



# NEWSLETTER July 2002

2002 Summer Concerts  
Pacific Salmon Farm  
event on July 21

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**The Friends of Mount Douglas Park**

## **Stormwater and Salmon: The Underground Story**

With Mount Douglas Creek as the focal point, the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society are joining with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Municipality of Saanich and the Pacific Salmon Foundation to present a one-day family event on July 20. Entitled "Stormwater and Salmon—The Underground Story, it's geared to increasing public awareness of the critical need for everyone to contribute to clean streams and waterways.

Though people with an interest in the environment are familiar with the issue of storm drains, most local residents are not. Through activities, field trips and displays, participants in the event will learn about curtailing water pollution that results from urban runoff, about their place in the watershed and ways to keep litter, gas, oil and chemicals, among other pollutants, out of storm drains. Mount Douglas Park provides an outstanding backdrop for the event, providing an opportunity to view both a riparian and shoreline environment first-hand. The interactive nature of many of the activities and displays ensures that both children and adults will be engaged. These include:

- Watershed Model—Opening Minds with Water
- Dr. Drip—Arenaria Research and Interpretation
- Adopt-an-Outfall/Watershed Walk—Veins of Life Watershed Society
- Storm drain marking—BC Hydro Youth Team
- Storm water display—Capital Regional District
- Electronic watershed model—Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society
- Cecelia Creek Project—Burnside/Gorge Community Association
- Watershed Map—Municipality of Saanich

The aim of the event is to foster ownership of the watershed and a greater understanding of the life that lurks beneath the storm drain grates. Presented in an informative and enjoyable manner, the event is likely to encourage residents to find alternatives to washing paintbrushes over storm drains, draining hot tubs into them, or letting automobile fluids wash into them. The happy outcome will be cleaner streams and thriving salmon populations.

## **THE HISTORY**

### **Mount Douglas Park**

Height: 222 metres

Extent: 435 acres (1992)

A survivor of the Ice Age, Mount Douglas is what is known as a "monadnock,"—that is, its material is harder than the surrounding ground.

Indians paddling over from the San Juans to Vancouver Island pulled their canoes up on Mount Douglas beach. The beach was also a stopping place for the Songhees on their way down-island to Fort Victoria. It was called the "hill of the cedars."

### **1843**

When Fort Victoria was being built, the Songhees Indians cut 22-foot cedar pickets from Mount Douglas for the palisade and carried them in to the site, travelling back and forth along present Cedar Hill Road. They were paid a blanket for every 600 cedar poles.

### **1845**

In this year, Captain John Gordon, visiting brother of the Foreign Secretary, was taken to hunt on the "hill of cedars." He did not catch his deer. It is said that later Gordon claimed he "would not give the most barren hills in the Highlands of Scotland for all I see around me."

## President's Overview

### 1852

The first settler in the Mount Douglas area was James Tod (son of the HBC chief trader, John Tod). He purchased land near the mountain in 1853 and called it Spring Farm. He built his first house in 1857 and his second one in 1869. He farmed there for 52 years.

### 1858

In 1858, James Douglas reserved the mountain and some surrounding land "for military, school and church purposes."

### 1859

In March, 1859, a Captain G.H. Richards, charged with mapping the region, wrote to the Hydrographer of the Royal Navy explaining how "Cedar Hill," though small and insignificant, would feature on the maps 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, partly from not wishing to lower the Governor [James Douglas] and partly because Douglas *Hill* does not sound well..."

We now are well into the second decade of our Society's existence. Initially, in the earlier parts of the first, our major concerns were with issues affecting what fell within the boundaries of the Park. We had to oppose proposals to subdivide chunks of land out of it, to build a service building that would have marred the skyline at the mountain top, to festoon the radio mast with larger aerials and wider dishes than it holds today, and to buttress the steep bank that carries Cordova Bay Road through the Park with rip rap that would have destroyed the amenity and ecology of the foreshore. We also had more proactive concerns. Major among these was the restoration of fish habitat in the Creek. Another was with the siting, design and maintenance of trails.

Some of these issues are still with us. Others are in at least temporary abeyance. As well, however, we now are faced by issues of a different kind. They affect what goes on outside as well as what falls within the Park, for the latter does not exist in isolation from the rest of Saanich and Greater Victoria.

One of these issues lies in traffic routing and traffic density. Cordova Bay Road is now in danger of becoming a major artery for traffic with final destinations in diverse parts of the city. Plans for an intersection on the Pat Bay Highway at Sayward to give better access for the western to the eastern parts of the Saanich Peninsula are calculated to aggravate the situation. Add to that the further plans to site as many as 19 new buildings on the UVic campus to cope with a projected increase in the student and faculty populations. Not only is this a recipe for general gridlock and chaos unless reliance on individual cars is radically reduced, it would also imperil further the stability of the bank that carries Cordova Bay Road within the Park, unless traffic along that particular route is somehow curtailed.

A further issue is posed by the built-up nature of the Douglas Creek watershed. A high percentage of that urban area consists of impervious surface. As a consequence, too much of the rain that falls in the watershed is channelled through storm drains into the Creek, sometimes in the form of sudden bank-eroding surges, and too often laced with harmful pollutants. Our recent downspout disconnection project began to address this problem. Measures of this sort,

