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Annual General Meeting

Reinventing Rainwater Management Protecting Health and Restoring Nature in the Capital Region.

> Professor Calvin Sandborn University of Victoria Faculty of Law

Thursday, April 8 7:30 pm Gordon Head Recreation Centre

When it rains in the Capital Region, water sweeps over roofs, streets and parking lots, picking up a multitude of pollutants on the urban landscape. Then storm sewers convey that tainted water at high speed and volume into sensitive water bodies.

This stormwater runoff is our biggest water pollution challenge.

- It has helped destroy our once-abundant salmon streams.
- Its high velocity erodes stream banks, silts water, and raises water temperature, destroying salmon habitat.
- The toxins in runoff kill fish.

Donation

The Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society is very pleased to have received the generous donation of \$2000 from CIF Composites, Inc. This allows us to propose projects that would provide a significant enhancement to the Park, especially ones that would fall outside what Saanich might normally do. We are deeply appreciative of this donation. Thank you, CIF Composites!

New Park Trails Map – Pocket Version

The latest Mount Douglas Park trails map is enclosed with this newsletter. We have produced this from previous maps and GPS data to give the best current snapshot of the Park trail system. We have also encapsulated it in plastic for weather protection and durability. All of the official Park trails are shown on it. They are colour coded according to their difficulty and experience rating (explained in this issue's Trails article). This map, in conjunction with the trail name-posts Saanich Parks will be installing at trail intersections,

should ensure there are no lost persons somewhere in the depths of the Park! There are impromptu trails not on this map, many of which will be closed. Help the Park by using only these named trails.

This map has been made possible by the generous bequest and donation received earlier from Henk Gautier and Marsh Ney. Volunteers provided the encapsulating, to keep the per map cost about the same as your newsletter. Thank you Henk, Marsh and volunteers.

Howard English Hatchery at Goldstream TOUR INVITATION – Saturday, May 29, 2010



The Goldstream Volunteer Salmonid Enhancement Association has extended an invitation to members of the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society for a tour of the Howard English Hatchery. The hatchery is located within the controlled area of the CRD watershed, so access is by invitation only. Full access details are not available at press time, so watch our website for updates. Because of the access security, arrival times might be restricted.

The 40,000 chum salmon fry that we transplant into Douglas Creek in the spring are

hatched and raised in this hatchery. Also, they have provided us with the salmon carcasses for our annual fall carcass transplant into Douglas Creek. The tour is very highly recommended.

Don't this opportunity for Society miss members!

Trails - Extremely Poor Conditions!

Due to years of neglect, numerous trails within the Park need repair, with most needing significant work to eliminate large mud-hole sections. Some trails are serving dual roles as a trail and as a stream, desperately needing water diversion work before they are completely washed out.

These issues have been continually brought to the attention of Saanich Parks but, unfortunately,

Counting hatchery salmon fry

Parks has committed to only two small trail improvements this spring. The first is the 100m or so of the Norn Trail south of Churchill Drive, where it is currently an almost impassable mud hole. The second is to work on small sections of the Irvine Trail in conjunction with the installation of new trail name posts and way-finding markers.

As an assist to Parks and at their request, we have walked all trails and completed a data sheet detailing the condition of each trail section. This was done in February and we have forwarded the data to Parks.

Where Does This Trail Go? Where Am I?

Many impromptu trails have started to appear, along with an almost exponential increase in the number of walkers. Now, as one walks through the Park, there are many trail choices with no indication where the trails go.

To address both problems - being able to find one's way on the preferred trails and to restore native vegetation in areas where poor trail maintenance and marking have caused a "braiding" of trails— our Society has been urging Parks to install trail name signposts and other way-finding signs.

To assist Parks, we have carefully examined the characteristics of different Park trails and proposed a trail categorization that both fits the uniqueness of Mount Douglas Park, yet is not at odds with Parks' overall strategies. (This is based on the three trail categories first published in our Society's Park Plan). In terms of difficulty, the three categories are similar to ski slope ratings, (easy, moderate, difficult). In terms of experience, they are "improved" (wider, relatively level, even surface), "natural" (single tread width, includes steeper slopes, natural surface) and "marked" (little or no trail improvements, sturdy shoes recommended,



Trail name post for named trail intersections

steep, traversing some rocks with a little exposure). They are colour coded on your new pocket map.

There will be two types of trail markers and way-finding signs. At major trail intersections, markers similar to the current trail name signposts will be used. (We have proposed a well-defined scheme that should avoid the ambiguity and marking errors on the current posts.) A small "the trail goes this way" sign will also be used at points along these trails, especially at those locations where trail braiding has occurred.

It is our hope that with proper trail signage and improvement of trail conditions, the number of impromptu and shortcut trails will diminish and these areas can be restored.



Trail way-finding sign to indicate trail direction

We are very pleased to report that Parks will install a complete sign system on the Irvine Trail this spring. We recommend the Irvine Trail, because it goes all the way from the beach area to the summit and includes all three trail categories.

Wildlife/Danger Tree Assessment

If you have walked the short section of the Whittaker Trail just south of the Churchill Drive parking area, you were likely as alarmed as we were at the very large number of trees cut down (50+).

We have clearly expressed our concern in a letter sent to Saanich Parks. From their

perspective, they have certain obligations regarding public safety, and trees that are assessed as dangerous must be dealt with (Depending on the specific tree, this could mean removal or conversion to a wildlife tree). While the concept of danger tree assessment and removal for public or worker safety has been with us all along, either many trees have suddenly changed character or there is a change in policy interpretation or assessment. We fear that if this continues, much of what we value within Mount Douglas Park will disappear. We have heard from other groups that have noticed an increase in tree removal in other areas of the municipality.

We are putting forth our best efforts to uphold the Mount Douglas Charter, "The lands known as Mount Douglas Park are hereby reserved in perpetuity for the protection and preservation of the natural environment for the inspiration, use and enjoyment of the public." We are confident that Saanich Parks shares this view. We therefore need to find a

mechanism that both satisfies Saanich's safety requirements while maintaining the protection and preservation requirements within the park charter. To this end, we have been researching what is done in other parks and looking at alternative procedures. A very promising approach is through the Wild Life Tree Committee of British Columbia that has sent us their Wildlife/Dangerous Tree Assessor's course manual. This is an officially-recognized tree assessor's course and is the "...standard of care for identifying and assessing dangerous trees that are located within parks...". This approach addresses worker safety while at the same time maintains safe trees for wildlife.

Douglas Creek and the Watershed

There are two fundamental problems facing Douglas Creek, both relating to the Gordon Head watershed. The first is water volumes, surges during storms and low water in summer. The second is water-borne pollutants. They are not independent problems and some solutions can address both.



Two Mount Douglas Park residents. The non-native rabbits are a problem. The Park's birds of prey do catch some so don't abandon your Easter bunnies here!

As Gordon Head developed from farm land to its current urban structure, the engineering policy of the time was to get the water into storm drains as quickly as possible. We now know this was wrong. When Gordon Head was farm land, rain-water slowly moved across fields toward the present Douglas Creek or soaked into the ground, adding to the water table. In the current urban setting, rain-water falls on a street, an impervious driveway or roof and is quickly directed into the storm drain system, arriving at Douglas Creek in a matter of minutes as a very large surge. The surges have washed out all the old spawning beds and eroded the creek channel down to bare clay. At the same time, because the rain-water went immediately into a pipe, very little water had a chance to percolate through the ground and into the water table. Summer water flows depend on a good water table.

Water-borne pollutants such as street oils and rooftop toxins are also now quickly dispatched to the Creek, whereas before the water was cleansed as it passed over field vegetation or passed through earth and into the water table.



Bob Bridgeman explains the weir to Mel Sheng – DFO Biologist, Cory Manton - Saanich Parks Natural Areas Manager, with Lorne Frisson and Sonora Butterfied - Fisheries & Oceans Canada Community Advisors

There are a number of remedies that can address the water volumes and the water-borne pollutants. Green roofs and rain gardens are excellent options (See Gordon Head Recreation Centre articles). Downspout disconnects effectively make a rain garden. Saanich is installing street swales (San Juan just east of Tyndall, Laval near Gordon Head Rd and new ones on Shelbourne between Arbordale and the Park). These not only slow the storm surges, but also filter pollutants.

The existing weir, located near where the Creek enters the Park, is solely an oil and floating pollutant trap. In theory, the dam forms a small pool behind it, trapping floating pollutants. Pipes take clean water from the bottom of the pool, discharging it downstream. The problem is that the weir design was undersized from the start. Saanich no longer skims the trapped pollutants and even small rains cause it to overflow, sending all the trapped pollutants downstream.

Ever since the Saanich Fire Department's furnace oil tank emptied into Douglas Creek five years ago, all levels of Saanich administrative staff have promised to "fix the weir". That then changed to "study the weir problem". The weir is still undersized, it is not serviced, and nothing has been done to fix it.

Douglas Creek Vision and Update

We have worked on the Vision for the Creek with Saanich Parks, Engineering, and Environmental Services, and with community advisors, directors from the Friends and other volunteers. We are integrating the 5-year work plan for the Creek and the Creek Vision to create a clear blue/green print for future action, critical to the success of our project.

As part of the visioning process, our Society hired a surveying firm, experienced in creek surveys, to complete a survey of the Creek section upstream from Ash Road. The object was to obtain an accurate picture of the existing creek bed levels to determine potential locations for future pools and spawning beds. They finished their work last fall and we now have full hydrological data plus drawings showing the the present creek slope along with creek bank profiles.

With this survey data in hand, we were joined by Fisheries and Oceans, Saanich Parks and Saanich Environmental Services for a walking examination of the Creek. We first looked at the section below Ash Road where spawning pools, log dams and rock riffles had been installed. (See Fall 2009 newsletter) That work, performed last summer, has been tested by the rains of October and November. Half of it has done very well but has part unravelled to some extent from the extreme storm surges. The unravelling riffles are not what we planned, but the challenges of getting large rock into the Creek at the chosen location compromised the size of material we were able to get into place. It is the thalweg (the middle of the chief navigable channel of a



Jim Hamly - Hamly Environmental (surveyor) and Mel Sheng -DFO biologist discussing optimal spawning bed locations in upper creek area.

waterway) that usually fails, but even after failure it leaves a riffle on either side of the log weir that permits upstream passage of adult spawners – a primary consideration.

The group then examined the upstream section above Ash Road where this year's habitat restoration plan has shifted. We want to leave the completed work in the downstream reaches for a few years to see how the structures/riffles hold up. The switch upstream allows us to try some riffles that back up quantities of water in low slope areas. We would also like to create a diversity of habitat types so that we can reintroduce coho in spawning beds as well as over-wintering coho, plus of course the chum. The upper reaches are badly eroded and currently provide virtually no habitat.

Pacific Salmon Foundation Grant

We have received \$10,000.00 from the Pacific Salmon Foundation for the habitat work this year, scheduled for August or September. We have our usual sound partnerships with the Pacific Salmon Foundation and the Parks, Engineering and Environmental Services departments of Saanich, with Fisheries and Oceans Canada, the Province, Pacific Forestry Centre, the Howard English Hatchery; and many many volunteers. This year we are

working with Mel Sheng - Biologist for DFO – a seasoned and accomplished habitat builder and an aquatic ecology specialist. Jim Hamly from Hamly Environmental is working with Mel and our new Community Advisor Lorne Frisson. We have never been so wellorganized

Lorne is replacing Sonora Butterfield. who was a very strong supporter of what we are trying to do with Douglas Creek. Sonora helped steer us through some difficult times, got our permits for us, and supported us in our applications to the Pacific Salmon Foundation For that we are thankful: good luck, Sonora.

Spare Time Tasks

We have finished planting the last of the shrubs left over from Tree Appreciation Day, washed the styrofoam growing blocks and returned them to Rob Hagel at the Pacific Forestry Centre. Rob has numerous shrubs and trees growing from the seed we gathered last fall, and we will volunteer at the PFC to help transplant the seedlings into the styrofoam blocks to grow them on for this fall's plant-out.

Along with Leon Gaber, we have started to sort the aquatic invertebrate samples we collected last fall. It is quite a job, and working with a perfectionist like Leon is demanding. Six hours for two people to sort one sample. Time-consuming, but also a learning experience: "that really isn't a speck of dirt but a dipteran's larval casing" (empty upon examination) and so on for hours – marvelling at the complexity of life forms and the patience of humans.

We put down several minnow traps to try and pick up some of the crayfish that were transplanted last year. No luck. We are consulting with Leon on trapping strategies, also going for a permit to transplant more crayfish into the Creek. The Creek is small but has the capacity to sustain, and hide, many crayfish.

We are meeting with Dr. Val Schaefer, Restoration of Natural Systems Coordinator at the University of Victoria, to get more students involved in the activities in the Creek. We've worked with RNS students before; enthusiasm plus education in ecology.

We attended the Bowker Creek Forum: An Integrated Approach to Urban Watershed Management at the University of Victoria. You have to hand it to the Bowker Creek group. They have carried on for a long time now, building capacity and volunteers, doing good work, and improving Bowker Creek year by year. We will be attending the Pink and Chum Conference, an international event being held in Nanaimo this year. We have the benefit of a stewardship rate, so it is affordable. Conferences are about networking, gathering information and making contacts; and then there are the sessions, laying out the latest research and the newest information.

We are working on a series of signs for the Creek. You may see them along the Creek in the Park or at least see pictures of them in the next newsletter.

We set up a table with a display of our Society's activities at a Community Network Fair held on January 16 at the University of Victoria. The Fair was a part of a Community Student Leadership Conference.

Salmon Carcass Transplant

In January we transplanted approximately one hundred dead and frozen chum and coho carcasses from the egg/milt take for the Howard English Hatchery. The volunteers froze the carcasses after using their eggs and milt to bring forth another generation of salmon.

Salmon carcasses carry and of carbon isotopes only found nitrogen in marine sources and these they bring back to their natal streams. sustaining riparian invertebrates, vegetation, and salmon fry. Aquatic ecosystems in the Pacific Northwest coevolved with the nutrient inputs of returning salmonids. It is questionable whether the species could survive without the codependencies of nutrients, clean fresh water, spawning rearing habitat and all functioning situated in



Peter McCully – hatchery manager for the Howard English Hatchery at Goldstream, provided a mini biology lesson on the values of the salmon carcass transplant. Douglas Creek was the first salmon transplant authorized in Canada.



aquatic habitat. A tremendous amount of work has been done by the Howard English volunteers. They help our program to stop the extinction of salmon populations on this coast. Thankfully there are people like these in the world; it would be a barren place without them.

Invasive Plant Species Removal

Much progress was made in 2009, with an immense amount of non-native invasive plant material removed from the Park. On the east side, a large area bounded by Churchill Drive, Norn and Whittaker trails, has been cleared of

most holly and ivy growth. Two large areas along Maddock and Glendenning trails were also cleared last year. In December, Saanich crews filled four tandem trucks with accumulated plant debris removed by volunteers.

Garlic Mustard remains a serious concern in Mount Douglas Park, with a sizable crop awaiting "harvest" this spring. The plants are still small, so we expect work parties will start late March or early April to remove this nasty, alien invader. Due to the diversity of native flora in and around the infested areas, the only feasible means of control is manual removal requiring a large number of volunteers. All plants must be removed by the end of June, before they finish blooming, set seed, and add to the existing infestation.

If you are interested in volunteering some time in Mount Douglas Park, please see the "Calendar of Events" on the Friends of Mount Douglas Park website for details and contact information.

Parking Lot Rain Garden for Gordon Head Recreation Centre

When we heard that the Gordon Head Recreation Centre was planning a new addition, we wanted to ensure rain-water management was included in their plans. We contacted Angela Evans of Local Solutions Consulting for some excellent ideas (remember her inspiring presentation at a previous AGM!). We also applied for and received a donation of \$4000 from the Nature Trust of BC as a contribution toward this project.

We had a very warm reception when we met with the project group, and were pleased to hear they had similar thoughts about addressing rain-water. A green roof covers the new addition (see next article). The parking lot was not part of the remodelling project, but plans have been drafted to construct a rain garden and divert the parking lot water there.

This is the largest Saanich-owned parking lot within the watershed, and handling the storm surges and water-borne pollutants from the parking lot is extremely important for Douglas Creek, for Cordova Bay Beach and for Saanich's stormwater pipe system. The concept is to make this a positive landscaping feature for the Rec Centre, as well as a demonstration project. It will include interpretive signs explaining its operation and benefits.

The Rec Centre renovation budget did not include funds for the rain garden. We understand Engineering and Parks can cover most of the cost, but do not have funds for the material excavation and removal (150-180 cubic metres). We are actively seeking support for this through private donors, to achieve this through a partnership effort. Suggestions

please!

Gordon Head Recreation Centre Green Roof

You can't see it, but it's there! We are extremely pleased to report that the Gordon Head Rec Centre has included a green roof over the new addition. The benefits are considerable:

- It is cooler in the summer, saving air conditioning expenses and accompanying greenhouse gases.
- It is warmer in the winter, again with similar savings.



Gordon Head Recreation Centre goes green! A new rain garden will collect parking lot water and the new addition includes a green roof.

- It absorbs stormwater and releases it slowly, providing a significant reduction in storm surges. Not only does this benefit Douglas Creek, but it also reduces the peak capacity stormwater pipe requirements.
- It eliminates the rainwater-borne roof runoff pollutants, especially in the first rains after a dry spell.
- The overall cost is comparable to an ordinary roof.

Thank you Gordon Head Rec Centre and Saanich!

The Shoreline

Along with many other capital projects, the shoreline protection plan was not adopted in this year's municipal budget. And now that the world has passed from crisis and panic mode into the domain of slow, grinding economic recovery, it is unclear just when this project will go ahead.

Everyone who has walked the section of Cordova Bay Road from the motel to the view road entrance has been alarmed at the deterioration of the cliffs and agrees that something must be done soon. If you follow the same path, continue the walk along the view road to the beach parking lot. This section was closed in the early seventies over the same safety and erosion concerns that plague the main road. Look closely and you will notice that the cliffs and margins along this section of the road are in better shape than the main road, which carries approximately 20,000 vehicles a day. In particular, the vegetation in the cliff face has enjoyed nearly forty years of undisturbed growth, which has helped to bind the soil together so that it is less likely to slide during a winter storm.

The proposal that Sandwell Engineering has produced would see a series of "T" shaped rock structures constructed a short distance off-shore, with the top of the T parallel to the shore and connected to the shore by the T base. These will break the wave energy, causing the wave to drop suspended sand and build up the beach area between the T's, slowly building the beach and protecting the toe of the cliff.

Following this procedure at successive weak points throughout Cordova Bay would, in the course of time, produce a public wild life beach extending from Cormorant Point in the south to Cordova Bay golf course in the north. When such a development is coupled with increased security for the drivers and passengers of those 20,000 vehicles it has an enormous appeal; unfortunately, it also has an enormous financial price tag and the environmental price tag has yet to be determined. We do not know the environmental effect on the near shore habitat and the small sea life that lives and spawns there.

Now that we know that no physical change will take place at the danger points along Cordova Bay Road for at least two years, it is time to think of low-cost, interim measures that be taken while we wait for better days and the funds to do the job properly. Looking at the way the view road has performed over the years, it seems as though some form of lane sharing could produce the level of safety required and slow down the rate of erosion.

With the budget set, it is time to start talking seriously about alternatives.

Churchill Parking Lot Update

We reported in the last newsletter about the redesign of the Churchill Drive parking lot in conjunction with the new gate closure hours. The majority of the work was done in late spring and it is a clear improvement. As was reported, part of the plans for the new design was *a new information kiosk with maps and other Park information, a large semi-underground waste bin, and bicycle racks, all near the gate*. It was a surprise to us when a large warning sign took the place of the promised information kiosk. We have told Saanich Parks that this is a

mistake that needs to be corrected. A bicycle rack did appear, but with only half the capacity of the summit rack, it is far too undersized. We have already seen it full (it might hold three bicycles comfortably) and summer isn't here yet. It needs to be replaced with a proper-sized rack. When the new hours were approved at the Council meeting, it was stated that Parks would work with our Society concerning new signs. Because parking is banned along Churchill and the space for parking at the summit is limited, drivers should be encouraged to park below and walk up. Walker, service vehicle, and automobile safety issues should also be addressed. So far no progress here. And



Saanich crews put the finishing touches on the new parking lot area. A job well done!

why there still is no sign indicating no parking in the specially-designed turn-around space near the gate is a mystery to us.

New Crosswalk at Shelbourne — or Is It Cedar Hill?

Perhaps a picture is worth a thousand words. Note that Shelbourne ends at the Park entrance. The new Cedar Hill Road crosswalk will be installed in conjunction with the bicycle lanes on the north end of Shelbourne.



The new Cedar Hill Road crosswalk will be at the junction of Shelbourne Street, Cedar Hill Road and Churchill Drive, connecting Churchill Drive with the "weir" fire road trail. Note that Shelbourne Street ends at the Park entrance. When Engineering installs the crosswalk, Parks will connect it with the existing trail passing through the parking lot.

Farewell to McMorran's

For the first time in nearly two decades we will not meet in the room with the panoramic views of Mount Douglas, Cordova Bay and the islands.

Over the generations, McMorran's has gone through several transformations but has always played a significant part in maintaining Cordova Bay as a distinctly different and more rural community than other neighbourhoods that have grown with the city.

It is unclear what will happen at the site after it closes at Easter. But, what ever transpires, it is fair to say that we are not alone in hoping groups such as ours will be able to meet there again in the future. It is not too fanciful to believe that gazing out across so much natural beauty does concentrate the mind on what is really important and, in

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doing so, helps to produce better outcomes.

In the meantime, we would like to thank Eric and Wallace McMorran for all their hospitality and kindness over the years and to wish them and their families a happy and prosperous future.



The morning closure of Churchill Drive has been a true success. The number of walkers at the summit seems to grow every week. One often hears comments like "we have to hurry to get back down before they open the gate!"

Outstanding Projects

We are pleased to offer our congratulations to Saanich for work well done. And when they complete a job, it is well done and does deserve our thanks. However, over the same period a growing list of problems has been compiled, discussed and solutions proposed. Year after year that's as far as we get; a commitment is made, deadlines slip and the physical part of the job is never started. If the problems were small, then there would be little to worry about. But, each day brings fresh evidence of the growing popularity and use of the park by members of the public and such success compounds the problems we are trying to solve; this is particularly true of all matters concerning trails. If you have images of swimming against the tide, running up the "down" escalator or taking two steps forward and three back then you understand how we feel. Here is a list of some of the significant problems we have identified that need a physical solution

• "Danger Trees" - The change in approach toward dead or dying trees is very

disturbing. We feel there are other more rational approaches, such as those proposed through the WildLife Tree committee and their assessment process for parks such as Mount Douglas. If the cutting continues, it will be the biggest threat yet to Mount Douglas Park.

- Weir Fix Ever since the Saanich Fire Department's oil tank emptied into Douglas Creek, there have been promises from almost every level to address this problem and specifically to redesign the undersized weir. Nothing has happened.
- Trails Parks used to walk the trails checking trail conditions, clearing downed trees. They no longer do this.
- Trails There used to be an annual trail maintenance and improvement program targeting a different sector of the Park each year. Despite significant increase in Park trail users, we are not aware of any "plan". As reported elsewhere, too many trails are either mud-holes or streams.
- Trail Markers Trail name posts were installed, perhaps fifteen years ago. We are not aware of any maintenance on the interior posts. Everyone agrees these are needed, along with other way-finding signs. There is a promise to install them on the Irvine Trail this spring, but an agreed-to Irvine Trail on-site meeting with Parks in February has already failed to materialize.
- Transmitter Site Saanich would like to expand the number of transmitter site users. To do this, they propose either replacing the existing tower with a larger tower or installing a second tower on the old unused base. Twenty years or so ago, there was a hotly-debated issue concerning this transmitter site. When Council approved it, they clearly stated there would only be one tower and it would be no larger than the currently installed tower (they had already purchased it).
- Invasive Removal Many hard working volunteers have been successfully removing invasives, piling them in easily accessible locations for removal. Saanich Parks now tells us it is too much work and too costly for them to haul these piles away.
- Summit Kiosk Last year, Parks told us they were going to install a small information kiosk at the summit and clean up all the other signs.

Board of Directors

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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.

Use this form for a gift membership; we will send a gift card in your name. Or for your own renewal, please check your address label; the label shows the year your membership expires (e.g. '10 means membership expires December 31, 2010). We hope you will continue to support the work of the Society for another year by sending \$5 for each one-year membership to the address below.

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