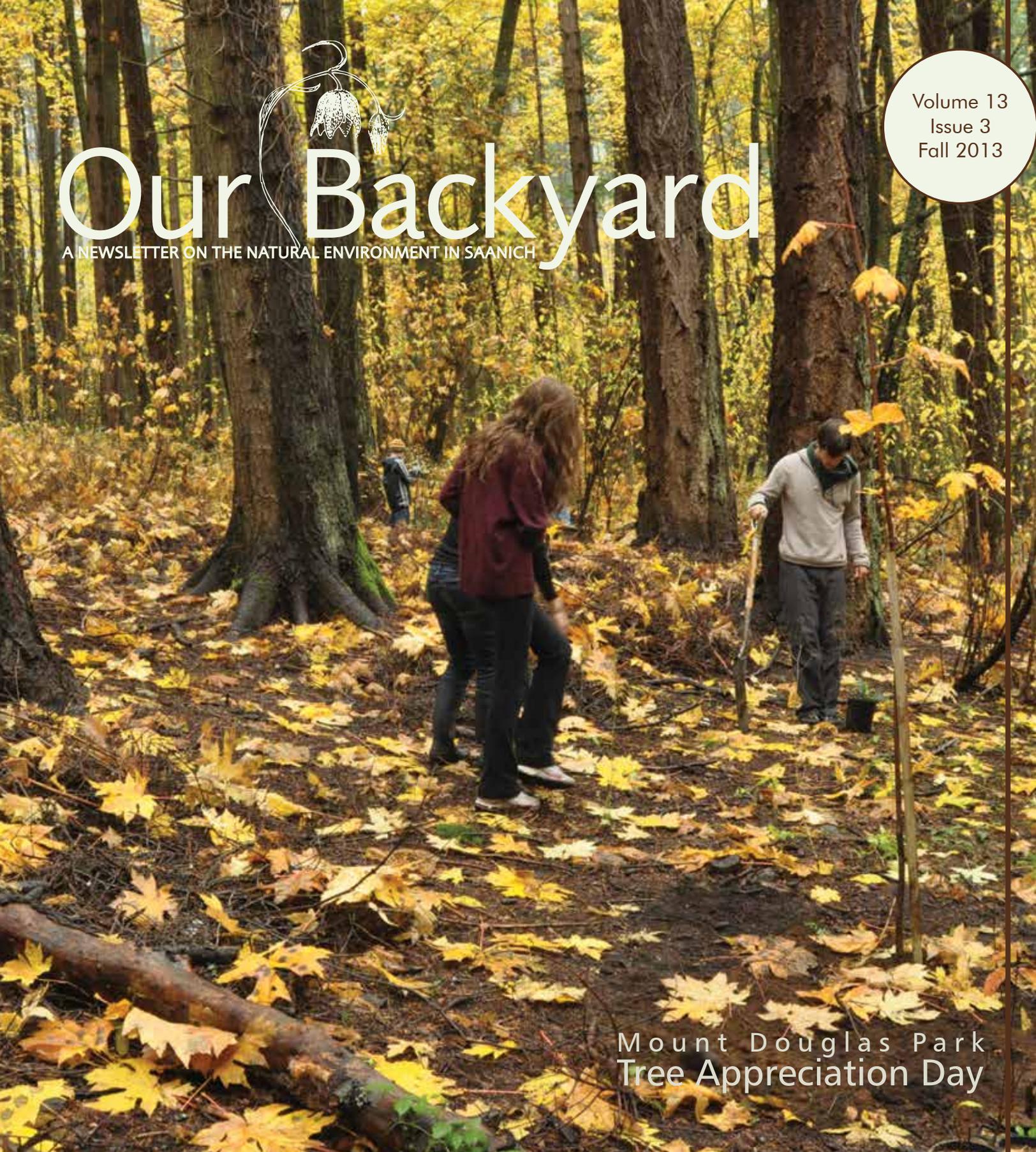




Our Backyard

A NEWSLETTER ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAANICH

Volume 13
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Fall 2013



Mount Douglas Park
Tree Appreciation Day

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Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA) mapping project

By Moraia Grau, Moraia Grau and Associates
moraia@bosquesyrios.org

Recently, I had the chance to explore many areas of Saanich while working on the Additional Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA) mapping project. The project included special areas suggested by residents, as well as areas identified through air-photo analysis. As you may have also discovered, the District is dotted with parks of all sizes and diverse ecosystems: mossy rock outcrops, coastal bluffs, beaches, old forests, wetlands and, where I feel most at home, Garry Oak woodlands. These ecosystems have come to represent the Saanich peninsula, since I have not found them occurring in such close proximity anywhere else. Many ESAs are found in Saanich parks and in undeveloped right-of-ways, while others are located on private lands. Until now, I had not realized the great ecological value of areas that exist outside parks. I encountered old forests in places where I would not have expected, like Old East Road. One of the owners of a seven-hectare old forest stated that Barred Owls nest there. I have also seen large old Douglas-firs and Western Redcedars (120-160 cm diameter), some scarred by wild fire, on Old West Saanich Road, Maltby Lake, and Mountain Road.

As a specialist in sensitive ecosystems, I am very impressed by the conscious effort of some landowners in maintaining (and sometimes restoring) natural ecosystems by removing invasive species (i.e., maintaining flower meadows as Scotch Broom free) and keeping snags and large old trees for woodpeckers and other cavity-dwelling creatures. I also met landowners who keep records of the birds, orchids, and camas they observe on their property, which is very valuable information, now and in the future.

Landowners in urban Saanich need to be particularly recognized, since they struggle with invasive species on a more intense scale than in rural areas. I spoke with Betty Meyers, a Saanich resident who has undertaken, with the help of another strata owner, the restoration of 0.4 hectares of Garry Oak woodland heavily infested with English Ivy and Himalayan Blackberry. Thanks to their determination, camas and Licorice Fern are now showing among the rocks and under the oaks on about one-fifth of the site. Other Garry Oak woodlands extend through several properties, as in the neighbourhoods of Glendenning Road, Wende Avenue-Athlone Drive, and Ascot Drive-Persimmon Drive. In these areas, ecosystem restoration requires the concerted effort of affected landowners. The prize could be a neighbourhood in a near natural Garry Oak woodland, an ecosystem found in Canada only on the West Coast and the islands of BC. In Saanich, many could rightfully say that they have an endangered (red-listed) ecosystem in their backyard.



**Pulling Together
Volunteer
Program**

Urban Forestry & Natural Areas Corner

In this space we profile volunteers active in Saanich's "Pulling Together" Volunteer Program. The program has volunteers engaged in hands-on ecological restoration work in more than 35 parks in all areas of Saanich. We welcome people of all ages and abilities. To learn more about what we do and how to help care for your parks visit: <http://saanich.ca/living/natural/stewardship/opportunities.html>

THE FRIENDS OF TOD CREEK WATERSHED

By Mary Haig-Brown, Friends of Tod Creek Watershed

The Friends of Tod Creek Watershed have had a busy summer. In Whitehead Park (with much help from Saanich Parks staff) we have continued clearing the blackberries and mulching an area of the east bank in readiness for fall planting. Beavers have moved into the creek and are rearranging some of our work to suit their needs.

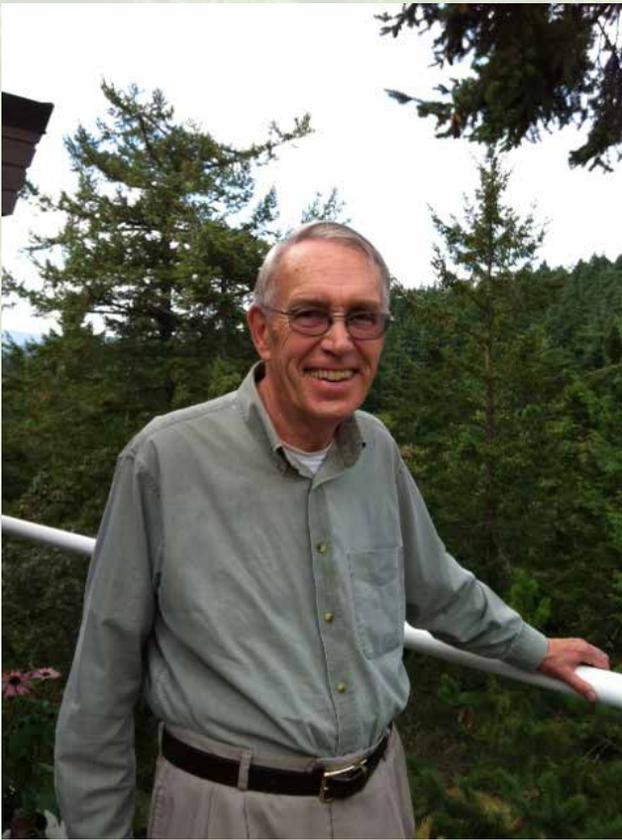
In August we hosted a BC Lake Stewardship LakeKeepers course taught by Rick Nordin. Eighteen people learned how a complex lake system operates as a result of temperature changes, wind, upstream events, and human actions. A day in the classroom was followed by a morning of practical work such as taking samples of water, bottom sediments, and plant growth on Prospect Lake. Participants were taken out by Barry Britnell on his floating dock. There was also time for a tour of the riparian restoration of Whitehead Park. Help from Saanich, Thrifty Foods, Level Ground and funding from RBC Blue Water Project made this course possible.

Some members of the Heritage group spent a day going over to Port Angeles for a tour of the underground area of that city. Human history is deep all around us.

During the fisheries window, we began restoration of the Killarney Creek fan, the area where Killarney Creek enters Prospect Lake. This area is a source of Yellow Flag Iris and other invasives that we have been working on in Whitehead Park. By removing them and replanting with natives, yet still allowing lake access, we hope to provide an example of stewardship on private land. This work is being funded in part by TD Friends of the Environment.

On International River's Day, Sunday, September 29th, we will be hosting a family oriented celebration of our little "river" at Whitehead Park from 1-3 pm. All are welcome to take part in the festivities.





Volunteer Profile:

John Stigant

at Boulderwood Park

By Jenny Eastman, Coordinator of Volunteers,
Pulling Together Program
jenny.eastman@saanich.ca

Saanich's Boulderwood Park perches atop a Garry Oak-covered hilltop in Broadmead, with expansive views across the region. There may be much Scotch Broom to see in the distance, but *Pulling Together* volunteer John Stigant has dramatically changed the foreground. "One afternoon when looking from my home over the park I decided that I

wished to see absolutely no broom whatsoever from our home. After pulling out thousands of Scotch Broom I have succeeded. The further growth of wildflowers has only increased my satisfaction with the result", John says. John works with a team of volunteers from the nearby strata complex to remove invasives in the park and on private property. This team also spends time encouraging other neighbours to care for the park.

Now retired, John taught senior high school mathematics for 33 years in West Vancouver and moved to Victoria in 2004 to be closer to family. His retirement activities involve volunteering in the garden of Christ Church Cathedral and keeping a small garden near his home. In his quiet time he enjoys reading, particularly the history of science and music in Germany. With his great love for organ music he says, "I pass perhaps too many hours enjoying the music of the north German Baroque composers". Enjoying Baroque music with a broom-free view - a combination that helps keep this park's ecological health in balance.

Our warmest thanks to John and the team of *Pulling Together* volunteers at Boulderwood Hill for their work.

GABO CREEK RESTORATION IN EMILY CARR PARK

By John Delli Carri (Engineering & Public Works)
and Cory Manton (Saanich Parks)

Collaboration between Saanich Public Works & Parks Divisions has enhanced the ecological integrity in Gabo Creek!

The daylighted portion of Gabo Creek is located in Emily Carr Park. Saanich's Public Works' Creek and Waterways crew discovered that the inlet pipes were submerged due to silt build up. The crew put a plan together that was reviewed by a qualified environmental professional, that included installing two temporary silt fences prior to removing the silt. A hydro-vac was used to remove the silt from the eastern arm of the creek. This method was preferred over an excavator because it reduces the impact to the vegetation in the riparian area.

Following this work, the Creek and Waterways crew found that the north-directed arm of the creek was also inundated with silt. Saanich Parks assisted in this area by trimming riparian trees and removing Himalayan Blackberry bushes for excavator access to the creek. Environmentally sensitive oil was utilized in the excavator. Forty loads of silt were removed from this arm of the creek! Once excavation was completed, the path was re-instated, topsoil was delivered, and the disturbed area was reseeded.

The combined crews utilized bio-engineering to assist with slope stability and reduce the overland run-off, including silt. This involved planting willow wattle-fences in the area that was washed out and utilized three existing willow trees. In the near future, native vegetation will be planted to further protect the banks of Gabo Creek and to provide cover for invertebrates inhabiting the creek.



BEFORE

Himalayan Blackberry dominated the riparian zone



DURING

Hydro-Vac in action removing sediments



AFTER

Willow wattle-fences are used to help stabilize the bank

Saanich Environmental Awards

Meet the Winners of 2013

Recognizing people and organizations that make a positive contribution to the natural environment in Saanich.

Volunteer Organization - Greenridge Crew



Twice a week for 17 years the 'Greenridge Crew' have been dependable volunteers, doing a wide variety of tasks to maintain and improve Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. These contributions include a great deal of the heavy work that ensures the trails are covered with mulch or gravel while unwanted or unsafe material is taken away. The Crew keeps the trails clean and useable so that others may easily enjoy the Nature Sanctuary, and they also assist in the removal of invasive plant material. The crew's volunteer efforts include helping at the annual Native Plant Sale and at other special events held throughout the year, all of which supports the community's efforts to keep Swan Lake and Christmas Hill natural. In total, the Greenridge Crew has contributed more than a thousand volunteer hours keeping Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary a green jewel in the centre of Saanich.

Business/Commercial - Oughtred Coffee and Tea



Oughtred Coffee & Tea has integrated sustainability into their core values going above and beyond industry standards and challenging "business as usual". Sustainability is now embedded not only in Oughtred's operations, but in every aspect of how they do business. Oughtred is continuing to look for new and innovative ways to reduce their impact and in turn, support the environmental vitality of Saanich. Oughtred is one of BC's first carbon neutral companies, having reduced their carbon footprint by almost 30% since 2009 through operational and behavioural changes. As a family-owned business dealing with international trade, Oughtred takes responsibility for their interactions with the local and global community. They take pride in providing coffee that is high in quality

and sustainably sourced. Sustainability has successfully been embedded in the brand and corporate culture at Oughtred, leading the way for businesses in Saanich.

Youth Group/School - Royal Oak Middle School



Royal Oak Middle School is adding another honour to their already impressive list of awards. Their waste reduction program, now in its fifth year, has continually set the bar for school recycling programs in BC. Their methods have been adopted by more than 100 schools and school districts, and are the foundation of a new Green Schools Program in the Saanich School District. The students at Royal Oak now divert more than 80% of the school's waste to compost or recycling. The program has become so successful that students, parents, and staff have set up their own extensive recycling programs in their homes and find it difficult to throw away any waste as garbage. Royal Oak was recognized by the BC Green Games as one of 20 winners of their video contest to inspire others to

think and act on environmental issues. Royal Oak students, staff and parents deserve recognition for their environmental stewardship efforts and make us proud to have them as members of our Saanich community.

Biodiversity Conservation Award - Peninsula Streams Society



Peninsula Streams Society, which has been active for many years restoring streams on the Saanich Peninsula, has been a major participant in the cleanup and restoration of Swan Creek and Blenkinsop Creek in the Colquitz watershed since the recent oil spills that captured headlines. This has involved working instream to clean up and create fish habitat and organizing volunteer events to remove invasive species and replant riparian areas with native species. Since that time, they have begun actively working to help form a community group dedicated to the stewardship of Colquitz River, including Swan Creek. Peninsula Streams hosted meetings to involve and educate residents in Saanich about stream stewardship and restoration. The residents of the watershed have now come together to create a new, non-

profit organization dedicated to maintaining and improving the Colquitz and Swan Creek watersheds. Peninsula Streams encourages greater participation by all residents of the Greater Victoria area to get involved in maintaining and improving all of our creeks, rivers and watersheds.

Long Term Achievement - Dr Paul West



Dr. Paul West has been active for many years on scientific and public advisory committees. He is now a retired faculty member from the University of Victoria, where he was a Chemistry professor and Director of the School of Environmental Studies. While Director of Environmental Studies he served on the BC Round Table on the Environment and the Economy. For ten years he was a member of the Advisory Committee to the Environmental and Occupation Health Diploma Program at the University of Victoria. He has chaired the Board of Directors of the Vancouver Island Chapter of the Air and Waste Management Association and served as President of the Chapter on two occasions. He has been a Chair or on the Board of Directors of numerous professional organizations and committees. Locally, he has been very active in

community affairs, particularly those related to the environment. Some of the many environmental committees that he has served on include the CRD Roundtable on the Environment and the Saanich Environmental Advisory Committee, on which he served for over 10 years. Most recently, he chaired the CRD Pesticide Reduction Sub-Committee. He has had experience with many other environmental boards both in BC and in Canada and made significant contributions to all of them with his scientific knowledge and vision for a sustainable environment.

Sustainability - Ed, Michelle, Jamie and Jesse Knaggs



Michelle, Ed, Jamie, and Jesse Knaggs believe in living simply and doing their part. They are a wonderful example of a Saanich family that is demonstrating how to live with sustainability uppermost in their minds. The Knaggs participate in a number of activities to reduce their carbon footprint including: growing their own vegetables, keeping backyard chickens for eggs, composting, using solar energy, driving an electric car, and tracking their use of electricity via an E-gauge. They are modeling these lifestyle changes to friends and neighbours who in turn are changing their own behaviours. The ripple sustainability effect is very important to the Knaggs family. The Knaggs are truly forward thinking in their everyday lives and intent on doing their part to make sustainability a reality.

Honourable Mention - Volunteer Organization - South Island Mountain Bike Society

The South Island Mountain Bike Society (SIMBS) received an honourable mention in recognition of their conscientious efforts to protect recreational lands within Saanich and for their promotion of environmentally-sound mountain biking practices.

GET READY FOR SPRING THIS FALL

By Deborah Walker, Parks and Environmental Services, Capital Regional District

Fall is the perfect time to get ready for spring. Take the following steps to conserve water as the days get cooler and shorter and to ensure your lawns and gardens stay healthy over the winter.



Watering

- Plants, lawns, and gardens usually require little or no watering beyond rainfall in the Fall and Winter months. Overwatering actually damages landscapes. If supplemental watering is needed remember to follow the CRD Stage One Watering Bylaw, which is in effect until September 30.



Composting

- Fall is the perfect time to start a compost pile or add to your composter. Leaves from trees, grass clippings, summer annuals, and other vegetation from your garden make great compost starters.



Mulching

- Mulching is especially effective during the early Fall. Apply 5 to 10 cm of a mulch that has a slow rate of decomposition and impedes the growth of weeds.



Lawn Care

- Aerate your lawn.
- Rake to remove thatch.
- Keep your grass short (about 7 cm) in the fall to discourage weeds and mould.
- Rake leaves off the lawn to avoid smothering grass.



Septic Care

- Protect drainfields over the winter months: ensure downspouts and stormwater run-off are directed away from septic systems.
- When aerating, be aware that septic pipes can be close to the surface and take care not to compact the soil.



Winterize Your Irrigation Systems

- Winterizing your irrigation system (whether in-ground or micro-drip) is important to avoid damaging pipes, tubes, fittings, valves and sprinkler heads.
- Remember to empty and take your hoses and watering cans indoors. It is also a good time to check and repair any leaking hoses or couplings.
- Remember to prepare your rain barrels and plumbing for winter frosts and freezing.

Visit the CRD Website for more details on these Fall and Winter tips. www.crd.bc.ca/water





Swan Creek Update

By Bob Cox, Friends of Swan Creek Watershed

We have been busy over the summer and have carried out a number of activities while enjoying the good weather. We were featured on the front page of the Saanich News! Check out the article here. (<http://www.vicnews.com/news/221536321.html>)

Members of the Friends of Swan Creek Watershed Board met with Saanich staff in July to go over our work plan and review our proposal to re-build three riffles in the lower reaches of Swan Creek. A site visit was arranged and there were no significant issues raised regarding the proposed work. We will pursue this for 2014. The Columbine Way planting site was again visited and the invasive reed canary grass cut. The Water Quality Crew has begun to take measurements and assess sites for longer term monitoring. Site locations will be finalized in early fall. The invertebrate sampling program will also start up this fall.

The group is also actively involved as a stakeholder in the current review of renewing or re-siting the Colquitz fish-counting fence. We also participated in a site visit to the Colquitz River with other stakeholders to review BC Hydro's proposed soil removal plan after the transmission line leak.

A unique event for a number of the members was going out to Goldstream Hatchery to fin clip about 3500 coho fry. I'm not sure who was more nervous: the fry or the novice fin clippers!

The Friends of Swan Creek Watershed would like to acknowledge Peninsula Streams Society and the following funders for supporting our environmental stewardship and restoration activities in the Swan Creek Watershed: the Pacific Salmon Foundation, Victoria Foundation, Vancity Credit Union, the RBC Blue Water Project and the Province of British Columbia.

For more information, please contact Bob Cox (Chair) at rkcox@shaw.ca



Photo credits: Bob Cox



Raising Young Voices: Sierra Club BC Launches New Youth Education Program

Education Program
*Deeply rooted,
Branching out*



**SIERRA
CLUB
BC**

This September, Sierra Club BC's Education Team launched the new Youth Environmental Leadership Program (YELP) in Victoria. YELP, which emerged from the Sustainable High Schools program, aims to foster youth leadership skills and civic engagement through advocacy-based activities, workshops, and events. The nine-month drop-in program kicks off with the Youth Actions in Nature Camp-Out, bringing youth from different schools to Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site to learn about advocacy, conservation, and leadership.

Other plans for the YELP curriculum include organizing events, habitat restoration projects, movie-making and storytelling workshops, safety and risk assessment courses, and outdoor leadership training. "Over the years our team has developed a deep appreciation for the motivations, values, and passions of youth," says Sierra Club BC Education Program Manager, Kieran Dowling. "Today's young people face a different world than generations before them. They want to be directly involved in decisions that affect their future."

With plans to expand the program across B.C., YELP aims to prepare youth for the transition from high school to post-secondary education or the workforce; helping them remaining politically engaged and active within a growing green jobs market. "By recognizing and inviting youth to demonstrate their creativity, tenacity, and organizing abilities, we can support leaders to emerge," says Dowling. "Youth are not just our leaders of tomorrow, but important leaders in social structures today."

Visit the Sierra Club BC's Education page or Facebook or contact the SCBC Education Program at education@sierraclub.bc.ca to learn more about the SCBC Youth Environmental Leadership Program and other youth engagement opportunities.



Upcoming Events

Saanich Recreation Trails & Treks

Enjoy fresh air, beautiful scenery, a friendly chat and gentle exercise as we take different walks through Saanich parks & trails. No registration required. Wear suitable footwear.

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

Sunday Hikes (FREE Drop-In)

Sundays, 1 pm - 3:30 pm

**Unless noted leashed, well-behaved dogs are welcome.*

Oct 20 - Kentwood to Rolston Trail

Meet on Lochside Drive at Royal Oak Drive (near Lochside Elementary School), parking is available on Lochside Drive

Nov 17 - Shelbourne Valley Circle

Meet at footbridge, Cedar Hill Recreation Centre parking lot

Dec 15 - Cadboro Bay to Queenswood

Meet in the Gyro Park parking lot, at Cadboro Bay

Gentle Walk & Talk (FREE Drop-In)

Thursdays, 9:30 am – 11 am

Oct 3 - Mystic Vale

Meet at Cadboro/Gyro Park parking lot beside washrooms

Oct 10 - Royal Oak Trails

Meet outside Royal Band at Broadmead Shopping Centre.

Oct 17 - West Saanich Interurban Rail Trail

Meet at Red Barn Market, 5550 West Saanich Rd. parking lot

Oct 24 - UVic Alumni Chip Trail

Meet at Henderson Rec Centre, outside main door

Oct 31 - Blenkinsop Valley

Meet at Lochside Elementary School on Lochside trail

Nov 7 - Lambrick Park to Sierra Park

Meet at Gordon Head Rec Centre lobby, 4100 Lambrick Way

Nov 14 - Marigold Park

Meet at Strawberry Vale Community Centre on 11 High St.

Nov 21 - Panama Hill Park

Meet at Hyacinth Park, parking lot, off Marigold at Interurban

Nov 28 - Lower Trails of Mt. Doug

Meet at washrooms of main parking lot off Cordova Bay Rd

CRD Parks & Environmental Services

The Parks Fall Nature Outings and Events brochure for Oct.-Dec. is now out. Our naturalists lead guided walks, hikes, and drop-in events for all ages and abilities. Most are free, all fun!

www.crd.bc.ca/parks/ 250-478-3344

Hawk Watch (Special Drop-in Event)

Saturday, Sept 28, 11 am – 3 pm

East Sooke Regional Park

Have you ever seen Turkey Vultures 'kettling'? Join CRD Parks and the Victoria Natural History Society for this annual migration event complete with live raptor demonstrations. The 20-minute trek up to the viewpoint requires sturdy footwear and experts with spotting scopes will be there. Bring binoculars, water and a lunch. Meet at the kiosk in the Aylard Farm parking lot off Becher Bay Road.

Grow a Native Plant Garden (Course)

Saturday, October 5, 26 9:30-12:30pm

Sunday, October 20, November 3, 1-4pm

Tuesday, October 8, November 5, 9:30-12:30pm

Swan Lake Nature House (3873 Swan Lake Road)

Residents of the CRD are invited to participate in a FREE workshop on gardening with drought-resistant native plants.

Instruction on native plant identification, their benefits and how to use them will be covered. Pre-registration is required by calling 250.479.0211.

Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary

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

Guided Bird Walks (Drop-In)

Every Wednesday and Sunday, 9:00 am

Bring binoculars & meet in the parking lot.

Wild Mushroom Show (Drop-in Event)

Sunday, October 27, 10 am - 4 pm

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 ID.

Wild Mushrooms: (Workshop)

Wednesday, Oct 9, 16, 23, Nov 6, 13, 7 to 9 pm

Field trip: Saturday, Oct 26, 9 am - 12 pm

An introductory course for adults. 6 classes and field trips. \$20/class for Swan Lake members - \$25 for non-members.

Reach for the Stars (Workshop)

Tuesday, October 8, 22, 29, 7 to 9 pm

Learn to use a telescope, navigate the constellations and find the hidden gems among the stars. Telescopes provided. \$60 for Swan Lake members - \$75 for non-members.

Compost Education Centre

www.compost.bc.ca 250-386-9676

Plant a Fruit Tree Day (Event)

Saturday, Sept 28, 10 am - 4 pm

Fernwood Community Centre 1240 Gladstone Avenue.

There will be fruit tree growers, live music, food and mini workshops on home orchard creation, plus guest speakers.

Tickets are \$20: www.eventbrite.ca/org/3022484318

SeaChange Marine Conservation Society

www.seachangesociety.com 250-652-1662

Restoration Days at SNIDCEL (Tod Inlet)

Oct 5 & 19, Nov 2 & 16, 10 am - 2 pm

SeaChange is a non-profit organization emphasizing marine restoration and also coordinates terrestrial restoration in Gowlland-Tod Provincial Park. We welcome anyone to join us and help restore this beautiful place! juditharney@gmail.com

Victoria Natural History Society

Visit www.naturevictoria.ca for more programs

Natural History Night (every 2nd Tuesday)

Tuesday, Oct 8, Nov 12, 7:30 pm

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

Botany Night (every 3rd Tuesday)

Tuesday, Oct 15, Nov 19, 7:30 pm

Swan Lake Nature House

Birder's Night (every 4th Wednesday)

Tuesday, Oct 23, Nov 27, 7:30 pm

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

Marine Night (last Monday of the month)

Tuesday, Oct 28, Nov 25, 7:30 pm

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159



This photo shows some of the 75 volunteers who came out to Saanich's 2012 Tree Appreciation Day at Mount Douglas Park. The volunteers, with help from Saanich Parks, planted several hundred trees and native plants. The work was done in areas that had been previously cleared by the invasive species group. If you are interested in participating this year, the date is November 3. Check the Saanich Parks website for this year's location. Photo credit: Darrell Wick, Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society.

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

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