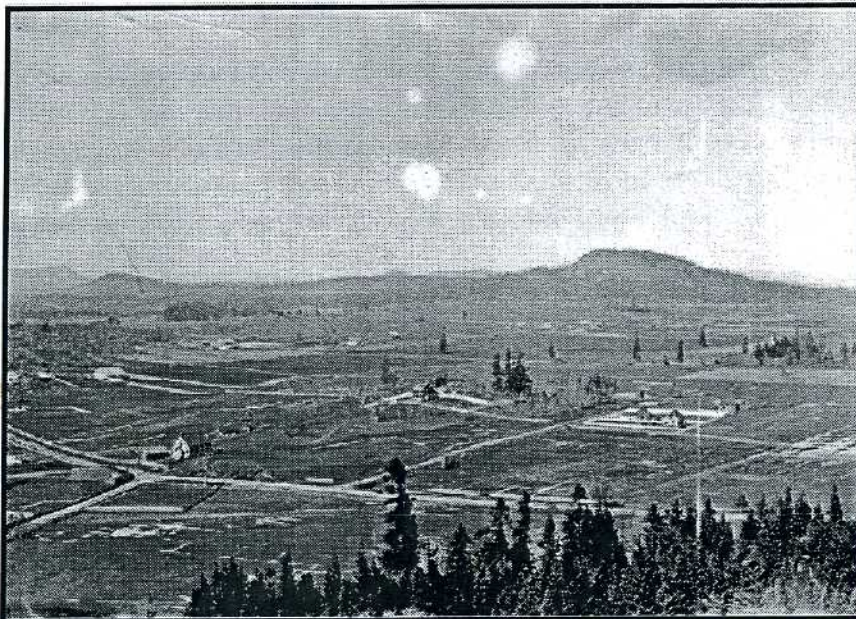


# FRIENDS OF MOUNT DOUGLAS PARK

Newsletter  
March 2004

*Mount Douglas from Mount Tolmie*



BC Archives

*in the good old days!*

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

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## **2004/2005 Annual General Meeting**

Date: Wednesday, April 7  
Time: 7:30 p.m.  
Place: McMorrans' Seaview Room  
5109 Cordova Bay Road  
Speaker: Ray Roer, Saanich Parks Manager

### **Park management**

We had a meeting with Ray Roer, the new Parks Manager for Saanich, not long after he assumed office. This was mainly to introduce ourselves and to explain in a cursory way what our interests are. More recently (on February 6) we had another meeting with him and Gerald Fleming, in part to place on the table a draft of our Management Plan for the Park, and in part for exploratory discussion on a wide spectrum of issues.

Topics we touched on included

- Installation of antennae on the transmitter and new cable
  - Burial of the transmitter power line to the summit
  - Trail program
  - Proactive steps for controlling mountain bike activity as spring approaches
  - Repair and enhancement of the weir
  - East side of Ash Road from the creek bridge
  - Douglas Creek stream restoration, including re-vegetation
  - Volunteer work—insurance coverage, ivy pulls and broom control
  - Closure of road access to private dwellings off Cedar Hill Road
  - Roadside power line / telephone line burial
  - East Summit action plan
  - The quarry
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## **Access to east summit**

In last November's issue of this newsletter we gave an account of our onsite meeting with Saanich staff to discuss plans for a path and stairway leading from the top parking lot to this summit. The major aim was to prevent the erosion at the parking lot side of the summit resulting from people scrambling straight up.

The main issue to arise at this first meeting had been over just where to place the stairway. Since then we have been presented with plans setting out in detail two options for its precise location. On Feb. 12 we met with staff on the site once again, and both parties reached an agreement in the choice of one of these options. It made the stairway somewhat less visible from the parking lot, and therefore visually less obtrusive. Since then, however, difficulties of a technical sort have arisen. The original plan to blast into the rock apparently has had to be abandoned for fear that the foundations of the transmitter tower would thereby be destabilized. Hence more use of concrete is now being favoured.

## **Harvest Lane**

This is a newly constructed road joining Cedar Hill Road to serve the new subdivision on the site of the old orchard. It terminates in a staired access to the driveway used by the two dwellings next to the Park at the top. This has caused problems, since walkers who have begun to use that staired access have then deviated along the driveway, thus violating the privacy of at least one of these dwellings.

The solution has been to construct a new trail leading from the head of the stairway straight into the park to connect with a main trail. In fact at this point a new trail is already beginning to emerge due just to such use. Since the trail will function merely as a connector, we have recommended that it should not exceed 3 feet in width.

## **The beach**

After a long delay, the Advisory Committee on the cliff stabilization project met in February to review the consultant's concepts for preventing erosion at the toe of the cliff.

The core of the new proposal is to prevent the erosion by beach nourishment rather than using the traditional rip-rap. This is a major departure from earlier proposals and

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stems from observations made at Spanish Banks in Vancouver and around the large rock at the mouth of creek in the park.

Overall, the structure is called an Australian Sill and consists of a series of rock fingers that start on the beach some way away from the toe of cliff and project into the water, angled so that they directly face the prevailing wind and waves. In the park these are the southeast winds and seas, so the fingers point northeast/southwest. If the whole length, from the creek to the breakline outside the park were protected by this method it would require the construction of twelve of these fingers about 100m or so apart. The gap between the end of the finger and the cliff would be filled with sand brought in by barge from a quarry. This has the effect of raising the toe of the cliff above the high water mark and so prevents the removal of debris from the base while at the same time providing a continuous walking area between the cliff and the fingers. The design of the immersed end has a number of possibilities that provide for the redirection of waves so they slow down, interfere with one another and allow the build up of sand within the gaps between the fingers. The build-up would not go on indefinitely: the free migration of sediment would resume after the rocks had been essentially covered with sediment.

The best case scenario coming from this proposal is:

- **No rocks cascading down the cliff**
- **A continuous beach walk for the public**
- **No net loss of beach habitat**
- **Accumulation of sand and an expansion of the beach .**
- **Minimum interference with fish habitat during construction and the ability to regenerate after construction is complete.**
- **No depletion of sand from other sectors of this system**

As always, there are some potential negative effects or uncertainties, and these include:

- **The impact of barging in material through the off shore eel grass.**
- **The discharge of water from the cliff into the sea.**

However, in the words of the representative from Department of Fisheries and Oceans:

**“ There are no show stoppers in this proposal”**

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The way forward is a little complex, as we now have a chicken-and-egg situation. To fine tune their model and prepare a full-scale presentation, the engineers need the results from a scale model. As these are costly to develop, they will not spend the money unless they have some assurance and support from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans but the latter will not give that support until they have more detailed information.

The meeting adjourned after it was agreed more details would be made available and an open house/public education session should occur before embarking on the next major stage. So, after several decades of talk, we have a proposal that could, again in the words of the fisheries official, transform shoreline protection and preservation of fish habitat on the Island. If that is the outcome, it will have been worth the wait.

## **The road revived**

The renewed Cordova Bay Road has been open now for several months and it appears to be working well: traffic flow is steady and speeds have been reduced a little because of the new crosswalks, the kinks in the road and the narrow, well-defined lanes. In addition, the lane-changing chaos at the Royal Oak/Blenkinsop intersection has been brought under control by the concrete curb: even the 4x4's tend to treat it with respect. As a result, there are now fewer cars diving for the right hand filter lane into Cordova Bay village. Equally heartening is the sight of mothers pushing strollers, people walking their dogs, and senior citizens armed with walking sticks striking out for the park.

Six months ago all these activities were hazardous and now they are a safe everyday occurrence. It is these forms of traffic we hope will increase in the years ahead. Similarly, the danger to the cycling population has diminished considerably, with the result that more cyclists of all descriptions are using the road even in these chilly winter months. Again, it would be a pleasure to see this type of traffic rise.

There are still a number of loose ends to fix; the Parks Department has some final planting to do and the question of buffer zones has not been resolved. The idea was to create zones some distance from the park boundary on each road leading to the park so that motorists would realize they were moving from a suburban area into a natural park

To achieve these buffer zones, in the south (on the main artery leading through the park along Shelbourne/Cedar Hill Road/Cordova Bay Road) signs would appear at either Kenmore or San Juan, and in the north at Cordova Bay Road on the major curve after the Royal Oak intersection.

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The problem is the name: the word "Parkway" has surfaced again. When this was last discussed many people called to draw attention to faraway examples such as the Don Valley Parkway, the roads around J.F.K. airport in New York etc. and the idea was dropped. Now we have a concrete example in our own back yard: the Veterans Parkway in Langford carries multi-laned free-flowing motorized traffic passing through manicured green space: the very thing we are trying to avoid. A compromise has been suggested, which would keep the present names and addresses for the houses along of the streets but would give an additional label to these sections of road as:

**Mt. Douglas Park**

**WAY**

What do you think?

### **The transmitter site**

No! not the one on the summit but the monstrosity that appeared out of the blue near the main entrance to the beach parking lot a month or so ago.

The question is: Who dropped the ball? Because the cell site has appeared without any of the usual consultation that takes place around such issues.

The initial part is easy to understand. Bell Mobility has a blind spot among its cell sites, caused by the shadow of the mountain, and it was looking for a site east of the mountain to remedy the problem. They rented the pole from B.C. Hydro to create a strong signal along a line roughly from the east end of Tyndall in Gordon Head to Sunnymead in Cordova Bay.

But anywhere along that line would have done. So why here? The most probable answer is that they thought no one would object. This highlights a growing problem: these cell sites are proliferating all over the continent, and where to house them and what to charge for them has not been worked out. As a result, these ugly sites and overhead wires emerge overnight, producing a massive increase in visual pollution. In more sensitive communities they have been able to make the installation a source of revenue: for example, churches lease space in their steeples and the fees make a significant contribution to their budgets. We need to do the same in B.C.

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Space has become available in the existing site on top of Mount Douglas and Saanich staff has offered it to Bell Mobility so they could relocate. Bell previously *requested* this site; now, however, they seem to feel they have leverage to bargain for a rent reduction for the summit site in exchange for removing the site at the Park entrance.

To remedy the current mess, we have appealed to Saanich's Environmental Committee, which has sent a resolution to Council. We can only hope that their resolution will galvanize Council to take action.

However, the most effective line will be for everyone concerned to call upon Bell Mobility to act as a Good Corporate Citizen and relocate the site to a more appropriate spot. So if you are a customer, please write to the President of Bell Mobility and let him know what you think of his company's actions.

### **Pollution in the creek and the Pisces project**

A couple of years ago, we started a program which involved sampling the water in Douglas Creek on a weekly basis. This sampling was carried out for more than a year and then selected samples were sent to the laboratory for chemical analysis.

The results that have come back show that there is significant contamination from polyaromatic hydrocarbons throughout the year. The main suspect is home heating oil. There are traces of other contaminants such as surfactants associated with paint, together with residues from septic tanks. As Gordon Head no longer has any active septic tanks, these traces probably come from the old disused fields leached by the ground water. The good news is that there are no significant levels of common pesticides at any time.

Riding on top of this annual cycle, which forms the pollution background for the Creek, are series of contaminants that appear for a short time and then disappear: these additional compounds are proving difficult to identify.

The way the sampling was done allowed us to collect separate samples under storm and flood conditions. The analysis of this data should point the way forward in terms of cleaning up the water before it goes over the weir.

See the next newsletter for the details.

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## Douglas Creek

The two Royal Roads University reports that the Friends co-sponsored this past year are outstanding examples of the fine work that can be accomplished with partnerships between the Society, Royal Roads University and groups of keen bright students.

The first report, "Detention Options for the Douglas Creek Watershed" details the sub drainage basin areas in the watershed, and the volume of stormwater that drains through each. It suggests strategies that could be used to detain and clean the stormwater. We will be using this research when we look for a project or projects to install on the watershed. We are planning to use our Public Conservation Assistance Fund grant to hire a researcher to develop three project plans, complete with a budget for each. We will take at least one of these to the Saanich Environmental Advisory Committee and ask that it go to Saanich Council with a recommendation for action. All credit to the students who worked on this report: Josh Bocskei, Kate Emmings, Rebecca O'Neill, Matthew Shumaker, Robert Wagner. Their Royal Roads advisor was Vivienne Wilson.

The second report, "Monitoring Restoration Success in Douglas Creek," works on refining a monitoring tool to assess and record the health of Douglas Creek. The focus is on biometrics—the life forms in the creek, their development and relationships. This is something that we have been working on—with varying degrees of success—since we started the Creek restoration. The current research and fieldwork includes a database, keys for invertebrate identification, and an accurate detailed description of what we have in the Creek now. We plan to compare present stream health with future assessments of stream health to determine if stormwater projects in the watershed have a positive effect. An interesting tangent to the initial research explores the linkages between development—amount of impervious area and degree of pollution—to the fecal coliform count in the Creek water. The CRD considers anything greater than 200 Fecal Coliform/100 mL of water a danger to the public when they are physically exposed to the water. Elevated levels of fecal coliform can cause gastrointestinal illness in swimmers. This group of bacteria comes from human sewage and from the droppings of warm-blooded animals. Numerous water samples taken from the Creek exceeded the CRD threshold. The work that this group of students conducted may create another restoration evaluation tool that becomes important in the restoration of urban streams. Thanks to Joey Browne, Mike Stead, Sarah Heinrichs, Scott Keeseey, and Faculty Advisor Michael-Anne Noble.

The students who worked on these reports all received their Bachelor Degrees and surely will do themselves credit in the bright futures they have in front of them.

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## The creek calendar

- 16 November 2003 we transplanted 1200 coho fry into the Creek. The fry were brood year 2002, which means they were a year old. They were approximately 120 mm tip-of-nose-to-fork-of-tail length and weighed about 10 grams each. Some will return in two years, and the majority will return in three. We had heavy rain the preceding evening, which moderated in the early morning so that we had a safe-for-people and safe-for-fry event. The fry were brought to us from the Howard English hatchery courtesy of Tom Rutherford (Fisheries and Oceans Canada); Peter McCully, and Judy Ackinlose (from the Howard English hatchery), Micqualyn Waldie (President) and the Goldstream Salmon Enhancement Society volunteers. A good time was had by all.

### Volunteers

Angela and Emma Evans; Erin and Annie Pringle; Jill Torney; Dave, Delia, Hunter and Grey Hill; May and Christopher Yu; Bill and Conner Cliff from the 5th and 6th Cedar Hill Beavers; Louise Ditmars; Nancy Rick; Natalie, and Corina Fischer; and Bob and Robyn Bridgeman.

- On 22 November 2003, we walked the Creek looking for some sign of the transplanted fry. Never saw a fry—not one. We had two heavy rains last week, one of which badly damaged the oil-skimming device behind the weir.
- 29–30 November 2003, we set and picked up four minnow traps. Coho fry in two of the four traps – eight in all; 90 mm-average nose-to-fork length.
- 14 December 2003, Tom Rutherford, Ian Greame, Louise Ditmar, Ian Coates (a military member stationed on our new submarine HMCS Victoria and a volunteer for the Goldstream Salmon Enhancement Society), and Bob Bridgeman met to transplant salmon carcasses into Douglas Creek. The carcasses came to us courtesy of Tom Rutherford, Peter McCully and the volunteers from the Howard English hatchery. We placed 105 mixed chum and coho carcasses into woody debris piles and root masses along the Creek banks.

In previous newsletters we have talked about the importance of marine-derived nutrients being transported into freshwater ecosystems with the return of salmonids to their natal streams. There has been a fair bit of research done on the ecology of freshwater ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest. The role of salmonids, in all their life phases including carcasses, are often overlooked even though they are keystone species and sentinel species. Think of a brick or a stone arch: it is the keystone in the centre that bears the weight and gives shape to the arch.

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Without it the arch collapses. A sentinel species can be understood as the canary-in-the-coalmine concept which, in the case of salmonids, is indicative of the health of our urban neighborhoods.

With respect to the marine derived nutrients we are one of the few groups in Canada carrying out this kind of research/restoration work and the only one as far as I know that is transplanting from one watershed to another. We are being guided by the protocols that are being established by Fisheries and Oceans Canada. One of the authorities on this subject, Dr. T. E. Reimchen, teaches at our own University of Victoria. But scientific research and protocols aside, sometimes experiences in life are required to bring the message home. We will tell you about an instance a little later on.

- 15 January 2004 saw that a big well-rotted and standing dead grand fir had fallen into the Creek. It was likely a big windstorm earlier in the week that brought it down. We don't want to digress again but it is important to reiterate that big pieces of wood in the Creek are the most important fish habitat creators. In fact, probably the most important work that has been done on the Creek is the introduction of woody debris—big pieces—into the channel. It is interesting to watch the big ones come in and to see how they alter the Creek water dynamics. We didn't see the number of rotted carcasses we expected to see. It had been a while since we had a look and it was difficult to say if rainstorms flushed them out into the bay or whether they were deep inside accumulations of leaves and woody debris. Certainly we could smell some that couldn't be seen.
  - 24 January 2004, a large root and another large grand fir came down into the channel. Set four minnow traps baited with salmon roe. Two of the traps were set in new places.
  - 25 January 2004 picked up the minnow traps. Each trap had fry in it for a total of seven fry at 110 mm nose-to-fork length.
  - 06 February 2004, we were at the hydrometric station with Gordon Clark from G. McG. Clark and Associates Hydrological Services. We downloaded the data logger that had stopped recording and we performed a flow measurement to see if the hydrograph was still accurate: the numbers aren't in on that yet. Again, somehow we must keep this station operating. It is a mine of useful data.
  - 15 February 2004, we saw the Indian plum start to put out leaves (it is flowering profusely now) and the red elderberry put out fat buds.
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- 26 February 2004, we made some softwood cuttings of Indian plum and red elderberry. These we planted in wet areas adjacent to the Creek, just downstream of the Edgemont entrance to the Park. They've been planted to help strengthen existing streambanks and to hold eroding soil that is being flushed downstream by the unnaturally strong flows. This planting is being carried out in a small way on an experimental basis to see if our theories work out in the real world. If it turns out as we hope, then we'll have a fruitful restoration strategy to employ in the years to come: if not, then very little is lost.

While we were doing this we had a clear experience of one of the many truths of ecology—one that we referred to earlier. While dibbling-in the red elderberry, we noticed the remnants of salmon carcasses in the accumulating bars of mud and under our feet. The sights and sounds of the Creek—and the smells—gave a clear signal that all of these things—the vegetation, the water, and the fish—work in mutually supportive relationships to maintain a healthy functioning ecosystem.

- 29 February 2004, we transplanted 2000 eyed coho eggs into the Creek, "housed" in Blaney Scott's egg condominiums. We have done this several times before, but we missed last year because the eggs ripened and hatched faster than we could get them into the Creek. When these fry hatch out and swim up into the Creek we begin to see what a healthy Creek looks like. We will have the brood year 2003 coho newly hatched into the stream, the brood year 2002 coho that have overwintered and are getting ready to migrate out of Douglas Creek into the Pacific Ocean, and about this time we will be transplanting 60 000 chum fry into the Creek. These last will make their way into Cordova Bay over the course of a few weeks. With a little more work we can have this happening naturally every year.

We are presently working with a team of four geomorphology students from the University of Victoria. The students are drawing up a plan to record the Creek channel and the adjacent deposits as they are now, so that when the banks are planted with softwood cuttings of red osier dogwood we will be able to track changes in the shape of the channel. This is in aid of creating more habitat units as well as protecting what is still in place. We are in a partnership with the Vancouver Island Public Interest Research Group of the University of Victoria to support the students' project—which, in turn, supports our restoration.

It will soon be time to start collecting seeds and salmonberry softwood cuttings to grow for Significant Tree Day in Saanich 2005. It will be interesting to see the seeds we collected last year as seedlings planted in the Park this November.

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## **The year of the first coho**

The return of our first coho in 2003 was a momentous event—one it will be hard to top until we get two! It's just a matter of time now (what with the addition of chum to the mix and our continued efforts with the coho fry) before we have salmonid at some stages of their life in the Creek at all times.

But until we do we can always enjoy the wooden fishes of the Stream of Dreams mural going up on the fence at Gordon Head Elementary on the 26th of March 2004. Read on!

## **The stream of dreams**

The Stream of Dreams is a public information program that connects watershed education with public art. Joan Carne and Louise Towell, Burnaby residents and healthy stream advocates, are coming to Gordon Head Elementary to deliver their program to students, teachers and interested friends. Joan and Louise, with the assistance of some volunteers from the school PAC, school teachers, and some trainees will be delivering the two-part program 23 March through 25 March 2004 at Gordon Head Elementary.

The first part involves an interactive discussion about urban watersheds and connects roofs, roads and drains to aquatic ecosystems—Douglas Creek in this case. A map of the Gordon Head watershed will be used for local reference. Stories of experiences with other streams also form part of the narrative.

The second part focuses on what people think about salmon. Each participant is given a wooden salmon shape, brushes and paints, and asked to paint their dream salmon for a Stream of Dreams. These salmon will be put up at the school on the chainlink fence that faces Kenmore on Friday 26 March 2004.

Each student, teacher and guest cycles through both parts of the program—a total of about 500 people. We hope to have good media coverage so that we can put out the message that we can have our neighborhoods as they are now—with very few changes—and still have a healthy Douglas Creek. We think that it is important to bring salmon back into the neighborhood as a feature of the Park, as an indicator of the health of the neighborhood, and to restore some of the cultural and physical heritage of this part of British Columbia.

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## The website

In September, the Friends of Mount Douglas Park launched a website at

[www.mtdoug.org](http://www.mtdoug.org).

The site contains information on the history of the Park, upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and previous newsletters.

Come have a look.

## Ivy kills!

Climbing ivy kills trees. And this is the time of year when ivy blooms on the climbers, so it's now most important to remove it, before the blossoms can set seeds. Cutting it from the base of the tree to a metre up the trunk will destroy the ivy above. So do it!

## The monthly ivy pulls kill ivy!

The March ivy pull took place under rainy skies, but the addicts were there, and pulled ivy happily—and wetly—for the full hour-and-a-half.

The pulls happen on Sunday, the first Sunday of every month. We meet at 10:00 a.m. in the main parking lot of the Park (rain or shine!), and go on from there to a selected crop of ivy.

The dates for the next six pulls are below. Why not mark your calendar and come along?

Bring gloves and secateurs if you have them, and dress for the weather.

April 4

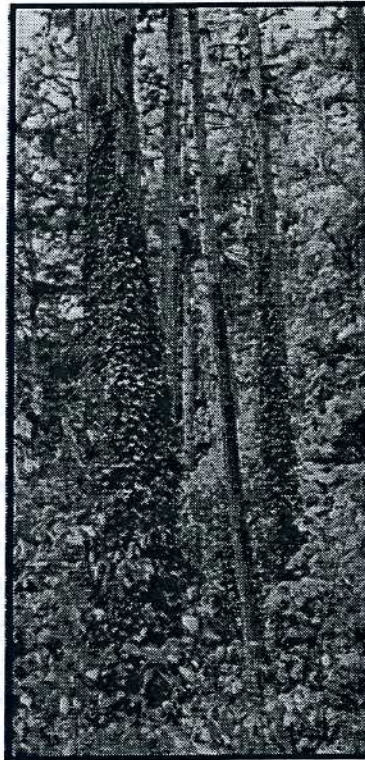
May 2

June 6

July 4

August 1

September 5



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## Membership

Please check the label on the cover of this newsletter; if it reads '03 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 each one-year membership to the address below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Individual membership fee is \$5.00 per year

Membership 1 year  2 year  3 year

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