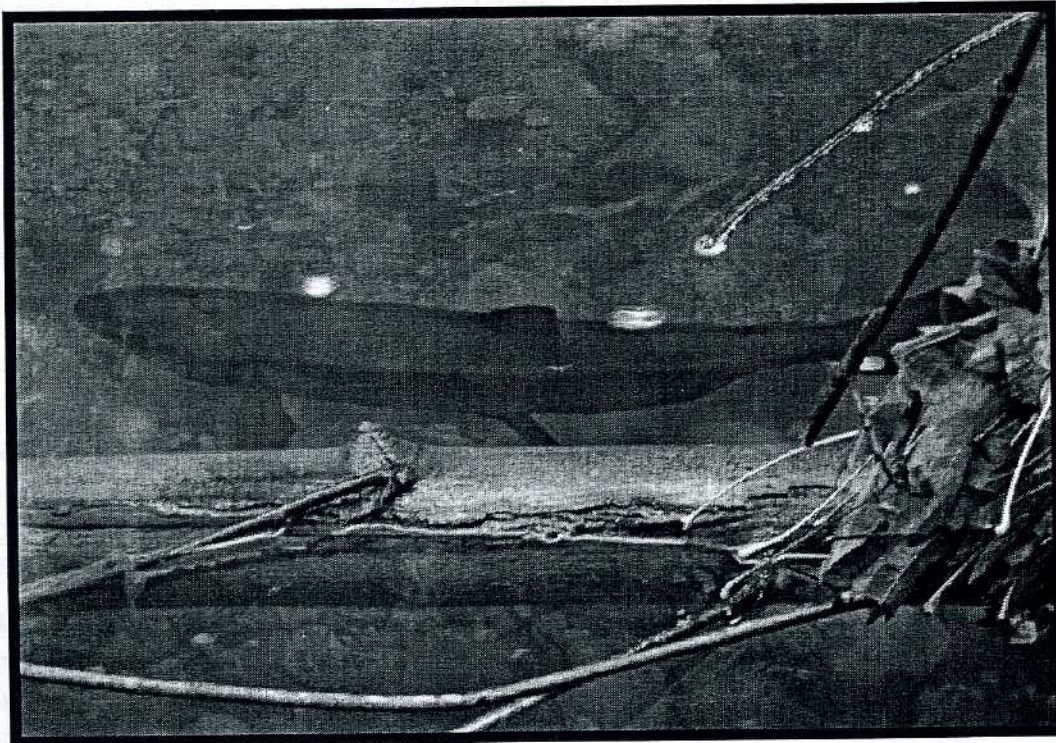


FRIENDS OF MOUNT DOUGLAS PARK



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Our future

One thing has become particularly plain over the 15 years of our Society's existence. If the Park is no longer under one kind of threat (and there are several that persist) then with regularity it comes under another. Hence there is unlikely to be any time for the foreseeable future when its integrity as a wilderness Park need not be jealously guarded.

How then, in the years ahead, should the interests of all who enjoy the Park's natural amenities be protected? The answer depends in part on how long our Society can keep going. That in turn depends on how long it can depend on the willingness and ability of enough of its members to serve as directors on the executive.

Over the past 15 years the turnover in our executive's membership has been rather sluggish. All in all only 4 replacements for directors who have dropped out come to mind. Up to a point this has been a good thing. An element of continuity in the executive's composition ensures that the Society's policies are consistently promoted. However, there remains the problem of whether the turnover can be fast enough to replace long-serving directors who perhaps in the not-so-distant future may, for reasons of age or health or other commitments, not put themselves up for renewal when their statutory term of office is over

One solution is to have a certain number of ordinary members of the Society present in an *ex officio* capacity at executive meetings on a fairly regular basis. That could ensure a sufficient familiarity outside the narrow circle of directors with ongoing business, and also provide a pool from which replacements for retiring directors could be drawn.

Also it could be combined with retired directors attending the meetings in a consultative capacity, and even sharing some of the tasks of those that replace them for as long as that is needed. To a certain extent we have already experimented with the first part of this idea, but so far the hoped-for pool of replacements has shown a tendency to drain away before properly filling.

There is another solution of a more radical kind: that the Park should be taken over as a nature conservancy. Swan Lake could, presumably, be the model for this sort of set up. The Park would then be in charge of a manager hired with pay and under the supervision of some sort of board. One advantage apart from that of stability: it would provide a permanent solution for the management of the creek. The latter requires all the dedication and technological savvy that now resides in the person of Bob Bridgeman, who

consequently is practically irreplaceable as a director. Qualifications that match Bob's could be required of any conservancy manager.

One disadvantage: depending on the composition of the supervisory board, the interests of the Park as a natural park and of those who frequent it as such might be subordinated to those of car traffic or development in one form or another. (As a parallel, the disquieting closure of the Crystal Gardens by the present Provincial Capital Commission suggests a danger of this sort)

We would be very happy to have your thoughts on the issues here raised.

Finally, to turn very briefly from the future to the past: for all of these years the executive has held regular meetings in the pleasant surroundings of the Shorthill's' sitting room. This has done much to give ease to our deliberations. We are deeply grateful to Graham and his wife for their seemingly termless hospitality

Displays

In the run-up to the Saanich Parks Day event at Mount Douglas Park in September, we finally bit the bullet and bought three display panels so we could show different aspects of the Park to the general public in a clearer and more immediate fashion. Until now, it has been difficult and time-consuming to prepare posters and to display them—the results were fine if you were preaching to the converted, but totally inadequate if you wanted to grab people's attention and enlist their energies.

These three panels are intended to stand on tables, and each is slightly curved so as to present a stand-alone subject or, with the others, related aspects of the Park and/or Park programs. They will work very effectively: no one will be obliged to get down on hands and knees to ensure they miss nothing!

Now that we have this new opportunity to show the Park in all its diversity to a wider public in different settings (malls, conference halls, open air events etc.), we need people to produce displays to keep our presentations fresh and engaging. So if you have a theme you would like to show or some ideas about a montage of print and text you would like to create, we want to hear from you.

We are always looking for people to get involved. Watching trees and shrubs flower – many have interesting flowers—watching the seeds for ripeness and then finally collecting them gives a perspective on what is in the park, the cycles under which vegetation works and how all the cycles fit together. If you are interested, there are opportunities to participate. We have enough seeds gathered for next year but we may want to look at softwood cuttings this spring.

Significant Tree Day in Saanich—and onward!

The plantings of trees and shrubs along the Creek took place as planned on Sunday, November 7 and there were two further plantings on November 12 and 19.

Local plant experts Mary Steele and Ian Bruce and two gardeners from Saanich were on hand to help with plant and site selection. These plantings are part of the longer-term plan to return salmon to Douglas Creek.

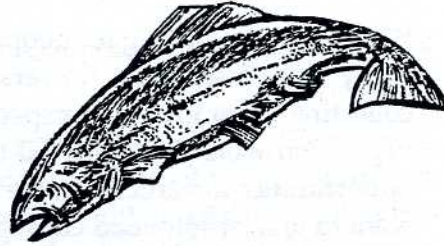
As we carry out this long-term plan, we are trying to expand the planting zone by offering a range of species that have different growing requirements. Our choices are native riparian species whose genes have been proved in this environment, so we hope we've expanded the opportunities for establishment to the maximum.

Other factors that need to be considered are the amount of light reaching the micro sites and whether soil is being eroded or deposited streamside. We want sufficient light for the species chosen for the micro site and we want to plant the areas that are collecting silt. Vegetation near the Creek edge will comb silt out of the water—this is another interesting example of how all species (humans for sure) modify their environments for short term gain: short term is a period that allows reproduction. Streamside vegetation also helps to reduce erosive forces by holding water back and by forcing that water up onto small flood planes. These actions reduce the erosive force of the impervious area stormwater driven flows that so heavily impact the Creek and the beach.

The short-term hydrology fix may lie partly with revegetating the banks and also partly with the woody debris that Parks has been putting into the Creek. What is not addressed is the water quality that is associated with those same impervious areas and the flows that come off them. We have a long-term strategy to deal with water quality and hydrology – a subject that we are working on while the revegetation, woody debris placement, fish transplants and carcass transplants continue.

Retrofitting the watershed

As you may recall, we worked with Royal Roads University to develop the data required to examine the watershed and to lay out options for retrofitting stormwater control.



One group of students also developed a monitoring system to measure watershed improvements by examining the species changes in the aquatic invertebrates (bugs) that live out their life cycles in the Creek. This is cheap monitoring but not easy. It is knowledge-dependent and requires people to do some work in the Creek.

An interesting result of the monitoring project was the fecal coliform sampling that was carried out. The Creek, and hence the beach, is always over the CRD limits. This is an issue that is being ducked and I always cringe when I see people working or playing around the Creek—if you're one of the people who do, always wash your hands: there is potable water available in the washrooms at the picnic area.

Some years ago we received a grant from the Public Conservation Assistance Fund to hire a research group to find methods of retrofitting stormwater controls into developed areas of the Douglas Creek watershed (most of it with high percentages of impervious areas—wide roads, rooftops, driveways, and such like).

This research (to propose a set of projects to improve water quality and hydrology in the Creek) is now beginning. We hope it will be completed by March 2005 or not long after.

Once the research is done, our hope (and intention) is to take the proposals to the Saanich Environmental Advisory Committee for its consideration and approval, and thence to Municipal Council to ask that the proposals be implemented.

We are looking at municipally-owned land and a timetable that meshes with public works projects to keep the costs minimal or nonexistent. We will choose the projects carefully, so that they can be seen as an improvement by the local residents. We want shining examples that people can go and look at while they consider options for their own neighbourhoods as we expand the management of stormwater into other areas in the watershed.
