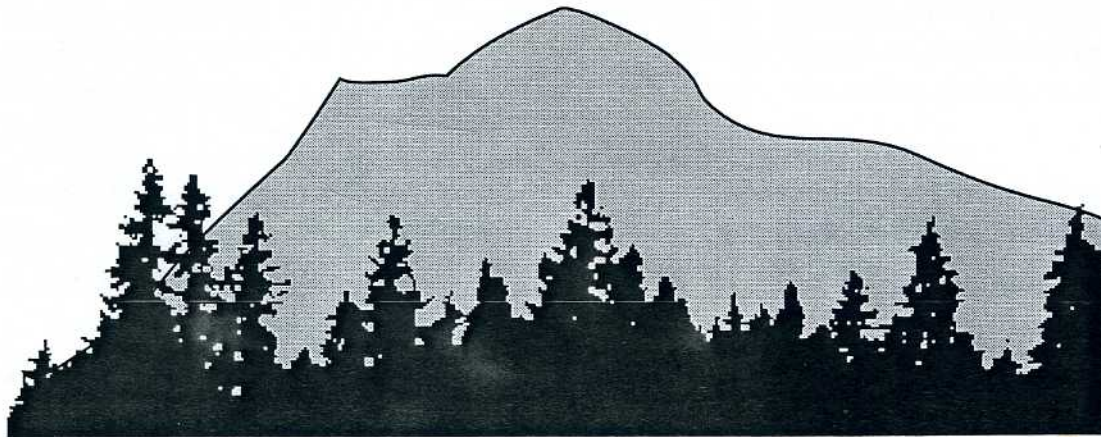

The Friends of Mount Douglas
Park Society

Newsletter

June 2001

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



2001 Annual General Meeting

The Annual General Meeting was held in McMorrans' Seaview Room at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday, April 10. The business of the evening began with the presentation and approval of the minutes for the Annual General Meeting of the year 2000. The president, Kenneth Rankin, gave an overview of the Society's activities since that time. The treasurer, Graham Shorthill, reported on the healthy state of the Society's finances. Bob Bridgeman described the further steps taken, and the progress made, towards re-establishing Douglas Creek as a fish-bearing stream

Our guest speaker for the evening was well-known local historian Valerie Green, who proceeded to fascinate all present with her information on Pioneer Neighbours of Mount Douglas Park. This led to an animated question period.

A vital, but almost omitted, piece of business was transacted on the cusp of the meeting's ungathering. Celia Esmonde, on behalf of the Nomination Committee, nominated Sheilagh Ogilvie, Bob Bridgeman, and Kenneth Rankin to election for further 2-year terms on the Board of Directors. No other nominations coming from the floor, these three nominees were elected. The meeting then finally adjourned.

The Braefoot Action Plan

The potential development of certain Braefoot properties has been under discussion. The area in question is enclosed by Braefoot Road on the west, Simon Road to the south, Malton Avenue to the east, and a section of Mount Douglas Cross Road to the north. There are 34 parcels of land, and they lie just within the urban containment boundary.

Among 9 highly significant environmental features mentioned in the Draft Action Plan for that locality, the following three are of the greatest concern for our Society:

- 17 distinct vegetation communities, ranging from Garry oak-shrub forest to wetland, indicating high biodiversity for an area of this size..
 - Areas supporting bird nesting and foraging. Deer and small mammals are known to live and breed in the study area
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- Forest along Mount Douglas Cross Road connecting with the forest corridor leading to Mount Douglas Park.

To determine the fate of this block of land, Saanich Council laid out three assumptions:

1. that there will be development within the urban containment boundary;
2. that recovery of some of the cost of sewer development in the area is desirable; and
3. that there should be a balance between social and environmental issues.

To secure consultation with the public, Saanich set up a work party limited initially to property owners that would, or might, be affected by any decisions, with a representative from the Gordon Head Residents' Association thrown in. After some protest from the Quadra/Cedar Hill Residents' Association, the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society, and the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society, representatives from these three community groups were also admitted.

Our interest as a Society in the proposed development stems from the fact that collectively these parcels form part of a corridor linking Mount Douglas Park to natural habitats outside the Park boundaries. If the Park is to remain a healthy wilderness area with a beneficial balance between diverse species, it's desirable that wildlife be able to come and go in and out of the Park. It could be argued that this places unfair constraints on bordering properties. However, part of the charm of Victoria has been the extent, spotty and at times inadvertent, to which the city has been willing to adjust its original idea in favour of what is indigenous to the land that it has inherited.

Unfortunately, by the end of the work party's consultations there had been no meeting of minds between the majority of the property owners on one hand, and the representatives of the three last-mentioned community groups on the other. In the end, the Planning Department came up with a compromise leaning in favour of the former. At the Committee of the Whole on May 8 it was recommended that Council should support rezoning applications to RS-8 (minimum lot size 665 m²) for houses along Malton and RS-12 (minimum lot size 930 m²) for the main properties adjoining

Braefoot. Council accepted these recommendations with certain modifications for greater flexibility.

Our argument before Council was that (setting aside the strip along Malton as a lost cause) the RS-12 provision would segment the forested section at the north end, at the cost of choking off access for wildlife through it and of disrupting the plant communities that presently flourish there.

A preferable allocation (again setting aside the strip along Malton) would have been RS-14 (minimum lot size 2020 m²) for the northern half and RS-15 (minimum size 3000 m²) for the southerly. The latter allocation is needed to preserve the large stand of Garry Oak that is distinctive of that portion. This, in fact, was the Planning Department's earlier recommendation which Council turned down at a Public Hearing in November 1999.

Council preferred the Planning Department's latest recommendations, but there is one more step to come. The recommendations will go before a Public Hearing within the next few weeks, at which point we will express our concerns again and hope for a more positive response.

Three further comments.

- During the meeting (in 1992?) when Council approved the sewer line for these Braefoot properties, councillors who supported the installation declared that property development there was quite a separate issue. There is little reflection of this sentiment in the second of the three assumptions (see above) with which Council has furnished itself.
 - The cost of observing socio-environmental constraints does not come out of the pockets of the property owners, as they often like to allege—it merely prevents them from cashing in as much as they would like on land speculations which the rest of the community is under no obligation to render successful.
 - To their credit, one property-owning couple in the area under discussion is adamantly opposed to any rezoning.
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Ivy control

Since the last newsletter we have taken a major step forward in ivy control: Saanich Council has approved funding for people to work in the area between Durling Place and the Quarry over the summer.

This will mean that two separate projects will be under way in the area, since, for some time now, there has been an intense and controlled effort to remove ivy from the heavily-infested woods close to Durling Place. This work has been spearheaded by Angela Evans of Saanich Environmental Services, in collaboration with people from UVic and groups such as the Girl Guides. Their intent is to give the rare native species a chance to survive in their original habitat.

The latest project is designed to be more visible, so that the general public can see the effect the work can have on their local environment. As well, we will free one small area in the park from ivy. The outcome of this project will lead to the preparation of an information flyer advising people of the best way to control and contain ivy on their own property: with luck, the flyer should be ready by the fall. If we can make a dent in ivy traffic across the park boundaries we will have scored a major success.

For the long term, the key to success in controlling ivy is for many people to do a little bit on a regular basis.

Mountain Bikes and the Law

After the last newsletter, we were asked to write an expanded article about mountain bikes in the Park for the Saanich News. The reporter felt the result was too wordy and wanted to redo it with more photographs of the damage and a cryptic script.

As luck would have it when we arrived at the lookout to take the shots, there were four mountain bikers resting there. The reporter asked them directly: "Do you know that there's a bylaw against mountain biking in the park?" "Oh, yes, we know about it but we came up the road!" they replied.

We went in search of the damage. It didn't take long. Just down from the summit on the north east side was area of Camas in full bloom. Through the middle of it was etched a 30 cm (1foot) black strip carved by the back wheels of some pretty powerful mountain bikes, judging by the size of tire treads.

We walked back to the summit. The bikers had descended half way to the car park and were resting on a rocky knoll off the blacktop. When they saw us, they enacted a little pantomime in which they turned their bikes over and a started a detailed examination of the tires, chain and the gears—but not before the reporter had taken some good photographs with his telephoto lens.

Eventually, they moved off. By the time we arrived at the car park we had lost sight of them. Just as we thought our work was complete, we heard a laugh and shouts from the other side of the transmitter tower. We scrambled up the slope: down below we could see the distinctive shirts of the riders as they flashed through the trees—yellow really does stand out in that environment! They had ridden down from the summit, through the washed-out and eroded area leading to the trails for Cedar Hill Road and Glendenning.

They stopped in a clearing and the camera came out again. Seizing the moment, the reporter took off for the bottom of the mountain. When he phoned later, he said he waited for riders to appear and sure enough they did! When they saw him they tried to do a U-turn and get clean away. But he did get the photograph.

In less than thirty minutes, we had witnessed and photographed a graphic enactment of the problem, one we have only been able to describe, not show, up to now.

We have a bylaw that bikers know about and disregard. We have extensive fragile ecosystems that have taken thousands of years to mature but can be wiped out in an afternoon of concentrated effort by vandals. From this new perspective, the comments made in the last newsletter are still valid. There need to be challenging routes and sites for mountain bikers *away from* our natural parks so those shrieks of laughter and shouts of pleasure are not produced at the expense of the destruction of a fragile environment that has been set aside for the enjoyment of everyone.

Storm Water and Disconnecting Downspouts

It's surprising where things will lead you! From the interest in salmon restoration, to water quality in the creek, to a winter of low water behind the dams, to major water restrictions, to new ways of operating—this is a path many people are following at the moment.

As everyone knows, this summer we are going to have serious problems keeping our gardens in reasonable shape. The idea of using rainwater more efficiently and more effectively is one that should be welcomed by the public. A number of cities have made a significant change in the way they handle stormwater and, from a survey of the different approaches, the models used in Toronto and in Portland, Oregon seem to have the best record of success. Such models could be introduced into this area with little disruption.

The driving force behind the idea in our area is Hugh M'Kay, Chief Engineer for Saanich: he will bring a proposal for a pilot project to Saanich Council in June.

The initial idea is to recruit approximately 200 volunteers in the Gordon Head area who want their downspouts disconnected and the water dispersed safely into their gardens. A team of trained personnel would inspect the site and do the actual work of disconnecting the down spout and installing the dispersion system.

The Municipality would bear most of the costs, with the homeowner being asked to contribute \$25. The assurance the homeowner has is that if installation is faulty the original system will be reconnected at no cost. The record of success in other cities suggests this will not be a widespread problem. For example, Portland has made 12,000 conversions and has had only three sites that needed attention.

The role of The Friends of Mount Douglas Park in this project is to promote the idea and to canvas the designated area for volunteers. Our membership will be asked to help distribute flyers to homes in the area. We have been talking to the new executive of the Gordon Head Ratepayers Association and it's fair to say there is general support for the concept and the goals of the project. However, there are a

number of questions they want answered on behalf of their membership before they give wholehearted and formal support. to the project. Given the record of this type of work in other areas, we believe their concerns will be laid to rest.

Once again individual members of the public are seen to be ahead of the government and local administration; numerous people are doing this sort of thing already on their own initiative. If you doubt this, try buying a rain barrel in the Capital Region.

If Council supports the idea, this concept could have an enduring future in the watershed which feeds Douglas Creek. In turn, it could have a major positive effect on the water quality and the water flows in Douglas Creek. Again, stay tuned.

Garry Oak

- The Garry oak ecosystem occurs on southeastern Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, and in two tiny patches in the Lower Fraser Valley—nowhere else in Canada.
- As global warming progresses, much of the Douglas-fir forest in coastal B.C. will likely be replaced by drought-tolerant Garry oaks and other plants of the Garry oak system.

What's the problem?

- Less than 5% of the original Garry oak habitat remains in a near-natural condition. Over 20% of that is likely to be lost within the next decade.
 - Garry oak and associated ecosystems are home to 93 species that have been designated as "at risk" in British Columbia. Twenty-four of the species are threatened or endangered throughout their global range.
 - Twenty-one of the species are listed by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada as being at risk on a national scale, either endangered, threatened or vulnerable.
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What threatens them?



- Urban development. Oak trees are not being replaced. Mowing, fertilizing, watering and other gardening-type treatments damage oak seedlings as well as other natural vegetation.
- Pests such as oak leaf phylloxera and plants such as Scotch broom and orchard grass threaten the ecosystem
- Garry oak ecosystems are adapted to fire, and with the suppression of fire Douglas-fir and snowberry shrubs are starting to shade out the indigenous plant species of the Garry Oak meadow.

What to do?

- Support The Land Conservancy of BC., the Habitat Acquisition Trust and The Nature Conservancy of Canada.
- Plant nursery-propagated native shrubs, perennials and bulbs in your yard.
- Plant and nurture Garry oak seedlings: avoid cutting seedlings and trees.
- Treasure the natural and wild areas in yards, parks, and all public and private lands.

On the following page is a contact list, for your interest.

Contacts

Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society, A-954 Queens St., Victoria, V8T 1M6

Habitat Acquisition Trust, P.O. Box 8552, Victoria V8W 3S2. Ph: 250-995-2428 .

Website: www.hat.bc.ca

Land Trust Alliance of BC, #204-338 Lower Ganges Rd. Saltspring Island,
V8K 2V3. Ph: 250-538-0112. Website: www.island.net/~ltabc/

Native Plant Society of British Columbia, 2610 Harpoon Rd., R.R. 2, Pender
Island V0N 2M2. E-mail address: npsbc@hotmail.com

Native Plant Study Group of the Victoria Horticultural Society. Ph. Susan
Bastin, 250-361-3122

Naturescape British Columbia, P.O. Box 9354 Stn. Prov. Gov. Victoria
V8W 9M1. Ph: 250-387-9853

The Land Conservancy of BC. 5793 Old West Saanich Rd. Victoria V8X 3X3.
Ph: 250-479-8053. Website: www.conservancy.bc.ca

The Nature Conservancy of Canada. #202-26 Bastion Square, Victoria
V8W 1H9. Ph: 250-479-3191. Website: www.natureconservancy.ca

Victoria Natural History Society, P.O. Box 5220 Stn B, Victoria V8R 6N4.
Ph: 250-479-2054



Fish

On February 3, 2001, sixteen adults and ten children planted ten cassettes containing 2000 coho eyed-eggs into the gravel substrate of Douglas Creek. It was a perfect day for the job, dry with a good flow of clean water. As we did last year, we will pick up the cassettes after the fry hatch out to see what the hatch rate was.

I have been regularly trapping the fry we transplanted in October 2000, with good results. They are growing larger in good numbers that were beginning to taper off into April. When we were down at the stream with some members of the Stormwater Committee on March 23, 2001, for the first time we saw small fry hatching out from the egg cassettes. I have seen these fry numerous times while walking the stream and while setting traps, but I have yet to pick up any in the traps.

We now have two age classes of coho in the stream at the same time; this state of affairs probably replicates what is found in natural, undisturbed systems. The large fry (pre-smolt/smolts) will eat the small fry, but the majority of the smolts have probably gone out to sea, with some overlap of early egg hatching and late smolt out-migration.

The diversity created by early/late hatching and early/late out-migration is a product of evolution, continually refined by the free play of environmental circumstances. Salmon are the end product of this give and take of genetics and environment, and on the larger scale we can't feel too good as a civilization as we watch these races of creatures disappear forever—sometimes for short-term, dubious reasons.

And now for the unpleasant system stressor, in this case the first observed fish kill of the year. It was May 6 when I first saw dead fry and smolts in the creek—five smolts and three fry, which would, of course, not be the total dead. The kill was associated with some rain and the season's first flushing of the storm drain system. A few curious items—live fry could be seen swimming in the pools and riffles that contained dead fry/smolts, and the smolts were all silver, no parr marks on their sides, which means they were ready to head out into Cordova Bay. We will analyze our samples from the PISCES (Passive In Situ Concentration-Extraction Sampler) and try to pinpoint the substance that went through and killed the fry/smolts.

The latest update for fish in the creek is May 21, when I picked up four minnow traps set in their usual places. One large fry—the biggest I have seen to date—with parr marks fading, at the top of the stream; none in either midstream trap; and the first eyed-egg transplant fry captured at the Ash Road bridge. I saw fry while I was walking downstream, so I am not concerned about the numbers. For some reason the fry are not going into the traps—perhaps they are just too small. The one at Ash Rd. Bridge was a lunker.

I also picked up an egg cassette that someone dug out of the gravel. I brought it home and opened it up. It looks to me as though there were only seven eggs that didn't hatch. A fantastic hatch rate—95.5% !—partly explained by the fact that the eggs were selected at a stage of development that ensures a good measure of success, but the rest is the Creek. I will return the undamaged cassette to Goldstream Hatchery with the rest when we pick them up.

Grants

Thanks to South Islands Aquatic Stewardship Society (SIASS), we now have the funds to run the PISCES project and the hydrometric survey for a further year. We haven't yet realized the benefit of the PISCES project, although it may prove invaluable in finding the lethal substances responsible for the latest fish kill.

We are just now writing up the results from last year's hydrometric survey. This project was not without difficulties. Barring equipment failure, the only circumstance that could skew the survey results was an uncharacteristic water year which, as everybody knows, is what we had. Thanks to SIASS we have a chance to study the hydrology of the stream in what we hope will be a more characteristic water year. Unfortunately, SIASS could not fund the purchase, installation, and monitoring of a water quality datalogger, which would have expanded the value of our studies considerably.

We also had an application in with the Urban Salmon Habitat Program (USHP) for the essentially the same funding that was requested from SIASS. One difference was that we requested \$5000.00 from USHP to hire a student to do some work for

the Stormwater Committee. The reason for a double application was in the hope that each body would fund a portion of the project . Unfortunately USHP rejected our request. We worked overtime creating the applications that went to both funding bodies and I think we did a creditable job writing up our project. The problem is that while the funds available shrink each year, the number of good, well-proposed projects increases.

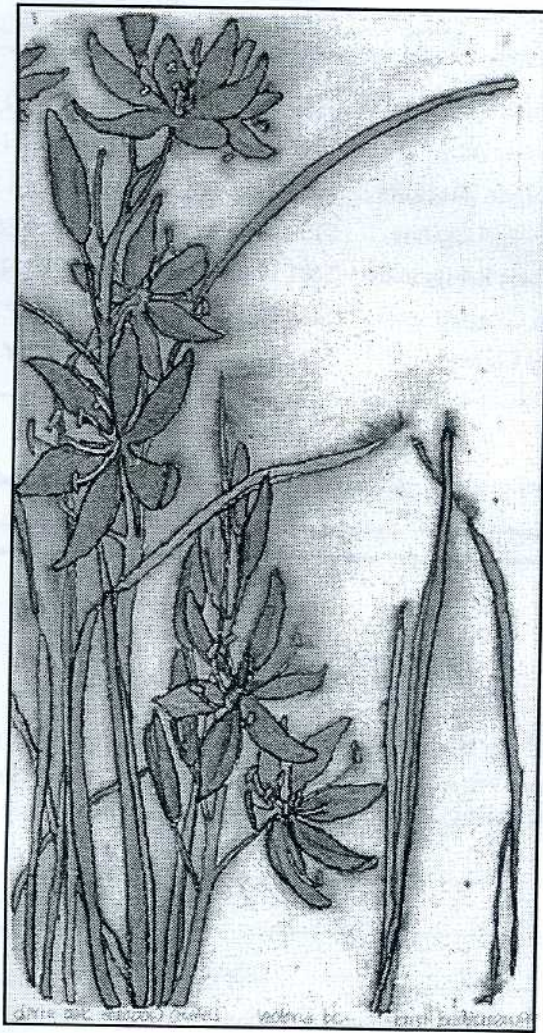
Although we're short of what we need, we are not beaten, nor are we out of meaningful things to do. We can change directions and we will adapt to the funds we have available.

With the help of some of our contacts, we have submitted a funding request to the Public Conservation Assistance Fund 2001 for \$5000.00 to hire a student to work for the Stormwater Committee. In a later issue of the newsletter, I'll let you know how that one turns out.

There remains the matter of \$400.00 that we use to run the Creek program for a fiscal year. This buys office supplies, resource material, postage and the odd bit of



equipment. We haven't yet applied to Fisheries and Oceans Canada for that sum, but will do so in short order and again I will inform you of the results.



from a watercolour by

Kristi Bridgeman

another talented member of The Friends of Mount Douglas Park.

Board of Directors 2000-2001

President	Kenneth Rankin	4285 Cedar Hill Road	V8N 3C7	477-8007
Vice President	Darrell Wick	1491 Edgemont Road	V8N 4P7	477-9291
Treasurer	Graham Shorthill	4623 Cordova Bay Road	V8X 3V6	658-5873
Secretary	Sheilagh Ogilvie	515 Carnation Place	V8Z6G6	479-4281
Streams	Robert Bridgeman	1481 Elnido Road	V8N 4Z7	477-7464
At-large	Hal Gibbard	1439 Wende Road	V8P 3T7	477-2986
At-large	Kay Porter	5041 Wesley Road	V8Y 1Z5	658-5792

Historian: Pam Lewis

Telephone Volunteers: Jane Owen—477-8963; Celia Esmonde—721-2796

Membership

Please check the label on the cover of this newsletter; if it reads '99 or earlier, your renewal time has come. We hope you will continue to support the work of the Society for another year by sending \$5 for one one-year membership to the address below.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code _____ Telephone No. _____

Individual membership fee is \$5.00 per year

Membership 1 year 2 year 3 year

Send or deliver to: Graham Shorthill, Treasurer
4623 Cordova Bay Road
Victoria B.C. V8X 3V6