

Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society



Fall 2015

Halloween Tradition Continues

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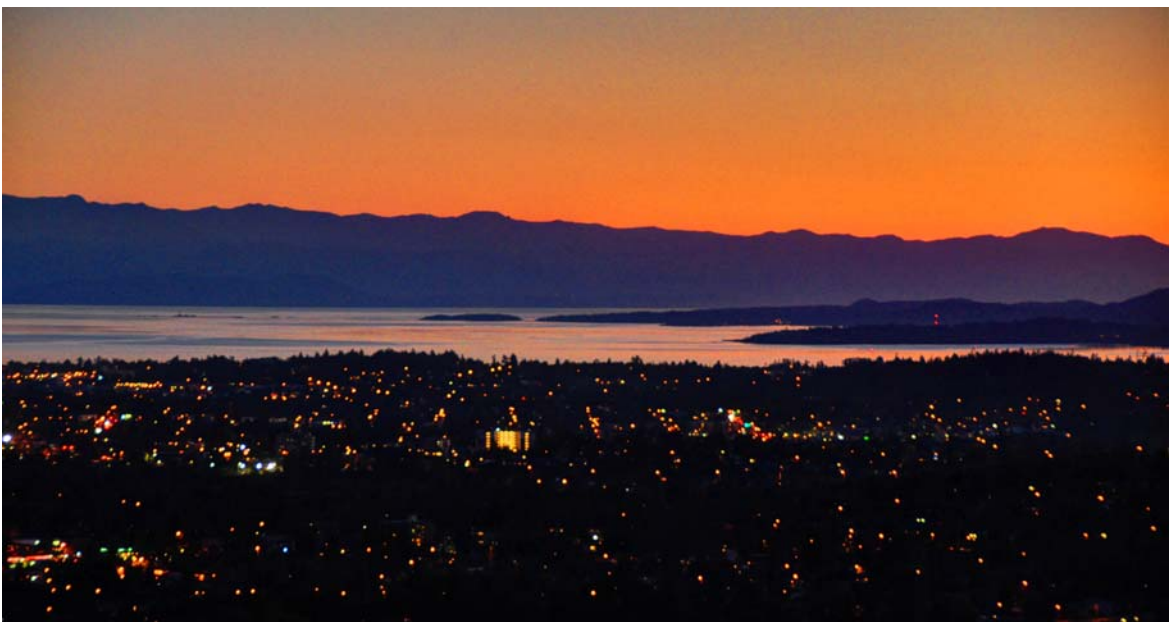
Welcome Eva Riccius, New Saanich Senior Parks Manager

Eva Riccius joined the District of Saanich as the Senior Manager, Parks in September 2015. She worked at BC Parks for seven years, most recently as the Manager for Conservation and Land Acquisition. Eva also brings experience in the non-profit sector, having worked in various capacities including almost ten years as the Associate Conservation Director with the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and forming the Vancouver Fruit Tree Project Society in 1999. From 2002 to 2005, she was elected onto the Vancouver Board of Parks and



Saanich Parks Management Team
Gary Darrah, Manager Park Planning & Design,
Andrew Giles, Manager Construction & Maintenance,
Eva Riccius, Senior Parks Manager,
Cory Manton, Manager Urban Forestry, Horticulture
and Natural Areas,

Recreation. There she worked closely with staff and community groups on a number of municipal parks projects, including parks and facility plans, community gardens, and park acquisitions. Eva and her family, enjoy the wide diversity of parks and trails in Saanich and look forward to working with community stakeholders in the continued improvement of



The sunset to the west was spectacular; certainly more colourful than the lunar eclipse!

parks and green space in the District. We welcome her and look forward to working with her and the Saanich Parks staff.

Lunar Eclipse – the Ultimate Traffic Jam!

Hundreds, if not thousands, of moon watchers headed for the summits of Mount Douglas to view the recent lunar eclipse. The sunset to the west was spectacular, but it took a while for the moon to appear above the clouds to the east. Being in full eclipse, with no sun light reflected from it, it was hard to spot. When someone first yelled “there it is!”, both summits erupted in excitement.

But the real action was on Churchill Drive. Cars kept arriving and with the summit lot full, they started parking along the road, first on one side, then also on the other side, leaving just enough room in the road centre for later cars to squeeze by.

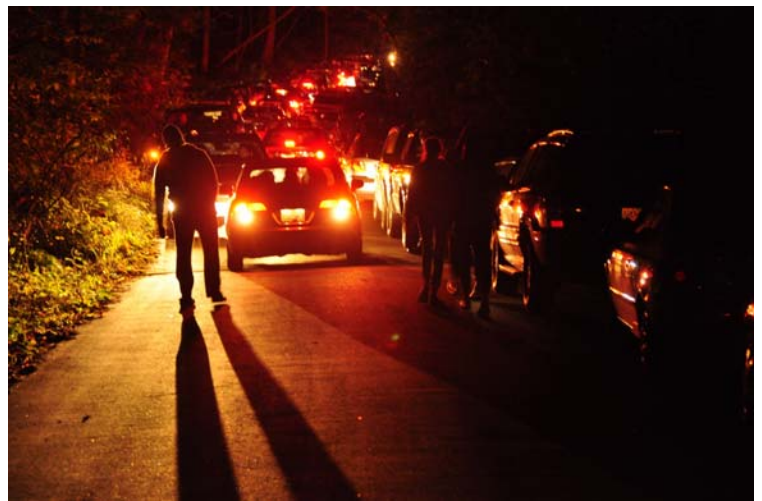
As the evening progressed, a few cars managed to turn around at different spots along



Watching Lunar Eclipse from main Mt. Douglas Summit



Spectators filled East Summit



Best traffic jam of the year!

the entire length the road. Now we had cars at scattered locations along the road headed down with cars in between still headed up with no room to turn around. A complete standstill! When the first police car arrived, they also headed up Churchill but didn't get very far before being confronted with cars headed down and a line of cars behind them headed up and no place to turn around!

No idea how long it took to unwind this colossal traffic jam!

Churchill Drive Construction

Ever wonder who constructed Churchill Drive and when was it constructed? We also wondered so we started a search of the Victoria and Saanich archives. It took a bit of research to find the answer.

In 1937 the BC Forest Service proposed a route that closely follows the current road location. The primary variation was at the summit, where they proposed a loop instead of the current single parking lot.

A plan wasn't enough; no one wanted to absorb the cost of building it. Despite being a Victoria park at that time, Victoria didn't want to pay because it was a distant park



A little rain didn't deter these grade 1 students.

outside the city limits. Saanich didn't want to pay because it was a Victoria park. Eventually a joint venture was formed with BC Forest Service taking the lead. Department of Labour was in charge of blasting. Labour was from a 30's work project with workers housed in barracks located in the current beach parking area. Saanich supplied a steam shovel. Private citizens donated \$1000 (about \$20,000 in 2015 dollars) for the project.

Secret Military Base on Mount Douglas Summit

While looking through the archives, we came across references to a "Huff-Duff" radio system on the Mount Douglas summit in 1942. Researching further, we learned that

“Huff-Duff” was RCAF slang for a high frequency (Huff) direction finding (Duff) radio system.

At a Blenkinsop Valley Community Association event, we spoke with Joan Alston-Stewart, a long time Valley resident, who remembered the installation and gave us a good description. As she recalls, it was a secret base and the public wasn't allowed there. The tower resembled a farm silo and was about 15m high with antennas on the top.

We also spoke with Al Smith, the now retired manager of Victoria Parks. He has lived in the Blenkinsop Valley since 1929 and also remembers the installation. And both descriptions matched!

We carefully examined the various concrete structures currently at the summit. What we refer to as the “cupcake” is the concrete seat and wall that sits on top of a concrete octagonal base. In fact, the base consists of two octagons, an inner one that is covered with a thin layer of rose coloured concrete and an outer octagon that the cupcake sits on. If you look at the north side of this outer octagon, you can still see where cables entered the structure.

The mystery of what really was there grew a bit when we were given a photo of a similar octagon base at Radar Hill in Tofino. We knew that Radar Hill was part of the early warning radar system, but that wasn't constructed until the 1950's. Perhaps the original installation at Radar Hill was another Huff-Duff system?

And the mystery deepens! Web searches turned up a radio direction finding system built on octagon bases in England – and the dimensions were very close to our Mount Douglas octagon. These were remote monitoring stations, called Y-stations, and were part of the code breaking at Bletchley Park! An old photo of the English Beeston Hill Y-station matched the description of the Mount Douglas installation! And these were high secrecy sites.

During WWII, efforts to locate North Atlantic U-boats employed listening for their transmissions. Using radio direction finding techniques required manual rotating of an antenna. It took a good operator at least a minute to determine the bearing, hence the German U-boat



Beeston Hill Y-Station
Similar to Mt. Douglas

command told their U-boat captains to keep their transmissions under 30 seconds, and they would be OK.

But the British and Americans developed an electronic system that could pin-point the transmission direction in just a few seconds. This was a significant advantage in the battle of the Atlantic where locating the U-boats was a crucial issue, hence the high secrecy of the technology at these sites.

We don't know for certain what was on Mount Douglas and what was at Radar Hill. But our sites and the English sites were built on octagons, the octagon dimensions were very close, the recollections of how the sites looked matches and they all were used for radio direction finding.

Summit Lookout Map Wheel

The original map wheel located within the Mount Douglas Park summit lookout, with a Rotary International wheel in the centre, went missing sometime in the



The original pedestal was an hourglass shape, not a column



Henry Niezen designed the current map-wheel on Mt. Douglas summit.

1970's, leaving the centre support pillar rather bare.

Around 1980, Henry Niezen designed a replacement map wheel, and as he describes it, with some changes from the original. Henry's design showed distances in kilometres instead of miles, the printing was significantly larger and the centre Rotary wheel insignia was replaced with a very nice relief map of the surrounding area.

The foundry took his design and formed it in bronze, whereas the original was brass. The City of Victoria then installed it in place of the missing original plaque, but it wasn't on the concrete column you see at the summit now. The original support structure was in the shape of an hour glass. Henry tells us that sometime after the replacement map wheel was installed, Victoria placed a sono tube around the hour glass support and filled the tube with concrete brought in by helicopter. And that's the cylindrical column and plaque you see today. Thank you Henry Niezen!

Invasives: 2015 Brings with it a Sense of Urgency to the Park

So much accomplished; and still so much to do.

With a sense of urgency to gain ground on the weeds in the Park, volunteers soldier on. And this year our intrepid crew really covered a lot of territory with teams fanning out to accomplish multiple tasks simultaneously. Some of the regular Thursday group started 2015 by reworking an area along the east side above Cedar Hill Road between Whittaker Trail and Churchill Drive before joining the rest of the group who continued the



Remove the invasives and the native plants recover.

massive job of clearing large swaths of mature ivy and holly on the south side of the Park. The south section of the Park is, or was, undoubtedly the worst area in the whole Park. Much heavy lifting has been done through countless hours of volunteer labour to alter this landscape in a positive way. Work still continues in the southeast corner, between Parkside Crescent and Glendenning Trail, but even this last section should be completed by year end or very early in 2016.

Work is also ongoing in the west side of the Park, south of the Mercer Trail along the Park boundary adjacent to Blenkinsop Road homes and farms. The terrain in this area is steep

and rocky, making for difficult work and of course it is badly infested with invasives. And you'll see work happening in the beach parking area by the Creek (with workers being very careful to stay out of the Creek itself due to salmon spawning and treading lightly around young native plantings on the slopes/riparian areas). Some invasives removal is also happening on both sides of Cordova Bay Road heading north from Churchill Drive.

Garlic Mustard

In April and May, volunteers worked 51 hours to remove the 2015 “crop” of Garlic Mustard. The good news is this was less than the 600 hours required to control it in 2008 (when it was at its peak in Mount Douglas Park). However, though we have this species under control in the Park, more or less, it still managed to spread. A new, localized outbreak was found east of Cordova Bay Road. This is a “wake up” call for volunteers and Society members alike, to be alert and check in areas not previously affected, (west and north sides of the Park).

Bur Chervil

New Invasive: Another plant added to the growing list of Mt. Doug's invasive species is Bur Chervil, introduced from Europe. First found on the Summit in 2010 some removal work was done that year but remnants persisted and this plant has rapidly spread around the summit areas and down the slopes by way of human and animal traffic. Bur Chervil is an annual, in the carrot family,

similar to Queen Anne's Lace but with more delicate, lighter green foliage. It looks harmless but can become a very tall plant producing many seeds from the “umbelliferous” white flower heads. It forms dense stands of plants, competing with native vegetation for light and moisture. Small brown, spiny seeds readily attach to clothing, shoes, and animal hair/fur, making it easy to transport around the Park without even realizing it. It's good



practice to do a quick check for “hitchhikers” before departing the Park.

Over 100 hours were worked by volunteers in 2015, removing many bags of Bur Chervil from the Summit areas. It was found and removed from trail and road edges leading down from the Summit, and from the eroding sandy south and west facing slopes, particularly above Glendenning Trail. Control of this species is yet another multi-year job for Parks staff and volunteers.

Little Mt. Doug Broom Bash

On November 8th, a Broom Bash was held at the Little Mt. Doug summit with members of the Greater Victoria Green Team working under the direction of Mike and Jo Motek, Lead Stewards for this particular site in the Park. They now report this site is clear of Broom with the exception of a few small plants that may have been missed. Due to their ongoing efforts, (and the efforts of John

Jungen, long time Mt. Doug volunteer, who has cleared Scotch Broom at this site and adjacent areas around Little Mt. Doug over many years), they are now seeing the re-emergence of native plant species: Camass, Shooting Star, Chocolate Lily, and others. Little Mt. Doug is a special area of the Park where it is critically important all park users and their dogs walk only on designated trails to avoid trampling delicate plants struggling to grow.

Onward into 2016! So much accomplished; and still so much to do.

Douglas Creek Weir Pond Enlargement

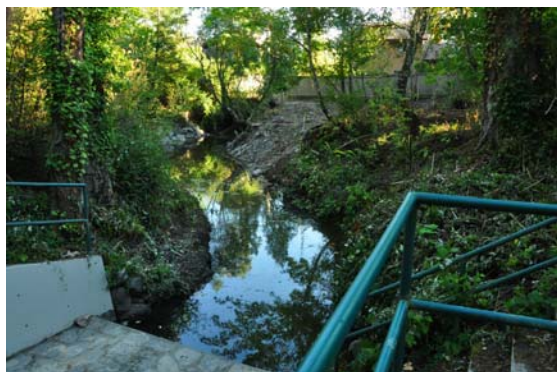
There is a lot of sand and other debris that is washed from the streets, through storm water pipes and into Douglas Creek. The original weir pond wasn't really a pond, but a slight widening of the creek. The water flowed at a relatively high velocity through this area and the suspended sand and debris didn't have a chance to settle, hence flowed further down the creek filling spawning beds.



Topping a danger tree eliminates the hazard while allowing it to continue as a wild life tree.



Before weir pond enlargement



After weir pond enlargement
Waiting for restoration planting



In a year nothing will suggest this was an access road used to bring in boulders used to armour the weir pond banks and haul out dredged material.

Our five year creek restoration plan developed by our RPBio Dave Clough, included widening and deepening the pond so that the storm water slowed and the pond could perform better as a settling pond. The preparation work, done last July, entailed preparing an access for the excavator as well as for tandem dump trucks that brought in large boulders and took out excavated material. The temporary access road route was selected to avoid any healthy trees.

The pond width was tripled and the depth increased by a similar amount. Large boulders were placed to protect the banks from erosion.

Tree Appreciation Day – Weir Pond Area

As part of the weir pond enlargement, the large blackberry infestation was removed. That and the temporary access road left a lot of bare ground that needed restoration planting.



Thanks to Saanich Parks, everything was ready for the volunteer planters.



With expert help, it only took two hours for 50 volunteers along with Saanich staff to plant over 600 native plants

On Sunday, November 8, Tree Appreciation Day, fifty volunteers along with Saanich staff planted over 600 trees and native shrubs. Parks staff placed the 600 potted plants where they were to be planted, even pre-digging many holes so that children had an easier time with the planting. The weather was perfect and all 600 plants were in place within two hours. The first summer is critical for these plants, so Saanich Parks will add them to their watering schedule. Within a year or two, it won't be possible to tell this was an access road! Job well done! Thank you volunteers and Saanich Parks!

Douglas Creek Flow Gauge

The spring newsletter announced the \$927 grant from the Pacific Salmon Foundation along with an additional \$1000 from our Society to be applied to the installation of a flow meter in Douglas Creek. It's a joint project between the CRD, Saanich and the Friends of Mount Douglas Park.

Several potential sites were considered for the installation. The weir pond provided the best installation potential, simplest creek flow geometry for the necessary calculations, good cell connection and site security.

The installation will measure several parameters: water flow volumes, pH and temperature. It will include a cell connection so that the data will be available in real time.

The water flow measure is accomplished by measuring the water depth in the weir pond.

Knowing the depth and the geometry of the weir, a correlation table will be calculated to provide the flow volumes. Kerr Wood Leidal (KWL) Engineering was selected by the CRD to supply the equipment and will work with the CRD to establish the water level/flow relationship.

The equipment has been ordered and is expected to arrive in November. KWL will then work with Saanich for the actual installation, expected by year-end.

We intend to correlate water flow volumes with watershed rain fall values. Hopefully this will provide a measure of the effectiveness of the various techniques (rain gardens, road swales, downspout disconnects) to reduce the damaging storm surges in the creek.



Two deer inspect creek work progress

Pacific Salmon Foundation's \$8400 Grant Department of Fisheries and Oceans \$1000 Grant

We are very pleased to report that the Pacific Salmon Foundation's Community Salmon Program granted our Society \$8400 toward this year's restoration work of Douglas Creek. PSF-CSP funds are raised through Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Recreational and Commercial Fishing Salmon Conservation Stamp Program and PSF dinners, auctions and donations throughout the Pacific region.

In addition we received a \$1000 grant from the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for Douglas Creek Restoration.

This year's project represents year four of the five year Douglas



Jack Coho is a Coho that has returned one year early



Logs and tree root balls must each be cabled in place to prevent washout from storm surges.



View from Ash Road. Creek was widened to slow water. Banks were armoured with boulders to prevent further erosion.

Creek restoration plan developed by Registered Professional Biologist (RPBio) Dave Clough. The work area was the 100m creek section upstream from Ash Road. The work was completed during the “fisheries window” in late August, the period when salmon are not in the creek and water flows are at a minimum. The low water flows allow a temporary dam to be installed above the work area with pumps and hoses to take the water past the work area.

Large boulders are brought in and individually placed to protect the banks from further erosion caused by high water storm surges. Tree root balls (from elsewhere, not from the Park!) are placed amongst the boulders to provide woody debris and fish habitat. Each of these must be cabled to adjacent boulders or they will be washed out by storm surges.

Where possible, the creek bottom is flattened and widened; a wide stream flows much slower than a narrow one. You can view the results from Ash Road (carefully watching for traffic) or from the bench overlooking the creek further up the Douglas Trail. We think this year's work was one of the best restorations and a total success!



Alex Neweling, Dave Clough, Rick Hatch & Robyn Nitychoruk after a job well-done!

Park Bus Stop Along Cordova Bay Road

Bus route 39, UVic to Royal Oak and Camosun Interurban has a stop for each direction along Cordova Bay Road, about half way uphill between the beach parking entrance and the crosswalk. The bus stop locations are currently inconvenient to access as there is no trail to either, therefore the only way to access them is to walk on the busy road. And neither stop has a proper waiting area. Even worse, in the UVic direction (southbound), the bus driver can't see waiting passengers unless they are standing on the road. Many patrons for these stops are park users and residents from the adjacent Gordon Head area. To access this stop, most simply jay-walk across the busy road since using the crosswalk means an additional 120m walk.

To address these safety concerns and to encourage increased transit ridership to and from the park, we are currently working in collaboration with Saanich and BC Transit to improve the situation. This could include relocating the stops to a more appropriate location that is closer to existing pedestrian infrastructure. Stay tuned for more information.

Trash and Good Deeds

You likely know the broken window syndrome. If a broken window isn't repaired, the probability of another window being broken increases and conversely, repairing it reduces the probability of another breakage. The same applies to trash in the Park, trash attracts more trash! We can all help. Carry a plastic bag on your walk and pick up that trash before it multiplies!

Mushrooms, Cedar Boughs, Fiddle Heads

It seems that pumpkins placed along the roads are not the only "tradition". We receive reports every fall when the



Douglas Trail in a sea of ferns.

rains arrive, that a few people are collecting mushrooms. Not just a few mushrooms, but many bags full of them.

Next comes Christmas and the “tradition” of cutting cedar boughs for wreaths and other decorations.

And in the spring, the “tradition” extends to fiddle head ferns. And again, it isn't just one item taken, but often bag fulls.

How can this issue be addressed? There are relevant bylaws:



Bountiful mushroom crops quickly follows fall rains. Soon after this photo was taken, someone picked all these mushrooms leaving none for later visitors to enjoy.

Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints

No person ... shall cut, break, injure, remove or in any way destroy or damage any tree, shrub, plant, turf, seat, swing, playground equipment or ornament of any kind in any park or on any beach.

No person ... shall remove any sand, soil, plants, tree, wood, log or other matter from a park or excavate, dig, cut into or open up the natural terrain of any park.

Somehow, not only the bylaw needs to be conveyed to these few people, but more generally, a culture of park preservation. Any suggestions? Please send them to us!

Bench Donation

Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society is making a donation to Saanich Parks for three additional benches within the Park. After considerable discussion and looking at various potential locations, we have selected two locations that offer great panoramic and a third location to serve as a resting spot along Churchill Drive.

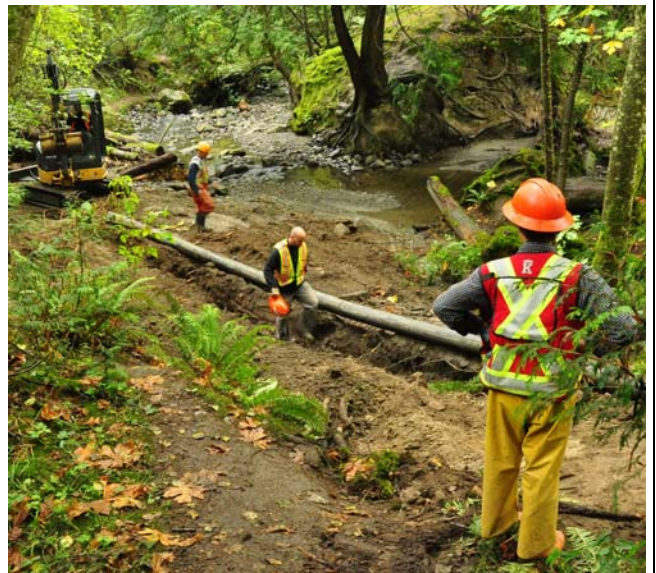
About halfway up the Blenkinsop Trail is a large flat rock viewpoint offering a 180 degree view of the Blenkinsop Valley. There are no convenient rocks or logs to sit on to enjoy the view, hence it makes a good spot for the installation of a bench. A criteria for the placement

is that the location must be along an existing trail; we don't want to create a new trail just for the bench.

The second view location is near the upper end of the Irvine Trail. Again, the location offers a magnificent 180 degree view, this time of Gordon Head with Mt. Baker and Oak Bay in the background.

The Churchill Drive "rest" spot will be at the Irvine Trail crossing. There are already benches further up the road, but we thought this lower location will be perfect for those walkers that need to catch their "second-wind".

Saanich Parks has changed the bench plaque inscription policy in favour of friendly, more inspirational uplifting sayings. We need such statements for the two view locations that are better than "Enjoy the View" or "Broaden Your Horizons" and a statement for the "second-wind" rest bench along Churchill Drive. Please let us know your suggestions!



Damaging erosion from rain water left to run over Douglas creek banks was fixed by Saanich's Creeks & Waterways with the installations of pipes and proper termination. Erosion from Ash Road had created a 5m chasm.

Classroom Incubation Program

The Classroom Salmon Incubation Program teaches students about salmonid habitat and biology by bringing to life the freshwater cycle of the Pacific Salmon in 110 classrooms in Greater Victoria and the Gulf Islands.

Students monitor water conditions as they witness their brood develop from eyed egg through alevin to the fry stage. Ten nearby schools release their fry into



Sadly, areas cleared of invasive plants are too tempting for walkers short-cutting between trails, requiring split rail fences to allow the native plants to recover.



Fall leaves in Beach Parking Area

Douglas Creek.

Thanks to the generous support of Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Pacific Salmon Foundation, and the Watership Foundation, participating schools benefit from partnerships that allow easy access to this program by all BC schools. Watership's purchase plan makes the incubation cart (\$650) and the aquarium chiller (\$1,100) available to schools at half price. DFO purchases and supplies all other materials at no cost to the school. The Goldstream Volunteer Salmonid



Students transplant their classroom incubated salmon fry into Douglas Creek

Enhancement Association annually supplies 20,000 eyed eggs for Victoria area classroom projects. CIP Education Coordinator is Don Lowen at 250-213-8582 or donlowen27@gmail.com

Fall Park Projects

In a very positive meeting with the Saanich Parks management team, Eva Riccius, the new senior parks manager, stated a desire to formalize the relationship between Parks and

FMDPS. We spoke about more sharing of visions for the Park, noting the significant increase in Park visitors needs to be addressed in the context of safeguarding the wilderness preserve and the natural environment referred to in the Park Charter.

Parks mentioned several of the Park enhancements completed in the last five years, including mapping of the trails, the Churchill Entrance Project (Charter Rock, kiosk), boardwalks over extreme wet areas on the Whittaker and Norn Trails, the new Blenkinsop Trail and parking area with the Blenkinsop Road crosswalk, the Douglas Creek restoration work, interpretive signs, the new South Ridge Trail and way-finding posts at trail intersections.

Scheduled for early 2016 is completion of the Churchill Entrance. Also a portapotty. We also requested that parks address trail water and mud problems.

A consultant has been hired to recommend solutions for the upper Glendenning Trail.



Lunch on the beach



Two wise friends of Mount Douglas Park

Matt's Corner has the Last Word!

Five Things To Do At The Summit

So you've reached the Mount Doug summit, snapped a couple Instagram photos and soaked in the spectacular panorama view. Now what do you?

Here are five other fun things you can do once you reach the summit:

1. Play I Spy With My Little Eye. If you have young kids (or if you're young at heart) there is no better place than the top of Mount Doug to play this classic game. From the summit you can see every colour of the spectrum which can make the game particularly challenging. "I spy with my little eye something that is mauve."

2. Draw. Grab some pencils and paper and start drawing. Drawing has been proven to improve your brain balance and strengthen cognitive skills. Drawing your surroundings also helps one gain perspective and start to see the 'big picture'. If you're just a beginner, start by drawing the ocean and islands. If you're more advanced, try drawing downtown and the southern island. And don't be embarrassed about the final product, it's the journey that counts, not the destination. Find your inner Emily Carr.

3. Introduce Yourself to Someone Else. The summit area is usually a melting pot of visitors from around Vancouver Island and the world. As a local, this is a great opportunity to introduce yourself and share some of your local knowledge, wisdom and culture. When people return home from a trip they usually forget what they saw, but they never forget the way they felt. So let's make sure our guests always feel welcomed.

4. Yodelling. Or, maybe not.

5. Count The Municipalities. There's nothing more fun for a resident of the Capital Region than a good old fashioned game of Count the Municipalities. The rules are easy, just try to identify where all 13 municipalities are in the region. Bonus points if you can name all the mayors ;)

Board of Directors

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Treasurer	Graham Shorthill	4623 Cordova Bay Road	V8X 3V6	658-5873
Invasives	Judy Spearing	1545 Eric Road	V8N 5Y6	472-0515
At-large	Matt Boyd	1571 Craigiewood Court	V8N 5Y3	516-4142
At-large	Nancy Lewthwaite	1559 Mt Douglas X Road	V8N 1Z9	658-0763

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: _____

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

Send or deliver to: Treasurer, Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society
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