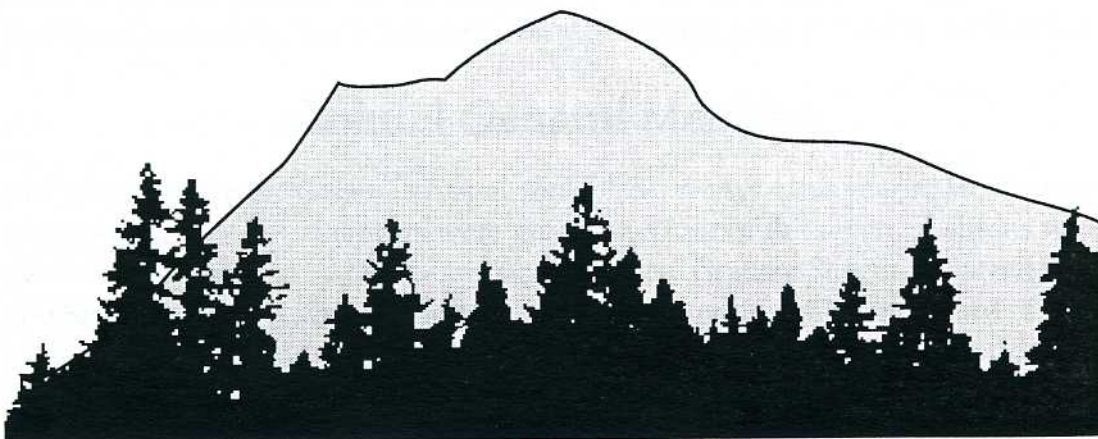

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society

Newsletter

June 2000

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An Award for The Friends...

Over the past decade, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has been holding biennial day-long meetings attended by streamkeepers' groups on South Vancouver Island with, from time to time, the odd Fisheries scientist, Minister, Departmental Manager, and Funding Society official thrown in. These meetings are for the exchange of information and the celebration of a common purpose.

The last meeting took place on Saturday, May 27. On this occasion, The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society was presented with a plaque bearing the inscription:

For outstanding service to
the fisheries resource in Canada
and dedicated support of the
Salmonid Enhancement Program



And An Award for Bob



Bob Bridgeman has been awarded a Saanich 2000 Environmental Award in the category of Individual Citizen Environmental Achievement, in recognition of his stewardship of the Creek in the Park and his fight against invasive species there.

The award will be presented by Mayor Frank Leonard at the Council Meeting on June 12. Bob will also be honoured on the evening of the following day at the Eco-Star Community Environmental Awards meeting held in the Crystal Gardens.

Annual General Meeting

The Year 2000 Annual General Meeting took place on May 4 this year, at McMorran's Seaview Room. Annual reports were given, and four of the seven positions were available, as provided by the Society's constitution. Graham Shorthill, Darrell Wick and Sheilagh Ogilvie were re-elected, and Kay Porter now joins the board. Claud Maurice now steps down: thank you, Claud. Richard Hebda, Curator of Botany, Royal B.C. Museum then spoke on "Fostering Wild Flowers in Mount Douglas Park."

Braefoot Development

Properties along the east side of Braefoot Road, and by the adjacent corner with Mount Douglas Cross Road include wetlands, Garry Oak parkland, and wildlife habitat. These features comprise one of the corridors that give wildlife potential access to and egress from Mount Douglas Park. For that reason, we have been monitoring proposals for further development in that area.

Our first step was to ask Council for representation on a committee of concerned parties that were to develop proposals for the future of that area. Though our request was granted by Council, the initial provisions for the committee contained a structural bias. Environmental groups such as ourselves, the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society and the Quadra/Cedar Hill Residents Society were to be allowed only to make representations before a core group consisting of property owners and the Gordon Head Residents' Association, whose recommendations would go before an Open House meeting and then, with or without further modification, to Council. We appealed this bias, and now we and the other two groups have been granted equal status with the committee's other members.

We are concerned not only that wildlife corridors be maintained, but also that any drainage of wetlands conform to Best Management Practices as currently understood. In part to enhance biofiltration of pollutants, these practices discourage the diversion of water into piping or covered channels.

Ivy

As you know, ivy is one of the most pernicious of non-native species invading Mount Douglas Park. Volunteer efforts cannot completely eradicate it. So, together with the Friends of Knockan Hill, we have applied to the Provincial Capital Commission for funding to employ a crew of four to remove ivy from our respective Parks. Altogether the crew would put in about 60 shifts of 4 hours each shift. The workers would be supplied by an organization called Hearts, which concerns itself with the training and employment of mentally-handicapped youths.

We have also asked Saanich Council for funds to employ two students to pull ivy in Mount Douglas Park. To promote public awareness of the threat the species poses to native forest vegetation, we have designated two ivy-covered areas that are fully visible to passers-by as test plots for ivy eradication. Initially the students would direct their efforts to these plots. One plot is adjacent to the washrooms in the picnic area. The other is close to the Ash Road bridge. At some stage these sites will be marked by posters that explain their import.

Complementing our efforts, Ron Carter, the Parks Department's arborist, and Adrian Pollard, the Environmental Planner, have been bringing in several parties of schoolchildren to pull ivy.

Daphne

This lass was the daughter of Peneus, a Thessalian river-god of minor status. Unfortunately for her, she caught the eye of Apollo, who wouldn't take "No!" from a maiden's lips to mean "No!". Just at the moment when he had chased her down, she addressed a prayer for aid to Papa, who transformed her forthwith into a laurel tree. That was really smart, for it saved Apollo's face—he could rest on his laurels—as well as Daphne's virginity.

Since this transformation she has given her name to a related species, otherwise known as "spurge laurel" (*Daphne laureola*), a particularly pestiferous type of semi-ornamental. This can grow in several stems to about a metre high. It has lanceolate leaves like the laurel, though much narrower, and these radiate outward from each node of the stem.

This shrub has taken to crossing the boundaries of private gardens into uncultivated areas. Already it has established a minor foothold at one or two points in Mount Douglas Park. A few plants have been detected just beyond the edge of a garden in Parkside. The householder has undertaken to deal with these. They have also established a little colony at a point where the Garry oak treeline approaches the steepest part of the mountain's south side. At the time of writing, that cluster has not yet been completely eliminated.

If you can locate any of these plants elsewhere in the Park, please contact Kenneth Rankin at 477-8007 or else uproot them yourself. Since they are slightly poisonous, however, the wearing of gloves is advised for the job. In the case of the maturer plants a weed wrench may also be required to extract the roots.

If you live near the Park and have any daphne in your garden, you may want to dig it out. Once it gets a hold in a forest it can overcome much of the native undergrowth.

Bird Study

Richard Seldman, a graduate student from U.B.C., is currently conducting a bird study in the Park for the Canadian Wildlife Service. You may have noticed the orange ribbons that mark the various stations from which the birds are being studied. Altogether he will examine eight Garry oak stands (not necessarily all in the Park) and, for comparison, adjacent plots of Douglas fir. He will be recording the species-variety and species-density of birds in these areas, and also doing some vegetation sampling. The study will take four or five months to complete.

The Old Quarry

Work on the reintegration of the old quarry site into the Park has already begun. The ugly chainlink fence has been removed and the adjacent space used by the Fire Department as an emergency pumping station has been surfaced with open brickwork that allows grass to grow through the gaps, thus giving the surface a more natural appearance. Access to the site can be had via a pedestrian crossing from the entrance to the old section of Cordova Bay Road that runs down to the picnic area, as well as by the trail that parallels the main road through the Park.

The reclaimed area also includes a holding pond designed to moderate the flow of water from the high ground into the road drainage system during heavy rainstorms. Unfortunately, shortly after its construction this pond sprang a leak, with the potential capacity of weakening the bank that supports the road. This defect is in process of being repaired.

As yet, our plans for the area around and above the pond have not been fully implemented. Eventually it will be planted with native shrubs.

The Road

...or more correctly the edge of the road from the motel to Blenkinsop Road and those pathways we have been talking about for a decade. The excuse for the latest delay is that the area will have sewers installed soon and the issues of footpaths and bicycle lanes will be part of the package. However, at the public hearing on the matter there was no clear indication where the line would go and there was virulent opposition from home owners in the neighborhood, concerned with the location of the proposed pumping station which is an integral part of the plan. After the meeting, a survey of the neighbourhood was done listing a number of options; since then.... nothing. Except that students continue to walk along the road's edge to catch the bus which takes them to U.Vic., Camosun or Royal Roads at considerable risk to themselves: yet another example of adding a service without having the proper infrastructure in place first.

At even greater risk are the twelve- to fifteen-year-olds who walk in groups, from close to the park boundary to Blenkinsop, to catch the school bus to Royal Oak Middle School. They are forced to cross the road at least once and at 8 o'clock in the morning, in February, that is a major risk. If you wanted to be alarmist, you could call it an accident waiting to happen.

To put this in context, more than five years have gone by since we asked the municipality to lay a simple, cheap and level track of crushed screenings, similar to the paths they have laid in the picnic area and near the motel, so that people could walk in relative safety from Royal Oak Drive to the park. Since then the matter has been caught in some infinite bureaucratic loop and the time has come to set it free. Our original argument was cast in favour of residents and visitors out for recreation. They are numerous, but they have a choice; the teenagers, however, are required to make the hazardous two-way trip, five days a week, come rain or shine. Stay tuned.
