



Our Backyard

A NEWSLETTER ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAANICH

Volume 11
Issue 3
Fall 2011



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UPDATE ON CUTHBERT HOLMES PARK WILDLIFE

By Dorothy Chambers, Gorge Tillicum Community Association

In late June, wildlife biologist Andy Stewart was in the park to band four young Cooper's Hawks at their nest as part of a long-term study of the ecology of Cooper's Hawks nesting in urban environments. Red bands are placed on females and black bands on males. If you observe a banded hawk, please record the band colour and code (if you can), date and time, the location, and whether it was in adult or juvenile. They can still be seen in the neighbourhood, and photos of any sightings would be appreciated to help track their movements. You can email the picture(s) to <andy.stewart@shaw.ca> and include the location.

The Great Blue Herons expanded their nesting sites this year. Ten nests in six trees were established in Echo Hill, behind Silver City and the arena, making the total number of nests in the park 61. The nest trees are monitored by a local volunteer on behalf of the provincial Wildlife Branch. Unfortunately this season the herons suffered from extensive predation by Bald Eagles.

For five months last fall/winter, many neighbours enjoyed the pair of Great Horned Owls who resided just beyond the Dysart Street bridge. Sadly, one of the pair died, and a newcomer was briefly seen in the park. Recently a young Great Horned Owl was photographed in the park and there is hope of a returning pair again. The Great Horned Owls have large cat-like ear tufts, and yellow eyes, distinguishing them from the dark-eyed Barred Owl. Watch (and listen) for them as they begin to re-establish territories within the park! These owls typically nest in a broken-topped fir tree, or they will also take possession of an abandoned hawk, raven, or heron nest. One way that neighbours can help these, and other birds of prey, is to use non-toxic methods of rodent control.

Work parties to remove introduced invasive plants will be organized again by the Friends of Cuthbert Holmes Park, starting in October and continuing until the weather no longer cooperates. To receive email updates about these

work parties and other news relating to Cuthbert Holmes Park, please contact cuthbertholmes@telus.net. For work party schedules visit www.saanich.ca/living/natural/opportunities.html

Salmon are returning again to the Colquitz River to spawn, and you can experience this urban miracle in Cuthbert Holmes Park. Join volunteers from the fish and wildlife organizations each morning (about 10:00 a.m.) at the fish counting fence, just behind Montana's Restaurant at Tillicum Mall.



The fish fence temporarily traps the fish until the volunteers empty the holding pen, and count, inspect, identify, and then release them up-stream. In an average year approximately 300 Coho, a few Chum, and Cutthroat Trout return to the Colquitz River. Many of the salmon are upwards of 10 kilograms.

The Coho will hold in Portage Inlet, where they change into their spawning form (dark red and a hooked nose for males), awaiting the right river conditions to proceed upstream. The first October rains are a signal to the salmon that there is enough water in the river, and they begin their migration up the Colquitz River. They swim upstream to spawn in the same stretch of gravel where they emerged as fry, and after they spawn they all die, leaving nutrients to replenish the watershed, and eggs in the riverbed to continue the cycle.

The influx of fish also brings other wildlife to the Park. Harbour Seals and River Otters can be seen patrolling for a fish dinner. Come on down, enjoy the park, and see the salmon. Bring the kids!



Committing To Action On Climate Change:

Saanich Carbon Champions Program



By Sarah Ozog, Saanich Student Climate Action Technician
Making changes to our everyday lives is one of the most important tasks in mitigating the effects of climate change. Recognizing this, the District of Saanich is looking to connect with the many residents who want to take action in adapting to climate change and help the community tackle its greenhouse gas reduction targets. The municipality has launched a new online community commitment tool to inform, engage, and support residents as it works towards a low-carbon future. The program also re-launches the Saanich Carbon Fund Calculator, the online offsetting alternative for residents that funds carbon reduction projects in the community, along with a new Saanich Facebook and Twitter presence.

Signing up to be a Carbon Champion is a simple 3-step process, beginning with a visit to <www.climateaction.saanich.ca>. Users start by raising their understanding of Saanich's connection to climate change, then making a pledge to reduce their carbon footprint, and finally using the directory of resources provided, to turn words into action. This program builds on

a long-term connection with the community that will be expanded and refined over the coming year. Saanich residents will be able to count on this site as a resource and are encouraged to challenge community members to take alternative transportation, improve the energy efficiency of their homes, reduce waste generation, and support local food production.

Mark Boysen, Sustainability Coordinator with the District of Saanich, notes "This is an opportunity for everyone in the Saanich community to work towards our common goal of greenhouse gas reductions. This program allows residents to share their own sustainability stories and also have "how-to questions" answered. We want to find and promote existing Carbon Champions in the community and also inspire those looking for guidance to do their part."



Carbon Champion?

The Saanich Carbon Champions program welcomes all questions, comments and feedback through the following forms of media:

Website at www.climateaction.saanich.ca.

Facebook Page at Saanich Sustainability and Climate Change

Follow us on Twitter @SaanichClimate

What is a
Carbon Champion?

A Carbon Champion is a person or organization in the community making a difference to reduce our carbon footprint. Learn more about our local champions and how you can ACT on climate change in the community on our website at: www.climateaction.saanich.ca



Cattail Removal At Rithet's Bog

By Russ Pym, Rithet's Bog Conservation Society

On Saturday, September 24th the Rithet's Bog Conservation Area hosted its second annual cattail clearing event. This event was a joint effort by the Rithet's Bog Conservation Society, Ducks Unlimited, and Saanich Parks *Pulling Together* Volunteer Program. Saanich Parks also provided equipment and support staff and *Pulling Together* supplied lunch and refreshments.

This year 23 volunteers attended and helped clear two areas for a total length of 32 meters along the trail adjacent to Chatterton Way. The clearing extended from trailside to open water.

The goals of our cattail clearing project are to:

- Reclaim areas of seasonal open water and mudflats to provide habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds and native plants,
- Open up viewing opportunities for the public, and
- Selectively remove non-native invasive species of cattails and maintain native species.



Our clearing efforts are focused primarily on two introduced species of cattail, the eastern Narrowleaf Cattail (*Typha angustifolia*) and the Hybrid or Blue Cattail (*T. x glauca*). The hybrid has proven to be extremely invasive. It grows along the trail forming a dense wall that is three meters tall, blocking views of the marsh and becoming a monoculture which is not suitable habitat for waterfowl, shorebirds, or native marsh flora.

We intend to maintain stands of our native Common Cattail (*T. latifolia*), which we consider to be an important part of the marsh habitat.

The alien cattails have spread over large areas of the marsh, so the removal program will take several years. Our approach is evolving, but we are gravitating towards initial cutting of a stand the first year with follow-up pulling of re-growth in subsequent years.

We thank the volunteers who helped us this year and we hope to see you next year. The success of our program and the health of the marsh at Rithet's Bog depend on your help.



This composite photo shows from left to right, the native *Typha latifolia*, the hybrid *T. x glauca*, and the introduced *Typha angustifolia*.

The intrepid *Pulling Together* volunteers made many jars of Himalayan Blackberry jam this fall! They figure it's another unwritten part of their volunteer position description. Not only to attend work parties and help cut, dig, and haul out invasive plants, but to "Eat it to Beat It" as well. Volunteers are removing Scotch Broom, Himalayan Blackberry, English Ivy, Narrow-leaved/Hybrid Cattail, Orchard Grass, English Hawthorn, Daphne Laurel, and many more invasive species. In our removal work we always follow established Best Management Practices (BMPs). The Pulling Together Program now has more than 100 volunteers active in more than 30 sites.

The highlight of the fall season is our annual Volunteer Recognition and Training Event, held on Saturday, October 15. Blackberry jam was served at the event of course, along with another surprise edible invasive treat. We had an interesting selection of guest speakers lined up.

We are also forming some other very "fruitful" partnerships this season. We have ongoing help at Mount Tolmie from St. Michaels University School Houses and physical education classes. Local Rotaract Clubs have also offered to send 10-15 volunteers to each Saturday work party this fall. Finally, Kiwanis Clubs are preparing to partner with volunteers at Mount Douglas for a much appreciated boost to volunteer efforts there. The University of Victoria Environmental Students Association and Restoration Club are also sending members.

Our new *Pulling Together* Volunteer Program website is now live! Check out this link <www.saanich.ca/living/natural/opportunities.html> to learn more about the program, how to join, where and when work parties are, and to hear stories of some active community *Pulling Together* teams. Fall is a great time to join the program and new volunteers of all ages and abilities are always welcome. We need your help in your favourite Saanich Park. Our calendar also promotes community-led restoration and invasive species events.

By Jenny Eastman, Coordinator of Volunteers | jenny.eastman@saanich.ca or 250.744.1710

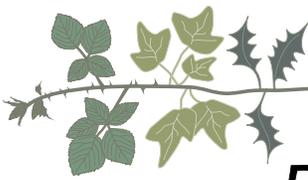
Garry Oak Restoration Project (GORP) Updates

By Jenny Eastman, Coordinator of Volunteers

Work parties are going full steam ahead in the GORP sites this fall. Volunteers will rotate through each of the nine GORP sites this fall season and we are actively working to invite and encourage neighbours of the GORP sites to join in with the work we are doing.

We were very excited to see the release of the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team's new publication, *Restoring B.C.'s Garry Oak Ecosystems*. Volunteers and staff are now reading and reviewing this new manual to ensure our practices are the most effective they can be.

For the work party schedule or for more information about GORP, please see our Volunteer Opportunities webpage <www.saanich.ca/living/natural/opportunities.html>



Pulling Together Volunteer Program



Urban Forestry and Natural Areas Corner

By Cory Manton, Saanich Parks

For more information on these projects, contact Saanich Parks at 250-475-5522 or parkadmin@saanich.ca

Here at Saanich Parks we are excited about a number of urban forestry, invasive species removal, and ecological restoration projects completed or planned for this fall/winter:

Capital City Allotment Gardens

During the fisheries window in late August and early September Saanich Parks and Environmental Services removed four invasive Golden Willow and ten English Hawthorn trees along the banks of Swan Creek within the Capital City Allotment Gardens. These trees had been spreading along the banks: choking out the native vegetation and decreasing flow in the creek. Saanich Parks staff, along with members of the Capital city Allotment Gardens, will plant native willow whips and other native trees and shrubs to restore the area.



Gorge Park

This September was a busy month in Gorge Park. Urban Forestry staff spent a week pruning hazard trees to maintain their wildlife values but reduce the risk associated with these dead trees. Gorge Tillicum Community Association and members of the Saanich *Pulling Together* Program also spent several hours removing English Ivy off the trees beside the main parking lot. Saanich Parks and the Gorge Tillicum Residents Association planted 100 native tree seedlings to celebrate National Tree Day.

We are proud of our continued partnership with the residents of the Gorge-Tillicum area to make improvements to the health of the native ecosystems within Gorge Park.

Douglas Creek Improvements (Mount Douglas Park)

In September 2011 Saanich Parks and the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society, Pacific Salmon Foundation, Department of Fisheries and Oceans, and members of the Goldstream Salmon Hatchery completed a large scale in-stream project to provide for improved salmon rearing habitat in the lower section of Douglas Creek.





SAANICH TREE APPRECIATION DAY

By Cory Manton, Saanich Parks

Mayor Frank Leonard has proclaimed Sunday, November 6, 2011 as Tree Appreciation Day in Saanich. Many benefits and values come from trees, including a very specific sense of place, aesthetics, air quality, property value, soil and water conservation, and protection of the environment. The planting and preservation of trees is an action that yields long range benefits.

Saanich's Significant Tree Advisory Committee and Saanich Parks, in cooperation with BC Hydro and Pacific Forestry Centre, are looking for volunteers in our community to help plant trees and shrubs as detailed below. No experience is necessary.

Bow-Feltham Park: (10:00 am – 1:00 pm)

Marshalling for the event will be in the park strip between Livingstone and Bow Roads. Parking for the event is at the North end of Bow Road, or the South end of Livingstone Ave. N. Saanich *Pulling Together* Volunteers along with Saanich Parks staff have been removing invasive species in this trail section over the course of the last six months. The main priority is planting more than 400 native trees and shrubs in the area bordering this section of trail.

Mount Douglas Park: (10:00 am – 1:00 pm)

Marshalling area for planters will be in the main parking lot near the Shelbourne/Ash intersection (by the washroom building). Stream restoration work completed in September 2011 has disturbed vegetation along the banks of Douglas Creek. The main priority is to plant approximately 1,000 native trees and shrubs along the banks of Douglas Creek.

Drinks, snacks and planting tools will be provided. However, if any of the volunteers can bring a shovel and gloves it would be appreciated. Please remember your rain gear and boots since we will be planting rain or shine.

If members of your group are interested in participating, please advise us of the total number of participants and at which location. This will allow us to make arrangements for food, etc.

If you have any questions please call Saanich Parks at 250-475-5522 or e-mail parks@saanich.ca. It would be appreciated if you would approach your members as soon as possible regarding this invitation. I look forward to hearing from you.





Food Security

At Reynolds Secondary School

It all started with the GREEN SPACES PROJECT which included creating an onsite courtyard food garden at the school...



www.greenspacesproject.org

LOCAVORE Potluck Meals... developing a COLTURE...

Connecting with Local Farms



HEALING
healingfarm.ca

MADRONA
madronafarm.com

HALIBURTON
haliburtonfarm.org



...and developing our L.U.N.C.H. PROGRAM (Locally United for Nutrition and Courtyard Harvest) providing a fresh local farm harvested salad bar once per week for three, 8 week sessions this year.

Six students are engaged in an Independent Directed Studies program to organize and operate the salad bar.



Next...

we are looking into being a hub for a Local Food Box Program thegoodfoodbox@shaw.ca helping to promote local and organic within our school families and communities...

For more information feel free to contact Heather Coey hcoey@sd61.bc.ca



Have You Seen The Signs?

By Adriane Pollard, Manager of Environmental Services

You may have noticed some new signs around town as you race from one thing to another. Saanich Environmental Services has put up 2 roadside signs that will be moved around over time—keeping the message fresh and mobile.

You might be surprised at how extensive the Douglas Creek Watershed is. It is as far south as McKenzie Avenue and Finnerty Road, and stretches over to the edge of the Blenkinsop Valley. A roving sign will let travellers know when they are within the boundaries and potentially having an effect on the watershed. For ways to care for the watershed you live in, please see the spring 2011 edition of Our Backyard.

Another sign identifies a raingarden installed by Saanich Engineering to capture and treat rainwater that lands on the roads and carries pollutants with it. Raingardens are effective at slowing down and cleaning water before it reaches streams or the ocean. For more information on raingardens, please see www.crd.bc.ca/watersheds/lid/garden.htm



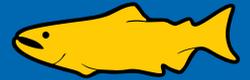
Property owners in Saanich who have a natural state covenant registered on their title can pick up a sign to help neighbours understand why their property might look different from the typical manicured lawn and garden. Natural state covenants are used to protect natural areas from development in the long-term. For more information, please see www.saanich.ca/living/natural/natcovenants.html

And finally, we have created a sign to help property owners who are in the early stages of converting their lawns and gardens into a Naturescape garden. This sign will help neighbours understand why different plants and different maintenance practices are appearing in their area. Naturescape BC promotes the use of native plants, food, shelter, and water to create habitat. For more information, please see www.saanich.ca/living/natural/naturescape.html

You are entering
**DOUGLAS
CREEK
WATERSHED**



www.saanich.ca



**RAIN
GARDEN
AT WORK**

**This raingarden
treats water naturally
before it reaches the stream.**



www.saanich.ca



Upcoming Events

Saanich Recreation Free Programs

www.saanich.ca/resident/recreation 250-475-5408

Sunday Hikes (Drop-In)

Sundays, 1-3:30pm

Although these free hikes follow mainly chip trails and pavement there may be some rough or steep sections so please wear sturdy footwear. Rain or shine, dress for the weather.

Nov 20 – Cordova Bay Beach & Ridge

Meet at McMinn Park, off Maplegrove & Lochside Dr.

Dec 4 – Gorge Waterway

Meet in Gorge Park parking area beside playground on Gorge Rd at Tillicum Rd.

Gentle Walk & Talk (Drop-In)

Thursdays, 9:30-11am

A great way to meet people suitable for all walking abilities. Dress for the weather.

Oct 27 – McMinn Park to Doris Page Park

Meet at McMinn Park beside tennis courts off Maplegrove St.

Nov 3 – Mt. Douglas Park

Meet near the washrooms in main parking lot, off Cordova Bay Rd, at Ash St.

Nov 10 – Lochside Trail

Meet at the end of Nelthorpe off McKenzie

Nov 17 – Rithet's Bog to Parkwood

Meet on Dalewood, off Chatterton, near kiosk

Nov 24 – Cadboro Gyro Park to Konukson park

Meet beside washrooms at Cadboro Gyro Park, end of Sinclair St.

Dec 1 – Beckwith Park to Hutchison

Meet at Beckwith Park, parking lot on Beckwith Ave., off Quadra

Bowker Creek Initiative (BCI)

www.bowkercreekinitiative.ca

Browning Park Riparian Restoration

Saturday, October 29, 9:30am to 12pm

Browning Park (meet at the bridge).

Over the past several years the Municipality of Saanich has been able to make several improvements to Browning Park through a federal grant. Much of the work focused on restoration of the Bowker Creek itself through removal of invasive plants and the planting of native plants. Other improvements include a play park and a greenway with playful public art connecting the path to the adjacent Bowker Creek. The local community and the Bowker Creek Initiative (BCI) continue to support the efforts to improve the riparian area through Browning Park by co-hosting with Saanich's volunteer program "Pulling Together". All ages welcome. Tools, gloves, drinks & snacks provided. Rain or Shine. *If you are interested in getting involved please contact Andrea Gleichauf @ 250-598-9837.

Victoria Natural History Society

Visit www.naturevictoria.ca for more programs

Natural History Night (every 2nd Tuesday)

Capturing Nature with Compact Cameras

Tuesday, November 8, 7:30 pm

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

Botany Night (every 3rd Tuesday)

New Caledonia, Glimpses of a Biodiversity Hotspot

Tuesday, November 15, 7:30 pm

UVic Elliott Building, Room 167

Birder's Night (every 4th Wednesday)

Hoo-hoo's in Your Backyard? – Owls of Southern Vancouver Island

Wednesday, November 23, 7:30 pm

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

Marine Night (last Monday of the month)

Sea Level Rise in British Columbia: a New Challenge to Protected Areas Management

Monday, November 28, 7:30 pm

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary

www.swanlake.bc.ca 250-479-0211

Wild Mushroom Show

Sunday, October 30, 10am - 4pm (drop-in anytime)

A special presentation by the South Vancouver Island Mycological Society. Discover the wacky and wonderful world of the mushrooms of Vancouver Island. The huge variety found in our forests, fields and gardens will be on display. Bring your specimens for identification by members of the Mycological Society. Admission by donation.

Winter Birds - an introductory course for adults

Birdwatching is the fastest growing activity in North America. Introduce yourself to the birds that make Victoria their winter home.

Classes: 7 to 9 pm, Mondays, November 14, 21, 28, Dec 5

Field-trips: 9 to 10:30 am, Sundays, November 27, 26, and December 4.

Call to register: \$80 for Swan Lake members. \$95 for non-members.

Slug Day

Sunday, November 27, 12 to 3pm (drop-in anytime)

Licorice or Banana? Which is your favorite slug? Join us in a celebration of all things slimy. Crafts, songs, and a slug safari - fun for the whole family. Admission by donation.

Upcoming Events

CRD Community Events

www.crd.bc.ca

Please call Swan Lake at 250.479.0211 to register

Native Plant Gardening Workshop

Swan Lake Nature House (3873 Swan Lake Rd.)

Wednesday, October 27, 9:30am to 12:30pm

Sunday, November 6, 1 to 4pm

Tuesday, November 15, 9:30am to 12:30pm

A FREE workshop on gardening with drought-resistant native plants. Instructor Patricia Johnston will provide instruction on native plant identification, their benefits, and how to use them. Includes a tour of the Swan lake native plant garden. Pre-registration is required by calling 250-479-0211.

NEW Eco Learning Hive Website

www.ecolearninghive.org

About Us

In 2009 a group of organizations in Greater Victoria found that the large number of environmental education programs and organizations in the Capital Region were resulting in many lost opportunities. Teachers and parents were not aware of what was available. To address this issue, many local environmental education providers collaborated to unify the many diverse programs onto one resource – The Eco Learning Hive.

The Eco Learning Hive will support school teachers within the CRD to increase environmental awareness and understanding by disseminating information about available environmental programs and resources.

CRD Regional Parks

Visit www.crd.bc.ca/parks for more programs

250-478-3344

Forest Spooktacular (Drop-in Event)

October 21, 22, 23, 29, 11am–2:30pm

Francis/King Regional Park

A spook-tacular afternoon of Halloween fun with CRD Regional Parks' naturalists. At 11:15 and 1:15pm join the guided walks, if you dare - we'll fill the cauldron with spooky treasures from the natural world. Displays, Halloween crafts and hot ghoulish brew await. Wear a costume and win a prize. Meet at the Francis/King nature centre off Munns Road.

Fabulous Fungi Presentation (Adults)

Saturday, November 5, 10am–12pm

Francis/King Regional Park

Kem Luther will teach you to identify some of our common local mushrooms as well as the important role that fungi play in the forest ecosystem. \$7/person + HST. Pre-registration required before November 4.

Fabulous Fungi Walk (Adults)

Saturday, November 5, 12:30–2:30pm

Francis/King Regional Park

Join CRD guest naturalist Kem Luther on this adults-only guided walk on mushroom identification. \$7/person + HST. Pre-registration required before November 4.

Marvellous Mushrooms (Guided Walk)

Saturday, November 12, 10:30am–12pm

Francis/King Regional Park

For the novice mushroom explorer, discover more about fungi in the forest. There is no fee, but you must pre-register.

Raucous Raccoons (Drop-in Event)

Sunday, November 13, 1–3pm

Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park

Drop by the nature centre at Beaver Lake with the family to discover more about these fascinating creatures of the night.

Ha-bat-itat (Guided Walk)

Saturday, November 19, 1–2:30pm

Francis/King Regional Park

Join a CRD Regional Parks' naturalist to discover the weird and wonderful world of bats. Meet at the Francis/King nature centre off Munns Road.

Forever Green (Guided Walk)

Saturday, November 26, 1–2:30pm

Francis/King Regional Park

Learn more about the lives and uses of our evergreens and warm up with a sip of forest tea. Meet at the Francis/King nature centre off Munns Road.

Wreathmaking (Drop-in Event)

Sunday, December 4, 11am–3pm

Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park

We'll supply materials and instructions— you supply creativity! Drop in anytime and bring a mug for hot apple cider, and clippers if you have them. Food and money donations welcome (proceeds to a local food bank). Meet at the nature centre at the main Beaver Lake parking lot.

Sleuthing with Skulls and Scat (Drop-in Event)

Saturday, December 10, 11am–2pm

Francis/King Regional Park

Through displays and activities use your finest detective skills to help uncover the clues that animals leave behind. Meet at the Francis/King nature centre off Munns Road.

Festive 'Winter Wonder' Crafts (Drop-in Event)

Sunday, December 11, 12–3pm

Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park

Make fun and festive seasonal crafts and enjoy some hot spiced apple cider. Meet at the nature centre at the main Beaver Lake parking lot.



This young Wandering Salamander (*Aneides vagrans*) is one of 6 salamander species that may occur in Saanich. They can be found under logs, or the bark of rotting logs and stumps. It is suspected that they were introduced to Vancouver Island from California.

Join the Our Backyard mailing list!

Be kept up to date on local community stewardship projects and environmental issues. Subscriptions to this quarterly newsletter are free and available in electronic or paper version. To subscribe, please send your contact information to the editor or visit the following website www.ourbackyard.saanich.ca

Editor: Darren Copley | Phone: 250-475-5579 | Email: Darren.Copley@saanich.ca

