradication. Initially the students would direct their efforts to these plots. One plot is adjacent to the washrooms in the picnic area. The other is close to the Ash Road bridge. At some stage these sites will be marked by posters that explain their import.

Complementing our efforts, Ron Carter, the Parks Department's arborist, and Adrian Pollard, the Environmental Planner, have been bringing in several parties of schoolchildren to pull ivy.

Daphne

This lass was the daughter of Peneus, a Thessalian river-god of minor status. Unfortunately for her, she caught the eye of Apollo, who wouldn't take "No!" from a maiden's lips to mean "No!". Just at the moment when he had chased her down, she addressed a prayer for aid to Papa, who transformed her forthwith into a laurel tree. That was really smart, for it saved Apollo's face—he could rest on his laurels—as well as Daphne's virginity.

Since this transformation she has given her name to a related species, otherwise known as "spurge laurel" (*Daphne laureola*), a particularly pestiferous type of semi-ornamental. This can grow in several stems to about a metre high. It has lanceolate leaves like the laurel, though much narrower, and these radiate outward from each node of the stem.

This shrub has taken to crossing the boundaries of private gardens into uncultivated areas. Already it has established a minor foothold at one or two points in Mount Douglas Park. A few plants have been detected just beyond the edge of a garden in Parkside. The householder has undertaken to deal with these. They have also established a little colony at a point where the Garry oak treeline approaches the steepest part of the mountain's south side. At the time of writing, that cluster has not yet been completely eliminated.

If you can locate any of these plants elsewhere in the Park, please contact Kenneth Rankin at 477-8007 or else uproot them yourself. Since they are slightly poisonous, however, the wearing of gloves is advised for the job. In the case of the maturer plants a weed wrench may also be required to extract the roots.

If you live near the Park and have any daphne in your garden, you may want to dig it out. Once it gets a hold in a forest it can overcome much of the native undergrowth.

Bird Study

Richard Seldman, a graduate student from U.B.C., is currently conducting a bird study in the Park for the Canadian Wildlife Service. You may have noticed the orange ribbons that mark the various stations from which the birds are being studied. Altogether he will examine eight Garry oak stands (not necessarily all in the Park) and, for comparison, adjacent plots of Douglas fir. He will be recording the species-variety and species-density of birds in these areas, and also doing some vegetation sampling. The study will take four or five months to complete.

The Old Quarry

Work on the reintegration of the old quarry site into the Park has already begun. The ugly chainlink fence has been removed and the adjacent space used by the Fire Department as an emergency pumping station has been surfaced with open brickwork that allows grass to grow through the gaps, thus giving the surface a more natural appearance. Access to the site can be had via a pedestrian crossing from the entrance to the old section of Cordova Bay Road that runs down to the picnic area, as well as by the trail that parallels the main road through the Park.

The reclaimed area also includes a holding pond designed to moderate the flow of water from the high ground into the road drainage system during heavy rainstorms. Unfortunately, shortly after its construction this pond sprang a leak, with the potential capacity of weakening the bank that supports the road. This defect is in process of being repaired.

As yet, our plans for the area around and above the pond have not been fully implemented. Eventually it will be planted with native shrubs.

The Road

...or more correctly the edge of the road from the motel to Blenkinsop Road and those pathways we have been talking about for a decade. The excuse for the latest delay is that the area will have sewers installed soon and the issues of footpaths and bicycle lanes will be part of the package. However, at the public hearing on the matter there was no clear indication where the line would go and there was virulent opposition from home owners in the neighborhood, concerned with the location of the proposed pumping station which is an integral part of the plan. After the meeting, a survey of the neighbourhood was done listing a number of options; since then.... nothing. Except that students continue to walk along the road's edge to catch the bus which takes them to U.Vic., Camosun or Royal Roads at considerable risk to themselves: yet another example of adding a service without having the proper infrastructure in place first.

At even greater risk are the twelve- to fifteen-year-olds who walk in groups, from close to the park boundary to Blenkinsop, to catch the school bus to Royal Oak Middle School. They are forced to cross the road at least once and at 8 o'clock in the morning, in February, that is a major risk. If you wanted to be alarmist, you could call it an accident waiting to happen.

To put this in context, more than five years have gone by since we asked the municipality to lay a simple, cheap and level track of crushed screenings, similar to the paths they have laid in the picnic area and near the motel, so that people could walk in relative safety from Royal Oak Drive to the park. Since then the matter has been caught in some infinite bureaucratic loop and the time has come to set it free. Our original argument was cast in favour of residents and visitors out for recreation. They are numerous, but they have a choice; the teenagers, however, are required to make the hazardous two-way trip, five days a week, come rain or shine. Stay tuned.



The Creek

On February 27 three society members cleaned rubbish out of the stretch of creek from the weir to Ash Road Bridge. Until we can trap the rubbish at the weir this is going to be an ongoing job. Each rainfall brings down another unpleasant load. In this case we wanted to remove the rubbish before we initiated the eyed egg transplant.

On March 11, ten adults and three children set the eggs out in the creek. The partially-developed eggs were contained in "Scotty egg condominiums", manufactured and donated by Scott plastics. Each condominium contains 100 cells with an egg planted in each cell. After the eggs hatch the fry emerge from their individual cells into the stream. We used two methods of setting out the egg "condos" (trays). Six trays were buried deep in the gravel, at the downstream edge of a pool, located such that a constant supply of oxygenated water flowed through the gravel and the egg trays. The second method involved setting five egg trays in woody debris piles and covering them with cobbles. When we recover the trays on June 10, we will open them up and count the unhatched eggs. This will give us an egg-to-fry percentage. Since we know where each tray was set out we can build on our successes for as long as we need to transplant eggs.

As of April 9th the fry started to come out of the trays. By now there are a large number of fry in the Creek from the Ash Road bridge upstream to just short of the fire road culvert. The fry are growing rapidly, and at present are 40mm, or just shy of 2 inches long. I call this very good news.

More Good News

On April 8 and 9, Susan Low, the new Streamkeepers coordinator, gave a streamkeepers course to a number of highschool students. Part of the course involved fish trapping methods. I pointed out a few spots where coho can usually be found

providing that they haven't already left for the ocean: in those places and some of her own choosing, she saw groups of fry moving downstream. Those ones were heading down to the ocean—and so the stream has produced smolts for the second year. These survivors lived through spring, summer, fall and winter of 1999 and winter, spring of 2000. This is excellent news and the only question that remains is how many in total did the stream produce.

And Some Hope

We know we can rear more coho in the stream if we can improve the water quality and even out periodic storm-related flows. The best management practice (BMP) that we hoped to see implemented by Saanich doesn't look, at present, as if it is on. This is extremely frustrating because as the few remaining open areas are developed, the job is going to be more and more difficult and at the bitter end much more expensive. We haven't given up. Your executive has put their heads together and drafted up revisions to Saanich's stormwater bylaw. These revisions are being circulated amongst interested parties and will in time come before the mayor and councillors. The intent of the revisions is to give the municipality some tools to work with in areas that are being infilled or redeveloped. We think that biofiltering is probably the most effective way of treating stormwater. We think that BMPs instituted for infill or redevelopment could be sized large enough to treat stormwater from an already developed portion of the watershed. In time several of these wetlands would do wonders for downstream ecosystems.

But there is more. Approximate figures, derived by people who are accustomed to estimating discharge of streams based on watershed size, soils in the region and climate, are in the order of 3.7 million cubic meters of water discharged through Douglas Creek per year. If stormwater is polluted (we are certain that at times it is) then that is a lot of polluted water being discharged into the ocean. The focus of this report is on coho salmon and we can expand that a little to include an aquatic ecosystem within a natural park. But there are also larger issues at stake. For anyone that hasn't read Rachel Carson's classic "Silent Spring," I recommend that you do and then set the clock back to 1962, and move it slowly forward through all the years that we haven't as a society learned anything.

The hydrometric study that we had hoped to carry out last year just didn't pan out. Fortunately we are able to carry over our USHP funding into this fiscal year. We have hired a new contractor, Gordon Clark of Clark Hydrological. Things are starting to move and I have every confidence that we will nail it down this year. The Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks, Resource Inventory Branch, has kindly loaned us some equipment (more details in the next newsletter) which will be installed in short order. A portion of our USHP grant is being spent on protecting this borrowed equipment. The way the hydrometric study is being designed will give us first rate data that can be incorporated into the provincial database. Next year this time I won't need to say *approximately* 3.7 million cubic meters but will be able to give an accurate accounting and then vary that figure with varying seasonal rainfalls.

This information is critical on several counts. When designing BMPs, the design parameters require an accurate knowledge of how much water and at what times. A benchmark is required to measure the success or failure of BMPs that are implemented. According to some people, hydrology is the keystone arbiter of biological health in aquatic ecosystems—more important in most instances than water quality. Understanding and managing flows can be correlated directly to habitat quality and thus the number of fish that can be reared in the creek. While a hydrograph or a stage/discharge spreadsheet will not solve our problems they will provide important tools that can be used in problem solving.

Speaking of problem solving: I have a problem that needs to be solved. To measure high flows in the stream safely, we need a portable platform that can be set in place from bank to bank so that people can work from the centre. It has to be able to bear 400 pounds in the centre of the span. I'm thinking of an industrial strength ladder 22-24 feet long. I can fasten plywood to the rungs to make it more sturdy and to give better footing. We are trying, out of necessity, to do things on a shoestring budget—so buying isn't really an option. Borrowing or building is more in line with our financial constraints. It must be light (could be sectional) and simple. Does anybody have any ideas? If you would like to talk about it please call me, Bob Bridgeman, at 477-7464.

Greenways, Blueways and the Changing Capital Region

Have you seen the C.R.D.'s flyer "Capital Choices 2000"? If you haven't, you should get a copy and send in the questionnaire about the mix of greenspace, urban development and transportation modes you would like to see evolve in the capital region over the next 25 years. They lay out four options for development in the region that will accommodate growth and still leave room for the region to prosper beyond 2026 while retaining many of the community features that make it such an attractive place to live. The full report can be found on their website—HYPERLINK http://www.crd.bc.ca/rgs_home.htm. They have information booths available at the malls for the next month and there are open houses scheduled throughout the region for the same period. All this effort culminates in the Capital Choices Regional Public Forum to be held on Friday and Saturday 8th and 9th September in the Council Chamber at the Municipal Hall. The organizers want your input so give it to them loud and clear.

All that seems quite removed from the title of this piece but in fact there is a very strong link. For all the options use six organizing principles and one of them is the creation of an integrated greenways and blueways belt stretching from Sooke to Sidney. The fact that such an item is on the agenda at all is a mark of how far we have come in the last ten years. The crucial issue now is to see that this concept retains its prominence when the time comes to carry out the plans; setting aside parkland, pouring concrete, planting trees, adding bicycle lanes and generally improving the quality of life for the people of the region. It will not be easy; most projects are subjected to a budget-cutting exercise prior to their start, and the first items under the gun are usually the ones that give the project its human dimension. However, these concerns are embedded in the terms of reference, which is a major gain and constitutes the good news.

If you want to see the other side, take a look at the maps the C.R.D. have produced and contrast them with the situation thirty years ago, when there were greenhouses at Shelbourne and McKenzie and Sunnymeade was a farm. In that short time the urban tide has swept past Mount Douglas Park nearly to the boundary of the

Municipality in the north. In fact the most striking image is that Mount Douglas and its immediate neighbourhood is now the single largest area of greenspace within the four core municipalities and as such is destined to play a central role in the process of building the region-wide network of greenways and blueways. Which makes it all the more worrying that Saanich has produced a draft document on the same topic, outlining the contributions the municipality would make to the overall scheme. Unfortunately, when we come to the sections dealing with the Park, there are a number of startling omissions and assumptions. The most glaring are:

- The exclusion from the blueways plan of the beach from McMorran's in Cordova Bay to Cormorant Point in Gordon Head.
- Designation of Cordova Bay Road as a Parkway/traffic corridor after it had been agreed to drop this terminology.
- No explicit reference to the central role the Park will play in the overall scheme, despite the fact that previous planning documents have assigned it as a major node or centre in both greenways and blueways plans.

The coordinator of Saanich's efforts is Neal Findlow: he has a list of our concerns. He has given assurances that they will be discussed in the staff review and the public review, both of which will take place before the fall. After that Saanich staff plan to take the document to Council for approval. Given the time frame and the scale of the overall project, it is vital we have the draft document altered before it goes to Council; otherwise we will have an uphill battle for a long time to come.

The Park Entrance

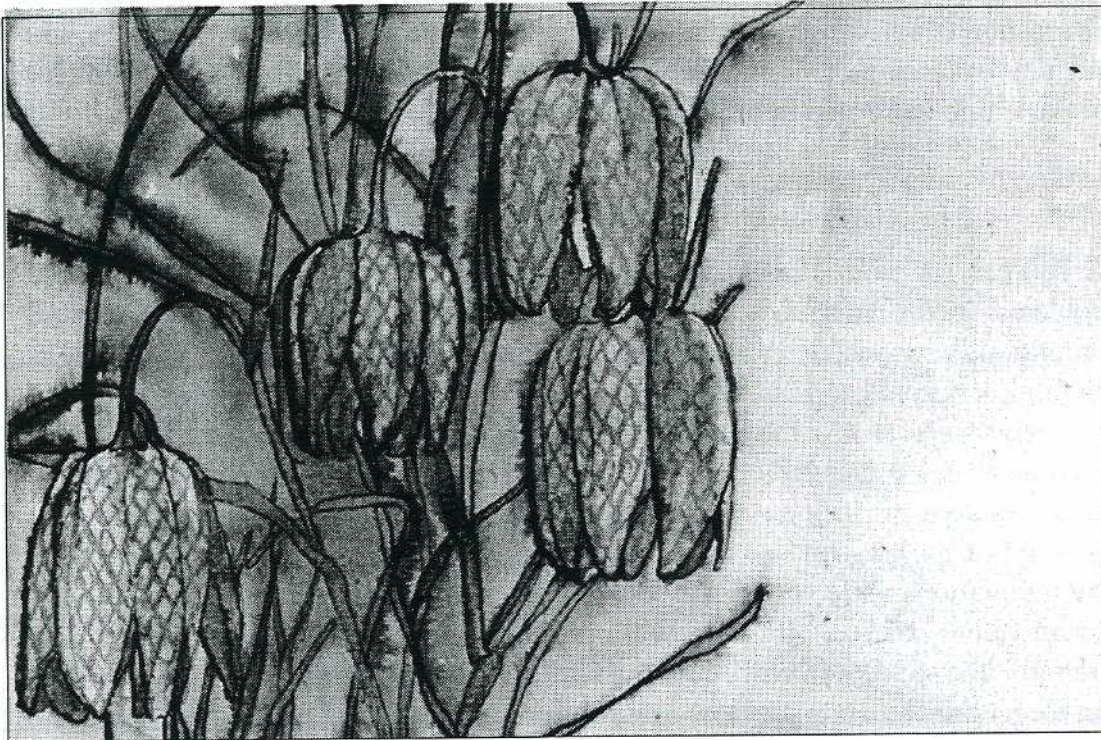
They are working at the entrance to the picnic area; there is now an alternate bike lane from Ash Road to the quarry through the picnic area and up the old view road, for those who do not like competing with the traffic along Cordova Bay Road. The plan also calls for cleaning up the unsightly yellow barriers which are used to define the corner and to make the entrance more appealing and functional. On the opposite side of Ash Road you might have seen a dotted white line painted on the damp brown mud before the holiday weekend rains washed it away. It was there to indicate

the location of a new bank which will be created from a mixture of rocks, logs, soil and native plantings. Once the bank is in place this area will cease to be an auxiliary car park: one more step in bringing the park to the road edge.

Transmitter Site

As you can see from other parts of this newsletter, it is a time for revisiting old problems. In the early days of the Society, the transmitter site was a major and contentious issue which was resolved, for the most part, by burying the building in the summit car park and limiting its use only to companies and agencies who needed emergency services. As the communications revolution continues, the site is seen as a major prize and there has been mounting pressure from the public and private sectors for access to it. Some changes have already taken place; the building beneath the summit parking lot has been expanded and the observation deck extended. The renovations were very neatly done; you can hardly see the join between the old and new parts of the observation deck. A few years ago, the tower was strengthened so it could withstand the winter winds with its present loading (who can forget the eerie orange glow around the summit as night fell and the welders were still at work.)

The building is essentially full and the tower cannot carry any more dishes without endangering the structure. In light of the requests Saanich has received, there was a meeting to discuss the future of the site: at the end of that meeting there was general agreement about "drawing a line in the sand" and saying the site is now full and no modifications will be made to the profile of the tower which would make it more intrusive than it already is. The next step is a little unclear; the municipality itself has to decide what it requires for its own medium-term communication services and once that is done then the most likely route is a proposal to Council which would close the site to any further expansion. The discussion tends to be very technical but our interests become crystal clear when each new proposal involves an additional dish or antenna to the tower and we argue against it. The aesthetic argument does seem to carry some weight.



"Chocolate Lily"

from a watercolour by

Kristi Bridgeman

a member of The Friends of Mount Douglas Park.

