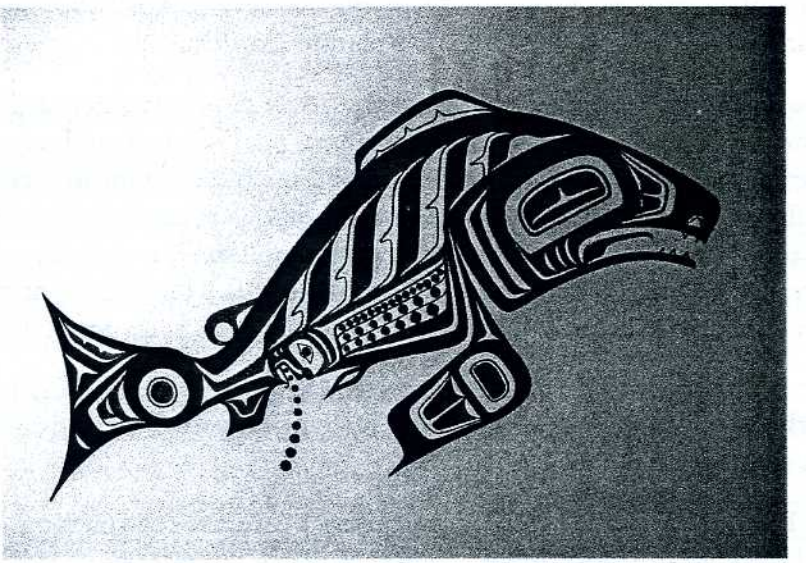
FRIENDS OF MOUNT DOUGLAS PARK

NEWSLETTER

September 2006

'03 MacDonald:
Stuart & Joan
4350 Woodcrest Place,
Victoria, V8N 2C2 B.C.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT



On May 6, at Shawnigan Lake School, at the 2006 Fisheries and Oceans South Vancouver Island Community Involvement Recognition Day, The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society was awarded the prestigious 10-year award for our restoration of Douglas Creek.

The plaque reads:

In recognition
Of the volunteer contribution
To Canada's salmonid resource

Friends of Mt. Douglas Creek Society
10 years

Thank you from
Oceans, Habitat and Protection Branch
Fisheries and Oceans Canada

This award is high praise for every supporter and every volunteer but—as we all know—the highest praise of all must go to our Streams Director, Bob Bridgeman.

In other matters:

We held our annual general meeting for 2006 on the evening of April 18. The venue, as in previous years, was McMorran's Sea View Room in Cordova Bay.

In his short opening address the president set the issue of stormwater control as the major theme for the meeting. However, the business part opened with a number of reports on other matters as well. Of these Graham Shorthill's financial report for the past year came first, and was duly approved. Other reports were made by Bob Bridgeman (the Creek), Darrell Wick (the transmitter site and related issues) and Graham Shorthill again (plans for stormwater control and also for the beach). These brought all present up to date with the variety issues to which our activities have been addressed.

Next came the pleasant duty of making a presentation to Dick Battles, in grateful recognition of the extraordinary amount of ivy he has succeeded in eliminating from the Park by his single-handed efforts.

Thereafter Kay Porter conducted the election of office bearers for the coming year. Since she herself had decided to stand down, Claude Maurice, a member of long standing and a former director, was elected to replace her. Darrell Wick and Graham Shorthill were elected for a further two years. Kay's departure from the executive should not go without acknowledgement here of her invaluable work, in conjunction with Sheilagh Ogilvie, in keeping the Society's Archives in good shape.

With the necessary business thus behind us we were able at last to give the issue of stormwater control a more exclusive attention. To assist in this we were honoured by the presence of two highly qualified guest speakers.

Mike Ippen, the Director of the municipality's Public Works Department, led off with an overview of the complexities involved in the maintenance and improvement of the municipality's stormwater infrastructure.

After an interval for refreshments, Angela Evans, a Saanich environmental planner, followed with a visually illustrated account of measures taken by the City of Portland to absorb rain water that falls within the limits of its built-up areas. Attention to these two highly informative presentations was keen.

And the meeting's final adjournment brought an end to an instructive evening.

Douglas Creek

Creek calendar

April 16, 2006. We celebrated Easter Sunday at Cadboro Bay United Church. Reverend Ross White, the minister, asked us to make a presentation to a group of children and adults while the children waited for their confirmation ceremony. We spoke of salmon ecology and watershed issues and demonstrated watershed processes using the Douglas Creek Watershed model (including Rubbermaid tub and two small sprinkling cans). The watershed model was organized by Ross White and supplied by Nikki Wright of the SeaChange Marine Conservation Society.

March 27, 2006. Chum fry that were spawned naturally last fall came out of the Creek gravel into the lower reaches of the Creek. This is an event we've been waiting for—the first wild production out of the Creek that we have actually seen. There were only a few fry, but since we were there infrequently and for short periods the numbers seen may be related to observation time and appropriate lighting as well as habitat limitations.

May 6, 2006. At Shawnigan Lake School, the 2006 Fisheries and Oceans South Vancouver Island Community Involvement Recognition Day awarded our Society the prestigious 10-year award for our restoration of Douglas Creek.

May 18, 2006. Walking up the Creek we saw 154 chum fry. Just what that represents in terms of the actual number still left in the Creek is hard to say: we walk fairly quickly and the fry are not easy to see in the cover.

May 20, 2006. We undertook the transplantation of 30,000 chum fry into Douglas Creek this day. In fact, we transplanted 40,000 chum fry into the Creek. The transplant was set up as a Saturday event to allow members of a church group to attend. At the site Reverend White led his group, and us, with this non-denominational blessing:

"Those who have heard the cry of Creation have also heard the cry of the Creator.

They fall in love with all that is good and all that is.

May what we do today be a sign of this love.

And may this sign be a blessing on these creatures that swim.

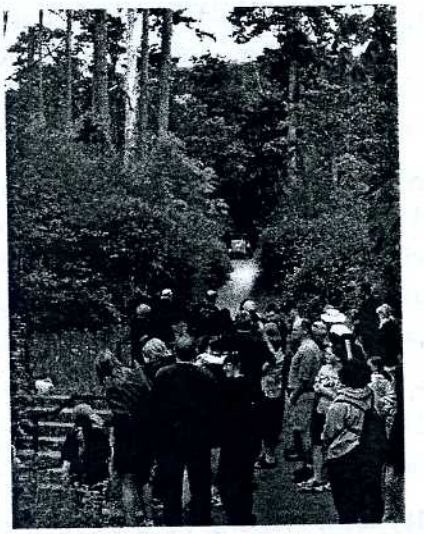
We claim the holy birthright of all creatures: that in life, and in death, new life will begin again!

The blessing was particularly apt, both to the situation at hand and as an integrator of the concepts of humanism and ecology, an integration that is—lets face it, folks—the milieu for urban restoration.

The transplant went off without a hitch—a great turnout that included Councillor Susan Brice (representing Mayor Frank Leonard), and Municipal Administrator Tim Woods. Two days later we removed the temporary screens on the upstream siphons in the weir. We had a spate of rain the following day which may have prematurely flushed out some chum fry.

This transplant is part of the ongoing restoration of Douglas Creek and will supplement natural production from the Creek, which was heavily impacted by an oil spill last fall.

Our community partners include Saanich Parks, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Howard English Hatchery, Goldstream Salmon Enhancement Society, Esquimalt Anglers, Pacific Salmon Foundation, Pacific Forestry Centre, Stream of Dreams, Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society and friends of the Park.



June 18, 2006. There were still a few chum fry to be seen in the lower reaches.

June 23, 2006. We picked red elderberry and Indian plum seeds along the Creek. These seeds will supply the plants for planting along the stream at the 2007 Significant Tree Day in Saanich.

July 03, 2006. We were in the Park to pick Oregon grape seeds but the heat wave moved the ripening on too quickly for us—we collected just under a hundred seeds when two or three hundred would have been more useful.

July 05-06, 2006. We took the electrofishing course given by Malaspina College in Nanaimo. The completed course, involving theory and information and a practicum, certifies the student to operate electrofishing equipment under certain circumstances. We passed the course, and plan to use the equipment later in the year. Our thanks go to Tom Rutherford and DFO for the course tuition and the shared accommodation.

July 23, 2006. We transplanted 1000 coho fry into several Creek habitat units from the Ash Road Bridge to the weir in a little over an hour-and-a-half. This time there were only 8 volunteers, a quarter of the usual number. The fry, from the Howard English Hatchery on Goldstream River, were spawned in November 2005 and should return in November of 2008. They were approximately 50mm in length, and perhaps 3 grams in weight. During September and October we will be tracking the success of the transplant using electrofishing techniques.

Melissa Nelson from the Saanich News Summary wrote a good story about the transplant—thanks, Melissa! And thanks, too, to Sharon from Saanich News for her photographs—despite the mud, she stuck with the program and got the job done!

We finished off the day by picking, in the cooler evening, red osier dogwood and Pacific ninebark seeds for next years planting out.

July 30, 2006. We were in the Park picking red osier dogwood seeds for next year's riparian transplant and also looking for dead fry from the first flush of the stormwater system due to last night/this morning's rain; we saw only live fry. So for all the rain there was little impact on the Creek—hope our shrubs from last fall got a decent watering.

On the horizon

Stock Assessment

For many years we have minnow-trapped in the Creek with indifferent results. We trapped at the same places with more or less the same results, but were never sure if those results represented the number of fry that were in the Creek. Now that we are getting returns and wild production we need to know more about fry survival and natural out-migration so that we can begin to grapple with the issue of sustainability. We know we can grow fish in this Creek, but can we grow enough so that we can expect a return every year based on wild production? Conditions in the Creek have changed and our methods must now change to suit.

Starting with the chum—we glossed over some of the difficulties in counting the emergent fry. They are virtually invisible, and they are masters of extreme camouflage. To find out how many are produced in the Creek we will set up a trapping station that requires daily monitoring, say for two months, and a crew that can alternate in spending the hour it will take to count the fry. On days when there are many emergent fry the trap may have to be cleared twice a day. The project depends on getting enough interested people, hiding the trap to spare it from vandalism, and picking the right trapping spot. We hope to set this up with UVic, perhaps through VIPIRG or any other interested and reliable sources of volunteers. In this project—as with all the rest—we would like an educational component as well as, of course, public interest.

As for the coho, we have agreed that 'electrofishing' is the assessment of choice: this is why we took the course and wrote the exam for certification. In 'electrofishing' a current flow is set up between an anode and a cathode. The current flow can be used to set up galvanotaxis which means (in terms of fish in the Creek) an attraction to electrical current. With a team of three certified people in the water, one 'electrofishing' and two netting the momentarily-attracted fry, a comprehensive survey of a habitat unit can be accomplished. Extrapolating from a few unit results we can get a very good picture of the number of fry in the Creek at a few key times. The thousand fry that we just transplanted will be the first to be sampled in this way. At this point we have no idea if we have naturally spawned coho fry—the sampled population will tell us this as well because naturally spawned coho will be smaller in size.

Electrofishing has a large human safety component with a specified step-by-step procedure and a rigorous requirement for personal protective equipment and careful procedure. If fish are being injured then the procedures are not being properly executed.

The two biggest threats to fry health are too high voltage and rough fish handling procedures. Our goal is to carry out the requisite work with zero mortality to fry and zero incidents to people or the environment.

This is something that we must do in order to carry on. We can't keep transplanting coho if a sustainable population is not possible. If we need to do some further work to improve conditions in the Creek for coho then we need to know what the limiting factors are and we need to mitigate those factors.

Stormwater Management is of course the key to the restoration. As we learn more about the hydrology and the constant pollution that impacts the Creek, the beach and Cordova Bay we strengthen our ability to control the impacts. Regular improvements are critical to maintaining the health of the Creek. At present we have marginal conditions that allow some creatures to live in the Creek some of the time: we can build on those conditions and restore the nutrient levels that have been shattered over the years—but are these restored systems sustainable? With watershed improvements we believe they are absolutely sustainable.

Water in the City Stewardship Fair, September 17, 2006 is an event that showcases local stewardship group's efforts to improve aquatic ecosystems. We set up a booth at the event (in the lobby of the Victoria Conference Centre). We learned what we already knew—we are not alone but share our concerns and values with many well-organized stewardship groups.

Water in the City Conference, September 18-20, 2006 continued the themes of the Stewardship Fair in a three day conference.

BC Rivers Day, September 30, 2002 is a province-wide celebration and we have timed a Creek cleanup with it for a number of years. We missed last year but have picked up the thread again this year. The Creek is full of trash.

Significant Tree Day in Saanich, November 05, 2006 will be celebrated by us with the by-now traditional riparian plant-out of indigenous shrubs. We picked the seeds last fall and Rob Hagel has grown them on to first-class plants. We went over to the Pacific Forestry Centre and had a look at Rob's work—it is terrific and will give us a full complement of riparian species to plant out. Saanich Parks is on board to supply two gardeners—a recipe that has spelled out success for the last two events—and our community partner, The Pacific Salmon Foundation, has supplied us with enough funds to provide enough plant experts and coordinators to make the yearly event a success once more. Contact Bob if you would like to take part—families are welcome.

Chum carcass transplant is something I hope we see the end of one day—not because we mind handling the carcasses (we have had such a quality group of students help us place the carcasses)—but because we want to see so many spawned-out chum carcasses in the Creek that a supplement is unnecessary. At present, we may have a carcass transplant in November/December, the timing to be worked out after we see how spawners come back

The mysteries of aquatic ecology are once again being studied by Friends directors. As we look at how nutrients are processed in the Creek we can't help but notice the missing species that are usually found in a healthy stream in the Pacific Northwest. The native crawfish *Pacifastacus leniusculus* comes to mind. If we take the ecological perspective that populations are energy processors for the next trophic level down/up and if we think about the detritus that is washed out of the Creek unprocessed each fall, we are forced to wonder if the Creek can support more shredders in order to support smaller invertebrates which in turn support a coho fry population.

The question is, once gone are exterminated species blocked by, say, saltwater/dry land from re-establishing populations in aquatic systems that could support them? We may yet transplant invertebrate species into the Creek if we can make a case for it and if we can get permits to do it.

When a low point is also a high

In early July, the tides in Cordova Bay reached their lowest point of the year. The tide tables list them as minus tides but to anyone who wanders along the beach at these times, the reality is a definite plus.

This year they coincided with the lull between the two July hot spells: Canada Day and the end of the month. So it meant a brisk walk through the park breathing air chilled by the departing sea mist. While the summer camps were in full swing in the picnic area, even smaller children were being armed with nets and buckets by their parents in the parking lot before the rush to the beach.

It is always a dramatic moment, when you emerge from the tree-canopied path that runs along the side of the Creek and are confronted with the vista of islands, sea and sky. On this morning, for a moment at least, it took everyone's breath away; the beach was more than triple its normal size. Then came shrieks of laughter from the net carriers as they streaked towards the rock pools with their parents in hot and anxious pursuit.

For quieter and more reflective moments, all it required was a short stroll parallel to the sea. The way led through sea weed and eel grass and sand mottled with blue clay. Crabs scurried away when a rock was disturbed and other things wriggled and swam out of the way, illustrating a fundamental truth—this beach is a living beach despite the years of attack from septic tanks and road runoff.

To highlight the point, a seagull and young eagle decided to fight over some small delicacy: the eagle won, and his success inspired his brother to try his luck over the water. He clutched at something but could not hold it and so he flew off frustrated towards Cormorant Point. Because of the average height of the tide, we can see this continuous stretch of beach from Cormorant Point in the south to beyond Mattick's Farm and the golf course in the north for only a few days each year. The eagles have it to themselves every day.

This will soon start to change. The model for headland control is being fine-tuned in a testing tank somewhere in the U.S., and once the results have been analyzed the consultants will present the overall project to stabilize the toe of the cliff to Council. With Council approval, work will begin on the first and most vulnerable section, starting below the old gravel pit and working towards the motel. Provided the construction follows the present plan, it will prevent further slippage of the cliff face and stop the migration of more blue clay into the sea. Moreover, the beach will extend further from the toe of the cliff, providing a larger and longer beach for the public to use.

Over time, as each new section is added, the public will gain greater access to the beach for longer periods until eventually the days in July will become an everyday event. It all hinges on making sure the present concept is translated into the final structure on the ground; we will take the first steps to ensure this sometime before Christmas.

Developments at the motel

We knew that the advent of sewers in the southern section of Cordova Bay would lead to major changes, with the one change closest to the park involving the motel.

When the motel was first constructed, it used a very sophisticated septic tank and aeration system to dispose of its waste. Now the sewers are installed, it means that the space occupied by the tank can be used for other purposes, and the owner plans major changes and renovations to the buildings and the site. In the process, the Parks Department are reclaiming parkland that has been used for a car park, and it also wants easy access for

Park vehicles from Cordova Bay Road to the fire road behind the motel. Moreover, the Fire Department needs better access to the motel itself in case of fire. So, from the initial request to do some modifications has come a series of developments that favour the park. The most obvious benefits include the clearing up of the mess at the back of the motel, the prospect of developing a lookout on the tongue of land that juts out between the motel and the bed-and-breakfast house further down the trail, and using the driveway from Cordova Bay Road to the fire road as an access point. The Parks Department are not going to advertise this access but if you feel unsure about using the steep gravel trail by the bus stop, you can get to the fire road by using the driveway without violating anybody's property rights.

Subdivisions and the approaches to the park

First there was one: the strata-title development around the pumping station, now complete. Next door to it came Ocean Park, which is half complete. And now we have prospect of an entirely new development on the corner of Cordova Bay and Royal Oak Drive, which promises to be as big as the first two combined.

Since the road was rebuilt and upgraded a few years ago, one of the benefits has been the free flow of traffic: the total numbers have gone up but because they are not stopping and starting their presence is bearable. There are already times when congestion is high; from 4:00 to 5:30 p.m. the traffic is backed up 500 metres from the traffic light and from 8:15 to 9:00 a.m. there is a similar but smaller line-up.

Introducing these subdivisions disrupts the flow and will, in time, increase the congestion. The rule-of-thumb used by traffic engineers is that each household makes an average of 12 trips a day (going to Thrifty Foods and back equals two trips). On this basis, the traffic flow on and off Cordova Bay Road will increase from less than 100 trips a day to more than 400 once these three subdivisions are complete, and that only accounts for developments on the waterside. Though there are more sites on the mountainside ripe for similar treatment, there is no plan in place to deal with traffic.

For years the residents of Cordova Bay and the Cordova Bay Association have argued for the closure of the filter lane at Royal Oak because it feeds a great deal of traffic through the village to the highway at Sayward. Using this development as a catalyst, it is now a good time to consider alternate roles for the filter lane in a general reorganization of the intersection.

The overall principles should be safe access to private property and free flow of traffic along prescribed routes rather than the free-for-all approach we have at present.

From the point of view of benefits to the park, the best outcome would be a steady flow of traffic from Cordova Bay and Gordon Head residents at the expense of through traffic going to Victoria or UVic. It cannot be 100% exclusive, but with the aid of modern timed signals and road paint much can be done at low cost to encourage the outcome

If you have any ideas concerning these problems, please let us know and we can take them forward.

The Douglas Creek watershed

In the last newsletter there was a report about the successful conclusion of the watershed project. Now the hard work begins; we need to find project sites and willing home owners to participate in the installation of rain gardens and swales near their property.

Our first step was to meet with the executive of Gordon Head Community Association and present an overview of Scott Murdoch's proposals and an outline of how they could be used. The members were very receptive and the points that really resonated about the proposals were:

- There is a public education component on storm water management.
- There are no time constraints (do as and where possible)
- The installations will be on municipal land
- There will opportunities for traffic calming
- Boulevard gardens will increase real estate values.

Finally, the idea of a group of residents adopting a street was seen as a good starting point for the first project and we hope to make some progress on this in the fall.

As part of the education process, we hope to have pictures and descriptions of Scott Murdoch's plans on the two web sites.

IVY!

If you care for the state of the Park and you have a couple of free hours on a Sunday morning each month, remember that there is an active ivy-pulling group that will appreciate your help.

Call or e-mail Judy Spearing

E-mail: jandd_spearing@shaw.ca

Telephone: 472-0515

She can give you the date of each month's Sunday workparty, and tell you where and when to meet the crew. Work usually starts at 10:00 a.m.

BROOM!

Come join us for a workparty to remove broom from Little Mount Doug!

Saturday, October 28, 9:30–11:30 a.m.

Meet at the Par k entrance on Blenkinsop Road

Sensible footware, rain or shine.
Cookies, nuts, juice and water provided.

Contact Jenny, 744-1710 or Laurie, 472-6138 for further information.

The front cover of this newsletter features "First Salmon Couple Return" by Kristi Bridgeman, Fine Art and Illustrations, (250) 477-7464).

The photograph at the left was taken by Bob Bridgeman on the beach in Mount Douglas Park.

Board of Directors 2006/2007

President	Kenneth Rankin	4285 Cedar Hill Road	V8N 3C7	477-8007
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Secretary	Sheilagh Ogilvie	515 Carnation Place	V8Z6G6	479-4281
Streams	Robert Bridgeman	1481 Elnido Road	V8N 4Z7	477-7464
At-large	Dave De Shane	4088 Livingstone Ave. N.	V8N 3A6	721-3492
At-large	Claude Maurice	2200 Lorne Terrace	V8S 2H8	598-7407
Youth Rep.	Mike Vaninsberghe	4585 Bonnieview Place	V8N 3V5	472-6138

Historian: Pam Lewis

Membership

Please check your address label (above); if it reads less than '05, 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: _____

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