

# Our Backyard

A NEWSLETTER ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAANICH



Volume 14 | Issue 4 | Winter 2014

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# Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary Update

Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary is a wild oasis in the heart of the urban landscape and includes two distinct ecosystems: the beautiful marshland of Swan Lake and the rocky, oak-forested highlands of Christmas Hill. Both are home to an incredible array of native plants and wild animals.

An extensive trail system gives visitors access to this site. For those who like to meander, the lake trail is an easy 2 km walk and the floating boardwalk puts you right in the centre of this significant wetland area. For those looking for a little more exertion, the hill trails offer more of a challenge. The summit of Christmas Hill sits at 109 meters above sea level and rewards you with a spectacular view of the city. In the spring a sea of wildflowers surrounds you as you walk past the endangered Garry oak meadow.

Over the last few years these trails have been worn down, but this past August a grant from Mountain Equipment Coop (MEC) paid for the resurfacing of the lake trail and the connector trail from the lake to Christmas Hill. This means that as the fall rains come down the trail should not be as muddy and slippery as past years. And this is a great time of year to visit and watch migratory birds pass through and winter residents arrive. In addition to the grant which covered material costs we received hundreds of hours of volunteer help to do the work. Gems like the Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary require partners like MEC and a wonderful crew of volunteers to provide access to Nature in an urban landscape.

## Thank you all!

By Jay Rastogi  
Swan Lake Groundskeeper

# Colquitz Watershed

Focus on Swan Creek and Goward Springs Creek

By Francesca Loro  
Stewardship Coordinator, Peninsula Streams Society  
with contribution from Lynn Husted, Goward Springs Watershed Stewards

In 2011, an oil spill into Swan Creek brought media and community attention to this urban Saanich stream. During investigations to determine the extent and remediation needed, we (Peninsula Streams Society) discovered a couple things. The oil spill occurred in November, at just the time of year that adult Coho Salmon were returning from the ocean to swim upstream to spawn. The female salmon, bellies swollen with thousands of eggs, had to wait their turn to spawn on what little gravel there was in the creek. Salmon dig their nests in gravel beds and Swan Creek was mostly a channel of clay and large shot rock. Fortunately, we also discovered that there were many concerned citizens who had long been interested in the creek and were eager to help restore it. Now, two years later, the Friends of Swan Creek Watershed is an active group that has undertaken stream/riparian restoration projects on several creek sections. Over four days in September 2014, Peninsula Streams Society and the Friends built six riffle/pool structures and salmon spawning habitat in three sections of the creek. If you walk along the path between Violet Avenue and the bridge behind the CRD pump station, you may just notice the gravel beds that await this year's spawning salmon.

Further north in the watershed, we've been supporting the Goward Springs Watershed Stewards in restoration of the riparian forest along the section of Goward Springs Creek which flows from Viaduct Flats through the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific and Vancouver Island Technology Park properties. Invasive species have been cleared, followed by extensive planting, mulching and watering of 540 trees. More than 620 hours of volunteer work have been contributed in 2014 so far, and volunteer work continues on select Saturday mornings.

We continue to liaise with the Municipality of Saanich and others towards developing an Integrated Stormwater Management Plan for the Swan/Blenkinsop Watershed, which will help guide future restoration plans.

Visit us at [www.PeninsulaStreams.ca](http://www.PeninsulaStreams.ca) for more information.



# New Interpretive Signs in Mount Douglas Park

By Darrell Wick  
Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society, President

Saanich Parks recently installed two well-designed interpretive signs in Mount Douglas Park. One explains the operation of the weir in Douglas Creek, near where the water leaves the urban storm drain system and becomes an open creek. The second new interpretive sign honours a Douglas-fir tree that was approximately 250 years old.

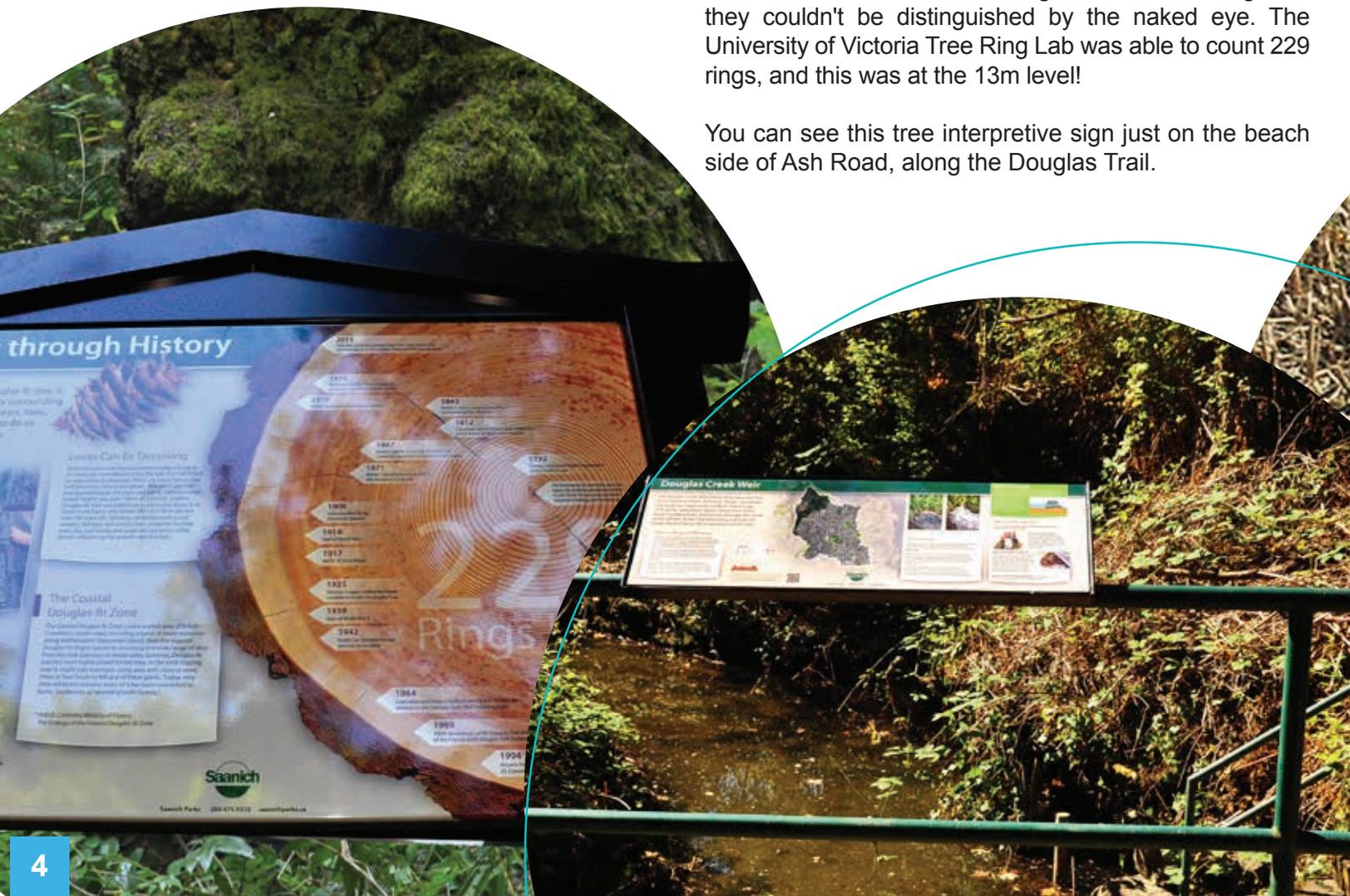
No doubt many Park visitors passed the concrete-and-stone weir structure as they walked along the Churchill Trail, and had no idea of its purpose, how it worked or the weir's importance for the health of this salmon-bearing stream. A first impression is of a simple dam; it's not obvious that the weir is an inverted floating pollutant trap. A cross section diagram on the interpretive sign tells the true story - the pipes passing water downstream are slanted down into the pond behind the weir so that their intake is clean water from the bottom of the pond. Floating pollutants remain on the surface where Saanich crews regularly skim them off.

The weir pond also acts as a settling pond. Rain water washes sand and silt from the streets into the storm drain system and then into the pond. Over the years, the pond has been filling with this sediment and needs to be cleaned out, a task for next year when the pond will also be enlarged so that it is even more effective as a settling pond.

Also included on the sign is a map of the Douglas Creek catchment area, and an explanation of the huge storm surges and actions to mitigate them. Stop by and have a look at this new interpretive sign – it is a great addition to the Park.

The other new interpretive sign features a tree "cookie" of the 250-year-old Douglas-fir. The tree was a danger tree because of significant rot. Fortunately, instead of cutting it down, Saanich crews were able to top it to become a wildlife tree. The small 1m diameter of the tree didn't convey an image of an old tree, but on examination of the cut section, some of the tree rings were so close together they couldn't be distinguished by the naked eye. The University of Victoria Tree Ring Lab was able to count 229 rings, and this was at the 13m level!

You can see this tree interpretive sign just on the beach side of Ash Road, along the Douglas Trail.



# Rithet's Bog 2014

## Invasive Cattail Removal Work Party a Success!

Residents came out in force for an invasive cattail removal work party on Saturday September 13, 2014. Volunteers from the Rithet's Bog Conservation Society, Saanich's *Pulling Together* Program, Duck's Unlimited Canada, TREX unit of the Victoria Girl Guides, and the general public worked with Saanich Parks' staff to remove a non-native species of cattail from Rithet's Bog.

There was approximately 30 volunteers who worked tirelessly for five hours in the heat to remove over 1400 square metres of the taller *Typha angustifolia*, or Narrow-leaved Cattail, which has been introduced from eastern North America. The native *Typha latifolia*, or Broad-leaved Cattail, was not removed. The invasive and a hybrid between the two have been choking out the open water areas of the bog and reducing critical habitat. The removal of these cattails involves cutting the stems to ground level in order for the "stumps" to be submerged in water over the wet winter months. This essentially drowns out the plants preventing regrowth from the root system. Opening up the bog to increased standing water greatly improves the wildlife habitat for numerous wetland animals including the many species of waterfowl that overwinter here.

This annual event happens in the summer, when the water level is at its lowest; limiting disturbance to the bog. Please look for posters in the kiosk or check the *Pulling Together* web page at [saanich.ca/pullingtogether](http://saanich.ca/pullingtogether) for next year's non-native cattail removal work party.

**We hope to see you there.**

By Andrew Burger  
Saanich Parks Natural Areas Technician



# Wylie Thomas

*Passionate About Ecological Restoration*

By Jenny Eastman  
Saanich *Pulling Together* Volunteer Coordinator

Freshly arrived from the urban hustle of downtown Toronto (via Hong Kong, Tokyo, Moscow, Vienna, Paris, and Jakarta), Wylie Thomas began volunteering with Saanich's Pulling Together program in 2010. A thoughtful, conscientious volunteer who wrestled broom and blackberry into submission with a smile, he brought along a warm sense of humour and a good repertoire of stories. Seeking change from his life in Toronto and a greater connection with nature, he jumped at the opportunity to work in ecological restoration and in due course became Lead Steward of both Wetherby and Camrose Parks. He then registered for the Restoration of Natural Systems diploma at the University of Victoria. Not quite done with his new adventure in restoration, Wylie was then noticed for his skills in native plant identification (and for his strong arms), by local botanist Matt Fairbarns. Fairbarns invited him to participate in ecological restoration and botanical inventory work at Trial Island and Observatory Hill for the federal government. Most recently, Wylie has begun work in restoration at Uplands Park in Oak Bay. It's quite a diverse involvement in the local restoration scene.



So why the fascinating list of former hometowns? Says Wylie, "My father was a Canadian diplomat and so we moved every few years. Despite growing up in big cities, we were fortunate to have had a mother who loved nature. She made sure we spent our summers away from the concrete. I credit her with instilling in me wonderment for nature and a concern for the loss of wilderness and biodiversity. Becoming involved with Saanich Parks was a natural outlet for me. "

With a Bachelor's degree in molecular and developmental biology and a Masters in environmental studies, Wylie works as a consultant specializing in stakeholder consultation related to the development of environmental regulations and programs. "My work has involved a lot of writing of proposals, attending meetings and producing reports, but through my volunteer activities in the parks around Victoria, I realized that what I really wanted was more hands-on work in the field." Chances are you'll run into Wylie in any number of parks doing his part for restoration in many parks in our region.



*“Becoming involved with Saanich Parks was a natural outlet for me.”*

# Prospect Lake Champion Wins Award

By Jenny Eastman  
Saanich *Pulling Together* Volunteer Coordinator



Long-time Prospect Lake resident, volunteer and environmental champion, Winona Pugh has just received the 2014 B.C. Lake Stewardship Award for Outstanding Volunteer Effort. Winona has lived in the Prospect Lake Watershed for more than twenty years and has been active with lake stewardship since the start.

Her commitment involves both the messy and the tidy. The muddy hands-on work of restoration activities with the hard-working Friends of Tod Creek Watershed Society, such as invasive Yellow Flag Iris removal, native species planting, and regular water quality testing is an ongoing commitment. She has also been active in organizing training for volunteers through stewardship programs such as Lakekeepers with the B.C. Lake Stewardship Society, Septic Savvy through the CRD, and as an advocate for ecologically-responsible living on the shores of Prospect Lake. She sees many changes in the lake over the last 20 years: an overabundance of aquatic plant growth, due to ageing and ineffective septic fields, increased silting from lake shore scouring from power boat wash, and the loss of wetlands from development. Winona notes, "It is such a privilege to live on this lake, so close to town, but in the midst of such rich nature and wildlife. We need to do all we can to help protect this ecosystem. It is under threat."

## BC Lake Stewardship Society

The BC Lake Stewardship Society trains volunteer stewardship groups, so that volunteers can gather scientifically significant data to contribute to the data pool that helps develop policy and protect our waters in BC. They also educate communities about lake issues to promote care of BC Lakes and they support restoration of lakeshores, supporting homeowners who strive to ensure their lakeside property is ecologically sustainable. Are you a lakeside homeowner? Find out what you can do to protect the lake you love. Visit the BC Lake Stewardship Society at [bclss.org](http://bclss.org)



## Congratulations Winona for being recognized for all your work to care for Prospect Lake!



Solar Hot Water Panels – Photo from Pacific Solar Smart

# Grants for Solar Hot Water Systems Available In Saanich!

By Shannon Jamison  
Saanich Sustainable Community Planner

Did you know that there are incentives available in Saanich to help you purchase a solar hot water system for your home or business through the Solar CRD program?

## Why Invest in a Solar Hot Water System?

- Be part of building a sustainable energy future for you and our community
- Protect yourself from rising energy costs
- Shrink your hot water bills by 40% or more
- Make an eco-friendly investment with a good rate of return
- Access solar incentives while they're here

## How Do Solar Hot Water Systems Work?

A solar hot water system allows you to use free energy from the sun for water heating. It includes a solar panel on your roof connected to a solar storage tank in your building. A backup system ensures that you always have hot water, day or night, winter or summer, rain or shine.

## Saanich is Going Solar!

Since the launch of the Solar CRD program in April, 11 homeowners in Saanich have already accessed incentives for their new solar hot water systems. Funds are only available until the end of March, so if you want to go solar, don't delay!

## Is Solar Hot Water Right For Me?

Solar hot water systems are great for buildings that have:

- Plenty of sun (i.e. not too much shading from trees, neighbouring buildings, etc.)
- A south, south-west, or south-east sloped roof orientation
- Enough space for solar panels (for a home with three to five residents, you'll need about 5m<sup>2</sup>)
- Space for a solar pre-heat tank
- High hot water consumption (the more you use now, the more you save with solar!)

## How Do I Access Incentives?

Contact a Registered Installer. They will reserve an incentive for you and provide the discount right off the top - no waiting for a rebate cheque!

## How Do I Learn More?

Visit [www.crd.bc.ca/solar](http://www.crd.bc.ca/solar) to learn all about the benefits of solar.

# Cracking the Code: a New Way Forward

By June Pretzer

Uncover Your Creeks Coordinator, Evergreen  
jpretzer@evergreen.ca | www.uncoveryourcreek.ca

There we were lying flat on our backs like some kind of over-forties slumber party, eyes trained where the roof edge meets evening sky, clasping our clickers, focused. It's the first hour of dark when bats leave their roosts for the evening bug meal. We're at the Goldstream Nature House monitoring the bat population with Christian Engelstoff and Purnima Govindarajulu from Habitat Acquisition Trust. This is the first time I've surveyed bats and already I've learned so much! Who knew they came to summer roosts to have pups or that we really don't know where they go in the winter. Not me, I didn't even know we had a dozen species on the island! This has been an amazing experience for all of us. We've gathered information on a scale not possible with only professionals. The sense of doing something concrete for the management of these animals is satisfying. That is just what citizen science is about.

Citizen science is a new way to gather scientific information that involves volunteers in research-related tasks such as making observations and collecting data. The application of citizen science is unlimited, no experience is needed, and with a little training everyone can take part! Now with a click of your phone you can upload photos to websites like iNaturalist (iNaturalist.org - search Tod Creek Watershed and download your photos!), count penguins from space (penguinwatch.org), or be a digital fisher and investigate trawler impact on deep-sea ecosystems (oceannetworks.ca/learning/citizenscience).

This is just what we're doing in the Tod Creek Watershed with the *Uncover Your Creeks* program. Water: we swim, drink, fish, and play in water. It's an essential piece of our lives and also impacted by our lives. To connect people more closely with streams, lakes, and wetlands in our neighbourhood, UYC conducts a water-quality sampling program in Tod Creek.

Volunteers use glass vials to collect creek water, and add tablets that react and change colour to determine levels of phosphates, oxygen, or nitrates, among others. There is no better way to understand that a stream is healthy or polluted than to see the water change colour in the vials in your very own hand. The results are uploaded to the [www.uncoveryourcreeks.ca](http://www.uncoveryourcreeks.ca) website and made available for public use.

**So why do this?** I always believed that to make good decisions you need enough information. Water sampling provides information for decision-making by public and private land owners. As the variety of information about the Tod Creek Watershed grows, we will be better able to decide on ecological management, development, agricultural growth, stream restoration, wildlife management, and maybe even bring salmon back to Tod Creek. As more people get involved, our ability to gather information grows.

Join us at  
Whitehead Park on  
Prospect Lake every  
third Saturday. Our next  
event is November 15th  
at 10 am. UYC is just  
growing on Vancouver  
Island. Come grow  
with us!



*Leonard Steves, volunteer, and avid Cutthroat Trout fisher, collecting water samples for analyses at Tod Creek. Leonard knows healthy fish need clean water!*



# Saanich Is Home To A Very Rare Beetle!

Audouin's Night-stalking Tiger Beetle (*Omus audouini*) is known from fewer than a dozen locations in all of Canada, and two of these are in the Municipality of Saanich! Because it has only been found in a few locations in our region and in the Lower Mainland, this sleek predator was designated "Threatened" in November 2013 by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC).

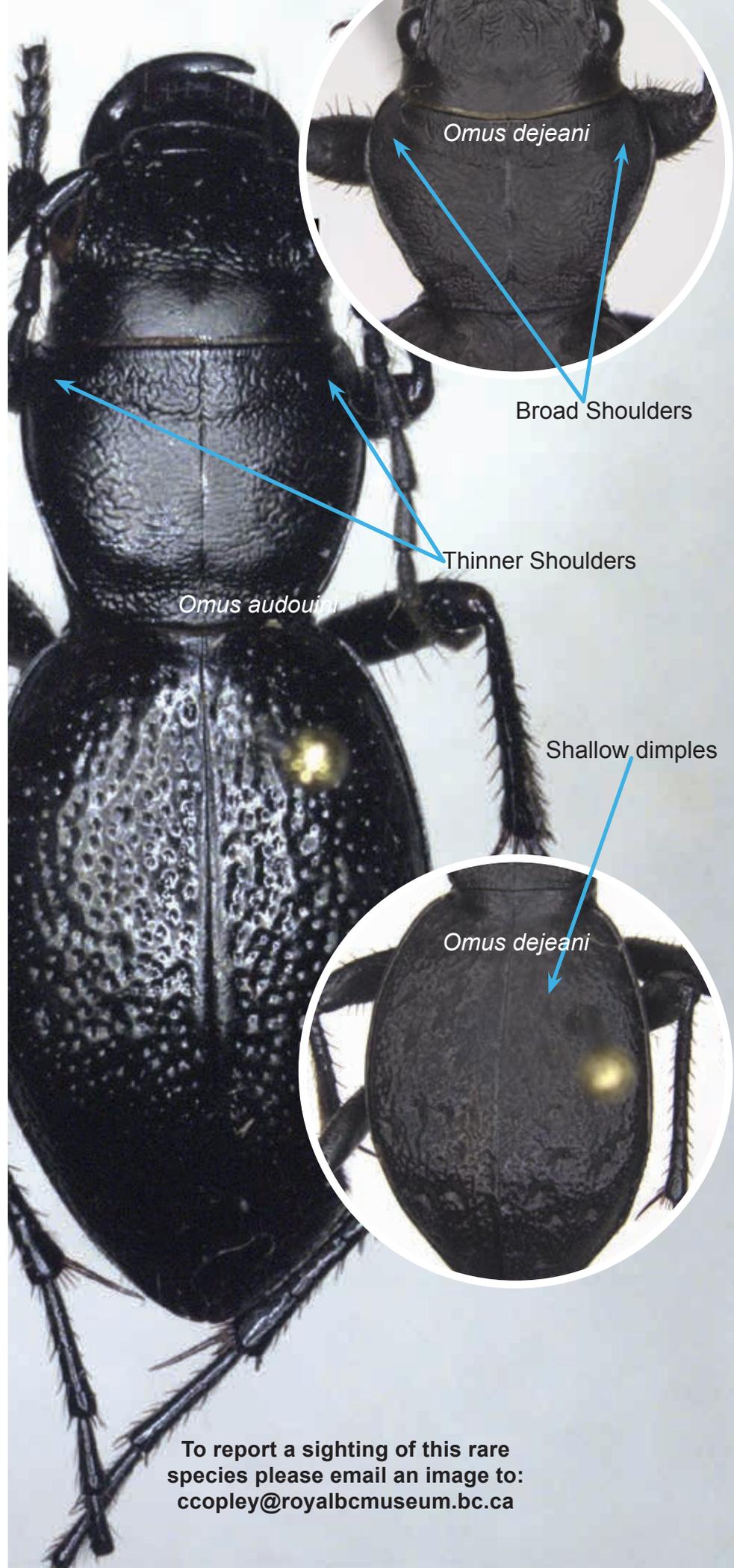
As its name suggests, this species is nocturnal and an active hunter - eating invertebrates such as other insects, slugs, and worms. The larva are also predacious, but they live in burrows so are even more difficult to detect. Extensive pitfall-trapping occurred in various Saanich natural areas as well as other areas of the CRD over several years without much success, but it is still possible that new locations could be found with help from citizen scientists.

There is another species of *Omus* beetle in our region that is still relatively common, so learning to distinguish these two flightless hunters from one another is an important first step. To the right is a direct comparison of the head, thorax and abdomen. Note the broader "shoulders", thinner "waist", and the rounder abdomen with shallow dimples on each wing case of *Omus dejeanii*. Overall Audouin's Night-stalking Tiger Beetle is a more streamlined and smaller animal. But they both have massive jaws to take down their prey! This means they are an important addition to any landscape: helping to keep pest species in check.

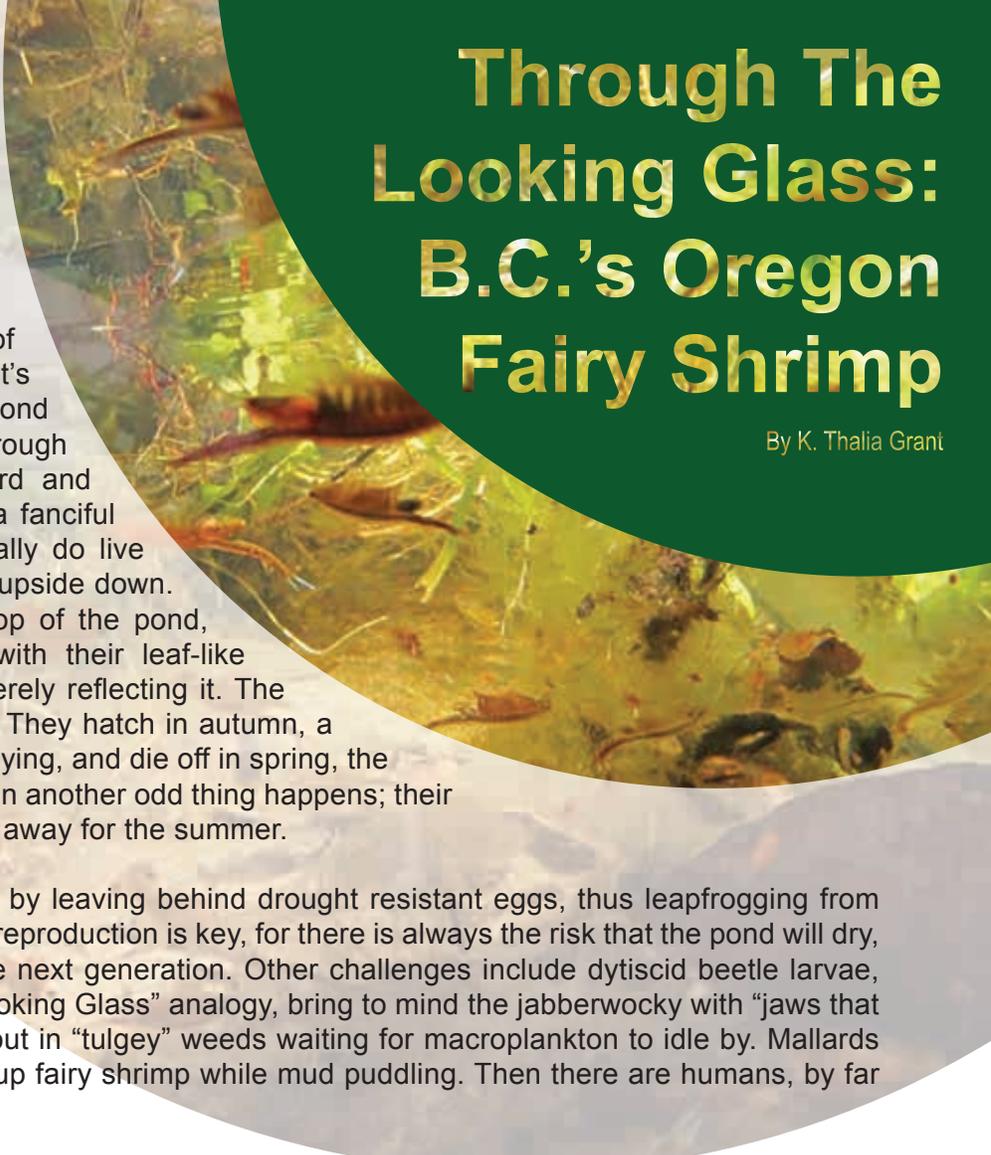
**For more information, illustrations, and images, check out:**

- The Species At Risk information by the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team: [www.goert.ca](http://www.goert.ca)
- The COSEWIC Status Report: [www.sararegistry.gc.ca](http://www.sararegistry.gc.ca)

By Claudia Copley  
Entomology Collection Manager at the Royal BC Museum



**To report a sighting of this rare species please email an image to:**  
[ccopley@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca](mailto:ccopley@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca)



# Through The Looking Glass: B.C.'s Oregon Fairy Shrimp

By K. Thalia Grant

In beautiful British Columbia we rarely need incentive to go on a nature walk, but in winter we may need a little nudge. Here's one reason to get out on those frosty, grey days: fairy shrimp. Winter is a perfect time to look for Oregon Fairy Shrimp (*Eubbranchipus oregonus*), and those swampy ponds in your back woods, the ones that look like empty puddles of tea water, could be teeming with them. It's certainly worth a look, for peering into a pond of Oregon Fairy Shrimp is like crossing through Alice's magical Looking Glass into a weird and wonderful, alternative world. That may be a fanciful exaggeration, but Oregon Fairy Shrimp really do live an opposite kind of life. For one, they swim upside down. Often they'll be filter-feeding right at the top of the pond, tickling the undersurface of the "mirror" with their leaf-like legs as if it were the pond floor and not merely reflecting it. The seasonality of their life cycle is also flipped. They hatch in autumn, a time normally associated with dormancy or dying, and die off in spring, the season symbolic with birth and new life. Then another odd thing happens; their whole watery world disappears, evaporating away for the summer.

Fairy shrimp survive their temporary worlds by leaving behind drought resistant eggs, thus leapfrogging from one hydroperiod to the next. However, early reproduction is key, for there is always the risk that the pond will dry, or freeze solid, before they can produce the next generation. Other challenges include dytiscid beetle larvae, which, to continue with the "Alice and the Looking Glass" analogy, bring to mind the jabberwocky with "jaws that bite and claws that catch" and which hang out in "tulgey" weeds waiting for macroplankton to idle by. Mallards are also a potential threat; they can siphon up fairy shrimp while mud puddling. Then there are humans, by far the biggest threat of all.

Through habitat destruction, humans have wiped out almost 90% of the Oregon Fairy Shrimp populations that we knew about (from museum collections records) in British Columbia prior to 1990. Considering that the species' geographical range in the Pacific Northwest coincides with some of the most highly developed land, the coastal valleys, this is hardly surprising. Once found north to Kamloops and east to Hope, it now appears to be restricted to a couple of sites on the lower mainland, parts of Vancouver Island, and two or three Gulf Islands. Some of these sites will certainly be lost to further development. In the interests of preserving the species genetic diversity, and British Columbia's biodiversity, we need to find and protect as many fairy shrimp sites as possible. These beautiful branchiopod crustaceans are not denizens of Lewis Carroll's fictitious wonderland, but an integral part of our real world, and really worth protecting. Can you help?

## Here are some tips on how and where to look:

- Start in November, a few weeks after the first significant autumn rains. By May most will have disappeared.
- Look for ponds in open, mixed woodland. See cover for examples of suitable habitat.
- The water will be clear or tannic (not muddy), between 0.5 and 2 meters deep.
- If there are fish in the pond, the water is flowing, or the pond holds water year round, look elsewhere.
- Adults are usually predominantly orange or green and 1.5-3.5 cm in length (see back cover). Species identification can be confirmed by focussing on the male's sickle-shaped secondary antennae. (For more photographs and information about this, and two related species, search "*Eubbranchipus*" on E-fauna BC: [ibis.geog.ubc.ca/biodiversity/efauna/](http://ibis.geog.ubc.ca/biodiversity/efauna/))

**Please report your findings to [grantkt@telus.net](mailto:grantkt@telus.net) and help prevent British Columbia from losing its only coastal fresh-water fairy shrimp.**



Female Oregon Fairy Shrimp



Male Oregon Fairy Shrimp

Cover shot and back page: These images show the type of clear freshwater ephemeral habitat that Oregon Fairy Shrimp (*Eubranchipus oregonus*) requires. Look for these small temporary ponds in open, mixed woodland around Saanich.  
Photo credits: K. Thalia Grant.

## 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 [ourbackyard.saanich.ca](http://ourbackyard.saanich.ca)

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# Upcoming Events

## Saanich Recreation Trails & Treks

[www.saanich.ca/parkrec/parks/trails/index.html](http://www.saanich.ca/parkrec/parks/trails/index.html)  
250-475-5408

### Weekend Walks (FREE Drop-In)

**Sundays, 1 pm - 3:00 pm**

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. Please wear sturdy and supportive footwear. Carry adequate drinking water. Walks go rain or shine.

Nov 16 - Coves and Parks of Gordon

Head Meet at Vantreight Park on Vantreight Drive, off Ferndale

Dec 7 - Winter Walk around Gorge Waterway

Meet at Gorge Waterway Park, (Tillicum & Gorge Rd)

Jan 18 - Cadboro Bay to Ten Mile Point (R)

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

Feb 23 - Konukson Park & Ten Mile Point

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

### Gentle Walk & Talk (FREE Drop-In)

**Thursdays, 9:30 am – 11 am**

Enjoy beautiful scenery, a friendly chat, and gentle exercise as we walk through our parks & trails. Suitable for all walking abilities, but wear suitable footwear. Dogs not permitted.

Nov 6 - West Saanich Interurban Rail Trail

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

Nov 13 - Lambrick to Sierra Park

Meet at Gordon Head Rec lobby, 7100 Lambrick Way, off Feltham

Mar 5 - Swan Lake

Meet at end of Nelthorpe, off McKenzie

Mar 12 - Interurban Rail Trail

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

## CRD Parks & Environmental Services

Our naturalists lead guided walks, hikes, canoeing, and drop-in events for all ages. Most are free, all are fun! The Parks Nature Outings and Events brochure can be found at [crd.bc.ca/parks-events](http://crd.bc.ca/parks-events) 250-478-3344

### Marvelous Mushrooms (Guided Walk)

**Saturday, November 15, 1 pm to 2:30 pm**

**Francis/King Regional Park**

For the novice mushroom explorer, join a CRD Regional Parks naturalist to discover more about fungi in the forest. There is no fee for this program but you must pre-register as space is limited. To reserve a spot call 250.478.3344

### Park 2 Park: A Hiking Adventure (Guided Adult Hike)

**Saturday, November 16, 11 am to 3 pm**

**Francis/King Regional Park**

Hike two parks in one! A CRD Regional Parks naturalist will guide the hike in Francis/King, and along the Pan Handle Fire Trail to Thetis Lake and back. Bring a lunch, water and raingear, and wear sturdy hiking shoes. There is no fee but you must pre-register before Nov. 14. To reserve a spot call 250.478.3344.

### Bring in the New Year (Guided Hike)

**Wednesday, December 31, 11 am to 1 pm**

**Bear Hill Regional Park**

Out with the old and in with the new! End your year with a hike up Bear Hill. We will enjoy fabulous vistas at the top and toast to the coming New Year with some warm forest tea. Bring a snack, wear sturdy footwear and dress for the weather. Meet at the boat launch parking lot off Brookleigh Road.

## Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary

Admission by donation.

[www.swanlake.bc.ca](http://www.swanlake.bc.ca) 250-479-0211

### Guided Bird Walks (Drop-In)

**Every Wednesday and Sunday, 9:00 am**

Bring your binoculars and walking shoes and meet in the parking lot for this informal and informative walk around the lake area. Binoculars are available for loan at the Nature House office on Wednesdays. Donations are appreciated.

### Duck Day (Drop-in Event)

**Sunday, November 30, 12 pm - 3 pm**

Some dabble on the surface, some dive for their food – we'll explore the amazing adaptations ducks have for living on the lake and discover who's who in the duck world.

### Christmas Hill Holiday Hike

**(Meet at the Nature House)**

**Sunday, December 28, 1 pm - 3 pm**

Need to burn off some holiday calories? Swan Lake Naturalists will lead a two hour hike up Christmas Hill and show you the view from above. Warm refreshments will be served at the Nature House following the hike to reward your effort.

### Oh Deer (Drop-in Event)

**Sunday, January 25, 12 pm - 3 pm**

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

### Who Gives a Hoot? (Drop-in Event)

**Sunday, Feb. 22, 12 pm - 3 pm**

Who glides silently, can turn their head almost completely around and can cough-up a wicked hairball – who-who-who? Drop-in anytime as we explore wonderful, world of owls through games, stories, crafts and hands-on exploration. Owl pellet dissection activity \$5.

## The Native Plant Study Group

[www.NPSG.ca](http://www.NPSG.ca) 250-598-1999

The Native Plant Study Group meets at the University of Victoria, the third Thursday of each month (except December). Join us for dynamic speakers and discussions relating to native plants of our area. (No experience required, just an interest in native plants and their habitats)!

### From Blah to Wow in 18 Months: Creating a Native Plant Garden (Presentation)

Thursday, November 20, 7 pm

UVic, MacLaurin Bldg, Rm D116

What is involved in creating a large native plant garden in your own yard? Also collecting and propagating seeds. Based on a six-year experience so far Louise Goulet PhD, RPBio explains What To Do, but even more importantly, What Not To Do! Non-member drop-in fee: \$3. \$2.50 parking at UVic.

### TBA (Presentation)

Thursday, January 15, 7 pm

Thursday, February 19, 7 pm

UVic, MacLaurin Bldg, Rm D116

## Victoria Natural History Society

Visit [www.naturevictoria.ca](http://www.naturevictoria.ca) for more programs

### Natural History Night (every 2nd Tuesday)

Juan de Fuca Forest (Tuesday, Nov 11, 7:30 pm)

Winter Birds in your Backyard (Tuesday, Dec 9, 7:30 pm)

TBA (Tuesday, Jan 13, Feb 10, 7:30 pm)

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

### Botany Night (every 3rd Tuesday)

Camas Meadow Restoration (Tuesday, Nov 18, 7:30 pm)

Botany Night Christmas Party (Tuesday, Dec 16, 7:30 pm)

TBA (Tuesday, Jan 20, Feb 17, 7:30 pm)

Swan Lake Nature Centre

### Birder's Night (every 4th Wednesday)

Bring Back the Bluebirds (Wednesday, Nov 26, 7:30 pm)

TBA (Wednesday, Jan 28, Feb 25, 7:30 pm)

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

### Marine Night (last Monday of the month)

Invasive Cordgrass Spartina (Monday, Nov 24, 7:30 pm)

TBA (Monday, Jan 26, Feb 23, 7:30 pm)

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

### Christmas Bird Count Tune-up

(Everyone is welcome!)

Saturday, December 6, 8:00 am

Meet at the bridge at Esquimalt Lagoon for a chance to tune up your winter bird-spotting identification skills. Bring your walking shoes, field guide and note-pad. Contact contact Agnes at [thelynns@shaw.ca](mailto:thelynns@shaw.ca) or 250-721-0634 if you need more info.

## Victoria Christmas Bird Count

(Everyone is welcome!)

Saturday, December 20, All day

To help with the Victoria Christmas Bird Count you don't have to be an expert birder. Novices will be teamed up with more experienced counters. Ann Nightingale would also be interested in recruiting some groups – walking groups, school groups, scout groups, or any other group that would like to support the activity. Anyone can help out by acting as a tally person or as a spotter. Contact Ann to sign up 250-652-6450; [victoriacbc@naturevictoria.ca](mailto:victoriacbc@naturevictoria.ca).

## Evergreen BC: Uncover Your Creeks

[www.uncoveryourcreeks.ca](http://www.uncoveryourcreeks.ca)

### Stewardship in Whitehead Park

Saturday November 15, 10 am – 1 pm

Every third Saturday of the month, 10 am – 1 pm

Whitehead Park, corner of Prospect Lake and Goward Roads  
Learn about the ecology and help restore Whitehead Park! We'll be removing invasive plants and taking water quality samples from Tod Creek. Tools, gloves and refreshments provided.

Please dress for the weather.

RSVP: [www.todcreekwatershed.eventbrite.com](http://www.todcreekwatershed.eventbrite.com)

## Greater Victoria Green Team

[www.greenteamsCanada.ca](http://www.greenteamsCanada.ca)

778-677-9078 or [Amanda@greenteamsCanada.ca](mailto:Amanda@greenteamsCanada.ca)

Green Teams of Canada is expanding with the establishment of the Greater Victoria Green Team (GVGT), to engage people in the Capital Regional District in educational hands-on activities to restore and conserve ecosystems and connect to nature.

This Green Team will organize teams of volunteers who will take part in invasive plant removals, planting of native plants and trees, and shoreline cleanups. Using social media to engage volunteers, the GVGT will run activities in municipal regional and provincial parks and work closely with existing environmental groups to build on their work.

The GVGT will provide hands-on stewardship/habitat restoration opportunities for volunteers, connecting them to existing stewardship groups and developing leadership and team-building skills. GVGT will also raise awareness of parks and local food systems, connect people to nature, cultivate a community of like-minded individuals, and engage youth and at-risk youth in their activities.

