

Volunteers In Parks

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Annual Volunteer Recognition 2008

Over 70 volunteers, their family and friends, staff and members of the Parks Committee gathered at the Olympic View Golf Course to celebrate, recognize the milestones, and thank the Volunteers In Parks.

April was not that long ago and it only took a moment to read my notes from that day to bring back the memories, as well as the wonderful feeling of being with each of you.

Having two years under my belt with Regional Parks, I thought how wonderful it was to be able to recognize each of your faces as you came through the door. When I stood at the podium, I could see the collective history that we had in the room that day. We were all there as our passion is protecting parks, being part of a community of like-minded individuals and giving back.

That Saturday was CRD's day to give back to you. We celebrated volunteers who have completed their first, fifth, tenth, and twentieth year of volunteer service. We learned about the conservation work being done by CFB Esquimalt

through a presentation by Tracy Cornforth, the Natural Resources Coordinator on the base.

Feedback is always welcomed from these events and we truly enjoy sharing it with you. Here are a few excerpts from the ones we proudly received:

"I really felt honoured and appreciated... great food too!!"

"I just wanted to say thank you all for the breakfast, it was definitely a feel good morning!"

Most of all, we at Regional Parks express our appreciation to each of you for being a part of our team and representing us in the parks! Thank you.

Karen Preston
Coordinator of Volunteers



VIP Milestone Anniversaries

1st Year Recipients

Charlotte Bowman
Susan Draper
Lara Gregory
Barb Jacobs
Stacey Jacobs
Ellen Kowalyk
Anita Lacey
Curtis Machek
Marie Machek
Del Meidinger
Laurain Mills
Dianne Murray
Bob Peart
Phil Petersen
Brendon Smith
Jesse Whittington
Eldred Williams
Scott Young
Krista Zens

5th Year Recipients

Emily Barnewall
Catrin Brown
Red Hermansen
Alan Philip
Tony Reynolds
Wayne Townsend
Joyce Wallbridge

10th Year Recipients

Nancy Braithwaite
Bob Twaites

20th Year Recipients

David Buchanan
Celia Buchanan
(Posthumously)

Rough-skinned Newt

Early one morning while setting up for a canoe program at Matheson Lake Regional Park, I spotted what looked like a small brown stick floating in the water nearby. I didn't take much notice of it until it started moving towards me.

It was then that I could see a tail fin moving and realized that I was looking at a Rough-skinned Newt (*Taricha granulosa*). Like a gleeful child, I grabbed a bailer from one of the canoes and waded in the water to catch the newt to have a better look.

Inside the white bailer, the dark brown granular skin of the newt with its bright orange belly really stood out. The newt moved around slowly within the bailer, not seeming to mind my presence. I watched as it slowly lifted its legs and moved about on its clawless feet.

In case you're wondering, newts are a kind of salamander. In contrast to most other salamanders, though, which are smooth-skinned and often slippery, these newts have rough, dry skin, hence the name. Indeed, the colour and texture of their skin is what makes Rough-skinned Newts so identifiable.

Rough-skinned Newts and their related species have by far the most skin toxins of any North American amphibian. In fact, people have died from accidentally boiling a newt in a camp coffeepot. There is nothing to fear, however,

as these creatures are very docile and the poison is purely for defense and is only released if the newt is severely agitated. The bright orange belly colour is a warning to would-be predators. When severely distressed or agitated they will arch their backs, bringing the tail and head up to expose their bright orange bellies, and remain immobile in this position. For most predators, one encounter with a newt is more than enough to discourage any further contact.

I was quite surprised to find an adult Rough-skinned Newt in the lake as the only other time I had encountered them was in the forest. I had always assumed that they only returned to water in the early spring to breed and then spent the remainder of their adult lives on land, but in fact some adults can remain in ponds year round.

There appears to be quite a healthy population of Rough-skinned Newts at Matheson Lake. Since my first encounter with the newt at the beach I've seen them on a number of canoe programs and several times when swimming at the lake.

So, if you're ever in the park, take a moment to stop down by the beach or better yet jump in for a refreshing dip. You never know who or what you might encounter swimming by.

By Colleen Long
Coordinator of Environmental Interpretation



Rough-skinned Newt photo Miguel Vieira

Who's that VIP?



“Motifs for embroideries (which were often referred to as needle paintings) were drawn from books or sets of engravings published specially for embroiderers, goldsmiths, and glass painters. Maria Sibylla Merian published books of her own flower pictures, or *Blumenbücher*, in 1675 and 1677.”

Excerpt from *Magazine Antiques*, August, 2000
by Charlotte Jacob-Hanson



Artwork Marie Sibylla Merian

Do you know how the citation above relates to Else Holzken, VIP Naturalist - Witty's Lagoon Nature Centre? Does she embroider? Perhaps, if I craft my words like colourful threads in embroidery, they will show a pattern begin to emerge to tell the story of how this relates to her. I believe that life is like embroidery, woven with experiences, friends, family, passions and inspirations.

Else is an independent, passionate nature lover who values sharing knowledge as well as experiences with others. I started my sunny summer morning visit with Else at her home in Sooke, a place she has called home since her husband, Theo and she retired there in 1996.

The first experience I had with Else was her sharing the locations where they view killer whales, seals and river otters. Although I missed the river otters, I did see the seals enjoying the warm rocks. The second was learning about the native plants in her garden, especially the one foot arbutus seedlings they planted when they bought the property.

Else has a genuine, relaxed spirit with a passion for nature and art. She was born in the Dutch East Indies, which is now called Indonesia, and then moved to Holland where she received her education. From an early age, Else developed an appreciation of art, especially with engravings of botanicals, birds and insects. Upon completing Grade 6, she received a book by Maria Sibylla Merian, a gift from the school. The book contains a collection of 24 coloured botanical engravings that she cherishes today. I believe this book was the start of her passion for collecting engravings and her love of botanical watercolours.

“You meet people who inspire you to learn” said Else. She was first inspired to see nature with new eyes by her biology teacher

in grade eight and nine. Else describes her as “an eccentric woman who would take the class on a bike ride to look in the fields and identify the family of particular plants.”

After her move to Canada in 1965, she married Theo, moved to White Rock in the early '70s and started a family. Since she likes to be physically active and is an avid hiker, joining the White Rock & Surrey Naturalists was a natural fit. She became friends with Madelon Schouten, a kindred spirit and the founder of the group. Else's knowledge of birds increased through time spent with Madelon who became her mentor. Else believes that “when you are given a lot (in life) you need to give back to your community.”

In the mid '80s she volunteered as treasurer for a women's transition house. Else remarked that “you learn a lot working on a board with women from different backgrounds and making decisions by consensus.”

Moving to Vancouver Island brought Else the opportunity to meet and become friends with, as well as a big fan of, Tannis Warburton, a local watercolour artist of native plants. A new volunteer opportunity, as well as a natural fit, was for Else to be part of our VIP Naturalist team and she agrees. “I am proud to be a part of CRD Parks!” She is excited about celebrating her fifth year next spring. She sees her role as “an ambassador for the parks and the programs.”

If her life was created in embroidery, it would be beautiful! Else has inspired me to look to see where my life threads of inspiration have come from, and maybe you will be inspired too!

Karen Preston
Coordinator of Volunteers

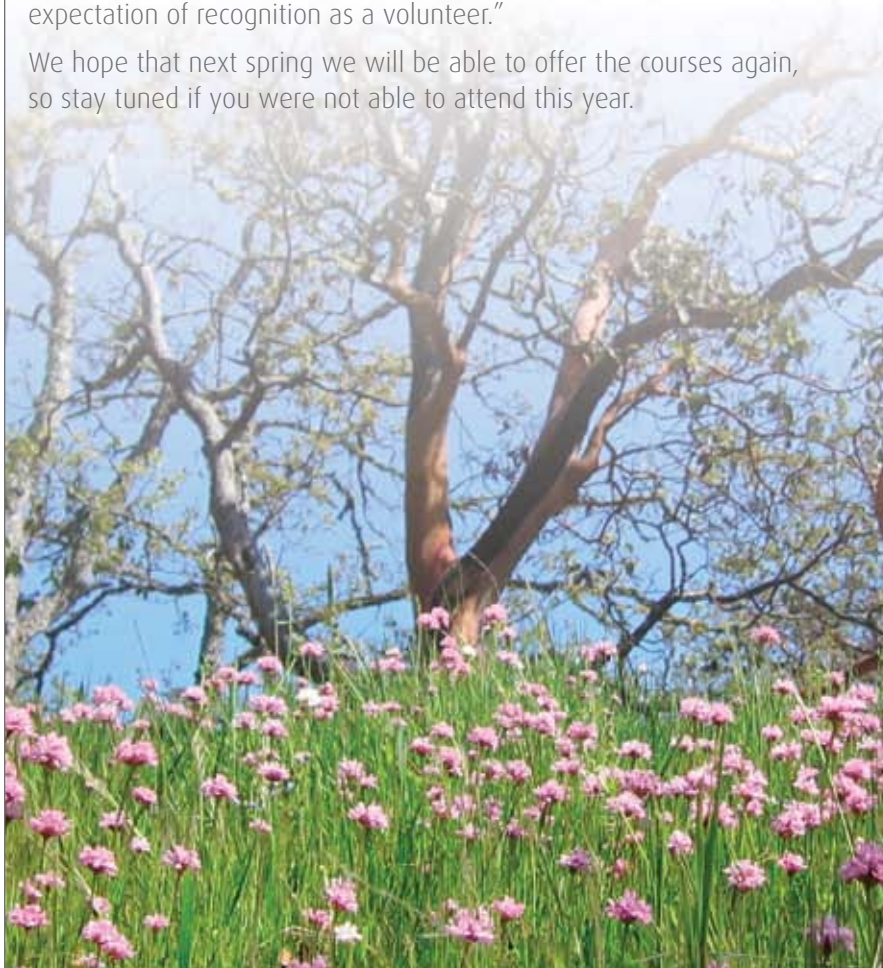
Ready, Set – Go!

Each year, employees of the Capital Regional District have the opportunity to participate in a Collision Avoidance Workshop. This spring for the first time, the course was offered to volunteers within the CRD. Six volunteers from Regional Parks participated.

Level 1 involved a short “classroom” session, followed by participants performing useful “hands-on” driving exercises that focused on skills to avoid collisions. The goal was for each participant to learn what they and their vehicle were capable of. Drills included vision slalom and braking on a curve. Level 2 offered further “hands-on” driving drills such as braking to a point, reversing exercises and braking on fine sand.

CRD staff members know the value of these courses so we were not surprised when the response from the volunteers included “Wonderful course and appreciated the opportunity to participate” and “Appreciative of the course, picked up new skills. It was above and beyond the expectation of recognition as a volunteer.”

We hope that next spring we will be able to offer the courses again, so stay tuned if you were not able to attend this year.



Regional Park Updates

We welcomed Janette Loveys-Smith as our new Manager of Visitor Services and Community Development this spring! Janette was the Manager of Community and Culture Development for the City of Guelph and we are so pleased that she made the trek across the country to become a member of our team.



Janette Loveys-Smith



Gordon Tolman

On May 30, Gordon Tolman retired as Manager of Park Operations after 30 years at Regional Parks. We still have him close by – he now volunteers as a VIP Warden!

In memory...

...we say farewell to:



Celia Buchanan with husband David

Celia Buchanan (December 25, 1922 - September 11, 2007) who served as a VIP Warden – Beaver Lake for 19 years.

Gerta Smythe (December 11, 1937 – June 19, 2008) who served as a VIP Warden – Mount Wells for four years.



Gerta Smythe