

Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

20th Anniversary of the Park

Fall 2012



Mayor Leonard, Councillors & Friends at 20th Anniversary Ceremony

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20th Anniversary

It was 123 years ago, on September 30, 1889, that the Park received its current name, when the Province of British Columbia granted Mount Douglas to the Corporation of the City of Victoria “upon trust to maintain and preserve the same as a public park or pleasure ground for the use, recreation and enjoyment of the public.”

As Saanich outgrew Victoria and surrounded the Park, it was felt more appropriate that the Park be managed by Saanich. Thus, twenty years ago, November 22, 1992, the Province transferred Mount Douglas Park to the District of Saanich, as a wilderness preserve for generations to come. The transfer ceremony was held at the top of Churchill Drive, where Saanich Council met and accepted the Park from the Province. The ceremony concluded with the unveiling of the Park Charter on a bronze plaque located at the summit parking lot.

At the 20th anniversary event celebrating the transfer of the Park to saanich, goals for enhancements commemorating this anniversary were announced.

1. The main Park entrance via Churchill Drive should provide a strong park-like character announcing that one is entering a park. One visitor commented the current industrial gate, trash can and ugly sign couldn't present a more un-park-like entrance! This will change with the Charter Rock unveiled at the anniversary celebration and additional enhancements including a more appropriate gate and a large cedar kiosk to be added next year. The overall concept is best described as a series of thresholds; an entrance threshold at the Churchill Drive Park entrance, a kiosk threshold which is also metre 0 for the Churchill Drive walk, and a gateway threshold with the Charter Rock and the new gate.



FMDPS directors along with Saanich Mayor, Councillors and former Mayor Murray Coell unveil the Mount Douglas Park Charter.

1858: Sir James Douglas provided the first official status for the “Hill of Cedars” when he designated it as a Government Preserve.

1889: Captain G.H. Richards wrote the Hydrographer of the Royal Navy explaining how “Cedar Hill,” though small and insignificant, came to be known as Mount Douglas. “...it has been much the fashion here to give the term *Mountain* to elevations which are by no means entitled to that description. I have taken the liberty of reducing all under 1000 feet to Hills, except for Mount Douglas, which I have retained as a mountain although only 690 feet (ed: actually 738'/225m), partly from not wishing to lower the Governor [James Douglas] and partly because Douglas *Hill* does not sound well...”



The Churchill Drive walk.

Stone markers, set in the road every 250m, show the distance travelled plus current elevation for the 1500m long, 160m vertical gain walk.

Unbeknownst to us, rock sandblasting has a season; it requires warm, dry summer days so that the stencil will adhere to the rock; we missed this window! The current inscription, which is perhaps a little difficult to read, will be replaced next summer. The thought is that the title should be readable as one passes, inviting walkers to approach this Charter Rock to read the main text. There should be a little mystery; it should have a weathered look, not something one would find on a tombstone!

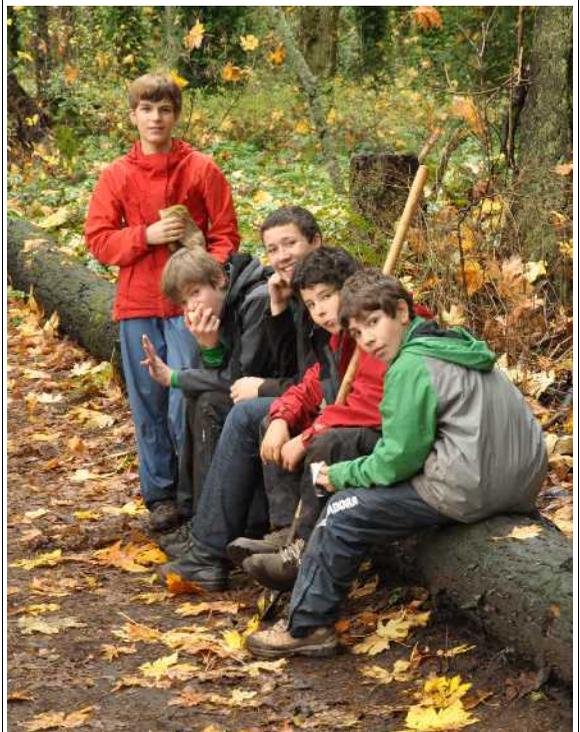
2. Churchill Drive has seen a phenomenal increase in the number of walkers since its closure until noon daily. Recognizing this, new markers will be installed every 250m along Churchill Drive to show the distance and current elevation as one walks up the road. From bottom to top, the walk along Churchill Drive is 1500m, with a total elevation gain of 160m.

Sheilagh Ogilvie Retires

Sheilagh Ogilvie was one of three that initiated the creation of the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society 23 years ago. She has continuously provided a steady role on our board, including newsletter editor for many years. Although retiring, she intends to continue her support in a reduced capacity. We miss her and wish Sheilagh the very best!



Planting one of the large trees.



A little R&R after a morning of hard work!

Tree Appreciation Day

On Saanich's Tree Appreciation Day during the first week of November, 75 volunteers (with help from Saanich Parks) planted several hundred trees and native plants along the Glendenning Trail, in areas that had been previously cleared by our hard working invasive species group. After the removal of the invasive plants, the area needed a kickstart to provide some ground cover. In addition to the hundreds of tree seedlings and native plants, about a dozen larger trees, perhaps two metres tall, were planted along the trail. These presented a bit more of a challenge for the volunteers to get just the right hole depth, but all the trees are now happily growing.



Volunteers listen to planting guidelines and safety orientation.



Home Depot Tool Donation

Store Manager Jason Handley and Assistant Manager Darcy Lockhart present \$1000 worth of tools to FMDPS for our volunteer work.

The following week, Saanich Arborists planted the steep banks along Douglas Creek. These areas had served as rock delivery and access areas for the extensive creek work this past summer. Mulch was first spread along the upper banks, then native plants were added. Many of these were grown by the Pacific Forestry Centre from seeds gathered the year before by Bob Bridgeman.

FMDPS – Invasive Species Group & Saanich Parks Pulling Together Program

Primary work for volunteers in 2012 has been the clearing of a lengthy swath of park along the western perimeter between the Glendenning Road parking lot through to the Mercer/Whittaker Trails junction. Volunteers

have been working from both ends of this heavily infested area and should finish by Spring 2013, weather permitting.

As with all restoration work in park perimeter sites, we are concerned with invasive plants growing on adjacent private properties. We can only hope, through our efforts, that neighbours “take a page from our book” and start to clean up their properties. It’s a legitimate concern because as we clear and open up the park understory, the cleared ground is more susceptible to re-infestation from nearby yards. To offset the potential for this occurring we try, as we are able, to replant native species to infill-cleared areas before invasives move in.

Our goals for 2013 are fairly fluid at present, but once we finish our current project we may revisit areas previously cleared 2006-2011. We know the ivy and holly are slowly coming back and new seedlings are sprouting from berries, so secondary sweeps are an absolute must in any restoration project. Follow-up work isn’t nearly as tough as the initial clearing, so if anyone is interested in helping us in 2013, please call. We need more volunteers, and sooner rather than later.

German University Student Internship in Mount Douglas Park

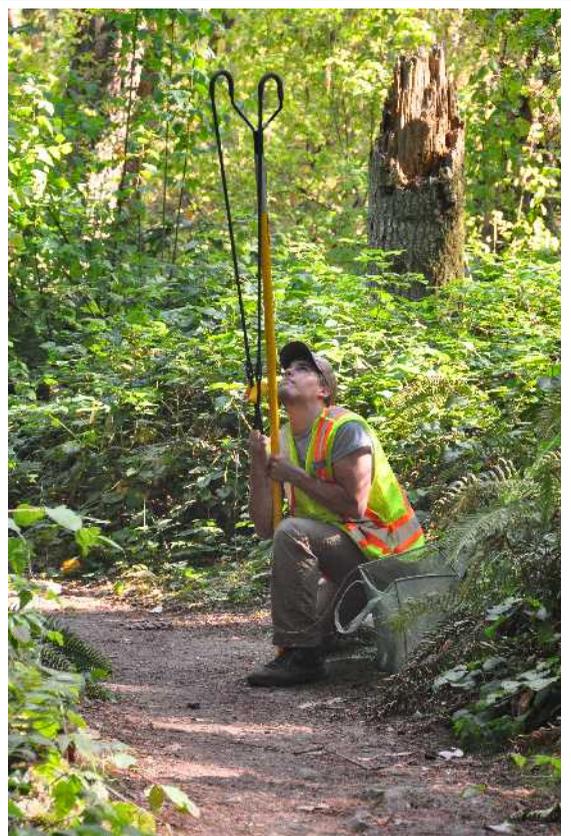
We suspected an internet scam when, last spring, we received an enquiry from Germany for a student to travel here and provide eight weeks of volunteer work in Mount Douglas Park. That was then, but now a truly successful eight weeks for our Society, for the Park and for the intern has passed. Georg Dischner, as a final requirement for his degree in Forestry and Forest Restoration at the Munich Technical University, needed to complete an eight week internship gaining practical experience related to his field of study. Georg had fond memories of the Island from a previous holiday with his parents and wanted to return. Lucky for us, he chose Saanich and Mount Douglas Park.

Now that the internship is complete and he has returned to continue his studies in Germany for a Masters degree, we can reflect on his contribution and all that has happened in the Park.

A Registered Professional Biologist (RPBio) study of Douglas Creek last June identified silting problems in the creek above Ash Road along with the need for more information about this riparian area – a perfect task for our intern!

Late August and early September saw significant restoration work in the lower creek under the guidance of the RPBio, David Clough. Georg was David's "right-hand man" throughout this project, making a really great team. Hopefully when the chum and Coho salmon return, they will appreciate the excellent spawning beds, along with bank armouring!

Saanich Parks welcomed Georg, providing him was several positive experiences including participating in a danger tree assessment.



Intern Georg Dischner takes his turn shooting a rope over an overhanging danger tree limb.

Georg really enjoyed the Park, often taking his lunch to a view spot or to the beach. But one of his pet peeves was best said in a Saanich News article: "I don't get that. People come here to enjoy nature and then pollute it," Dischner says. "People who visit the Park should be concerned about the natural areas; I find the doggy bags every day."

A special thanks to Ryder's Cycles who provided Georg with a bicycle for his stay, to Graham Shorthill, for providing a room for Georg and to the Saanich Parks staff and others who welcomed Georg. This was truly a "win – win"!

Two Douglas Creek studies: RPBio & Riparian Assessment

This year's Pacific Salmon Foundation grant for Douglas Creek Restoration work stipulated that Saanich must assume full liability related to the restoration project, and suggested that a Registered Professional Biologist (RPBio) be consulted for the project. This suggestion translated into a requirement by Saanich's risk management office, and RPBio Dave Clough was retained to make



RPBio Dave Clough uses an electroshocker to count salmon in Douglas Creek.



Saanich Parks staff with RPBio discuss possible weir changes necessary because of high volume storm-water surges.

recommendations and to carry out subsequent on-site supervision of the restoration work.

Dave provided an extensive analysis of both the lower creek, below Ash Road, and the upper creek between Ash Road and the weir. His report provided a list of

prioritized recommendations for both the lower and upper creeks as well as suggestions for the pond behind the weir.

He also identified two tributaries emptying into the upper creek. Intern Georg Dischner, as part of a riparian assessment, traced the tributaries, making GPS recordings which were added to our GIS database. This led him to two more tributaries plus a grow-op! Interestingly, one of the tributaries had been blocked, flooding a trail and a large region, drowning many trees and weakening others, resulting in wind blow downs. The tributaries were cleared of blockage and current observations indicate they are again working.

Douglas Creek Restoration Work

RPBio Dave Clough's recommendation for further work builds on the excellent previous work spearheaded by Bob Bridgeman in the lower creek. The work primarily consisted of repairing some of the early spawning beds damaged by high storm-water flows, armouring the banks with larger rocks and widening the creek channel in a few spots with the idea that the wider channel would allow for slower water flows.

It was one of our largest projects to date, but the results have stood up well during recent very heavy rains with the usual accompaniment of large storm-water surges.

And we are extremely pleased to report that once again, returning salmon have been spotted spawning in the lower creek area!

Next year's planned work will be in the upper creek. This will include clearing sediment from behind the weir and possible enlargement of the weir to provide the potential for better silt capture. A very large woody debris dam will be removed. This dam hinders, or more likely blocks, salmon migration. It also presents a potential flood danger if it gives way during a storm surge.



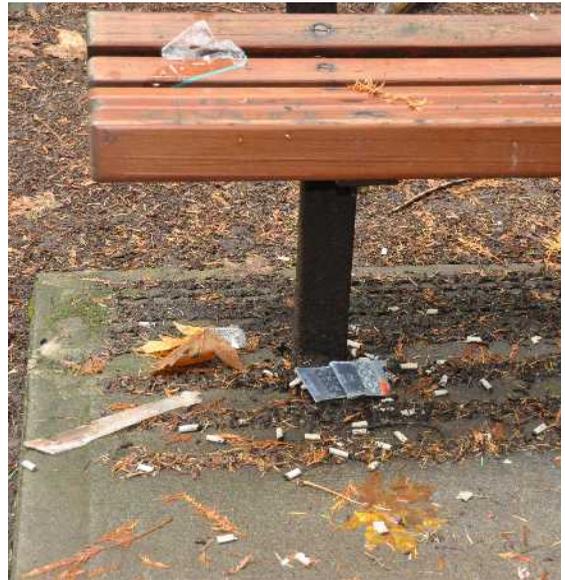
Cabbling a log to protect creek bank.

Park Cleanup

If you enjoy and want a clean park, it's up to you! Saanich Parks does not perform litter pickup along the Park trails. Sadly, doggy bags, cigarettes butts and discarded Kleenex tissues are all too common. No doubt the guilty are not members of FMDPS and don't read these newsletters – so it is up to us to help! Why not take a plastic bag with you and collect a little litter?



Halloween Tradition – cute but substantial clean-up costs come out of parks budget.



Cigarette butts and doggy bags continue to be the most frequent park litter. What happened to the expression “take nothing but memories, leave nothing but footprints”? And we need to add that the footprints left behind should be on recognized trails!

Danger Trees – Wildlife Trees

Worksafe BC requires a danger tree assessment before any work can be performed in the Park. A couple of years ago, the FMDPS felt too many trees were being declared a danger and were cut down. We researched this issue and found an alternative policy developed by the BC Wildlife Tree Committee and accepted by Worksafe BC for danger tree assessment and mitigation within parks. Saanich Parks subsequently produced their Tree Risk Assessment and Abatement Procedures incorporating this information.

This summer, danger tree assessments were performed prior to scheduled trail improvement work on the Whittaker Trail and also in the area of Douglas Creek.



Although this danger tree was notched to create a break point, it chose its own snap point.



Saanich Parks Arborist rappels down rope after topping a danger tree next to the Whittaker Trail.

It was fascinating observing the expertise of these Saanich arborists as they shot a line over an adjacent healthy tree, climbed the rope, then climbed even further up the tree to finally lower themselves to the dead danger tree (see photo) and proceeded to top it. Working on another tree which they felt too unpredictable to simply cut down, they notched it (see photo) and then attempted to pull it over using a long line. The tree was so rotten, it simply snapped above the notch cut, justifying their concerns about standing near it when it was cut!

Super Sized Trash Receptacles

Saanich Parks utilizes tall trash receptacles that are installed with the lower five to six feet underground. This provides considerable hidden capacity while requiring less frequent emptying. One is installed at the bottom of Churchill Drive near the gate, another is installed by the washrooms in the beach parking area.



Pileated Woodpeckers love wild-life trees and are easy to spot along the lower trails.



FMDPS Director Thomas Munson with trash receptacles designed for maximum loads and less frequent service. The bottom two thirds is installed underground.

Recapping a good & productive year in the Park, thanks to all our readers.

The Park awaits your getting out and about in 2013!

How about a brisk walk up Churchill Drive after that festive meal?

Board of Directors

President	Darrell Wick	1491 Edgemont Road	V8N 4P7	477-9291
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Treasurer	Graham Shorthill	4623 Cordova Bay Road	V8X 3V6	658-5873
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At-large	Claude Maurice	2200 Lorne Terrace	V8S 2HB	598-7407

Membership Renewal - Gift Membership

Providing information via this newsletter about the Park is an important Society function. We want to reach more Park users and Park neighbours. Why not **give someone you know a gift subscription and include it with your renewal**? A one year membership isn't much more than the price of a good cup of coffee! You provide the gift and we'll send notification to the recipient of your generosity. We hope you will continue to support the work of the Society for another year.

Gift From _____

New Member (or renewal) form:

Name: _____

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Membership 1 year \$5 2 years \$10 3 years \$15 4 years \$20

Send or deliver to:

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4623 Cordova Bay Road,
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