

Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

Spring 2019 Newsletter



Spring flowers are a big attraction in Mount Douglas Park. The beautiful white fawn lily is one of the first large wildflowers to bloom in the spring.

Annual General Meeting

1st May 2019 7:30 p.m.

Feltham Room

Gordon Head Recreation Centre

Guest Speaker — Rick Hatch,

Assistant Supervisor for Natural Areas in Saanich

An overview of the Saanich Parks Department

and

What to plant in an era of climate change.

Followed by questions, refreshments and informal discussion.

Message from the Board

Many of the reports in this newsletter are rather brief as several long term projects and issues have been completed or are nearing completion.

This summer will see the return of the ambassador program and the introduction of regular membership drives. If you have friends and out-of-town guests please bring them to the park and show them what we have to offer.

Have a great, fire free, summer!

Invasives Report: 2018 In the Park

2018 was a different kind of work year for volunteers with the Pulling Together/Friends of Mt Douglas Park Society team. The weather played more prominently in the “when and where” we worked than in previous years. Our total hours worked in 2018 were the lowest since 2007. The reduced hours worked do not reflect a lack of effort and dedication to the cause. Quite the opposite is true.

Last Summer was so hot and dry that working in the park was not advisable. From late July to mid September most of the group did not work. The ground was dry, dusty, and so compacted it was hard to remove the roots of invasives and if you don't get the roots you might as well not bother so we opted to break until we got some rain.



Longtime invasives removal volunteers in the park.

We worked all of 2018 in the large section of parkland east of and adjacent to subdivisions at Harvest Lane, Woodcrest Place, and Parkside Crescent. This was our second effort in the area, the first sweep occurring 5-10 years ago. Not surprisingly, we found lots of *E. Ivy* coming back, small *E. Holly* and *Daphne Laureola* sprouting from old berries, and still some major *E. Holly* trees needing special treatment.

We found a few incursions into the park perimeter along property lines and those were referred to Saanich for resolution. Generally they are old situations and current residents are often unaware. This is, apparently, a common occurrence in the municipality and Saanich has its hands full to rectify misunderstandings on this count.

As ever, volunteers not only removed invasive plants but also many empty liquor bottles of various sizes and ages, candy wrappers, old dog doo bags tossed into the understory and still not decomposed, plus any other items they unearthed.

But no matter what, our volunteers are real troopers. They deal head on with any and all obstacles finding ways to overcome them. They maintain their cool and good humour when faced with the (very) odd unappreciative park user or large, off leash dogs charging them in the understory. And always, always these hardworking folk produce amazing restoration results. Thanks, as ever, to every single person who gives of their time to care for this Park and all our precious green spaces!!

Summit Address

Did you know that the summit has a street address? It's 4500 Churchill Drive. There's now a sign at the viewing deck. We assume that the building under the deck needs an address for official purposes.



Two artificial redds were recently built in the creek. A redd is what a female salmon builds, by mounding stones on the stream bed, to protect their eggs and the alevin as they grow. These redds will help us to better understand the effects of strong streamflow following heavy rain in the watershed.

New Land Agent

We welcome Janet Racz as the new Land Agent. Janet was BC born and raised in the Kootenays before moving to Saanich and attending UVic where she graduated in anthropology. Janet is a certified real estate para-legal and, in a previous position before joining Saanich, Janet managed properties Canada wide. Speaking with Janet, her appreciation for trees, parks and animals was clearly evident!



Janet Racz, Saanich
Land Agent

The Lands Agent and Mount Douglas Park

Did you know that the Lands Department, over all other Saanich departments, has had the most significant positive impact on Mount Douglas Park during the almost 30 years it has been a Saanich park? Likely most don't even know the office exists within Saanich! Do you? Our first encounter with Lands was during the Park transition from Victoria to Saanich, around 1991.

At that time there were plans to build a two story communications building on the summit currently housing the radio tower. By the time we heard about the plans, a large base for the new tower had already been constructed. This building would have been an unsightly Park intrusion so our Society made a proposal to the Lands Commissioner that the building should be buried under the summit parking lot. It wasn't a simple process to change the location, but the commissioner researched it and convinced others within Saanich of the merits of the new location. Since the just constructed tower base was too far from the new buried building location, a new second base supporting the current tower was constructed.

At the time the Park was granted to Saanich, almost the entire Blenkinsop side was private land, including Little Mt. Doug and the Whittaker Trail. Again, we

approached the Land Commissioner and after official approval, he began acquiring property.

The Lands Office is also responsible for the power lines leading to the summit. Trees kept falling on the lines, causing power outages. We were very concerned about the number of danger trees that would require cutting because of this power line, but the commissioner found a way to replace the normal lines with armoured lines without any tree loss. More recently, following our concerns about fan noise that could be heard when standing on the observation deck, the Lands office made the tenants fix their noisy equipment. The office also, after 25 years (!), removed the old tower base using an inspirational method (see our 2015 Spring newsletter).



Trails Standards

Mount Douglas Park trail types have been colour coded similar to ski runs; **green is easy**, **blue is moderate**, and **black is difficult**. The easy green trails are referred to as *Developed* in our Park Plan along with a description of the trail width and surface. Recent trail work has diverged from this description and your impressions would be appreciated.

Specifically, it would be appreciated if you compare trails and gave us your opinion of the following sites.

- The recently gravelled trail of the Churchill Trail between the Edgemont Park entrance and the weir.
- The wood chip trail at Henderson Recreation Centre in Oak Bay. Park in the Recreation Centre lot. Find the trail entrance opposite the centre entrance.
- Sections of the Cedar Hill Park trail around the golf course have a similar wood chip surface.

Some differences we've noted:

- Surface hardness: hard versus soft surfaces when walking.
- Noise: Is it noisy or quiet when walking on it. Can you hear birds?
- Trail width: formal constant width or varying width.

Which trail treatment would you prefer for Mount Douglas Park?

Please email your comments to any board member or bring them to the AGM.

Annual salmon toss and tree planting

The annual salmon toss and tree planting event was a great success with 112 people taking part. The most encouraging aspect was the involvement of so many young people as these are the ones who, over the coming years, will ensure the continued success of maintaining this natural park despite the fact that it is surrounded by a sea of development.

The site of this year's event was close to where we want to build the bridge and the mental image of youngsters, in years to come, leaning over the bridge trying

to spot the departing fry and the returning salmon was quite an incentive to get the bridge built.



The annual Salmon Carcass transplant and restoration planting. More than 100 turned up to have a chance to grab a salmon and put it into Douglas Creek.

Native plants were also added to a steep portion of the bank to help reduce harm from human traffic and from erosion.





Trail work on upper Glendenning is complete, for now.

Glendenning Restoration

Trail and restoration work on upper Glendenning Trail is complete. The badly eroded sand gully has been fenced off with split rail. The main trail, still quite steep, splits into two and follows the edges of the gully. Trail work included gravel surfaces, stone work to reinforce edges, stone stairs, as well as a bench for a rest stop and to enjoy the view over the Garry Oak forest. The gully has been partially filled. New, native plants have been added and barriers installed to discourage any still determined to wander down that route. Above the gully, and on the trails around, water diverters are installed to reduce the flow down the path during rainy season weather.

During a recent membership drive and meet and greet at the summit parking lot many people ascending Glendenning stopped to praise the renovations.

Overall it has been a great success. we'll continue to monitor the trail and look for any spots in need of further work.

Membership Drives

In an effort to recruit more members and to raise the profile of the Society, we are planning to hold information sessions at the various entrances to the park over the summer months starting in April at Churchill Drive. We will have the tent, table and banner on hand and will give out information about the park and the Society. Watch the web site for dates and encourage your friends who might be interested in the park and our work to come along and find out more; hopefully, they will like what they hear and will join us.

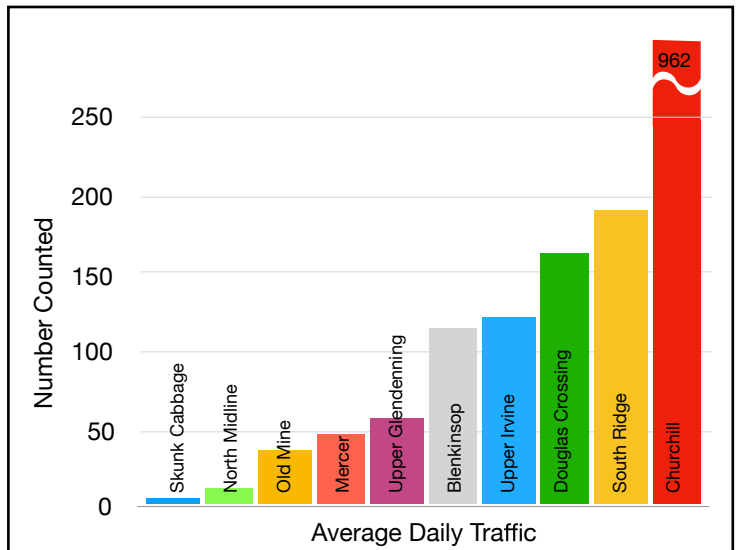
Park Ambassador Program

The Saanich Park Ambassador program that we helped to create continues. If you're interested in volunteering as an ambassador in Mount Douglas Park, or joining an event at a different Saanich park, you can find more information at Saanich's website.

<https://www.saanich.ca/EN/main/parks-recreation-culture/parks/events-in-park/park-ambassador-program.html>

Park Visitors

Average daily traffic on some of the trails in the park is shown in the figure at right. Churchill Drive is the busiest access point, counting vehicles as well as pedestrians. Daily data shows the park is busiest on the weekends, no surprise there. It's quietest mid-week.



Plant Theft

Unfortunately, we can't say there are never problems in the park. There are some park visitors, as the Saanich News recently reported, who harvest mushrooms, berries, or fiddleheads, or other material in the park. Worse, we occasionally find or are shown evidence of the theft of plants from the park. Recently, someone removed an entire patch of satin flowers (photo above).



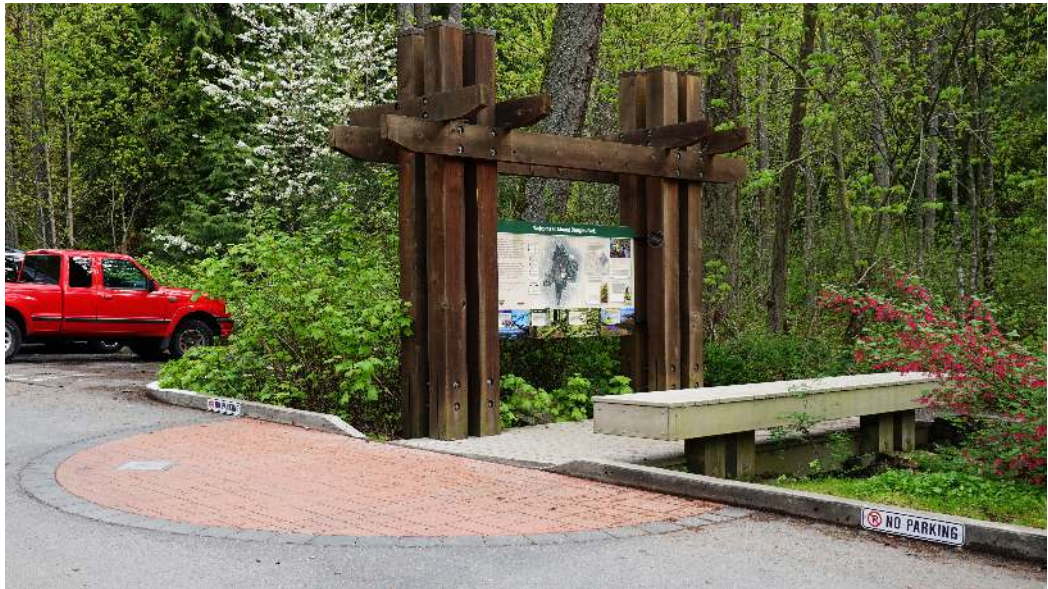
It is unlawful to remove plants, seeds, bulbs, berries, leaves, or any other part of a plant from a public park without proper authorization. These unfortunate events are reported to Saanich. If you ever see the results of suspicious activity in the park let us know we will document it and forward it on to the proper authorities.

4 Poop

The garbage barrel near the Glendenning Road entrance, labelled "4 Poop" has for many years been tended by volunteers. The idea was to provide a place, just far enough inside the park, for conscientious dog owners to dispose of their dogs' waste close to where the action happens. Unfortunately, the most recent volunteer is unable to continue with the task. We've been made aware that someone has nobly volunteered to take over this job. To them we say, "**Thanks!**"

New Thresholds on Churchill Drive

After a long wait new decorative and functional thresholds have been installed on Churchill Drive. There is a full circle on Churchill at Shelbourne, and three semi-circular patterns. The semi-circles are at information kiosk and under the swinging gates. The goal is to remind drivers visually that they are entering the park and to slow them with an audible **rumble** reminder.



New thresholds were installed at the park entrance on Churchill Drive.

Winter!

As you all noticed, we experienced an unusually cold end to winter in 2019. In fact, this past February was the second coldest February observed in Saanich since 1940. Cold temperatures like these though are something that the plants

and animals in the park are well adapted to. Increasing light levels and relative warmth of January led to some plants starting to leaf out. The cold that followed merely paused their early enthusiasm. When spring began for real in mid-March the plants continued where they left off. Today, the new green growth is everywhere in the park and we are well on the way to summer. Future climate change will bring fewer cold events like this past one but also new challenges with warmer days and even less summer rain.



Winter snow brought a whole new look to the park, and an opportunity for some fun on lower Whittaker trail. It's all part of the natural cycle.



That view! Looking south from the east summit.



A bracken fern, unfurling. From Pojar and Mackinnon, "Despite the Aboriginal use (Rhizomes only), you should not eat these plants."

Board of Directors

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At-large	Graham Shorthill	4623 Cordova Bay Road	V8X 3V6	658-5873
At-large	Alan Walton	4236 Parkside Pl.	V8N 4V5	477-5003

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 Number: _____

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

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Colour versions of newsletters are available on our website.