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Photo Rick Eppler



Making a difference...together

Regional Parks

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Recognizing and Thanking our Volunteers

By Colleen Long

The CRD attracts many residents who volunteer in our parks and trails. Thanks to volunteer naturalists, families can spend time with their children in our three nature centres learning about intertidal life or how a beehive works.

Gates open and close magically at dawn and dusk thanks to our gatekeepers. Park wardens report to staff about the condition of parks and trails and offer visitors directions or map. Volunteer groups take time out of their busy weekends to help remove invasive species at events such as the Mill Hill Broom Sweep. Participants on the Citizen Advisory Panel and Sea to Sea Management Plan Advisory Group help to guide park planning and management.

In 2009 for example, volunteer wardens, gatekeepers, naturalists, beekeepers and community groups contributed over 6,158 hours pursuing their passion through volunteering for Regional Parks!

Volunteers deserve to be honoured and Regional Parks does just that at the annual recognition event where staff and the Parks Committee show appreciation to long time volunteers for their contributions.

This year's volunteer recognition event took place on September 11 at the Teaching Shelter at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park. Mayor John Ranns addressed volunteers on behalf of the Regional Parks Committee. Dr. Richard Kool of Royal Roads University delivered a riveting keynote address. Lunch was provided followed by an awards ceremony in which 30 volunteers were recognized for contributions of one to 30 years of service.

Your outstanding community involvement and legacy of caring for our regional parks and trails is truly remarkable. Thank you!



30th Year Honorary Recipient Mary Leeming



10th Year Recipients: Moralea Milne, Randy Cunningham





25th Year Recipient Dave Welch



20th Year Recipients: Ray Creasser, Bill Spriggs



15th Year Recipient: Roxana Argust



5th Year Recipients: David Gellately, Kaye Leicester



1st Year Recipients: Terra Murdoch, Lauren Strachan, Emily Beinhauer, Andrew Malczyk



Who's That VIP?

By Colleen Long

Margaret Reeve is the VIP Warden at Horth Hill Regional Park and has been since 2006. She and her husband Paul live in Central Saanich on ten acres. They have lived there for 32 years and from their deck are amazing views of the Olympic Mountains, Bear Hill Regional Park, Mount Douglas and on a clear day, Mt. Rainer.

Margaret is originally from Abingdon, England, a small town south of Oxford where the famous MG cars were built. She later moved to London to study engineering. Margaret began working as a drafts person in the National Research Division, where she met her husband Paul.

When her two boys were young, Margaret took a break from work to raise her sons. When the boys were in school full days, Margaret returned to work. Shortly after, there was a huge call in England for teachers. At the time, educated women were urged to return to school and get their teaching certificate. The government was also offering great incentives with this opportunity and so Margaret retrained as a teacher.

After teaching one term in England, Paul was offered a position at the University of Victoria in the Astronomy department, and so in 1970, they immigrated to Canada.

For the first couple of years, Margaret worked in various positions as a teacher on call. She finally landed a full time position at Happy Valley Elementary and worked there for almost twenty years. She originally taught special education and then taught Grades 1-3 for several years each. She also taught a class of mainly gifted students from Grades 3-5.

The atmosphere in the classroom was amazing as the other students seemed to absorb the energy and knowledge that the gifted children generated. For Margaret, that group of students was like a big happy family; everyone got along well and



Margaret Reeve at Horth Hill Regional Park

Margaret has many fond memories of these teaching years. Near the end of her career, Margaret also taught at John Stubbs and Willway Elementary. She retired in 1997 after 22 years of teaching. Margaret really enjoyed her teaching career. She enjoyed the fact that she was doing something for someone else. She enjoyed the company of her students and the fact that most of the time they were eager to learn and were respectful.

Margaret also enjoys retirement and being able to do what she wants, when she wants. But after a number of years in retirement, Margaret began looking for something to do during the week. She had a dog at the time and enjoyed hiking and being in the parks with her dog.

She saw a posting in the paper for VIP Wardens, and both Margaret and Paul applied. In the end, Paul declined the position, but accompanied Margaret on most of her outings, which he still does today.

Before I met Margaret, I knew she was someone who had quite a connection to the natural environment through her impressive weekly warden reports. They are hand written in lovely script and in her reports she comments not only on trail and facility conditions, but she also writes about her natural

Horth Hill Regional Park

A vital ecosystem, this park is an important natural habitat area and a place for recreation for the people of the Saanich Peninsula.

Features



- trail through moist cedar lowlands to mixed forest, to dry Garry oak bluff (136m)
- hilltop views of Satellite Channel, the Saanich Peninsula, and the Gulf Islands
- trails for hikers and horse riders

Trail Rating: Moderate

Size: 37 hectares

Location: Tatlow Road in North Saanich

BC Transit #72 or #73

www.crd.bc.ca/parks/horthhill

history observations in the park. She notes which flowers are blooming and birds she has heard or seen. They are a fabulous nature journal of Horth Hill throughout the seasons and years.

When I met up with Margaret in the park late last spring, she showed me where many of the wildflowers could be found. If you've never been up Horth Hill in the spring, it is worth the trip to see the wildflower display. Fawn lilies and shooting stars cover vast areas and western trilliums grow in abundance under maple trees. Margaret says that Horth Hill has the best showing of chocolate lilies she has ever seen.

She notes that many visitors to the park are older, local residents who really look after it. There is quite a large dog walking contingent that frequents the park, and they are very good about picking up their dogs' droppings and keeping the park in order.

Margaret told me a story about how she caught two young boys riding motorbikes in the park while she was walking with one of the other regular users. With her firmest teaching voice, she made the boys get off their bikes and walk them down the trail to the parking lot. Though the bikes were small, they were fairly heavy and had to be lifted over a downed log on the trail.



View from Horth Hill Regional Park

The one boy was a little saucy to Margaret, though the other younger boy was petrified. Margaret hasn't seen them since!

When I asked Margaret how she had become such a good naturalist, she told me that she has always enjoyed being out in nature and that it gives her a sense of calmness. She thought it was probably from her upbringing in England. She grew up during the war years and if you weren't helping with the war cause you were outside playing. Margaret's father was a superb gardener and was part of the Home Guard in England. He worked in the MG factory which had been converted to build tanks and airplanes and also worked a number of allotment gardens.

Margaret sometimes helped her father in the gardens and one of her jobs was to kill the caterpillars on the plants by squeezing them to death. Not a task she relished doing. She also helped with harvesting the vegetables and helped gather fruits and nuts and anything else edible that they could find in the nearby woods and fields to be processed and canned for later use.

Margaret also mentioned that in school every classroom had a nature table and students were encouraged to bring things to add to it. The items on the table changed with the seasons and reflected the natural world around them. As they lived in a rural area, the nature table was always brimming with interesting items to examine and explore. Margaret kept up this practice in her own classrooms, but they were never as substantial as the nature tables of her childhood.

As for her favourite regional park, for Margaret it's East Sooke. She feels the park has a little of everything to offer. There is the historical aspect with the farm and apple orchard, the coastline and rock formations, and also the variety of flora and fauna.

Luckily for us though, Margaret is content to take care of Horth Hill. Though small in size, she enjoys hiking in the park. She finds the local history interesting, enjoys her outings and has gotten to know many of the regular park users. For me, I enjoy reading about Margaret's outings in her reports about what's going on at Horth Hill during the seasons.

Regional Parks Updates

CRD Regional Parks & Trails At a Glance



Capital Regional District
Southern Vancouver Island
& the Southern Gulf Islands

Parks & Trails At A Glance

We recently printed a new publication listing all the CRD regional parks and trails on southern Vancouver Island and the southern Gulf Islands. *Regional Parks and Trails at a Glance* highlights our park features, activities, nature programs and locations. Contact Colleen for a copy or download it: www.crd.bc.ca/parks.

Galloping Goose Improvements

Regional Parks is improving the trail surface of the Galloping Goose Regional Trail between the Charters and Todd trestles in Sooke. A layer of aggregate will be added to 2km of the surface to bring the trail to current standards. It will enhance the visitor experience and improve public safety. The trail from km 45-47 will be closed for a week in December. We'll let you know the dates once they are confirmed.

Hamsterly to Creeds Trail Project

Improvements on the Hamsterly to Creeds section of the 10 km trail at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park took place in October. Work included ditching and drainage followed by resurfacing the trail with gravel.



Coho Fry at Ayum Creek Regional Park Reserve

Habitat Restoration at **Ayum Creek**

We recently partnered with the South Islands Aquatic Stewardship Society to undertake a fish habitat restoration project at Ayum Creek in Sooke. Chum and coho spawn at Ayum Creek. Extensive habitat restoration has occurred over the last dozen or so years, however, some of the work was in need of mitigation. We repaired a riffle (a small pocket of active water where fish hide and feed) and prevented further erosion to the stream bank to improve fish habitat. This small park reserve protects the stream-fed estuary of Ayum Creek, which empties into Sooke Basin. It is one of the few remaining estuaries in the region.

E&N Rail **Trail Construction**

Construction work within the E&N Rail Trail right-of-way is underway from the intersection of Admirals and Colville roads to Esquimalt Road. Completion of the trail components is expected in March 2011. There will be improvements to the road and rail intersections, including pedestrian crossings and additional rail safety infrastructure. Construction of new trail bridges at Helmcken Road and Hereward Road are completed, as well as the new rail bridge at Island Highway and Four Mile.

Regional Parks' **Staff Updates**

- Heather Chatwin is the new Parks Interpreter, replacing Robyn Sealy who took a position with Parks Canada.
- Kelly Edwards, GIS Technologist, is on temporary assignment during Sarah Forbes' maternity leave.
- Anne-Marie Marchi, Administrative Clerk, is on temporary assignment in Visitor Services & Community Development.
- Mike MacIntyre was the successful candidate for the new position of Supervisor of New Initiatives and Program Integration in Park Operations.
- John Mooney, replaces Mike as Park Operations Technician.
- Reed Osler, Parks Interpreter, is on leave of absence until Feb. 2011; Nancie Dohan is overseeing the nature centres and assisting with volunteers in Reed's absence.

Volunteer and Staff Regional Park Picks



Do you have a favorite regional park or trail? Send it in to us and we will feature it in the newsletter. Here is park interpreter Deb Thiessen's favorite picnic spot:

Coles Bay (western side of Saanich Peninsula) - The beach is in a small bay, with a magnificent view of the Saanich Inlet, looking out towards Brentwood Bay. There is great exploring to do at low tide, with millions of small shore crabs, and moon snails on a good day. Due to its location, this is one of only a few CRD Parks that gets the evening sun, so you can picnic here long after the sun has gone down on other parks. All in all, a perfect place to picnic and play.

Coles Bay Regional Park

The cool canopy of mixed forest yields to the stunning views of the Saanich Inlet and the Malahat along the warm salt waters of the shallow, protected bay.

Features

- winding woodland trail along a quiet creek
- secluded bay with sandy mudflats, rich in intertidal life
- picnicking, bird watching and beach exploring
- accessible picnic tables and pit toilets

Trail Rating: Easy

Size: 3.6 hectares

Location: Inverness Road in North Saanich

BC Transit #83

www.crd.bc.ca/parks/colesbay



Staff Profile

Marilyn Fuchs Regional Parks Conservation Specialist

What do you do at Regional Parks?

My title is Environmental Conservation Specialist, but I usually just tell people I'm the Biologist. My job is extremely varied, and ever interesting and challenging – it seems like every other day I'm dealing with something I've never dealt with before – always something to learn! Invasive species management, and protection and recovery of species at risk are among my many responsibilities.

What is your training and background?

I earned a B.Sc. in Biology from SFU and an MSc in Conservation Biology/Forest Sciences from UBC. For my graduate research I studied Steller's Jays caching acorns! I worked as a consulting biologist before coming to Regional Parks in April 2005.

What is your favorite Regional Park?

I used to say that East Sooke was my favourite park, but the more I am involved with the Cordova Shore Conservation Partnership the more I am becoming attached to that area, which includes Island View Beach Regional Park. I love the juxtaposition of ecosystems there – from the marine, to the sand dune and sand beach, to the wetlands – there are even a couple of rock outcrop ecosystems on the Tsawout lands. I really enjoy working with the Tsawout First Nation, and am also developing a greater appreciation of the cultural values invested in this landscape.

Where were you born and where have you lived?

I was born in Tarrytown, New York and grew up in the suburbs of New York City. I have also lived on Martha's Vineyard, in Puerto Rico, San Francisco, Ottawa and Vancouver.

Tell us a bit about your family.

I live with my partner Marsha Arbour, who manages the Victoria Opus Framing and Art Supplies store. We don't have any children; our families are scattered across North America.

Volunteers in Parks Updates

Mill Hill 9th Annual Volunteer Broom Sweep

By Colleen Long

The annual Mill Hill Restoration Project was another great success this year. This science-based restoration project is in its ninth year. It brings passionate community members together with Regional Parks' staff under the common goal to restore a valuable remnant Garry oak stand and recover populations of rare plants.

About a dozen auxiliary staff worked for a few weeks in the spring and again in the middle of September to remove Scotch broom and other invasive plants from a portion of the hill, while 160 volunteers focused their efforts on an area treated several years prior.

Volunteer Broom Sweep days were held on Sept. 18 and 25. Volunteers included park neighbours, students from the University of Victoria Law Society, Belmont and Reynolds High Schools, CRD staff, volunteers staff from the Garry Oak Ecosystem Recovery Team and many others.

A number of volunteer groups also came out to remove broom in separate sweeps, including the Saanich Baptist Church, Power To Be Adventure Therapy, a grade 6 class from Crystal View Elementary, and the Lighthouse Christian Academy School.

An exciting partnership was developed this year with the academy. Forty high school students and several teachers including the school's principal, Leland Markoff, spent the day removing broom from the park. The students used the Broom Sweep event as a school fundraiser through pledges for time spent removing broom. Leland lives near Mill Hill and really



Before and after photos of volunteers removing broom from Mill Hill Regional Park



liked the idea of the educational aspect of the project to help students learn more about conservation projects and also about careers and work in the environmental field. It was also a great opportunity for the students to serve their community and help out with a good cause.

The students raised \$6500 for the school, so it was both a great fundraising initiative and a learning experience. The school is committed to coming back next year and I look forward to working with them again.

In total, eight tonnes of broom were removed from the park. The 19 bundles of broom taken off the hill by helicopter were trucked to Alpine Disposal, where the biomass is shipped to a gasification plant to produce biofuel.



Patrick Coih

Fall Volunteer Continuing Education Session

Join us for an evening with **David Nagorsen**, former curator of mammalogy with the Royal BC Museum, for his presentation Mammals of the Night – Bats of the Capital Region.

When: Wednesday, December 1, 2010

Where: CRD Regional Parks Headquarters (Cedar Meeting Room) – 490 Atkins Avenue

Time: 6:30– 8:00pm (“meet and greet” first 20 minutes, with refreshments and snacks)

Please RSVP to Anne-Marie at amarchi@crd.bc.ca or 250.360.3338 by 4pm on November 29