



Our Backyard

A NEWSLETTER ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAANICH

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Seven-year-old discovers new population of endangered species

By Adam Taylor, Habitat Acquisition Trust

You can too!

What does it take to be a citizen scientist? Mostly a willingness to get a little wet, a little dirty, and look for little animals. My son was doing all three recently when he discovered a new population of Blue-grey Taildropper slugs in the Cowichan Valley. We were out for a “walk and talk” with Dr Kristiina Ovaska on the Nature Conservancy of Canada property with other slug and snail enthusiasts. The goal was education; we didn’t expect to find Blue-grey Taildroppers.

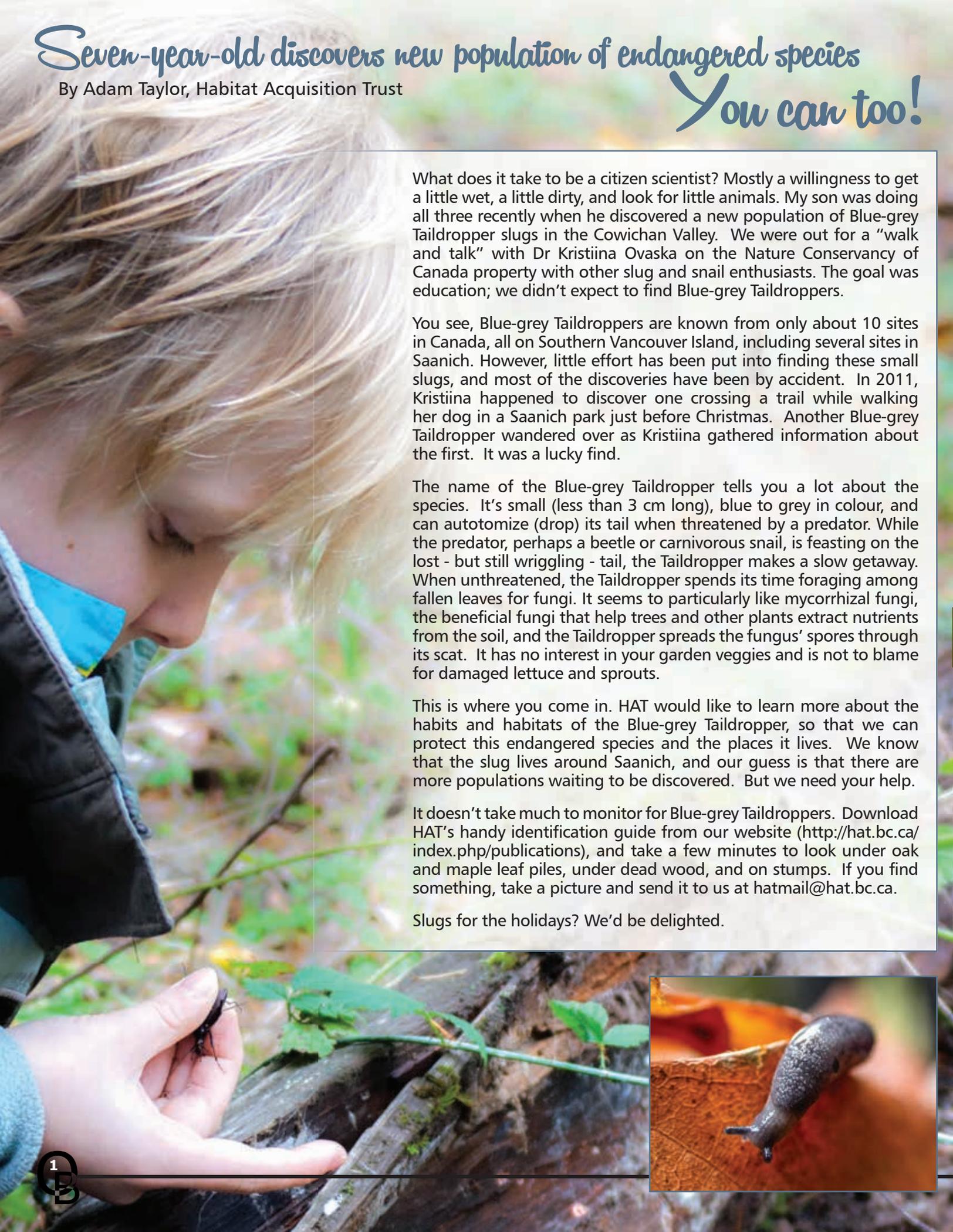
You see, Blue-grey Taildroppers are known from only about 10 sites in Canada, all on Southern Vancouver Island, including several sites in Saanich. However, little effort has been put into finding these small slugs, and most of the discoveries have been by accident. In 2011, Kristiina happened to discover one crossing a trail while walking her dog in a Saanich park just before Christmas. Another Blue-grey Taildropper wandered over as Kristiina gathered information about the first. It was a lucky find.

The name of the Blue-grey Taildropper tells you a lot about the species. It’s small (less than 3 cm long), blue to grey in colour, and can autotomize (drop) its tail when threatened by a predator. While the predator, perhaps a beetle or carnivorous snail, is feasting on the lost - but still wriggling - tail, the Taildropper makes a slow getaway. When unthreatened, the Taildropper spends its time foraging among fallen leaves for fungi. It seems to particularly like mycorrhizal fungi, the beneficial fungi that help trees and other plants extract nutrients from the soil, and the Taildropper spreads the fungus’ spores through its scat. It has no interest in your garden veggies and is not to blame for damaged lettuce and sprouts.

This is where you come in. HAT would like to learn more about the habits and habitats of the Blue-grey Taildropper, so that we can protect this endangered species and the places it lives. We know that the slug lives around Saanich, and our guess is that there are more populations waiting to be discovered. But we need your help.

It doesn’t take much to monitor for Blue-grey Taildroppers. Download HAT’s handy identification guide from our website (<http://hat.bc.ca/index.php/publications>), and take a few minutes to look under oak and maple leaf piles, under dead wood, and on stumps. If you find something, take a picture and send it to us at hatmail@hat.bc.ca.

Slugs for the holidays? We’d be delighted.





Pulling Together Volunteer Program Site: Ferndale Forest Park

By Jenny Eastman, Saanich Pulling Together Program

Well-known Canadian women's rights pioneer Nellie Clung had a connection with Ferndale Forest Park. In the 1930's she lived across the street from it, and her written archives contain several poems about this peaceful forest.

Donated to Saanich Parks in the 1990s by the Moore family, Ferndale Forest is a remnant Douglas-fir ecosystem in Gordon Head. This 1.3 hectare park contains a much-used walking trail to connect between neighbourhoods and for daily dog walkers. There many invasive species of concern here, particularly English Ivy, Daphne Laurel and Garlic Mustard. Dumping of yard waste from nearby neighbourhoods has also introduced Periwinkle and Lamium, both highly invasive ground covers.

In 2012, a team of keen neighbours approached Saanich Parks about beginning some ecological restoration work in the park. Their hope was to prevent the trees from dying due to English Ivy strangulation and to plant native species to provide habitat for native fauna. A call was put out to the neighbourhood and several neighbours have joined in with the efforts. In 2013, the University of Victoria's Restoration of Natural Systems students drafted a restoration plan to help guide the work in this park. The volunteer team meets weekly and, with staff support, the progress has been steady. In the course of their work, volunteers have uncovered old car parts, a handmade stone baking oven and many old glass bottles. All evidence of past uses of this well-loved park, from disposal place to a source of peace and poetry.



New volunteers are always welcome to join work parties each Monday 10:00 am to 12:00 pm. Tools and refreshments provided. Meet at the end of Leyn's Road, off of Vantright Drive.

ESA Mapping Initiative Results

By Adriane Pollard, Saanich Environmental Services

The District of Saanich is expanding its Environmentally Significant Areas (ESA) mapping to improve our existing inventories by looking for areas that may have been missed during past mapping initiatives. These existing inventories currently appear in our ESA Atlas. The new data will be used to produce an updated ESA Atlas in late 2014.

Data collection for this initiative occurred in two phases. In phase 1, the public was invited to send information on sites that could be of interest to our consultant who could follow up with further scientific data collection. In phase 2, sites were identified by our consultant through existing inventories, data, and aerial photo analysis. These included the 2008 Coastal Douglas-fir Terrestrial Ecosystem Mapping, Historical Garry Oak mapping, and the Victoria Natural History Society Greenspaces Project. Phase 2 involved a major landowner contact campaign to gain access to sites, and was completed in 2013. Phase 1 recommended 29 new ESA's, and for phase 2, 38 new ESA's were recommended

With the assistance of the Technical Advisory Group, Saanich staff will consider the consultant's recommendations. There are many options for how the data may be used.

Phase 1 Results

29 new ESA's recommended:

- 23 sensitive ecosystems
- 1 isolated watercourse
- 1 Bald Eagle nest
- 4 undeveloped Right-of-ways

Plus

- 2 wildlife tree areas
- 5 veteran tree areas
- 4 older second growth forests

Phase 2 Results

38 new ESA's recommended:

- 30 Sensitive Ecosystems
- 2 isolated wetlands
- 6 undeveloped right-of-ways

Plus

- 7 wildlife tree sites
- 6 veteran tree sites

Where can I find more information?

Please see our project website at www.saanich.ca/living/natural/esamapping.html

Saanich Environmental Services

planning@saanich.ca

250-475-5471

District of Saanich 770 Vernon Ave, Victoria, BC V8X 2W7

Pulling Together Volunteer Profile

Doug Hare

Home made, Home grown, Hand built

In his frosty backyard, Doug Hare carefully slips a shiny curved blade into an apple branch as he demonstrates how to graft fruit trees. He then offers up a crispy, strawberry scented Ellison Orange apple for a taste. A member of the BC Fruit Testers Association and UVic biology graduate, Doug still lives in the home he grew up in near Houlihan Park in Gordon Head. He recalls the field nearby full of Sky Lark calls and a childhood spent high climbing Douglas-firs and scaling cliffs at Glencoe and Arbutus Coves. "It was just what a childhood should be", he recalls, "we explored, built and dug and scavenged treasures. I still climb my big old Arbutus tree to prune it – you remember those skills learned as a kid," notes Doug at age 60.

A man of diverse interests and skills, Doug has designed and crafted countless creations – amphibious aircraft, wooden structures, sailboats, self-designed tools, green houses, and more, and he gives life to a garden that keeps him fed with 72 grafted varieties of apples (Gravenstein is his favourite). Doug also cultivates cacti. Amid all this creative energy he finds time to volunteer with Saanich's Pulling Together Program at Ferndale Forest Park. Doug and the volunteer team use some of his clever homemade tools (including the "fly by night shovel" made of recycled aircraft pieces) to perform removal of intricate English Ivy root systems. Says Doug, "My motivation for removing invasives is about doing a small bit to counteract the damage our species inflicts on our environment. Few of us are in a position to correct the impact of human activities on the planet. Everyone can do a little and lead by example."

Back at home, Doug tucks away the harvested boxes of red and yellow apples as the winter chill approaches, "There are many heritage fruit trees in Saanich Parks that could use some care too" he notes, "Maybe some volunteers will help with that too... more apples would be good." Our thanks to Doug and the Ferndale Forest team of volunteers for all their work caring for their park.

By Jenny Eastman,
Saanich Pulling Together Program



Doug Hare, Pulling Together Volunteer at Ferndale Forest Park with a couple of his home made tools for invasive species removal

Urban Forestry & Natural Areas Corner

2013 Saanich Knotweed Treatment

By Cory Manton, Saanich Parks

Knotweed is a tall, herbaceous, perennial plant that is native to areas of Eastern Asia. Unfortunately the World Conservation Union lists it among the world's 100 worst alien invasive species. In the District of Saanich, there are three invasive Knotweeds (Japanese, Bohemian, and Giant) that are spread when used as garden ornamental plants, or inadvertently by soils containing fragments of rhizome and stem tissue. They are known to form dense stands that cause bank erosion and clogged waterways. This threatens ecological processes and biological diversity in general. They also cause expensive Infrastructure impacts by penetrating pavement and damaging roads, foundations, other structures, and drainage systems.

The District of Saanich takes the threat of invasive species seriously and has an Invasive Species Management Strategy. This plan provides guidance for site inventories, monitoring and evaluation, prevention, and best practices for treatments, disposal, and restoration. The best management practice for Knotweed strongly recommends treatment regimes that include appropriate chemical treatments (integrated with other methods). Other treatment methods, at this point, do not provide assurances of eradication and/or may risk further spread. The goal in the Capital Region is to eradicate this species.

Chemical treatment of Knotweed in Saanich began in 2010 on both private and public lands, and, as of 2013, a few of these original sites show no evidence of Knotweed this season. Based on this experience and current research, Saanich is hoping for 3 to 4 years of chemical treatment to eliminate a population. The 2012 program treated approximately 65 Knotweed sites on private and public land and surveys showed a 70 to 80% reduction in new stem growth. There was a significant reduction in the growth and vigour of the plants with much less height and width to the bamboo-like stems, and a more bonsai look to the foliage and lateral stems. The inset photo shows a typical reaction of knotweed after the first year of herbicide treatment.

Public awareness to the invasive nature of Knotweed is growing, and efforts will be made in 2014 to increase media output. The CTV broadcast, Destructive Knotweed Not Welcome In CRD, was followed by dozens of calls and reports to Saanich Environmental Services and Parks about new Knotweed sites. Approximately 30 new sites were added to our treatment list for 2013 and all but a few were treated on top of the previously managed sites. Public feedback was excellent when crews from Saanich Parks and Environmental Services were fortunate enough to discuss the program with home owners.

The Capital Region Invasive Species Partnership held a Knotweed information session in July for all municipalities within CRD to share their experiences and treatment regimes. A PowerPoint presentation by Saanich staff resulted in excellent discussion on the battle against Knotweed. With almost 100 known Knotweed sites within Saanich, and more new reports expected next year, our commitment to eliminate this invasive species from Saanich remains strong.



*Bonsai-like plant growth
spring 2013*

Tree Appreciation Day 2013:

7,000 plants, 80 volunteers and staff, sunshine, cookies, and dirt.

By Cory Manton, Saanich Parks

As the morning sun filtered through the trees, more than 80 volunteers and staff took part in the District of Saanich's Tree Appreciation Day. Approximately 7000 native shrubs and trees were planted by these volunteers, including the help of many enthusiastic children. The goal was to restore sites that had been cleared of invasive plants or disturbed by restoration work to improve creeks and tributaries.

Whitehead Park

The hard work of Saanich's Pulling Together Volunteers in clearing the blackberry at Whitehead Park has paid off. Three hundred plants, consisting of 17 native plant varieties: Common Snowberry, Sword Fern, Oregon Grape, Thimbleberry, Red-Flowering Currant, Oceanspray, Red Huckleberry, and Pacific Crab Apple just to name a few, were planted in the area south west of the Goward Road bridge. Look for the deer fence just past the bridge to find the site.

Mount Douglas Park

A mix of 2600 Sword Fern, Oregon Grape, Salal, Oceanspray, Indian Plum, Douglas-fir, and Grand Fir filled the restored tributaries at Mt. Doug. The diverse mix of native species were planted close together, giving excellent ground cover adjacent to the naturally vegetated forest floor. If you want to see the results of this effort, head to the trails below Mt. Douglas Parkway (behind the secret gathering spot for the Halloween jack-o-lanterns).

Cuthbert Holmes Park

The sparsely vegetated, compacted soils at Cuthbert Holmes Park were brought back to life with more than 2300 Salal, Sword Fern, Oregon Grape, and rose species mixed in with a few Grand Fir and Western Yew seedlings. The site was heavily mulched last fall to help loosen the soils and retain moisture to create a better growing environment for the native plants.

Emily Carr Park

If you get a chance, check out the amazing transformation of Gabo Creek within Emily Carr Park. The once choked out, blackberry-infested creek banks have been transformed with Salmonberry, Hardhack, Scouler's Willow, Red-osier Dogwood, Nootka Rose, Red Elderberry, and many other native plants. The newly planted area and willow wattle fences built by Saanich Public Works will help stabilize soils and grow a native riparian zone.

Fuelled by cookies and coffee, volunteers and Saanich staff planted hard for two hours to bring life back into areas that had once been dominated by invasive plants. Thank you to all of the participants, especially the kids, for a great effort. Restoration of Saanich Parks back to their beautiful natural state will be enjoyed by many generations to come.

Youth Initiatives: Addressing the Environmental Disconnect

By Chris Fretwell, Sierra Club BC, Youth Engagement Coordinator

This year, under a new youth engagement program initiated by Sierra Club BC, youth throughout the CRD are taking action on what they see as a key issue for their generation and our society. Addressing people's disconnect from both nature and politics is fundamental in taking action for healthy communities and ecosystems. The Youth Environmental Leadership Program (YELP), which began in September, is a 9-month youth-driven program for ages 14-18 aimed at providing opportunities for engagement and skills-development in the areas of social and environmental justice. Early in the program the youth involved identified the 'disconnect' issue as a key theme that will inform their activities over the year.

The Fall season saw many opportunities for connecting with both nature and community. The YELP group got involved in everything from a camp-out at Goldstream Provincial Park with leaders in Victoria's NGO community, to collaborating with the Tsawout First Nation in ecological restoration, to raising their voices against pipelines and tankers at the Nov 16th National Day of Action.

Some upcoming highlights for the new year include campouts at Fort Rodd Hill National Historic Site and in the Gulf Islands, as well as many other skill-building out-trips and workshops. In one of these workshops the group will receive training in video production with local experts from Reel Youth media empowerment program. In keeping with the theme of 'addressing the disconnect' the group plans to visit elementary schools in the spring to deliver environmental education presentations and get outdoors with their younger peers.

Getting involved with YELP is fun, free, and open. 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.



Saanich Noxious Weed Bylaw Review

By Caroline Richman, Saanich Environmental Services

One hundred and seven years ago, in 1906, an earthquake destroyed much of San Francisco, Jack London published *White Fang* and the first record player was invented. It was also in this year that Saanich Council adopted a Noxious Weeds Bylaw (and the year of Saanich's incorporation). It seems that it is time to review this bylaw!

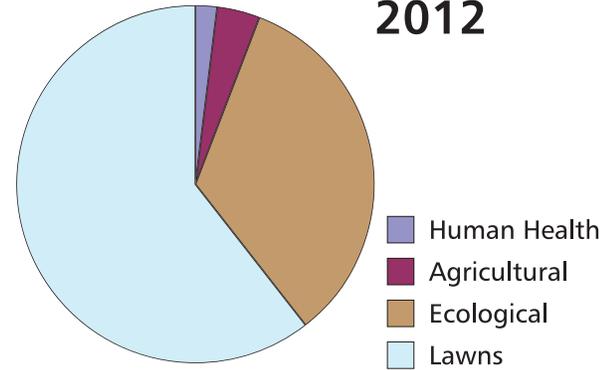
In 1906, three plant species were named in this bylaw as the key priorities: Canada Thistle, Ox-eye Daisy, and Wild Mustard - all agricultural issues of that time. Eventually new plant species were added and some wording changed. One hundred and seven years after adoption, the bylaw receives very few complaints about agricultural weeds. Instead complaints are mostly about unmowed grass and common weeds. The bylaw is also used to deal with contemporary issues regarding invasive species that are having environmental, economic, and social impacts.

Public input is part of the process as Saanich reviews this bylaw. A public open house was held in early November and a virtual open house is available on the website (see below). A survey attracted 250 respondents over the Fall. A second public open house will be held in 2014 once the concepts for a revised bylaw are developed (based on consultation and research). By the end of 2014, staff will bring forward a report to Council proposing revisions to the bylaw and a bylaw administration policy. Saanich is very thankful for all public participation in this process to help us build an effective bylaw.

Saanich is looking to broaden the bylaw to consider current priority issues. The bylaw should be aligned to the goal, strategies, and actions outlined in the Invasive Species Management Strategy adopted by Council in April 2013, as well as updated and aligned with provincial legislation. Other considerations include proper techniques for removal and disposal of invasives, as well as enforcement, compliance, and administration.

For more information: www.saanich.ca

Noxious Weeds Bylaw Complaints
2012



Upcoming Events

Saanich Recreation Trails & Treks

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

Sunday Hikes (FREE Drop-In)

Sundays, 1 pm - 3:30 pm

Penny Stevens & Robert Newell

Discover the beauty of the Saanich Parks right in your backyard. These FREE guided hikes are open to adults of all ages. No registration necessary-just drop in at the appropriate time and meeting place. Although these hikes follow mainly chip trails and pavement, there may be some rough or steep sections, so please wear sturdy and supportive footwear. Carry adequate drinking water. Walks go rain or shine.

Jan 26 - Campus To Cove

Meet at UVic parking lot #10, off Gordon Head Rd (free)

Feb 23 - Konukson Park & Ten Mile Point

Meet at Cadboro Bay Gyro Park parking lot, end of Sinclair St.

Mar 23 - Copley Park West & Layritz

Meet at Copley Park West, on Parkridge, off Vanalman Ave.

Gentle Walk & Talk (FREE Drop-In)

Thursdays, 9:30 am – 11 am

Enjoy fresh air, beautiful scenery, a friendly chat and gentle exercise as we take different walks through Saanich parks & trails. A great way to meet people. No registration required. Suitable for all walking abilities. Wear suitable footwear. Sorry, dogs not permitted.

Mar 6 - Lambrick Park to Sierra Park

Meet at Gordon Head Rec Centre lobby, 4100 Lambrick Way

Mar 13 - Interurban Rail Trail

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

Mar 20 - Colquitz Creek to Hyacinth

Meet at Colquitz Creek Park sign near Silver City Theatre

Mar 27 - Beckwith – Maltwood - Stoneywood

Meet at Beckwith Park parking lot, on Beckwith St, off Quadra

CRD Parks & Environmental Services

The Parks Fall Nature Outings and Events brochure for January-March 2014 is now out. Our naturalists lead guided walks, hikes, and drop-in events for all ages and abilities. Most are free, all are fun! www.crd.bc.ca/parks/ 250-478-3344

Going Batty! (Drop-in Event)

Friday, Feb 21, 11 am – 2 pm

Francis/King Regional Park

Drop in between 11 am and 2 pm and join in a batty world with CRD Regional Parks' naturalists. Make a 'bat button', enjoy a 'bat walk' through the park at 11:15am or 1:15pm. Meet at the Francis King Nature Centre off Munn Road.

Grow a Native Plant Garden (Course)

Sunday, February 2, 1 to 4pm

Saturday, February 15, 9:30-12:30pm

Monday, March 3, 9:30-12:30pm

Saturday, March 15, 9:30-12:30pm

Wednesday, April 9, 9:30-12:30pm

Sunday, April 13, 1 to 4pm

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.

Oh Deer (Drop-in Event)

Sunday, January 26, 12 pm - 3 pm

Deer, deer everywhere! Love them or hate them, they're a native part of our environment and they are here to stay. Play deer games, deer bingo, make deer crafts and learn more about these fuzzy invaders!

Who Gives a Hoot? (Drop-in Event)

Sunday, February 23, 12 pm - 3 pm

Who glides silently, can turn their head almost completely around and can cough-up a wicked hairball – who-who-who? Explore owls through games, stories, crafts, hands-on exploration, dissect an owl pellet, and try a game of owl bingo.

Fossil Fair (Drop-in Event)

Saturday & Sunday, March 22-23, 12 pm - 3 pm

Who lived here millions of years ago? Dinosaurs, trilobites, ammonites, enormous clams and sharks lived in the ancient tropical coral seas and palm tree forests that covered Vancouver Island. Palaeontologists will share their personal fossil discoveries and help to ID your fossils. Bring your kids for a scavenger hunt, make fossil and dinosaur rubbings, dig for fossils in a sandbox, and take a fossil home as a treasure.

Hummingbird Day (Drop-in Event)

Sunday, March 30, 12 pm - 3 pm

It may seem early, but Anna's Hummingbirds start to nest in February, and it won't be too long before the summer hummers, the Rufous return for their annual visit. Join us as we discover how to get the most of hummingbirds in your neighbourhood through crafts, stories, hands-on exploration and song – don't worry if you don't know the words you can just – hum!

Victoria Natural History Society

Visit www.naturevictoria.ca for more programs

Natural History Night (FREE Event)

“Peace Out” Documentary (Tuesday, Jan 14, 7:30 pm)

The Dead Keep Talking (Tuesday, Feb 11, 7:30 pm)

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

Botany Night (FREE Event)

Cowichan Garry Oak Preserve (Tuesday, Jan 21, 7:30 pm)

Trial Island Rare Plants (Tuesday, Feb 18, 7:30 pm)

Swan Lake Nature House

Birder's Night (FREE Event)

Rocky Point Bird Observatory (Tuesday, Jan 22, 7:30 pm)

Raptors of Canada (Tuesday, Feb 26, 7:30 pm)

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

Marine Night (FREE Event)

Pacific Leatherback Turtle (Tuesday, Jan 27, 7:30 pm)

Oil Spill Drift Card Study (Tuesday, Feb 24, 7:30 pm)

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

Saanich Training to Restore Streambanks

By Caroline Richman, Saanich Environmental Services

Saanich is fortunate to have many natural streams, but also the unfortunate reality of degradation due to urban development for many of these ecologically important areas. Specific impacts of urban development, agriculture, and industry include stormwater run off, erosion, loss of native vegetation, invasive species, chemical/nutrient imbalances, sedimentation, loss of large woody debris and alteration of stream flow. In Saanich there are policies, bylaws, and other initiatives to protect and restore streams as an ongoing process. Saanich staff and community partners are also taking an active role to restore streambanks through a process called bioengineering.

In 2003 and 2004 Saanich Environmental Services hosted 3 staff training sessions on bioengineering which provided staff with theoretical and practical training to restore damaged streambanks. In November of this year, another training session was held with Saanich staff and community stewards. The instructor, David Polster, is a plant ecologist with 35 years of experience in vegetation studies and reclamation/ restoration.

The two-day course focused on how to restore damaged ecosystems and streambanks using structural materials, cuttings from plants such as native willows and Red-osier Dogwood, and techniques to stabilize soils, control erosion or seepage, and re-establish native plants. The workshop in November used bioengineering to improve a section of Swan Creek near Hyacinth Park. Staff and community partners can now use these methods to work on ecological restoration of other degraded stream areas in Saanich. Look for bioengineering restoration used recently in these areas:

- Bowker Creek at McRae Avenue
- Colquitz Creek west of Columbine Way
- Gabo Creek at Emily Carr Park



Preparation of live stakes at Swan Creek
Photo: Bob Cox



Down the eroded Swan Creek bank before bioengineering
Photo: Bob Cox



Live stake wattling on Swan Creek
Photo: Bob Cox



Bioengineering results (2005) on Bowker Creek at McRae Ave.
Left bank full growth, right bank early growth on new wattling

FREE Business Energy Assessments for Saanich Businesses

By Glenys Verhulst, City Green Solutions

Is your business looking for ways to save on energy costs and access rebates and incentives? For a limited time your business is eligible for a FREE business energy assessment offer.

City Green has teamed up with the Province of B.C.'s LiveSmart BC: Small Business Program, Capital Regional District, BC Hydro Power Smart and FortisBC to help small and medium sized businesses identify potential energy and money saving opportunities.

- Save money on energy bills
- Improve your work environment
- Reduce maintenance costs
- Access BC Hydro and FortisBC incentives to help cover costs of upgrades
- Receive a LiveSmart BC recognition package to promote your energy saving achievements

To sign up for the program and take advantage of the FREE business energy assessment offer contact the City Green Business Energy Advisor at business@citygreen.ca or 250.381.9995 ext 118.



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