



Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society Spring 2011

Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, April 19, 2011 7:30pm
Gordon Head Recreation Centre

Wildlife Trees and BC Wildlife Tree Committee

Guest Speaker: Dean McGeogh, RPF
Certified Wildlife/Danger Tree Assessor & Specialist
Integra Forest Consulting,
Member of Wildlife Tree Committee of B.C.,

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Pam Lewis, FMDPS Founder

New Trail Way-finding

New way-finding signs have been installed along the entire length of the Irvine Trail. The popularity of walking through the Park and the significant increase in visitors has resulted in a myriad of impromptu trails. The hope is that with good way-finding signs that at least some of the impromptu trails will fade away.

This is a test installation for two new designs, a signpost and a small sign “cube”. The posts are constructed from a wood-simulation plastic with trail information printed on a metal faceplate attached to the post. The original wood posts deteriorated in the wet areas, resulting in a significant maintenance cost. These new posts will be installed at major trail intersections.

The second sign type is a small steel cube,



Dave Hill, Parks Supervisor Construction, shows off the first installation of the new trail signpost for major trail intersections.



New way-finding sign, a small steel cube, for use between major trail intersections.

also with trail information printed on a metal faceplate. They are made in the Saanich shops and will be installed between major trail intersections where the way might not be clear.

Attached to both the posts and the small cubes will be one or more printed

faceplates. This new design shows the trail name, colour-coded trail category and the direction to follow. Trails in the Park have been categorized according to *easy*, *moderate* or *difficult*. Each category indicates the quality or type of trail surface (e.g. relatively level gravel, natural tread or unimproved), amount of trail maintenance and an indication of the physical ability and agility appropriate for the trail. For example, with the black diamond *difficult* category, expect steep climbs, some height exposure and slippery rocks necessitating good hiking shoes.



The new way-finding faceplates show an “Easy” green circle, “Moderate” blue square or “Difficult” black diamond, similar to ski markings. The Difficult category means appropriate hiking shoes and expect exposed areas over slippery rocks!

If the tests are successful, the signs will be adopted for use elsewhere in the Municipality.

New Blenkinsop Parking and Trail

Last fall's newsletter reported that Saanich had purchased the property at 4439 Blenkinsop Road. The property has been subdivided and the house area is to be sold. The entire, very visible and beautiful hillside will be kept as an addition to Mount Douglas Park. Parks will construct a small parking area and a new trail leading up to the Tod Trail. They are currently working on design details and will complete the project later this year. This will be a beautiful trail and we anticipate that it will be very popular.

Name the Trail

The new trail needs a name. Thus far, all the trails have been named after area pioneers. The “Blenkinsop Trail” was one suggestion for Saanich to consider. Would this cause confusion with the Blenkinsop Greenway that connects the Lochside Trail with Mount Douglas X Road? Another suggestion was the “Lewis Trail”, in honour of the long time Park neighbour and founder of our Society, Pam Lewis (See “In Memoriam” in this issue). Do you have any suggestions?

Poop Park

Another symptom of the increasing popularity of Mount Douglas Park is the many dogs and, unfortunately, the amount of dog poop along the trails. Responsible dog walkers do pick up and properly dispose of the bag and contents in provided trash receptacles. But sadly, there is an ever-increasing number of piles of poop, so much that some now refer to Mount Douglas Park as Poop Park. Sadly, others leave their doggy bags along the trail, or worse, throw it into the bush where it hangs for all to see. This extraordinary amount of poop “hidden” along the trail edge is an acute problems for those removing invasive plants from the Park. It not only makes their hard work an unpleasant task but in humid, warm weather, “the stuff” becomes mouldy, stinks and is a potential health risk.

It's again another example of a common problem, a few irresponsible people can spoil it for all. We need to find a way to educate those creating the problem before things get worse. One approach might be, when you see someone not picking up after their dog, politely remind them of their obligation (and legal responsibility – it's a Saanich bylaw). We welcome responsible owners and their dogs in the Park.

Park Use Permits -- submitted by Saanich Parks

Saanich Parks provides permits for a wide range of organized activities in parks each year. In Mount Douglas Park, these activities include picnics, birthday parties, fitness boot camps, trail running events, various training exercises and other activities consistent with the natural setting of the Park.



The Park's arborist climbed an adjacent “safe” tree, then, using ropes, swung from the support tree to the danger tree to “top” it.

Obtaining a permit provides certainty to a group that they will be able to use the space they were planning for. The Parks Division also reviews the appropriateness of the activity for the Park and limits the number of concurrent activities to reduce conflict and impact. Also, obtaining a permit assists Saanich staff to better schedule major work and be aware of special maintenance needs for garbage or washrooms. Saanich supports groups by providing information on insurance, parking/traffic management, reducing impact to natural areas, and a number of other operational considerations.

If you would like to arrange a park permit for your next activity, you can contact Saanich Parks' at 250-475-5522 or check the Parks website at www.saanichparks.ca.

Hazardous Trees

Our Society has been working with Saanich Parks regarding policies and procedures related to hazardous trees. Over a year ago, there were a large number of trees cut down along the Whittaker Trail. The Society's concern was that there should be a difference between hazard tree management along roadways versus within natural parks. After some research, we found the Wildlife Tree Committee of BC (WTC) which had developed an alternate standard specifically for use in parks. We brought this to the attention of Parks and also to the consultants writing the Saanich Urban Forest Strategy. We are pleased that, subsequently, that document now includes reference to the WTC.



The "Danger/Hazardous" hollow tree base had no structural strength.

In advance of any trail work, a danger tree assessment is required. We informed Parks of our concern about the balance between the number of danger trees identified for removal versus proposed trail improvements, feeling that the trail improvements were insufficient to offset the loss of trees. Subsequently, Parks did an extensive re-examination of their procedures and wrote a new Tree Risk Assessment & Abatement manual,



Another Friend of Mount Douglas Park

trained their assessors in the new procedures and required them to take the WTC assessors course module. The stronger emphasis on eliminating the danger tree risk by converting the tree to a wildlife tree instead of simply cutting it down is a significant positive step for the Park and for the many wildlife tree inhabitants. Although “the proof is in the pudding”, this work and approach looks very promising.

Parks & Recreation Study

Saanich Parks is currently developing its Parks & Recreation Master Plan. The working papers are available on the Saanich Parks & Recreation web site at <http://www.saanich.ca/parkrec/masterplan.html>. There have been some surveys mailed out and others available on-line, also open houses have been scheduled to provide some background information. Hopefully there will be more emphasis on “exercise” that people

are likely to do on a regular, daily basis rather than weekly or monthly. This might be neighbourhood walks or walking to a nearby store or school. Studies have shown that this can lead to better health and weight reduction than less regular, but perhaps more strenuous exercise. An excellent example is the regular Churchill Drive morning walkers.

Camosun Environmental Program Beach Study

A team from Camosun College's Environmental Technology Program is assessing current status of the beach where stabilization work might be done, and their recommendations for replanting will provide a means of regenerating the beach as well as stabilizing the cliff in the future.

Saanich Cycling Festival

Remember the Saanich-sponsored police-escorted "Shelbourne Ride" last year? It was part of World Health Day and in support of the Shelbourne Corridor Strategy and the three urban centres. It was a huge success, with a continuous line of cyclists extending from the Gordon Head Rec Centre starting-point all the way down Shelbourne to the end of the ride at Shelbourne Plaza. At the plaza was a small festival with displays, a police bicycle safety rodeo and awarding of prizes. Our Society participated with a tent and display.

Saanich is again sponsoring the event, now an annual event named the Saanich Family Cycling Festival (<http://saanichcyclingfestival.ca>). It is part of this year's month long Victoria International Cycling Festival (<http://vicf.ca>). The Saanich Festival will be on **Sunday, June 19**. This time it will include two police-escorted rides, one for the "training wheel" set and another for the rest of us. And the festival will be even larger. Look for the Friends of Mount Douglas Park tent there; we will be featuring our Douglas Creek watershed model.

UVic students join Invasive Species group in Park

Our Invasive Species volunteer group was pleasantly surprised early this year when a contingent of students from UVic came forward to join our ranks. Welcome to our new volunteers!!

It is no coincidence their collective studies focus on the Restoration of Natural Systems, Ecology, and Geography. Clearly they have more than a passing interest in the restoration

of the Park and a level of environmental awareness well suited to this task.

The infusion of youthful energy is so very welcome, particularly to those who have, for years, devoted countless hours removing invasive plant species from the Park. To date, volunteers have made huge strides in park restoration by removing literally tons of Ivy, Holly, Garlic Mustard, et al. However, it's really good to have younger volunteers. It will be these younger people who will be charged with continuing this very necessary work as older volunteers opt to hang up their loppers and take up other, less arduous activities (snowboarding??).

With the participation of new volunteers, we've been able to return to the partially-restored site adjacent to the Fire Lane off of Cedar Hill Road and continue to remove an infestation of Himalayan Blackberry that is rapidly expanding west into the Park along the Whittaker Trail. These alien invaders should be dispatched in 2011 and replaced with young native plants. A great beginning to the new year.

Saanich Focuses on Our Watershed

submitted by Saanich Environmental Services

Even for those of us who are used to our Northwest winters, this one has everyone talking about the amount of rain we've been getting! The soggy yards, cancelled soccer games and constant grey skies seem to have been going on forever.

While the rain can be irritating to us, it is the



Winter Snow along Douglas Creek

lifeblood of our local streams, including Douglas Creek. However, streams, like people, can get too much of a good thing. In an urban watershed, such as the Douglas Creek watershed, the combination of impervious surfaces—roads, roofs, parking lots, sidewalks, driveways—and a drainage system designed to convey rainwater quickly away from these surfaces, has resulted in more water entering the creek quickly after a storm. In addition, this water carries with it all the pollution from those surfaces—grease, oil, dirt, heavy metals, pesticides—straight into the creek.

To the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society, it is disheartening to see their hard work restoring the Creek and fish habitat washed away. As much as we can improve the habitat for fish in the Creek, survival will always be limited by stormwater quality and quantity unless changes to the larger watershed improve these conditions.

As part of a focused outreach program, the District of Saanich (Environmental Services) has partnered with the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society to encourage residents to understand the impacts of stormwater on Douglas Creek and give them the tools to reduce their own impact on the watershed.

What will the outreach program look like? Look for a special edition of Saanich's *Our Backyard* newsletter that is devoted specifically to stormwater in the Douglas Creek watershed. It will be mailed to residences in the watershed, and will be posted on our website at <http://www.saanich.ca/living/natural/ourbackyard.html>

Other events through the year will include a local raingarden tour and a backyard stormwater workshop where participants can learn how to treat stormwater in their own yards and have the chance to win a professional stormwater audit. Look for us in September on Rivers Day for a special event focused on stormwater. Visit our website for regular updates on these programs and for more information on stormwater (www.saanich.ca/living/natural/stormwater.html). If you have any questions, please contact Darren Copley at 250-475-5579 or darren.copley@saanich.ca.

Shelbourne Swales

The street swales on the north end of Shelbourne Street that were installed last summer are working well. Last fall's newsletter explained that the swales lessen stormwater surges, improve ground water levels through infiltration, and reduce water-borne pollutants. We have been monitoring their performance and have noted that:

- where there are street swales there are no “street lakes”, the swales do a very good job of draining the road and the bicycle lanes;
- the leaves from the London Plane trees collected in the swales, necessitating Saanich crews collecting them, but it was no more work than created by the ditch or the roadside;
- the placing of the overflow drains was conservative – if they were raised 10 centimeters, the swales probably would have infiltrated 100% of the water they collected;
- the planting of the swales will be important for operational effectiveness and appearance..

The street swales have been an example of how to successfully control water on roads and how to manage the impacts of polluted water on Douglas Creek.



Rain-water swale on Shelbourne St. with raised drain

Funding Received for Habitat Restoration

The Pacific Salmon Foundation has provided funding for a project to construct four pool riffle sequences, incorporating woody debris just downstream from the Ash Road Bridge. The \$9000.00 from PSF will serve as a funding “anchor” around which to organize the project partner’s contributions. We are in discussion with Saanich Parks, Engineering, and Environmental Services, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, private contractors and volunteers to put the many pieces of the project together.

The drawings and material list have been prepared for this habitat restoration project and a stakeholders meeting early in April will set up material logistics and equipment requirements.

On a related restoration note, a set of seeds has been forwarded to the capable hands of Rob Hagel and his associates at the Pacific Forestry Centre to grow and make ready for the annual November Tree Appreciation Day planting.

Salmon Carcass Transplant

In January, approximately 2.5 tonnes of frozen Coho and chum salmon were transplanted into Douglas Creek. Volunteers met at the Edgemont entrance to the Park and in an hour-and-a-half all of the carcasses were in the Creek.

The salmon are largess from the Howard English Hatchery volunteers. The carcasses were frozen after they contributed eggs and milt to the hatchery program. Again the hatchery



Unloading 2.5 tonnes of salmon carcasses

and volunteers make this program viable; their efforts are a significant contribution to the Creek restoration success.

Transplanting salmon carcasses introduces isotopes of nitrogen and carbon that are only available from marine-derived sources such as salmon. These salmon carcasses are critical sources of nutrients for invertebrates and riparian vegetation which have co-evolved



Four Beauties!

with the seasonal nutrient source. As a part of the restoration strategy, they replace the components that healthy streams possess and help to rebuild the ecological relationships presently missing from the Creek.

Another Oil Spill!

After many years of transplanting salmon carcasses, this year's effort had a different twist. There was a spill of some substance into the Creek, presumably a hydrocarbon. The 2.5 tonnes of salmon had been delivered and were thawing, so there was little choice but to proceed with the transplant.

This oil spill, previous ones and spills to come are multidimensional ecological disasters that we have been trying to effectively deal with for all the 14 years we have been working on the restoration of Douglas Creek. From our perspective, the clean-up efforts at the Creek are not commensurate with the real environmental problems that the spills cause. Proper spill response and clean-up require:

- samples of the spilled material, taken by someone who is competent to take legal chain of custody samples, and those samples analyzed by a certified laboratory;
- technology that actually removes the spilled material from the water at the pool behind the weir. Spilled toxins must be out of the Creek as soon as a spill is reported;
- installation of signage at the weir that encourages spill reporting with a telephone number, so spills can be reported by anybody walking by;
- a database that logs all spill reports, lab analysis of what was spilled, amount vacuumed up, who was responsible for the spill (and thus financially culpable for the abatement costs), and what the abatement costs were.

The procedure has been to place oil absorption pads and booms behind the weir to contain and absorb oil spilled into the Creek. During such spills, the hazardous material collects behind the weir, but when it rains all the hazardous material, including the oil pads and oil booms, are washed over the weir and carried downstream the length of the Creek and out into the Strait.

Any mammals or birds coming into contact with spilled toxic material (usually hydrocarbons) die. On the east coast of Canada, 100,000 birds per year are oiled and left to die. It is hypothesized that the same number is lost on this coast – on the east coast bodies collect on shore because of prevailing currents while on this coast the opposite happens, bodies are washed off shore and disappear without notice or comment. Many of these birds and aquatic mammals are killed by the constant input of oil from storm drains up and down the coast, the total toxins equivalent to many Exxon Valdez disasters.



FMDPS Aerial Park Inspector, Rabbit Control

Weir Study

Saanich Parks and Engineering Departments are in the process of commissioning an engineering study of the general stormwater and associated pollutant problems related to Douglas Creek, the Gordon Head watershed and the failure of the weir to handle either the stormwater surges or the water-borne pollutants.

Salmon Chum Fry Transplant

The annual 40,000 chum fry release into the Creek will be in April or May. These excellent fry come from the Howard English Hatchery and volunteers who, as has already been said, are champions of this project. Watch for a notice on the Society's web page calendar; those on the volunteer list will get an email when the date is set.



Web Site

Have you looked at the Society's web site lately? (<http://moundouglaspark.ca>)
A couple of highlights:

- The “Calendar of Events” link shows upcoming events. Events such as our AGM, salmon carcass transplant can be found here as well as date and location for Creek or invasive work parties.
- The “Park News” page provides news items between our newsletter issues.
- “Photo Albums” is a good overview of the many Park events.
- “Edit your profile” is the newest addition. If your email address is on file, you can,

through an automated process, request a username and password and then update your membership profile.

We are asking for member email addresses so that you can be notified of significant events such as notice of the AGM, Park events such as the chum fry transplant or the Tree Day event. And also if there are any Council agenda issues that might have a significant impact on the Park.

Membership is more automated, so your mailing label now shows the month when you should renew your membership. For your convenience, please consider renewing for three or, even better, for four years instead of having to renew every year.

In Memoriam

Our Society lost its founder last autumn when Pam Lewis died.

It was she who approached her Cordova Bay Association colleagues, Kay Porter and Sheilagh Ogilvie, in 1989, about her deep concern for Mount Douglas Park. Their discussions led to the organization of the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society later that year.

The City of Victoria had operated the Park for a century according to a dedication to park purposes established by Sir James Douglas. A certain benign neglect had applied, but the provincial government was planning to take the Park back briefly, to remove several limits to its exploitation for non-park purposes, and to then pass it to Saanich. Pam and her family had lived beside the Park for nearly 40 years, and were very disturbed about those non-park purposes.

She had the memory - and the files - on much Park history, and the clear-headed tenacity to bring the rest of us up to speed on every issue. She participated in Friends' Directors' meetings from the start, until last summer (2010). Pam Lewis, aged 84, died on the 25th of October, 2010, and is survived by her 2 daughters and 5 grandsons.

Thank you for your inspiration and counsel, First Friend.

Board of Directors

President	Darrell Wick	1491 Edgemont Road	V8N 4P7	477-9291
Vice President	Kenneth Rankin	4285 Cedar Hill Road	V8N 3C7	477-8007
Treasurer	Graham Shorthill	4623 Cordova Bay Road	V8X 3V6	658-5873
Streams	Robert Bridgeman	1481 Elnido Road	V8N 4Z7	477-7464
Invasives	Judy Spearing	1545 Eric Road	V8N 5Y6	472-0515
At-large	Sheilagh Ogilvie	#402, 1110 Oscar Street	V8V 4W5	479-4281
At-large	Claude Maurice	2200 Lorne Terrace	V8S 2HB	598-7407

Membership Renewal - Gift Membership

Providing information via this newsletter about the Park is an important Society function. We want to reach more Park users and Park neighbours. Why not **give someone you know a gift subscription and include it with your renewal?** A one year membership isn't much more than the price of a good cup of coffee! You provide the gift and we'll send notification to the recipient of your generosity. We hope you will continue to support the work of the Society for another year.

Gift From _____

New Member (or renewal) form:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postal Code _____ Telephone No. _____

Email _____

Membership 1 year \$5 2 years \$10 3 years \$15 4 years \$20

Send or deliver to:

Graham Shorthill, Treasurer,
4623 Cordova Bay Road,
Victoria B.C. V8X 3V6

<http://www.mountdouglaspark.ca>