



UVic graduate student Grace Sethantant at our annual salmon carcass transplant.

# Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

Spring  
and  
Summer  
2020  
Newsletter

## **Annual General Meeting**

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society is typically held in the Spring. This year it has been deferred due to COVID-19 restrictions on public gatherings.

Our AGM will be rescheduled when conditions permit us to gather in a group again. If this doesn't happen in a timely (enough) manner, we'll consider other options.

This newsletter is available in colour at <http://moundouglaspark.ca/>  
Join online: <https://moundouglaspark.square.site/>

**Thanks to each of you for your continued support!**

# Take Only Memories, Leave Only Footprints

Mt. Douglas Park is a natural wonder surrounded by an urban area with a quickly growing population. How do we enjoy the park but ensure that it protected and preserved for those that follow? Simply put, *we should leave no trace of our time spent within its borders.*

You might think that it would be self-evident that nothing should be taken from the park. Sadly, some who visit feel it's OK to take mushrooms, fiddle heads, clams, maple syrup, greenery, cedar bark, dirt, clay, and bouquets of the many wild flowers. Some even feel entitled to remove entire plants. Generally, litter is a minor problem. Given that smoking is not permitted in the park the number of cigarette butts is surprising and worrisome.

It is important to stay on the named and marked trails. As the number people visiting the park increases so does the number of rogue trails. This in turn means fewer areas of undisturbed landscape for the plants and animals that call the park home. Treading on sensitive areas such as rocky outcrops and forest understory can be very damaging. This problem has been amplified by the ongoing pandemic as people try to social distance. Another problem of increasing concern is the use of the trail system by cyclists. Cycling is not permitted in the park other than in the paved areas. Bike tires are very damaging to trails and there are safety concerns as well.

Our four-legged friends are welcome in the park with the understanding that they be under control. While dogs have many admirable qualities, they are not known for their self-control. It falls to their two-legged companions to ensure everyone behaves. It's not OK to chase a squirrel or rabbit, to run through areas that are home to sensitive plants and animals, or bound up to other park visitors. Your dog might think that they should be universally adored but many people have concerns for their safety or simply don't care that "*he's friendly*".

While dogs don't seem to mind it, humans don't want to smell or step in dog poop. Visiting dogs' human companions are always responsible for removing the poop from the park. Are dogs puzzled when we stoop and scoop with little plastic bags? It is safe say people are puzzled when those little bags are tossed in the woods, hidden behind trees or simply left at the side of the trail. It is one of the greatest mysteries of our time. Saanich has provided bins at all major

entrances and makes a great effort to ensure they are emptied often. Deserving of special mention is the volunteer who empties the Glendenning 4 Poop bin.

Enjoy your time in the park and be mindful of your impact. Should you see others causing harm and if you are comfortable doing so it's OK to speak up. Always remember to do so in a respectful manner. If not, you are welcome to call Saanich Bylaw (250-475-5456) to report a problem. While Bylaw Officers, may not always be able to attend immediately, calling in the problem creates a record which helps to track ongoing infractions. Take time to learn about the park. Few places in Greater Victoria can offer a stroll on the beach, ravens calling from the heights of old growth trees, and a vista of sea and mountains.

Happy trails.

## **In Memoriam**

A good friend, and Friend, of the Park, Henry Niezen, died on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March. He was 95. He was instrumental in the 1970s design, fabrication and installation of the bronze map plaque in the *cupcake* lookout at the summit. It replaced the less informative, less accurate, 1960 original.

We re-visited the site with Henry a couple of years ago. He walked with a cane, but had lost none of his feeling for the Park, or memories of getting the project done.

## **Parking on Churchill remains a problem**

A persistent problem on Churchill Drive is the number of drivers who choose to illegally park their vehicle on the road above the gate. We've seen as many as 15 vehicles illegally parked there. We'd like to remind drivers that there is ample parking in the Beach Parking lot. Churchill Drive is narrow and illegal parking along the road edge forces drivers and pedestrians into a safety conflict. It can also restrict access for fire trucks. Please park safely, and legally, in designated areas.



*A male pileated woodpecker, *Dryocopus pileatus*. The male and female of this species look virtually identical but the males have a red patch on their cheeks.*

*A juvenile bald eagle, *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, spotted, at the beach, by Brandon Smith. Bald eagles don't get their adult feathers, with the distinctive white head and tail, until they are around four years old. This one is close to maturity, with golden eyes and lots of white developing among the brown feathers.*



# Carcass Transplant

Our annual salmon carcass transplant took place on January 25. Can you recall that it was delayed one week because of heavy snow on the previous weekend? Given everything else that has happened in 2020 that snow has been completely forgotten.



The transplant was a great success. As has become tradition the event was begun with a great, short, explanation of why we do this every year, delivered by Peter McCully, Technical Advisor, Goldstream Volunteer Salmonid Enhancement Association (photo). Streams and rivers on Vancouver Island have historically played host to salmon returning from the ocean to spawn. Pacific salmon live for some years far from shore and die after spawning in their home streams and rivers. Their carcasses feed the streams, surrounding forests, and wild lands. Invertebrates in the streams, themselves food for fish and other aquatic life; larger animals and birds on shore

who make use of the flesh; and not least of all, the forest itself. All this life benefits from the nutrients the returning salmon had gathered in their bodies far out to sea.

The transplant of salmon carcasses, collected from the Goldstream River, is a small attempt to reproduce this part of the natural salmon cycle. This event also provides an opportunity to educate the community living near to the Mount Douglas Park about the



salmon and the park. The parents and children who participate leave the event, we hope, with a greater appreciation of the park and a greater willingness to make the changes needed to preserve it as a Natural Area.

# Membership Drives, Online and Onsite Payment

Early in 2020 the Society added the option of online and on site electronic payment for memberships or donations. It has already proven to be a great success with many members quickly adopting it for renewals and some new members joining us (Welcome!).

To join or renew online visit <https://moundouglaspark.ca/> and look for *How to Join*.

As part of our regular commitment to be present in the park, members of the board of directors (see the list at the end of the newsletter, *join us!*) take turns setting up our information tent. Usually we are on Churchill Drive near the main park gates but we may appear elsewhere as well. This year we were only able to set up until the restrictions of COVID-19 began. Rest assured we've still been busy working on many park related projects. Once restrictions ease up again we'll be back in the park and hope you'll stop to say hello if you see us.

## Ticks

Late spring and summer are tick season in Mount Douglas Park. There's no need to fear visiting because of this but everyone should be tick-aware.

Ticks have eight legs, they're arachnids not insects and are part of the same animal class as spiders. There are several kinds of ticks that can be found in the park and on Vancouver Island. They all share the trait of needing blood meals to get protein for growth and reproduction. Remember, when you find something you initially find disgusting say, "That's interesting!" instead.

Ticks will latch onto dogs visiting the park, especially when the dogs are allowed to wander off trail. However, ticks are not that fussy about where they get blood. People will do as well. Unfortunately many species of ticks can carry a bacteria, *Borrelia burgdorferi*, that can cause Lyme disease in humans.

The BC Centre for Disease Control has information on Lyme Disease and ticks on their website: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/lyme-disease-borrelia-burgdorferi-infection/tick-talk>

They also have a child-friendly brochure there that gives useful information for everyone, not just kids.

## Bridge Trail

We are pleased to inform you that we received a \$15,000 grant from the Pacific Salmon Foundation for the Douglas Creek Bridge and Salmon Interpretation



The site of the future bridge and two trees that fell into the creek at the site during a storm in late March. Part of site preparation for the bridge will include a thorough assessment of at risk trees in the surrounding area.

Area project. We are adding \$10,000 from our own funds to that project. We had hoped to see it completed during this summer's fisheries window when creek



work is allowed, but it now seems like there will be delays within Saanich due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We'll keep you posted when we learn more.

One of the issues to be managed at the site of the bridge is the number of danger trees in the area. Remember, this area is not yet part of the official trail network and should be avoided. Please stay on official trails.

## **Summit Restoration and Path Repair**

Another project we have been working on is restoration of the area between the summit parking lot and the summit. The asphalt trail and steps that are in poor condition will be repaired by Saanich. Also, the area south of the trail, now covered with Scotch Broom, will be restored for native plants and these areas protected with split rail fences. At the same time an information kiosk similar to the one at the bottom of Churchill will be installed in the summit parking lot along with improvements to the parking area.

## **Flashiness in the Creek**

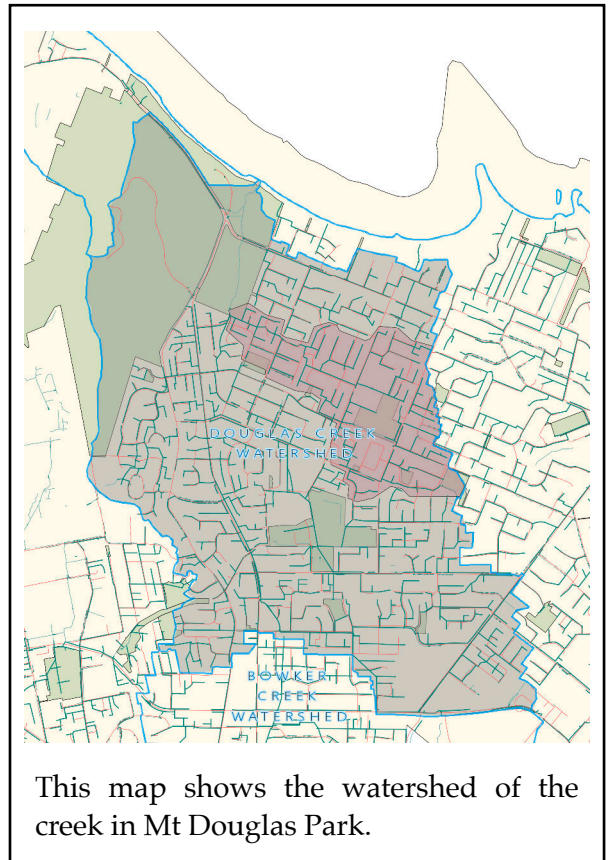
The creek in Mount Douglas Park is fed by water collected in the shaded region shown on the map (next page). The total area enclosed by the watershed is five and half square kilometres (559 ha). The portion of the area enclosed by watershed that lies in the park is drained by three, somewhat natural, tributaries. The rest is all developed land, approximately 40% impermeable surfaces, and a small area of manicured parks. This area drains, in all seasons, via storm water pipes underground and some ditches directly into the small pond above the weir near Robinwood Drive and Shelbourne Ave.

Due to our typically dry summer weather, summer flow in the creek is very low. The source of the water is natural springs that drain water stored during the wet season in Mount Douglas itself. The evidence of the springs is good news for the creek. It means that we can expect that the creek is unlikely to dry up even in the driest summer weather. That's great news from the perspective of fish and

invertebrate life in the creek. And it's good for the plant and animal life near the creek. There's always at least some water around.

For the rest of the year, and during occasional intense dry season rain storms, water collected through the storm water system buried beneath almost all of the watershed area, quickly and efficiently moves through the pipes and into the creek. The result is frequent very high water events that damage the creek banks and, potentially, flush the creek clean of fish and other animal life that may not be able to find a place to shelter until the flow subsides again.

There is no easy solution to this problem. It's a result of the creek being used as a receiver for the storm water. Ultimately the only way to solve this is to redirect much of the storm water flow through pipes to the ocean, bypassing the creek. This work would be expensive but is needed because of the decisions made when the watershed was first transformed into suburban housing.



This map shows the watershed of the creek in Mt Douglas Park.

## Park Status and Future ...

The last three months have brought dramatically increased demands on the park. Many have commented on the widening of trails as a result of people attempting to increase distance between themselves and others. Recently, a project that could add 600 new residences in walking distance of the park was sent to Saanich Council. Other projects are coming to increase housing density in the region. We don't disapprove of densification, it's clearly needed. We are concerned though about how to protect the park as a special, designated, Natural Area for the benefit of wild animal and plant life, and for future generations of human park visitors. How can we protect and preserve what we have as we increase density in Saanich? This is a question worth discussing before this park and others are changed irreversibly.

Saanich's 2011 document, *Park Natural Areas Management Guidelines* warns about this.

“Urbanization and a growing population translate into increased pressure on and exposure of park natural areas to human activities. More people of all ages want access to park natural areas for themselves, their children, and their pets. The carrying capacity of the park natural areas will be challenged as use increases.”

Let's enjoy the Park but take nothing and leave nothing. Stay on the marked trails and keep dogs on trails to reduce harm to native vegetation and ground dwelling animals and ground nesting birds.

## Food Truck Pilot Project

Saanich has announced that Mount Douglas Park will be part of a Food truck pilot project. By-laws state, “no person shall sell or offer to sell any refreshments, goods or services or conduct any business in any park or on any beach save and except with written permission from council”. Council approval was necessary for this to go ahead. We have concerns about litter, about idling vehicles and generators and about the designation of this park as a Natural Areas Park. We've written to council and we'll be watching and documenting what happens. Let us know how you feel about this pilot program.



*Oemleria cerasiformis* is usually the first plant to leaf out and flower in the park in the late winter. This photo is from 2020-02-23. It's commonly known as osoberry or indian plum.

Another beautiful park flower is this tiny mimulus or monkeyflower. They can often have a little red heart on one petal. Mimulus is another early bloomer. It's well adapted to rocky crevices or surfaces where ground water can seep through cracks. It can be found in several places in the park.



# Dogs

We have been hearing more and more from concerned visitors who find, increasingly, issues with dogs in the park. The concerns are many, varied, ongoing and include the following:

- Dog owners ignoring signage and letting their pets splash and dig in recently remediated Douglas creek and the riparian areas damaging the banks, disturbing the invertebrates that are food for salmon fry and destroying spawning areas;
- Owners allowing their dogs to run free on the beach area, disturbing birds and other wildlife, "doing their business", leaving their excrement behind where children and others are walking and playing and disturbing other beach goers enjoying the area;
- Dog owners allowing their dogs to run free off marked park trails creating rogue trails, damaging native plants, spreading invasive species and destroying ground nesting bird habitat;
- Volunteers pulling invasives and planting native species having to deal with dog poop bags that are thrown in the bush in addition to unbagged dog poop;
- Commercial dog walkers letting large groups of dogs run free off marked trails;
- Park visitors being injured when knocked over by "friendly" pets;
- Dogs being aggressive and owners believing they are entitled to let their dogs run free and out of control in the park, even when signs are pointed out to them or reasons for keeping dogs on leash are presented to them.

We are impressed with the citywide, holistic approach Vancouver has undertaken to dogs in urban areas. Vancouver's report is online:

<https://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/people-parks-dogs-strategy.aspx>

Finally, we're not anti-dog, we're pro park. Let us know your views.

## Two Bits of Park History

At right is a very short story from The Daily Colonist on January 21, 1960. This is the first mention of Mount Douglas Park moving from Victoria's Control to Saanich's. It reads in part, "Where the suggestion [to transfer the park] came from in the first place, no one seems to recall." At the time both municipalities shared a Beaches and Parks Committee.

Recently, we, with the help of keen military and communications history buffs, have been able to connect the site of the viewing platform on the summit of Mount Douglas with its use, during World War Two, as a direction finding radio tower. A prefabricated wooden tower was erected there in 1942 and can be seen (just) in the photograph included on the next page. The tower, and its concrete foundation were octagonal. After the tower was removed in 1950 a wooden viewing platform was built on the concrete base. Later still, around 1960, the concrete *cupcake* that we know well today was built. We're working on a more detailed story about this for a future newsletter and the website.

If you've got photos of the tower, the original wooden lookout, construction of the cupcake, or any interesting features of the park, please let us know.

**Mount Douglas**

# Want a Park? Saanich Asked

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### Source Of Plan Mystery

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Saanich council was asked yesterday to discuss whether or not the municipality would like to take over city-owned Mount Douglas Park.

Victoria-Saanich beaches and parks committee made the request, after hearing a report from City Solicitor T. P. O'Grady that it would be advisable to seek provincial legislation to permit the transfer if it was desired.

**SUGGESTION OBSCURE**

Where the suggestion came from in the first place, no one seems to recall.

"It's never been discussed in our council," said Saanich Coun. George Austin.

The committee also:

- Approved April 16 as official opening date for the dressing rooms provided by the Junior Chamber of Commerce at Elk Lake.
- Voted to seek \$15,000 this year from Victoria and Saanich. Last year the same amount was requested, and Saanich council was prepared to contribute its \$5,000 share. But city council cut its \$10,000 to \$8,000, so Saanich contributed \$4,000.
- Approved spending \$750 on clearing of underbrush in Mount Douglas Park.



**Everything Must Be Right**

Checking final arrangements for a red letter day—the opening of the B.C. legislature one week from today—are Sergeant-at-Arms Denzil Ashby, standing, and Clerk of the House E. K. DeBeck—(Colonist photo.)



*Looking north on Cedar Hill Rd south of Kenmore between 1944 and 1947 (above) and in 2020 (below). A lot of trees have grown up along Cedar Hill Road in the past 70 years.*



# Board of Directors

President	Darrell Wick	darrell@mountdouglaspark.ca 477-9291
Vice President	Ed Wiebe	<a href="mailto:edwiebe@gmail.com">edwiebe@gmail.com</a> @edwiebe
Treasurer	Nancy Lewthwaite	
Invasives	Judy Spearing	
At-large	Graham Shorthill	
At-large	Alan Walton	
At-large	Deborah McEwen	

## Membership Renewal - Gift Membership

Join online: <https://mountdouglaspark.square.site/>

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, 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

Send or deliver to: *Treasurer, Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society*  
*P.O. Box 31002, RPO University Heights*  
*Victoria, BC V8N 6J3*

**Web:** <http://www.mountdouglaspark.ca> **Twitter:** @MountDougPark

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