

Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society



Spring 2013

Churchill Challenge

Taking advantage of the morning hours before the road is opened to motor traffic... Whether you're in your 20s, or 40s, 60s or 80s; whether you're fit or working on it, or whether you wish an outdoor experience in a beautiful natural setting, Churchill Drive awaits you!

In This Issue

- Annual General Meeting, May 7
- Churchill Challenge
- Soundscape – Sound Map
 - Transmitter Site
 - Westbank Construction
- Trails
 - New trail map, Kiosks, Way-finding
 - Whittaker Trail Boardwalks
- Blenkinsop Parking & Trail
- Douglas Creek
- Recording Water Temperature
- Carcass Transplant
- Tributaries Success
- Summer Creek Work
- UVic Douglas Fir Study

Annual General Meeting – Tuesday May 7

The annual general meeting of the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society will be held on **Tuesday, 7-May-2013, 7:30pm at the Gordon Head Recreation Centre.**

Our guest speaker is registered professional biologist Dave Clough, who recently developed the five year plan for the restoration of Douglas Creek. With his extensive creek restoration experience, he is a wealth of information and a delight to listen to!

Constitution Changes

The Board of Directors recommend the following changes to section 4.6 of the FMDPS constitution, to be voted upon at the May 7 Annual General Meeting:

Change 1:

4.6 No later than the month of September in each year, the Board of Directors shall appoint a nominating committee ... Nominations may also be made from the floor of the Annual General Meeting by any two (2) members in good standing...

To be replaced by

4.6 No later than one month prior to each Annual General Meeting, the Board of Directors shall appoint a nominating committee ... Nominations may also be made up until two days prior to the annual general meeting by any two (2) members in good standing.....

Trails

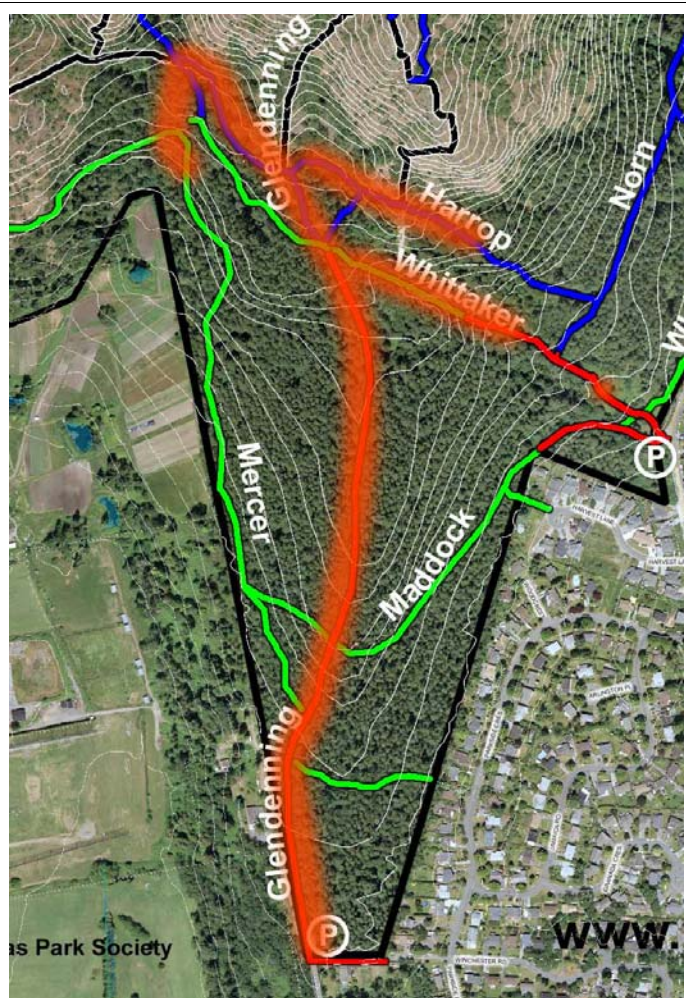
New Mount Douglas Park Trails Map: Saanich Parks has produced a new map of trails in Mount Douglas Park. The new map will be installed in existing and new kiosks as well as the smaller “you are here” map points within the Park. This new map shows the trails recognized and maintained by the Parks department. Not shown are the impromptu shortcut trails which are an on-going problem.

The **Blenkinsop parking lot & trail** construction is now complete. There is a pedestrian activated light to cross Blenkinsop Rd. that provides connection to Lohbrunner. The parking lot can handle nine cars and the trail is clearly marked with way-finding cubes and plates, the new standard for markers along the trail.

The trail is steep and slippery in many locations, but also offers spectacular views of the Blenkinsop Valley. The trail condition is being monitored, and future work will address the

slippery problem sections.

New way-finding posts at all trail intersections: As a major effort to improve way-finding within the Park trail system, and to encourage walkers to use the official trails versus the impromptu trails, the 1.5m tall way-finding posts will be installed at all trail junctions. This is no small



Recent spread of the very invasive Garlic Mustard. Dogs running off the trail pick up the invasive in their paws and carry it to new areas.



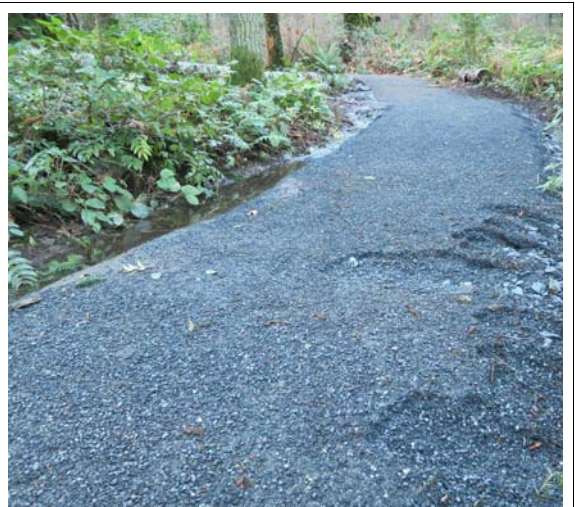
Saanich Parks Construction Supervisor Dave Hill plans to install way-finding posts at each of the 80 official trail junctions.

task, as there are in excess of 80 junctions, each with custom signage and orientation. The specific post sign and orientation details will be plotted over the summer, the signs will be manufactured in the fall and installed next winter.

Trail Counters: We now have counters along seven trails, including Churchill Drive. The counters are remarkable little units; each has a three year battery life

using three AAA batteries and can record 400 million counts. They are configured to accumulate and record the total number of walkers in each one hour period throughout the day. One of the limitations of the sensor on trails like Churchill, is that two or more side-by-side walkers are registered as a single walker. To account for this, we have made manual counts and compared this with the automated counters to determine a correction factor. For Churchill mornings, the factor is roughly 2:1. That is, there are twice as many walkers than are auto-counted.

Whittaker Trail boardwalks: The Whittaker Trail behind the “motel” area was a true mud quagmire with walkers making wider and wider detours around the mud holes. In much of the area, it simply wasn't possible to divert all the water flowing through the area. The solution was to install a series of boardwalks over the worst areas coupled with drain rock covered by pathway blend gravel in the in-between sections. The boardwalk is constructed using an engineered grade synthetic board avoiding the rot problem when using wood in a constantly wet environment.



Compared to “natural tread” trails, “pathway blend” gravel is very noisy and uncomfortable under-foot after it hardens like concrete. We have measured a noise increase of over 20 dB! A better surface material is needed.

Saanich Parks prefers the pathway blend gravel because of its low maintenance. Our Society would prefer a different surface. The gravel becomes as hard as a concrete surface and is much less resilient under foot than natural surface trails. It is also noisy – we have measured a very large noise increase of over 20 dB for these surfaces, an unacceptable level! Surely there is a compromise trail treatment?

Churchill Drive Douglas Fir Study

As part of their UVic Study Design and Data Analysis class, Kylli Morgan and Jennifer McIntyre analyzed the effect of elevation and edge effect (distance of Douglas Fir tree from Churchill Drive). They used a 30m x 4m belt transect going into the forest from the road edge, numbered each Douglas Fir within the transect area, then randomly selected five trees to measure. They measured the trunk diameter at chest height to indicate the overall size of each tree.

The study goal was to see if tree size changed with distance from the road and with increased elevation. They found a statistically significant result of combined elevation and edge effect on Douglas Fir tree size with two general trends: trees were larger further from the road and were smaller as the elevation increased.

They proposed that their study could help in predicting how ecosystems will respond when a road or some sort of man-made edge is introduced (see Westbank article). With climate change, it is important to see trends with elevation because species are not only shifting toward the poles but also migrating to higher elevations, thus possibly influencing tree diversity and growth success.



Kylli Morgan and Jennifer McIntyre measure trunk diameter and distance from Churchill Drive as part of UVic biology study.

Churchill Challenge

Ever since Churchill Drive was reserved for walkers and cyclists until noon daily, the number of walkers has increased exponentially. Observing the wide range of walker age and physical agility, it appears there are many that view the walk to the top as a personal challenge! Some run to the top, some do the climb more than once, others walk at their own steady pace, some take advantage of the benches along the way.

As encouragement to those taking this Churchill Challenge (1500m with an elevation gain of 160m), stone markers will be placed every 250m along Churchill Drive. Each will show the distance from meter 0 at the lower parking lot and the current elevation.



Churchill Challenge pictorial to be placed on new kiosk at metre 0 in the lower Churchill Parking lot.

Tributaries

During last summer's Douglas Creek surveys, three major tributaries feeding Douglas Creek were re-discovered. One was blocked by a toppled tree, flooding a large area, causing more trees to die and also bringing silt to the creek. After the blockage was removed and the tributary restored to its original course, a local Scout group brought new life to the area with restoration plantings this spring. This summer the remaining uncleared sections of the three tributaries will be restored.



Local Scouts performed restoration planting along Douglas Creek tributaries.

Douglas Creek Weir Spills



Don't hesitate to report a possible spill.



Saanich Crews respond to a hotline phone call reporting a possible spill.

Mount Douglas Park Soundscape

When was the last time you heard only nature - no traffic or other city noises? Increasing urbanization comes complete with noise from traffic, leaf blowers, lawn mowers, high-pitched backup warning signals, and on and on.

At the same time, places of solitude where one can hear nature and appreciate the quiet, are steadily disappearing. The Friends of Mount Douglas Park recognize the natural quiet deep within Mount Douglas Park as an important resource to be valued and preserved.

Organizations elsewhere also recognize quiet as a valuable resource; there is an excellent movement in Olympic National Park to preserve "one square inch of silence" where "noise free intervals" are measured as the time when there are no human generated sounds, including airplanes (onesquareinch.org). The US National Park service considers natural quiet sufficiently important that they have a Natural Sounds and Night Skies Division, recognizing that visitors come to parks to hear natural sounds and to escape traffic and city noises. The division monitors tour flights over parks and also takes action on sounds generated outside the parks that adversely affect the natural soundscape. Mount Douglas Park deserves similar protection.

Increases in background sound levels are important because noise can be translated directly into lost hearing opportunities. Doubling the background noise can reduce the area where an animal might hear predators to a quarter of the original area. Likewise the detection area for animals or birds that use hearing to find prey or mates may also be reduced to a quarter of the original area. This is because, in most environments, the sound level is halved when one moves twice as far from a sound and from geometry, we know the (listening) area is proportional to the square of the distance (radius).

Sound Mapping Project

Tranquil areas within Saanich that afford visitors to hear nature with little or no urban background noise are becoming increasingly rare. Natural sound areas within Mount Douglas Park are, therefore, a valuable resource that needs to be fully recognized and preserved. To protect such a valuable park resource, it must be documented in such a way that changes can be identified; hence, our sound mapping project. Our first goal is to produce a "Mount Douglas Park Trail Soundscape Map": basically a trail map where each trail is colour-coded according to the city/traffic noise levels encountered as one walks along the trail (averaged over a period). We are fortunate that a recent UVic graduate in the

area of Urban and Development Studies has volunteered to lead this project. He will be working with additional volunteers in the field to collect the geo-referenced trail noise data, add it to our GIS database for analysis, and then finally produce our Soundscape map. The data samples will be gathered over the next several months; due to varying urban noise levels, several readings recorded at different times at each location will be required to gain a true representation.

You can help with this project. Download the data form from our website <http://mountdouglaspark.ca/web/Soundscape/> and take the form with you on your next walk through the Park. Instructions for recording noise levels along the trail are on the form. No sound meters or other special equipment is required; just your ears and a pen to record the sound levels. Where is your favourite "natural quiet" area in Mount Douglas Park? Please let us know by helping with this sound survey or by sending an email to info@MountDouglasPark.ca.

Westbank

We are extremely fortunate that Mount Douglas Park includes many important qualities; the natural forest with its diversity of trees and native plants, panoramic views, remote trails and Douglas Creek with its salmon, and at the same time is so close to our urban setting. We cannot take these qualities for granted, but must recognize and protect them or they could be lost forever.

Equally important, but not yet receiving the recognition it deserves, is the Park soundscape, in particular, the "natural quiet" in large areas of the Park. By natural quiet, we mean devoid of city and traffic noises, places where one has solitude and can hear nature.

The largest of these natural quiet areas in the Park is the plateau above and behind Westbank. The steep rock bluff and bank



Potential construction of Westbank to the Park boundary would have a significantly detrimental affect on the adjacent Park area, probably the most natural, undisturbed and quietest section of Mount Douglas Park!

leading up to this plateau protects it from Cordova Bay Road vehicle noise. On the other side, Mt. Douglas blocks city noise. There are very few such natural quiet areas within the urban area of the core municipalities and it is a resource that must be protected. As the intensity and noise of these urban areas increases, such quiet locations will increase in importance and value.

However, if this road is constructed and the property developed, the Park and the citizens of Saanich will lose two very important Park values; this unique natural quiet area and also the natural forest setting currently without any visual urban intrusion.

This natural quiet area that is threatened represents roughly 10% of the entire Park! If Westbank is developed, a car or truck driving to the top, a lawnmower on the properties, an air conditioner or other human generated noise will simply eliminate this natural quiet area. Constructing the road will require leveling the current rock bluff and trees that block the Cordova Bay Road traffic noise, leaving a virtual sound channel to the plateau.

Further, for a house at this location to obtain an ocean view, dozens of trees will have to fall or the house will have to be very high in order to see over the trees towards the ocean. In the other direction, a monster house would visually impair this natural forest setting.

The natural quiet is a valuable asset and we need to consider its value. We urge Saanich to take this information into consideration before allowing this development to proceed. It isn't a small area that is threatened.

As part of our Park soundscape project, sound pressure measurements recorded on this plateau are very low, in the 30-35 dB(a) range, but in comparison, the sound levels in areas not protected from road noise are very high, measuring 60-80 dB(a) on trails such as Norn or Whittaker Trails above Cordova Bay Road.

Website Help

We would like to explore the possibility of an on-line method for new memberships and also membership renewals. As a method of payment, Paypal comes to mind, but we have no experience with this, don't know the pros and cons, and would welcome advice. If you can help, please contact darrell@MountDouglasPark.ca (250-477-9291).

We are also now on **Twitter: @MountDougPark**.

Salmon Carcass Transplant

Normally our friends at the Howard English Hatchery at Goldstream take the salmon out of the freezer well in advance of our carcass transplant so they are nice and slimy, with just enough odour that you know you have one in your hands! But this year the weather was below zero and



Peter McCully has a talent for conveying a quick biology course about the salmon life cycle and the importance of these transplants in a most entertaining manner.



Expert Carcass Thrower!

despite taking the salmon out of the freezer early, they simply didn't thaw – to the delight of our “throwers” and disappointment to the cheering crowd! Never-the-less, all the carcasses ended up just where they needed to be and the day was a success. Thanks to Peter McCully for his inspiring welcome and all his colleagues at the hatchery that make this possible!



Another Expert Carcass Thrower!



Six about to be experts!



Just a Beginner!
(Saanich Municipal Administrator
Paul Murray)

Summer Creek Projects

The Douglas Creek work plan for this summer is to restore high priority habitat above Ash Road, including three tributaries resulting in improved fish access, reduced erosion and improved riparian health. The plan includes:

- Restoring two debris jams to reduce sediment, improve fish access and create cover habitat as per the habitat assessment.
- Improving water quality by restoring braided tributaries that are sediment sources.
- Improving the riparian forest by confining flooded portions of disturbed channels, removing invasive plants and planting new seedlings.
- Contracting a Bio-Engineer to design weir storm water detention pond.
- Continuing to build partnerships within the community including the District of Saanich, and Goldstream Volunteer Salmonid Enhancement Society and to continue to educate and inform through signage, newsletters, media releases, school field trips and information sessions.

Trash in the Park



Discarded bed at Blenkinsop trail.

You name it...someone will dump it! We've found a couple beds, a freezer, sofas, building material, etc. Despite the free service at the Saanich Yard, the worst is garden waste, complete with invasives. If you observe anyone dumping in the Park, note their vehicle license number and report the incident to Saanich Parks at 250-475-5522.



Trash at Churchill Parking lot.

Spawning Salmon

During the first weeks of November, salmon were seen spawning in Douglas Creek. Later that month, biologist Dave Clough identified several salmon redds when he walked the creek.

We have an interesting device, about the size of a cigar, housed in a metal casing with a ten year battery life that measures the creek temperature every 30 minutes allowing vital temperature related details to be recorded. From this data we know that the water temperature variation from winter to summer remains in a healthy range for salmon. Also, along with the November date the salmon spawned, we can estimate the chum salmon eggs were at eyed stage around 1-Dec, hatched around mid January, and swam up in March. The Coho follow a similar pattern, but are a little earlier.



RPBio Dave Clough recording data about one of the salmon redds.

Transmitter Site

For twenty years we have been monitoring the symbiotic relationship between the transmitter site at the Mount Douglas summit and its park setting. There is constant pressure for more cell providers to be located there; technology dictates a steady change in antennas and microwave dishes; there are equipment changes and upgrades in the building itself requiring air conditioner changes. Our goal has been to ensure there is no additional

encroachment that might affect the Park ambiance, either in the vicinity of the summit or from distant views within Saanich.

Last fall we were alarmed by two changes, both a surprise to us. The first was the addition of six rain hoods designed to cover new fan vents. The second was the fans themselves, six new fans each labelled as noisier than the single fan they replaced!

One might say that the six fan rain hoods aren't a big issue, but up until their installation, all building changes were done in a way to blend in with the original building and we were party to the plans. Our position remains opposed to these hoods, but we accept that they will be painted in a way to blend in with the building wall. We have also been assured we will be included prior to any future changes.

The other concern was the significant increase in fan noise. When we first heard them, they were in test mode at full force (and noise level!). They now have speed controls that limit them to much lower speeds and sound levels. Although the sound levels are now at what we consider a maximum acceptable level, we remain very concerned about the sound level on hot summer days.

One other noise emanating from the building is caused by an old noisy air conditioner belonging to Rogers Mobility. Saanich has requested they either repair or replace the unit, but thus far there has been no action from Rogers of which we are aware.



Four of six new vent covers at the transmitter building.

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	Thomas Munson	3996 Gordon Head Rd	V8N 3X6	478-1787
Invasives	Judy Spearing	1545 Eric Road	V8N 5Y6	472-0515
At-large	Claude Maurice	2200 Lorne Terrace	V8S 2H8	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: _____

Email _____

Address: _____

Postal Code _____ Telephone No. _____

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.mountdouglasspark.ca>

Colour versions of newsletters are available on website.