

Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society



Spring 2014

A crafty otter hides under logs at Douglas Creek entrance waiting for a tasty salmon supper to pass by!

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Annual General Meeting Wednesday May 7

The annual general meeting of the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society will be held on Wednesday, 7-May-2014, 7:30pm at the Gordon Head Recreation Centre featuring two excellent guest speakers:

Landscape Architect Illarion Gallant, the primary visionary for the new Churchill Park Entrance, will present the overall project along with explaining several of the design concepts and intricacies.

RPBio Dave Clough, who developed the five year plan for the restoration of Douglas Creek will present an overview of last year's successful creek work and preview this summer's project.

Society director Claude Maurice chairs the nominations committee.

New Park Acquisition

It gives us great pleasure to announce that Saanich Council approved the acquisition of the two lots at the end of Westbank. They will be officially rezoned for park in the future as part of housekeeping amendments.

The southern part of Westbank was required only to service these two lots. Once they are rezoned as park, the legal requirement for the Westbank road right-of-way is removed and it can be closed. Our Society has requested Saanich to close the road and then zone it as park. We have also requested that a proper park access trail be constructed there. Saanich will be consulting with Engineering, Planning and neighbouring land owners before making a decision.

According to the Park Soundscape, this is the quietest section of the Park and acquiring these properties will preserve this peaceful area.



Two lots now part of Mount Douglas Park. Hopefully Westbank will be closed and also zoned as park with an access trail.

Invasive Work Success

Clearing the Park of invasive plants will likely never end, but working on sections of the Park overrun with these invasive plants and restoring native plants has had huge success. Presently, the primary work area has been along the Glendenning Trail where one can see mounds of decaying invasive plants. Native plants such as Trillium, Native Trailing Blackberry, Oregon Grape, Camass etc. are starting to recover. Return trips to this area will be required to remove some invasive re-growth, but it will be a much easier task.



Piles of pulled invasives along the Glendenning Trail speak to the perseverance of the invasive group's work.

During the past 8 years volunteers have used two methods for plant debris disposal. Early practice was to load debris on tarps and drag it to a designated site for pickup by Saanich Parks staff. As work progressed further into the forest, it became too hard to drag tonnes of biomass long distances. Volunteers now use a less labour intensive method that's proven faster, cheaper, but is still very effective. Volunteers heap debris in numerous, small(ish) piles within cleared sites where the debris quickly dries out and the mounds gradually disappear. As a side benefit, these mounds may also function as temporary refuge for small, ground nesting birds and other small wildlife.

If you wish to help volunteers as you walk the Park, please note and report the location of any non-native bulbs you may find blooming this Spring (see contact information on our web site). Volunteers will follow up on your report and deal with non-native flora appropriately. Imported bulbs are pretty but many are invasive, pushing out native plants, and for this reason are not welcome in natural areas like Mount Douglas Park.

Consider contributing to the preservation of the Park by joining the invasive group for an hour of work. Any assistance makes a difference. See the calendar on our website for meeting times: <http://mounddouglasspark.ca/calendar.do>

Douglas Creek Weir

The Douglas Creek Watershed encompasses most of the Gordon Head Local Area. Roads, driveways, and roofs are impervious surfaces that occupy 37% of the watershed. Water drains from these impermeable planes and travels through the storm water system to the Park boundary and into the creek channel about 20 m upstream of the weir.

Weir making a Difference!

The storm water collected from the urban watershed comprises of rainwater and various pollutants such as oil from cars, heating oil, paints, soaps, and other liquids spilled into house or street drains. A significant amount of rainwater also contains hydrocarbons, silt and sand from the roads.

The quality and quantity of water reaching Douglas Creek has a considerable impact on the stream environment and in particular, the salmon rearing habitat. The inverted weir was built to address the problem of pollutants and silt entering the creek.

The weir protects the creek by restricting floating oils and other substances to the surface of a collection pond. The water is also slowed in this pond, allowing silt to settle. Only clean water below the surface is able to pass through the angled pipe and into the creek.



Through public awareness and education with outreach information individual or family improved water practices can help protect Douglas Creek. Additional information can be found at www.saanich.ca/esbackyarddew.ca or scan the QR code.



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Douglas Creek Weir Interpretive Sign showing watershed (left half)

New Interpretive Signs

Saanich Parks plans to install two interpretive signs this Spring. One will be at the weir showing the Douglas Creek watershed, which covers most of Gordon Head. The other interpretive sign will be next to a wild life tree that was topped a couple of years ago because it was a potential hazard (the base had significant rot). Although the tree circumference wasn't anything exceptional, it turned out to be quite an old tree. The UVic Tree Ring lab counted 229 rings and this was at the 13m tree height. Estimates give

Douglas Creek before and after a storm surge

Right of Passage

The Douglas Weir is located in Mount Douglas Park within the urban watershed of Douglas Creek. It was constructed to prevent pollutants in the 5.5 km² water catchment area from entering Douglas Creek. The inverted weir structure creates a barrier that separates floating oils and other contaminants in the water by blocking them and only allowing clean lower water to pass through.

Storm Surge

The large volume of water from a heavy rainfall can overpower the limited water storage capacity of the weir and allow trapped contaminants to flow over the structure and continue downstream.

When a storm surge occurs the increased water volumes wash out salmon spawning beds and erode the creek banks. The hydrocarbon pollutants found in the rainwater are quite dangerous to the salmon, along with silt, can smother young salmon fry.

Additional stormwater management measures are contemplated in the future to mitigate peak flows. There are currently rain gardens and bio swales along Saan Juan and Shelbourne to help retain and filter the collected water.

Start at the Source!

You can help the Douglas Weir keep Douglas Creek clean by making several small changes:

Disconnect downspouts - Divert rooftop water from the municipal storm water system to your lawn or garden. The ground water table will be improved and it will help considerably to reduce storm surges.

Build rain gardens and swales - Support the creation of more in-street rain gardens and swales. The water impurities that pass through the rain garden vegetation are absorbed and decomposed. Swales form temporary ponds which act as a first stage settling pond for silt and keep silt from entering the storm system.

Be aware of automobile pollutants - Be careful to contain leaks and recycle used motor oil appropriately.

Concept and design: Saanich

Douglas Creek Weir Interpretive Sign (right half)

it an additional 20 or so years to reach that height, making it date back to around 1760!

South Ridge Trail – New Way Finding Markers

The month of January saw the completion of way finding markers along the South Ridge Trail. This is a black level difficult trail leading south from the transmitter tower. It traverses some rocky terrain and with a myriad of braided trails, it was impossible to know which was the correct trail to follow. With a mixture of way finding markers, 1.5m high posts at trail intersections and small low way finding cubes or simple signs riveted to rocks, the proper trail should now be clear. This is the third

Cutting through History

During the life of this Douglas-fir tree, it contributed nutrients to its surrounding ecosystem for nearly 250 years. Now, in its afterlife, it continues to do so in a much different way.

Giving Life After Death
The tree has been cut approximately 13m or more above the ground. This reduces the hazard to formerly posed to us and other healthy trees. We usually avoid it to go. We are in the traditional sense any longer. It does provide valuable habitat for birds, insects and other animals on this type of environment for survival. Wildlife trees are important to the biodiversity of their ecosystem. The felled portion of the tree which is left in place provides the most several decades. Not only can it provide habitat, as the wood decays, it will provide nutrients to the soil and other trees seedlings to life.

Looks Can Be Deceiving
Much the same way that you cannot judge a book by its cover, you cannot judge a tree by measuring its diameter. There are many factors that will determine how a tree grows. This particular tree was approximately 250 years old but its DBH (diameter) was approximately 110cm. This Douglas-fir tree was felled due to advanced decay in its lower trunk had a very similar DBH of 110cm, yet was only 100 years old. Growing conditions such as soil, weather, fire, sun/shade and water are just some of the factors influencing the growth rate of a tree.

The Coastal Douglas-fir Zone
The Coastal Douglas-fir Zone covers a small area of British Columbia's south coast, including a band of lower elevation Douglas-fir regions. Douglas-fir regions supreme, occurring in a wide range of sites from dry rock outcrops to moist valley bottoms. Douglas-fir was the most highly prized timber tree in the early logging days of the Pacific Northwest. It took three to four hours to fell one of these giants. Today, very little old forest remains; most of it has been converted to farms, residences, or second-growth forest.
* British Columbia Ministry of Forests, The Ecology of the Coastal Douglas-fir Zone

229 Rings later

2011 Added as a change tree. This tree had been cut from about a 13m height. There are 229 annual rings.

1973 Mozzola was the first company to produce a hand-held timber probe.

1977 Home computers entered the market.

1843 Nelson's Column to Vancouver Island in remembrance of Captain Nelson.

1812 Considered as a "Dotted Line" in the history of Vancouver Heights.

1867 British North American Confederation for Canada.

1871 Vancouver Island was the site of the first oil discovery in Canada.

1906 Formation of the District of Saanich.

1914 Start of the Great War.

1917 Battle of Vimy Ridge.

1925 Victoria, Canada, declares historical landmarks to open the Stanley Cup.

1939 Start of World War II.

1942 First aerial photograph taken of the park.

1984 Green Motor and Dean C. Campbell are the first Victoria-based photographers to photograph the Douglas-fir tree.

1989 100th Anniversary of Mt. Douglas Park and Foundation of the Forests of Mt. Douglas Park Society.

1994 Victoria hosts the XXI Commonwealth Games.

229 Rings later

Tree Cookie Interpretive Sign – 229 tree rings , some so close a magnifying glass is required to see them.

Map of the Coastal Douglas-fir Zone
The map shows the Coastal Douglas-fir Zone in British Columbia, Canada, extending from the Strait of Georgia in the north to the Strait of Juan de Fuca in the south. Key locations marked include Vancouver, Victoria, and the Strait of Georgia. The zone is shown as a dark red area along the coast.

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trail to be so signed; other trails are the Irvine Trail and the new Blenkinsop Trail.

Way Finding Posts at all Trail Intersections

Saanich Parks will be installing 1.5m tall way finding posts at each of the 86 official trail intersections. The planning stage is almost complete, next the sign shop will print each of the small signs. The posts will be installed next winter.



Trail way finding posts similar to this one will be installed at all official trail intersections.

Park Vandalism

Perhaps vandalism is not the correct word, maybe it is simply ignorance or “me first entitlement”, but there is an ongoing problem in our Park; with dumping of trash, garden waste, and throwing doggy bags so they hang in the underbrush for all to see. And now Maple Tree tapping for syrup!



Doggy bag thrown onto undergrowth for all to see!



Illegal Maple Tree syrup tap.

The dumping is an obvious abuse of the Park, but the significant increase in Park walkers, including dog walkers, also poses a challenge to the Park's natural environment and its continuance as a wilderness preserve. In the past, it was recognized that motorcycle hill climbs and trail riding was not appropriate in the Park. Later, a deluge of mountain bikes created a maze of tracks down from the summit; they are now restricted to paved roads. Now we are seeing walkers making their own cross country trails. It only takes a few walkers to trample the natural plants and pack down the soil so plants don't grow. Remember *Plants grow by the inch and die by the “foot”* –

please stay on marked trails. Hopefully, when Saanich completes installation of the trail intersection way finding posts, walkers will be able to distinguish impromptu from recognized trails.

Spring brings native flowers, fiddle heads and other plants to enjoy, but picking them for a bouquet or for supper is illegal in Saanich Parks. Please remember: *Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints.*

Tributary #1 Pond

Tributary #1 starts at a spring fed pond (pictured) just off of the Douglas Trail. The pond outflow joins the other tributaries just prior to flowing into Douglas Creek. This T1-pond acts as a silt settling pond but the silt had almost filled it, eliminating its capability to act as a pond. During last summer's creek work, the deep layer of silt was removed,



Tributary #1 spring fed pond. Small cedar tree seedlings and other native plants were planted around the pond during tree appreciation day last November. The pond was frozen last winter when this photo was taken.

restoring it as a true pond and wildlife watering hole. Many small seedlings were planted around its perimeter, so please give them a chance and stay clear.

Weir Pond Expansion

The Douglas Creek weir serves two primary purposes. It acts as a floating pollutant trap holding pollutants back so they can be skimmed off and removed from the creek. The pond formed by the weir dam acts as a settling pond for the road silt that arrives with every rain. Over the years the pond has slowly filled with silt and needs to be cleaned out.

The pond will be slightly enlarged to slow the water even more, making the silt settling even more effective. The first step, planned for this year, will be to clear the surrounding brush and survey the current pond.

Churchill Park Entrance Project

In Fall of 2012, the 20th anniversary of the transfer of Mount Douglas Park to Saanich was celebrated with the unveiling of the Charter Rock and announcement of the Park entrance concept. The work plan for this year includes the installation of an information kiosk to be located at metre zero of the Churchill Challenge. The kiosk will provide information for Park visitors including the trail map, environmental zones, Douglas Creek tributaries, Churchill Challenge, and the Park soundscape.

The FMDPS gives special thanks for the generous contributions by architect Dennis Moore for the kiosk design and to landscape architect Illarion Gallant for the overall entrance concept. For a better description of the latter and an inspiring overview of the design subtleties, come and listen to Illarion at our AGM on Wednesday May 7!



Illarion Gallant measures road slope for new leaf gate.

Churchill Walkers

During the one year period between July 2012 and July 2013, 300,000 walkers (and cars) passed the Churchill Drive gate area. Counts don't distinguish direction. The summer month counts had roughly double the numbers as the winter month counts.

Salmon Return Again

The success of the Douglas Creek restoration work was again realized with the return of spawning salmon last November – and also the previous Novembers for the past decade. The lack of any rain during the first half of last November didn't help, but later in the

month, the rains finally arrived along with the salmon. Without rain, the creek water levels are too low to allow salmon to move into the creek or to move between pools

Summer Douglas Creek Work

This summer marks year three of the five year restoration plan developed by RPBio David Clough. The first two years focused on the creek below Ash Road. The next work stage will be in the creek section above Ash Road where water quality will be addressed, especially stream born silt. Again, David will be presenting a fuller perspective when he speaks at our AGM on Wednesday, May 7.



Lower Douglas Creek

Danger Tree Tomography

Saanich Parks now have a very well defined protocol for determining if a tree presents a danger and what to do about it. The most common reason for a danger tree is some sort of rot, either within the trunk or within the root system. One technique for determining tree stability, especially for root rot, is to shoot a line high into the tree and do a pull test to check the tree stability. And no, the chap doing the pull doesn't stand in the fall line!

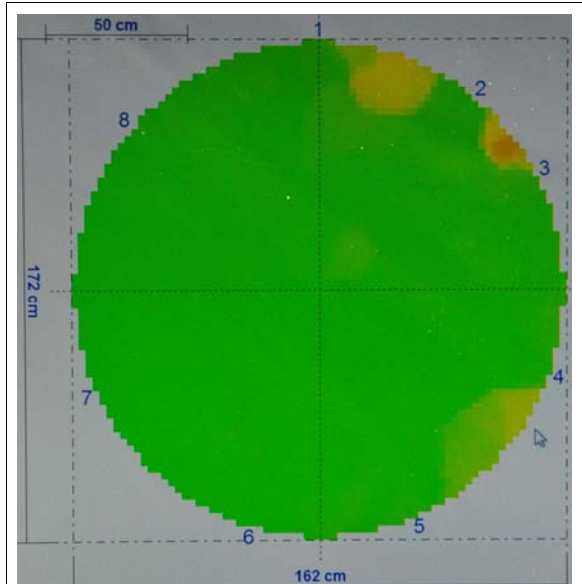


Transducers spaced around the tree send sound wave propagation data to a data acquisition system.

Detecting rot within the tree trunk isn't always so easy. Sometimes the rot is in the central core (especially in Garry Oak Trees), but even when it is on the outer rim, the extent isn't always easy to determine, hence the use of tree tomography- a type of ultra sound for trees.

Saanich can now obtain a cross sectional view of the tree that shows healthy versus rotting wood using a tree tomography. Basically, eight transducers (long nails) are spaced around the tree trunk and connected to a data acquisition system that measures sound waves as they pass through the tree. The resulting data can then be displayed showing the wood condition.

Saanich Parks has a large range of other tools to assess a tree's health. On the rare occasion that these tools are inconclusive, tree tomography can offer additional information, but it is expensive and most likely will only be used in rare cases. But, as with any new technology, the price is likely to come down in the years ahead.



Analysis of the sound transition speed shows this Douglas Fir is healthy with only three small sections of rot shown in yellow.



Who Lives Here?



Puddles = Opportunity



Pileated Woodpecker Tree

The Five Emotional Stages of Walking the Churchill Challenge

1. Enthusiasm: You arrive at the base of the mountain with a twinkle in your eye and skip in your step. Today you are going to walk all the way to the top of the mountain and nothing is going to stop you (including any cars because the gates are closed before noon!). The satisfaction of the people that have just returned from their own ascent is contagious. Even the birds seem to be chirping, "You can do it!".

2. Cautious Optimism: The first stretch is a nice pleasant incline, and so far you're feeling good. You're starting to feel a little bit of burn in your legs, but you're confident that your \$200 running shoes will get you to your destination. You also notice that your mind is focusing less on the beauty of the natural surroundings and more on putting 'one foot in front of the other'.

3. Resistance: You just passed the half-way marker stone, the incline has gotten much steeper, the turns are getting sharper, and you just got lapped by someone twice your age who didn't seem to have even broken a sweat. The resistance is setting in. Your muscles suddenly get tight and your mind starts scrambling to find excuses to quit:

- Did I leave the coffee machine on? I better go home and check!
- I think that looks like a rain cloud, I better go home before I get wet!
- Wasn't there a cougar sighting recently? Better safe than sorry!

Your bag of excuses has never been more full.

4. Rejuvenation: Just as the resistance is about to claim victory you pass by someone making their descent and they say, "You're almost there!" You respond, "Really???" With those simple words your mind sharpens back to the task at hand and your energy level skyrockets. You round the final curve and see the homestretch ahead. You drop your 'bag of excuses' and race to your awaiting destiny.

5. Bliss: You've reached the summit where you soak in the beauty of the South Island as you bask in the pride of your physical accomplishment. You climbed the mountain, both physically and mentally. You are the King/Queen of the World. There are very few exercise routines that provide such a visually stunning reward upon completion (beat that yoga!). You take a quick selfie, tweet it to @MountDougPark, and then begin your satisfyingly ginger descent back down the road where you'll be able smugly say, "You're almost there" to all the other people that were in your shoes only moments before.

Then tomorrow, you'll do it all over again.

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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:

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

Send or deliver to:

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