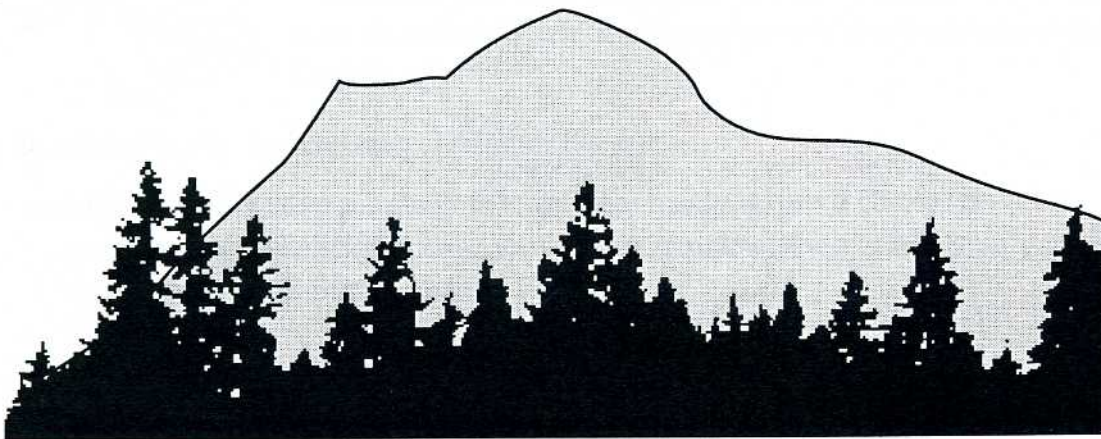

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

Newsletter

November 2000

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



English Ivy—No Friend to Trees

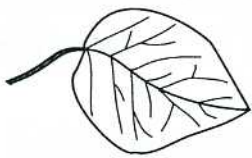
Ivy can look very good in an ornamental garden, so there's a lot of it around. But it escapes easily: it has invaded every natural park anywhere near an urban area.

By now it is a major threat both to natural parks and to ecologically sensitive areas across the Pacific Northwest.

These are the problems:

- As the ivy grows upward into a tree, it becomes so dense that it keeps light from the foliage, and the tree fails and eventually dies.
- The extra mass and weight of the ivy add wind resistance to the tree and increase the chance of stem or root failure in a storm, even in strong and healthy trees.
- The ivy vines can become so thick on the stems of a tree that they can girdle it and kill it.

The distinctive lobed leaves are only the juvenile stage. In a city yard, where it's cut back regularly, the leaves keep this form. It's the juvenile plant that climbs so successfully.



The mature ivy plant (and it *does* mature in natural parks, where it's less likely to be cut back) grows an oval leaf, so very different from the juvenile leaf that many people don't recognize it as English ivy.

In natural parks, ivy creates yet another hazard:

- Like most invasive plants, it is extremely hardy: given a chance it will overtake more delicate indigenous plants, smother them, and occupy their ecological niches in the park.

**Protecting your own trees from English ivy is a first step
to protecting the trees in the Park.**

Ivy Removal in Mount Douglas Park

Our last newsletter mentioned that, conjointly with the Friends of Knockan Hill Park, we had applied to the Provincial Capital Commission for funding to employ a crew of four and a supervisor to remove ivy from our respective parks. This application did not meet with success.

We have now made a similar application to a federal agency called Ecoaction 2000. Once again the four workers would be supplied by an organization called HEARTS that seeks out opportunities for the training and employment of mentally-handicapped youths. We should know by mid-December if this application has been successful.

We also mentioned that we had applied to Saanich Municipality with a similar purpose. We asked for funding to hire two students who would conduct a survey of ivy infestation in the Park, remove it on the two small demonstration plots, and likewise clear it from other similarly manageable plots within the Park. The success of this application will not be known until the municipality has made its budget allocations for next year.

In the meantime, you are encouraged to cut away ivy creepers wherever you see them growing on trees in the Park. Before setting out for a walk, equip yourself with a pair of clippers. Remember that it is from the ends of these creepers that seed spread further afield.

Broom Bashing

Broom seeds have lain dormant for about two years on the two main sites that we have been clearing, viz. by the Cedar Hill firegate and at the mountain top. Now, however, the moratorium is over. During the past summer young broom has been sprouting fast, thick, and high. Unless, then, we wish our past labour to be set at naught, we must remove this new crop before it reaches the seed-bearing stage. To this end our first work-party will be scheduled for Saturday, November 18, and the second for Saturday, November 25.

Please support this follow-through effort with all your former zeal.

The Braefoot Development

The wooded tongue of land between Braefoot and Malton roads provides one of the corridors for wildlife that may prevent the Park from lapsing into a wildlife ghetto, with consequent inbreeding and final demise of its larger native fauna. Now that the owners of that land have succeeded in having a sewer line installed to serve their properties, many of them are keen to subdivide. Council, at the time it approved the installation, chose to pretend that future development there was a separate issue. However, it now wants to recover for the municipality some of the cost of the installation by allowing development. To this end, a committee has been formed to determine in what way the subdivision should proceed.

Originally the membership of this body was to be confined to the property owners affected, and to a representative from the Gordon Head Residents' Association. However, after a certain amount of foot-shuffling, representatives from the Garry Oak Meadow Society, the Quadra/Cedar Hill Society, and the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society have now been admitted as well.

Our concern is that development should not be at a density that would preclude the preservation of a wildlife corridor. Also our experience with the upgrading of Douglas Creek has alerted us to the need to maintain wetland areas to biofilter impurities carried by storm water from built-up areas. Part of the Braefoot land includes a wetland we are anxious to have preserved for that purpose, in conformity with what should be a municipality-wide policy for water management.

Restoration of Natural Systems Diploma/Certificate

The Restoration of Natural Systems diploma/certificate has been developed by University of Victoria to disseminate information about environmental restoration and to provide practical background knowledge, training, and skill development for those working or planning to work in areas related to restoration of natural systems. Courses are offered in a variety of formats and schedules in order to meet the needs of busy people living in and outside the Victoria area.

For more information, please call 250-721-8463 or e-mail pfaulds@uvcs.uvic.ca

The Creek

Coho, Chum, and Spawned-Out Carcasses

On June 10th we picked up the egg trays that we implanted on March 11th. We had an astonishing egg-to-fry survival, 84 spoiled eggs out of the original 2200 .

At the time we were digging up the trays it was noted for the first time that the numbers of fry in the stream were diminishing. Up until this time there were abundant fry in the stream, growing visibly larger each week. Subsequent minnow trapping has not produced any fry whatsoever.

The mystery is: where did they go? I haven't seen one dead fish in the Creek this year. It is possible that there are lots of fry in the creek—survival in the wild depends on hiding skills. But to avoid leaving a blank spot in the seasonal development of fry, we have transplanted more mature fry of the same age class as our eyed eggs. On October 22, with conditions just right, sixteen adults and eleven children seeded the creek with 2000 coho fry. It was a wonderful event. Thanks go out to Goldstream hatchery for the fish.

A few of us picked the rubbish out of the stream channel on October 15 in preparation for the fish transplant. I don't like putting fish into the creek amongst the litter. I will be glad to see the litter trapped at the weir when and if that can be managed.

It is within the range of possibility that we could have some spawners back this year. If you are walking around the stream some time, you may want to watch for spawned-out carcasses. This is the surest indication that the coho have come back. Coho have a reputation for being secretive, and one would be lucky to actually see them spawn. If you see anything, please call me, Bob Bridgeman, at 477-7464. It is difficult to predict when they will cross the beach shallows. Obviously, some kind of a high tide is needed, but how high depends on the state of the beach, and that changes dynamically with each tide and differing stream flow. They could be back as soon as now and right up until Christmas. Likely times are when the creek is flooding and we have a high tide. There are high daytime tides in October, November, and December.



We are in process of applying for permission to transplant chum (*Oncorhynchus keta*) eggs (from Goldstream Hatchery) into the stream next year. Chum usually occur in the lower reaches of coastal streams. They migrate downstream to sea soon after they emerge from the egg, and are usually, depending on the stream, gone from fresh water by June 1st. The life cycle of this species avoids the difficult summer months that salmon experience in southern coastal streams—especially urban ones. If this strategy pans out we can accomplish a couple of things. We can have the public-awareness benefit of salmon spawning in the stream while we are working on the more difficult problem of reintroducing the threatened coho. And there will be a huge pulse of nutrients entering the aquatic ecosystem with the disintegration of the spawned-out carcasses. Historically, this has been an important event in the lifecycle of every living creature and plant associated with water. As the number of salmon has declined so have the dependent biota—this can be seen pretty much everywhere.

Because we want to replicate natural conditions in the stream as much as possible, we have asked for a permit to transplant some spawned-out salmon carcasses from Goldstream into the creek. At present the thinking is to contain the disintegrating carcasses in coarse natural fibre mesh bags, so as to hold them together in the stream as long as possible. Since the creek is subject to intense, short interval flows, a little extra is required to stop the carcasses from flushing out, so the mesh bags will probably be tied under water into some woody debris structures. Approximately a hundred carcasses have been talked about. I don't anticipate smell being a problem, and as for harmful bacteria it's hard to raise that issue when what is now allowed to pass through the stream kills fish. Permits are required for both these activities, plus we will need the approval of the Parks Department. We will move along on the issue as the permits come through.

Here is probably a good place to recognize Tom Rutherford from Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and Peter McCully, Manager of the Goldstream Hatchery, for their contribution to our project. Without the paperwork that these people do for us and without the fish that they provide to us we could not do anything. I would also like to thank Tom for the \$400.00 that he supplies us to run the project: it pays for photocopying, resource material, bits of equipment, and the odds and ends that are needed to keep it all together. Thank you.

Grant from South Islands Aquatic Stewardship Society

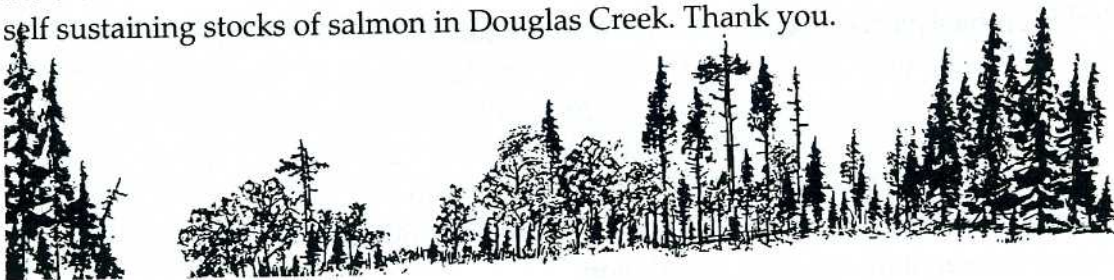
We recently applied for funding for two projects, the continuation of the hydrometric survey and a water quality monitoring program. We were allowed the \$7,918.00 that we requested through the South Islands Aquatic Stewardship Society (SIASS) funds originating from Fish Renewal BC. The hydrometric survey is under way and doing well. We are just putting the pieces together to get the water quality monitoring program started. Brian Fowler of the Axys Group is advising us on the project. To raise money and bring in professionals is really the way to go sometimes. Brian's experience has already solved some of the complex sampling problems in the design phase of the project. I will report further on this next newsletter.

Portable Bridge

Last newsletter I asked for some help finding a portable bridge to use for measuring bankfull flows. Our trusty membership has come through once again. A friend of the park is going to lend us a painter's staging plank that should do the trick. More on that after we have given it a try.

Cutting Windthrows

The Saanich Parks arboriculture crew was recently in the park, cutting channel-spanning windthrows so that one end of the tree bole drops into the active part of the channel. This complexes the channel, creating coho habitat at all stages of stream flow. This important work has been going on for three years, so a vote of thanks to the crew. Without these kinds of contributions we can't progress toward the goal of self sustaining stocks of salmon in Douglas Creek. Thank you.

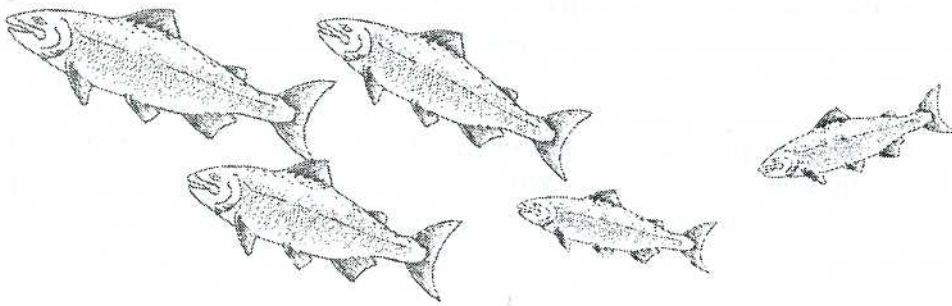


Vandalized Trees

On September 5 I discovered that four trees had been cut down adjacent to the stream and approximately 150 metres upstream from the Ash Road Bridge. One, a Western Red Cedar, was 12 centimetres in diameter and growing right on the stream bank. It provided shade to a portion of stream that will now bake in the sun for the next thirty or so years. Further away from the bank, three Douglas Firs, each approximately 8 centimetres in diameter, had been cut down. Although the fir trees were small, one had over a hundred yearly growth rings. (Interestingly, the thinness of the growth rings shows that the tree had been stressed much of its life.) Two fires had been set, one on the stream bank and one in the stream channel. Beer tins were hidden under the cut off limbs of the fallen trees and an area had been cleared of vegetation.

It is a waste and a shame to know that even in a natural park a hundred years of tree can be wiped out for nothing.

Not to be beaten by this sort of thing, we have decided to go in and replant on November 5th, which is Significant Tree Day in Saanich. Most of the tree understory is Western Red Cedar, so that is the tree species we will plant. If stocks of suitable native plants are available to replant the herbaceous understory, we will plant them too. We are organizing the event with representatives of the Significant Tree Committee, who are supplying the planting stock, a lunch, and expert advice. Since we plan to overplant there will be lots to do for everyone who would like to participate. We will meet at the Edgemont walkthrough at 10:00 AM, November 5th, rain or shine. I will ask the telephone committee to call the membership with details or you can call me, Bob Bridgeman, at 477-7464.



The Future for Douglas Creek?

With all that we've done and are doing to restore the Creek, we are still left with the basic problems of pollution and high flushes,

Despite Saanich Municipality's considerable support in other aspects of restoring the Creek, it is a fact that these problems exist because the storm drains for 5000 residences and commercial buildings are fed into the Creek.

The provincial Municipal Act gives each municipality the power to send water wherever it wants to. Not surprisingly, municipalities have chosen to run it in the easiest and cheapest direction, in the direction of what could be called "natural flow," and until fairly recently that direction has not been questioned. As areas became more urbanized, the creeks that ran through them not only received runoff water but became part of the storm water system and were piped and covered over with asphalt.

Today it's a different world. Fresh water can't be taken for granted. Less than .5% of the world's available water is fresh water.

In an effort to clean up our small part of it, last week we met with Saanich's Municipal Planner, Municipal Engineer, Assistant Engineer and Environmental Planner. The immediate focus was the little remaining developable land within the watershed that feeds Douglas Creek. The general intent was to bring them up to date on what we've been doing and where we've arrived, and to enlist their help in cleaning the water running into the Creek.

It was agreed, we think, that the issues need to be approached from both a local and broad perspective, and the Saanich officials indicated that they would be glad to assist. It was proposed—and we are moving on it—to create a committee with a mandate to collect information on all options, with the further expectation that what is learned and achieved in Douglas Creek will also be relevant to other freshwater streams.

A water management plan is currently being developed for Bowker Creek, and we will be watching the process closely, with a view to making use of the findings and before long, with municipal and regional assistance, developing a water management plan of our own.

The Churchill Drive proposal

In the course of a year, this road to the summit is closed several times to motor traffic. At such times walkers have an opportunity to experience the park in a totally new way, the absence of car noise and the smell of exhausts being the most obvious benefits.

In discussions with Parks and Recreation staff, we agreed it would be a bonus if this type of use could be extended, and we thought the best way forward was to conduct a trial over year to see what sort of response we would get from the public.

Dave DeShane, the Parks Manager, placed the item on the agenda of the Parks and Recreation committee and we both spoke in support of the item. The response was mixed, a foretaste of things to come, but in the end the committee voted for postponing the opening of the road until 12:00 noon on Sundays for a year. From the committee we learnt about similar operations in Vancouver and how successful they had been in drawing new segments of the population to parks, due to the absence of traffic. In addition, members of the committee voiced the needs of older people who are intimidated by the trail system within the park but would welcome the opportunity to include a vigorous walk under open skies into their regular pattern of exercise.

Armed with this result, the issue went to Council in the summer where it met with the same mixed response—on the one hand, a reluctance to inhibit motor vehicle traffic and on other, the hankering for an extensive area of outstanding natural beauty and clean air for the public to enjoy in peace and quiet. At the end of the evening, the decision was to solicit the opinions of SCAN, the Saanich Community Associations Network at its end-of- summer meeting.

Although at SCAN there was considerable comment in favour of the idea, the members were restricted by their mandate of officially approving only those items on which there was unanimous agreement. In this case, at a separate meeting, the Gordon Head Residents Association had voted against the proposal, and so the letter from SCAN to Council is somewhat less than a ringing endorsement of the concept

In an attempt to gain a clearer and more objective picture of what happens on Sunday mornings at Churchill Drive, we conducted a survey from 7:00 a.m. to noon on the Thanksgiving weekend. The results were surprising. In the five hour period, 73 people went up on foot accompanied by 12 dogs, as well as 3 cyclist and a baby in a stroller; in the same period, 16 cars went up carrying a approximately 25 people. Significantly, only two cars carried more than two people (they were difficult to count, hence the approximate total of 25).

Clearly the walking public outnumber the motoring public by 3 to 1. Moreover, the image people have, of carloads of families on family outings is a false one at this time in the morning and at this season of the year.

The closure came up to Council again on Monday, October 30th. The results of our survey must have carried the day, because Council has agreed to give Sunday morning closure a one-year trial.

Knockan Hill Park: Can It Grow?

Over the last decade, it has become clear that most of the difficulties the Friends of Mount Douglas Park face when we argue for the preservation of natural parks are also faced by the Friends of Knockan Hill Park. Now they have an opportunity to expand by acquiring a property which is about to change hands.

The property sits on two sides of the park. The postal address is:

101 High Street, View Royal

but the physical reality is 2.6 acres of mixed vegetation including maples, Garry oak, ocean spray and fir with a summit, which is the highest point in View Royal, providing magnificent views to the Sooke Hills, Mount Finlayson and the sea.

At present the land is held in trust by the S.P.C.A. of Ontario. The Friends of Knockan Hill are trying to obtain from them the right of first refusal for the property when the S.P.C.A. gives up its interest in it next spring.

As usual, such things cost money and the present state of play is that View Royal Council has agreed to provide \$200,000 in seed money: however, the remainder must be found from other sources.

The Habitat Acquisition Trust has agreed to handle donations and the Friends of Knockan Hill are lobbying vigorously to obtain the remainder. If you would like to help in this effort in any way please contact Andrea Tetlow at (250) 479-1947 for further information.

Sea Walls

The story so far:

In the mid-nineties the engineers at Saanich came up with a plan to build a massive 600-metre retaining wall along the beach to the park boundary, at a cost of approximately \$1,000,000, in an attempt prevent further erosion at the foot of the cliff.

In the discussions that surrounded the proposal, it was agreed that the engineers would tackle the problem of surface water first, and they would monitor the erosion at the toe of the cliff. If and when it was eaten away by 5 metres then a retaining wall would be installed without further discussion. Fortunately, the toe has stayed in place: however there has been some slippage in the upper slopes, most notably near the old quarry where there was considerable runoff from the steep trail on the opposite side of the road until that trail was rebuilt.

In the intervening years, we have gained some insight into the problems associated with building structures on beaches: the cautionary tale of the pumping station in the middle of Cordova Bay beach leaps to mind. From the work we have done with the Department of Fisheries and Oceans it is clear that such structures have a devastating effect on marine habitat.

Finally, through the work of one young man, Michael Vaninsberghe, we have the first comprehensive survey of life on of the beach and what would be destroyed if massive concrete structures were ever installed. He took it upon himself to catalogue the various species he found on the beach and in the intertidal zone. When in doubt, he went to the Royal British Columbia Museum for guidance and support, and through this collaboration has come an excellent survey which will be of use for many years to come.

So it was a little surprising to find the issue of sea walls being brought forward again by the engineers.

We wait for the rains and for the new proposals but this time we start from a more realistic position; no one is suggesting, as they did suggest six or seven years ago, that we can have a permanent solution to the erosion problem in the park. All the engineers can achieve in this environment is to slow down the rate of erosion and postpone the inevitable collapse into the sea. Given such an outcome, the tax payers money would be better spent looking for alternatives. We look forward to helping that process. Once again, stay tuned.

More Land for Mount Douglas Park

The Friends were very pleased to hear that the Municipality has acquired 3.6 ha from the Richards family and the new acquisition has been added to Mount Douglas Park.

The property is located just north of the Seven Oaks property. This, along with the other additions to the Park along the western boundary, now make it possible to circumnavigate the Park and stay within the Park!

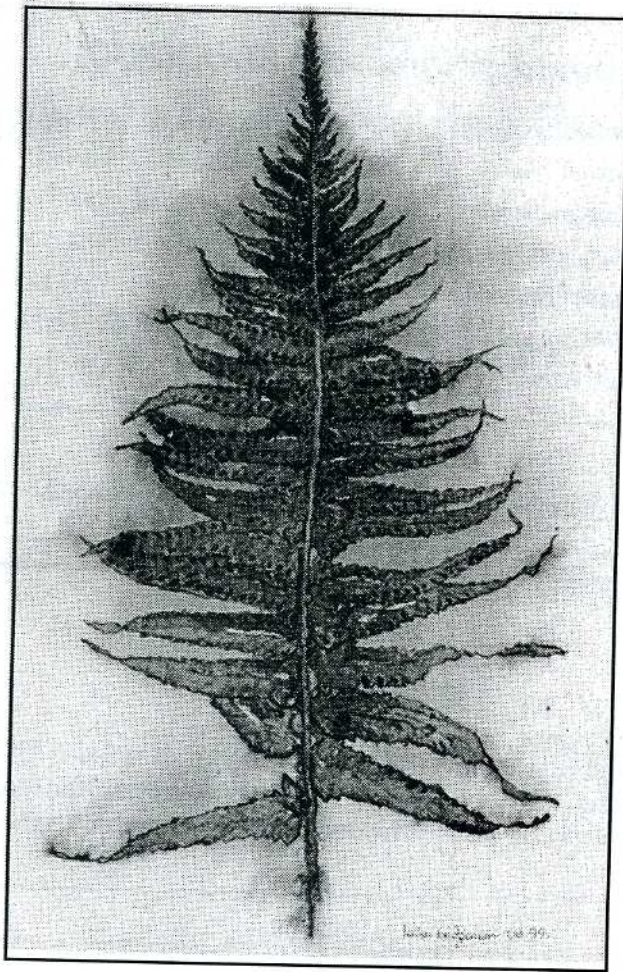
When you have an opportunity, please congratulate Saanich Council for this important acquisition.

... and more land on Christmas Hill

The Land Conservancy, in partnership with Saanich Municipality, has agreed to purchase four lots on Christmas Hill.

These lands support the Garry oak ecosystem and also form an essential addition to Swan Lake/Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. The Land Conservancy and Saanich between them must raise \$400,000.

Saanich is to be congratulated not only for this acquisition as well, but for its broad, general support of land acquisition for natural parks.



"Fern"

from a watercolour by

Kristi Bridgeman

a member of The Friends of Mount Douglas Park.
