

Volunteers in Parks

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Volunteer & Park Updates

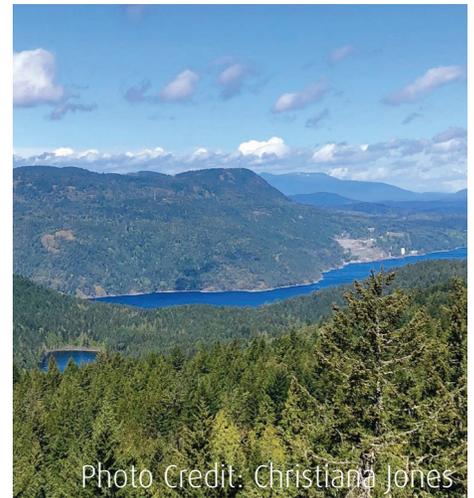


Photo Credit: Christiana Jones

On the Lookout

By Colleen Long

At the summit of Mount Manuel Quimper in the Sea to Sea Regional Park stands a fire lookout tower, a remnant fire protection resource used in BC for over 100 years. Established in 1912, the BC Forest Service built and operated fire lookouts on mountain peaks throughout BC from 1930-1970 to help protect BC's economically important forest resources. They were an essential first line of defense in the early detection of fires.

The original tower built in the 1930's was destroyed and rebuilt in the 1950's and has been standing atop the summit ever since. Though currently closed for repairs, the fire lookout tower will be open shortly for visitors to again enjoy the panoramic views from inside the tower thanks to our hardworking park operations staff.

Like so many things these days, the fire lookouts have been replaced by technology.

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What's New?

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Fire spotters in the lookouts, with their unobstructed view of the surrounding forests and intimate knowledge of the landscape could quickly detect anything out of the ordinary, but getting information out about the fires was often slow. There was also a limit to the information that the fire spotter could provide. The technology that the BC Wildfire Service now uses has the ability to detect lightning ground strikes and their location within seconds and they are also able to determine the likelihood of each strike to start a fire. Aircraft are then dispatched to do patrols of the area and if needed, can perform an initial attack on the fire.

This technology, first developed by NASA, the U.S. Forest Service and U.S. Bureau of Land Management, to detect fires has been combined with a range of other technologies that are now used in fighting fires. Infrared technology using thermal imaging from the ground and air is used to detect spot fires, residual fires and is used in fire mapping.



Fire management computer systems using highly detailed weather information can predict the probability and location of wildfires, perform modeling to predict how fires might spread, at what rate and even the amount of moisture in the fuels in the forest floor and deeper down within the soil. Things have come a long way from a fire spotter using a two-way radio to report fires.

Even with all of this technology, the general public are still the best source for reporting wildfires, with over 40% of wildfires being reported by the public. We all have a role to play in helping to protect this important resource and the ecosystems they contain by adhering to fire regulations and also by reporting wildfires to the BC Wildfire Service at 1.800.663.5555 or *5555 on a cell phone.

Some fire lookout stations in remote and prominent locations are still occasionally staffed during periods of prolonged fire danger. As a tribute to the contributions that fire lookout stations played in the protection of forest resources in the province, a lookout tower was relocated to the BC Forest Discovery Centre in Duncan and another fire lookout in Woss, located 128km north of Campbell River, was designated a heritage site.

Luckily for us, we have our own fire lookout tower to enjoy. It is a bit of a hike to get to the summit of Mount Manuel Quimper (548 metres) where the tower is located, but the views once there are well worth it. You can just imagine the fire spotter sitting in the tower with their binoculars, map, notebook and two-way radio keeping an ever watchful eye on the landscape, looking for the faintest wisp of smoke.

Sources:

<https://www.sookenewsmirror.com/community/sooke-history-fire-watch-on-mount-empress/>

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/wildfire-status/about-bcws/wildfire-response/fire-characteristics/detection>

<https://friendsofbcarchives.wordpress.com/2019/01/06/the-man-in-the-tower-forest-service-images-in-the-bc-archives/>

<https://www.npr.org/2019/09/15/749547034/a-fire-lookout-on-whats-lost-in-a-transition-to-technology>

<https://www.timescolonist.com/opinion/op-ed/comment-why-bc-decided-to-shut-down-fire-lookouts-1.21260460>



Staff Profile

Christiana Jones, Communications Coordinator



What do you enjoy about working at Regional Parks?

Everything. I enjoy the challenge of balancing recreational wants, conservational needs, and political pressures. I care deeply about parks and believe accessible greenspace is vital to a community's health. I like that I get to talk to people about the things I love all day. I also have fun creating communications materials like this snazzy newsletter. The days are full to the brim and hard to predict. There's never a dull moment!

Tell us a bit about yourself

A long time ago (December) in a galaxy far, far away (Winnipeg)... I got sick of minus fifty. So my husband, Adam, and I packed our two cats and only what we could fit into our tiny car and moved to Victoria. We have been wreaking havoc on the island ever since.

I have a degree in Communications, a diploma in Public Relations, and a diploma in Photography. Before parks I worked in elections and before that served in the Royal Canadian Navy. In my spare time I like to hike, kayak, and cycle. I play too many videogames. I am one of those weirdos who dresses up in costume to go to comic book conventions.

Volunteer Profile

Sharon Zwart-van Tilburg, Volunteer Naturalist at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park since February 2019

What do you most enjoy about volunteering with Regional Parks?

It's hard to say what I enjoy most about being a volunteer naturalist at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park. I would say two things: First, it's really fun to learn about the natural history of this region. There are so many interesting things to read in the Nature Centre. I have learned a lot and take that knowledge with me when I am hiking with my family. Also, it's very enjoyable to meet all these different visitors of the Nature centre. The conversations with visitors are often surprising. I find it very rewarding to positively contribute to someone's experience in nature, whether it's by simply handing out a map of the area or by enabling kids to share their excitement about that crab they spotted on the beach.

What is your favourite volunteer memory or experience?

I remember this time when a little girl came in the Nature Centre with her parents and big brother. She was excited, the big brother looked bored, as if he wanted to make clear this was for little kids and he wanted no part in it. But eventually, he started looking around at the displays and opened some drawers. He ended up staying the longest, reading a lot and taking all that information in. I could tell he was really interested in everything, it was great to see.

Tell us a bit about yourself?

I moved to Vancouver Island from the Netherlands in 2017 with my husband and son. Our daughter was born here. The main reason for our move is the beautiful nature here. We absolutely love this island and enjoy hiking different parks. One of my favorite things to do is looking for animal tracks in the mud and trying to guess what animal the tracks are from. And looking at the ocean, trying to spot orcas (but so far no luck!).



Did you know... over 160 bird species have been documented at Witty's Lagoon?

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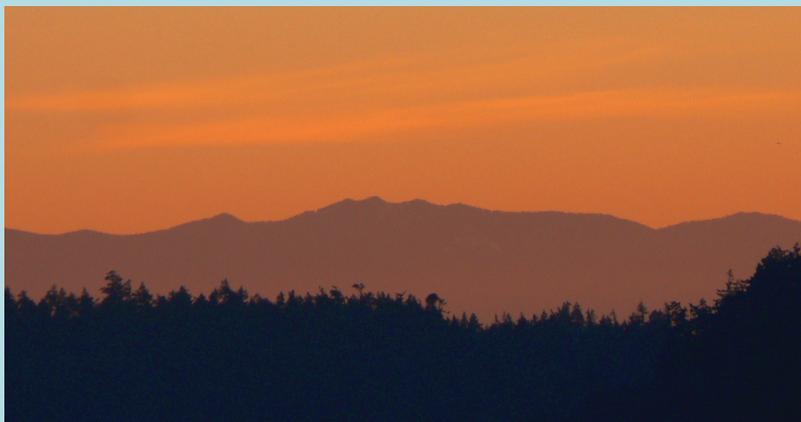
The CRD is developing a management plan for Mount Work Regional Park. The plan will provide both strategic and specific management direction and will guide environmental conservation, cultural heritage management, visitor use and park development over the next 15-20 years. The first round of public engagement is now underway. You can fill out the online comment form until midnight on October 11, 2020.

You can find the comment form at www.crd.bc.ca/mtwork-plan.

The first round of public engagement for the East Sooke Regional Management Plan is now complete. The park management plan for East Sooke Regional Park will be developed based on information and input collected. A second round of public engagement will be launched in the summer of 2021.



Photo Credit: Christiana Jones



The first round of public engagement for the Roche Cove and Matheson Lake regional parks management plan is now complete. The plan will be developed based on information and input collected. A second round of public engagement will be launched in the summer of 2021.

The Mountain Biking Advisory Committee (MBAC) is now meeting. The group is comprised of people in the capital region with an interest in recreation and a knowledge of the regional park system. They will provide advice and guidance to the CRD Regional Parks Committee for use in the development of mountain biking guidelines for regional parks.

All photos in this newsletter are supplied from the CRD Image Bank unless otherwise noted.