



Volunteers In Parks

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Volunteer & Park Updates



Grass Lake in Sea to Sea Regional Park. Photo Mary Sanseverino

Sea to Sea Regional Park - Lakes Section

By Lynn Wilson

The CRD Regional Parks staff have been busy over the past several years preparing to open the lakes section of Sea to Sea Regional Park. The area will open this October with an official trail system and park

map, and trail signs at key locations to help people navigate around the park. Several new bridges are being installed to improve visitor safety and official park trails are being brushed back.

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Diverse ecosystems, amazing vistas, sparkling lakes!



View from Empress Mountain. Photo Mary Sanseverino

The Lakes Section is the core wilderness area of the Sea to Sea Regional Park. It contains all of the major lakes in the park, including Peden, Grass, Sheilds, and Crabapple lakes. It also offers a hike to the summit of Empress Mountain (the highest point in the park), with its panoramic 360 degree view of the Sooke Hills and the Olympic Peninsula. The lakes section is rugged, remote and beautiful. Notably, it has healthy populations of large carnivores, including black bears, cougars, and wolves (although it would be rare to actually see any of them on the trails).

The trails will primarily be identified as “undesignated wilderness recreational trails” which means that visitors can expect rough trail conditions which require appropriate preparation and a fair degree of self-reliance. These trails will be open to hikers, cyclists, and equestrians. The other type of trail is the “wilderness recreational hiking trail” where trail conditions are too rugged for other uses.

The lakes section has an interesting human history. It is in the heart of the T’Sou-ke Nation’s traditional territory. T’Sou-ke oral history includes stories of hunting and gathering within park boundaries. On the shores of Sheilds, Grass, and Crabapple lakes (known traditionally as the “Smokehouse Lakes”), seasonal camps were set up to process fish and game for easier transport to the coastal villages.

This area has seen a fair share of settler activity since the

mid 1800s. From the 1920s to the 1940s, the Alpine Club of Canada had a two-story lodge at Sheilds Lake which people visited by horseback from Sooke stables. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Boy Scouts had a cabin at the western end of Sheilds Lake. The northern end of Grass Lake had some cabins and a cabin was also present at Crabapple Lake. These cabins have since burned down and nothing much remains of this phase of park history.

Up to the 1970s there was still a paved road to Sheilds and Crabapple lakes that provided public access for

fishing, camping, hiking, and winter ice skating. Remnants of the paving are still visible.

When the Lakes Section officially opens in October 2019, it will provide a new generation of well-prepared park visitors with an unparalleled opportunity to explore the diverse ecosystems, amazing vistas, and sparkling lakes nestled deep within the scenic Sea to Sea Regional Park on Southern Vancouver Island. This fall, we welcome you to come and explore this historic and wild regional park! Find out more at our [website](#).

Lynn Wilson is a parks planner with the CRD.



Charters Creek. Photo Rich Mably



Volunteer Profile

Fred Pye is a Park Steward at Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park. He has been a volunteer since March 2017.

What do you most enjoy about volunteering?

The reasons I volunteered to be a park steward were several: I have always been inclined to “sell” the beauty of the CRD; I love the outdoors and outdoor activities; I love meeting people and promoting our public resources; and mainly, I wanted to remain involved in my community. I don’t like sitting around much! So, to get a little exercise and to contribute as a CRD Park Steward seemed a perfect match.

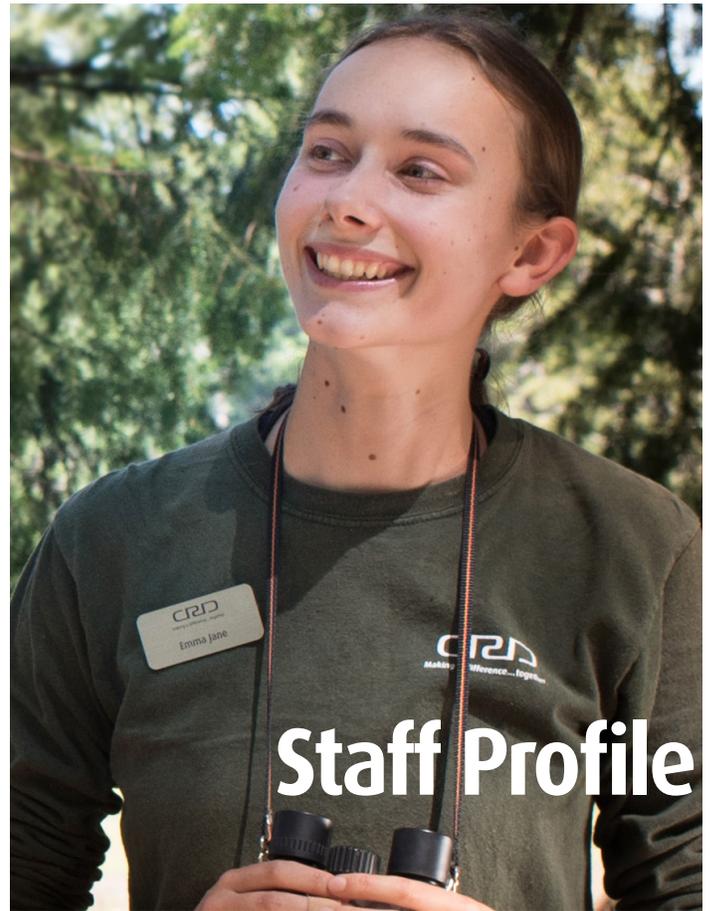
What is your favourite volunteer experience or memory?

Without question, the most positive experience I receive is the joy and satisfaction from seeing folks of all ages enjoying these beautiful parkland resources. I see such a wide variety of activities that all add to a sense of well-being in our community. For me, this is the essence of what a public parks system should be and why I am happy to be a part of it!

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I am a “born and raised” Victorian. I was brought up in the Fairfield neighbourhood, and attended Sir James Douglas Elementary, Central Junior High and Vic High schools. I received my BEd and my MEd degrees from UVic. For 33 years I taught in junior and senior schools, and was in school and district administrative roles in SD 62. Through this period I raised my family and affirmed many ties to the community.

Paralleling my chosen career, I also spent significant time in the tourism industry. To pay for university, I was one of the early drivers/tour guides for the original double decker bus company in Victoria, working around my class schedules and through the summer months. When I retired I again was drawn to tourism and was employed for 8 years as a skipper with the Victoria Harbour Ferry Co.



Staff Profile

Emma Jane Vignola is a Park Naturalist at CRD Regional Parks. She began working at the CRD in July 2017.

What do you most enjoy about working in parks?

I love getting to work with diverse people in diverse places. Our regional parks protect many different kinds of ecosystems and it’s a real pleasure to help people learn about and connect more to them. We also receive some pretty great questions from the public like “Do birds need vitamin D?” and “Do owls have earwax?” which always keep us naturalists on our toes!

What is a favourite experience or memory?

Some of my favourite memories are all the wildlife I’ve seen and heard in our regional parks, from sea lions breaching off the coast of East Sooke and woodpeckers flitting about at Mill Hill, to dragonflies soaring at Elk/Beaver Lake. It makes my heart happy to know that humans aren’t the only ones to benefit from parks.

Tell us a bit about yourself.

I grew up in Victoria, and have lived here most of my life. I like nature photography, philosophical conversations, music, and taking my dog for walks (don’t worry, I keep him leashed and scoop the poop).

Volunteer & Park Updates



Bill in action, April 2018

In Memory of Bill Spriggs

By Colleen Long

Bill Spriggs, Volunteer Beekeeper, passed away on July 2, 2019 at the age of 89 at home with his family. Bill began volunteering with Regional Parks in 1990 and worked together with our original beekeeper, Alan King, helping to establish observation hives in the Nature Centres. Bill eventually took over for Alan.

Having a life-long love of the natural world, Bill completed degrees in agriculture and forestry from MacDonald College in Montreal and the University of New Brunswick. He worked for the BC Forest Service and later BC Parks as a Parks Planner from 1957 until his retirement in 1988, where he helped establish many of the parks in the province, including Naikoon on Haida Gwaii and the West Coast Trail. In the last five years of his career with BC Parks, Bill became a Park Naturalist at Goldstream Provincial Park, where he had the opportunity to pass on his knowledge and passion of the natural world.

Bill had an interest in bees from an early age, but it wasn't until he took a beekeeping course at Camosun College that he rekindled that interest. He shared that knowledge and appreciation by teaching beekeeping himself for many years, volunteering as a beekeeper with Regional Parks, Goldstream Provincial Park and Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary. He also served many years on the executive of the Capital Region Beekeepers Association.

Over the years, Bill tried to establish observation hives in

our Nature Centres at Elk/Beaver Lake, Francis/King and Witty's Lagoon regional parks. For various reasons, the bee hives at Witty's Lagoon and Elk/Beaver Lake were not very successful, but the bee hive at Francis/King has thrived under the direction of Bill and with the help of Randy Cunningham, who apprenticed under Bill. They developed quite a friendship over the years maintaining the beehive at Francis/King. Most recently, Nairn Hollott, an experienced beekeeper and Education Director with the Capital Region Beekeepers Association, joined our ranks as a Volunteer Beekeeper.

The observation beehive at Francis/King has provided endless hours of fascination and enjoyment for visitors of all ages. It is a highlight of the Nature Centre and has been enjoyed by thousands of visitors over the years.

Bill was also an accomplished organic farmer. He and his wife, Cicely Meek, grew apples, pears, plums, melons, berries, vegetables, nuts, herbs and maintained about a quarter of a million very happy bees on two-thirds of an acre near UVic.

I feel very privileged to have gotten to know Bill over the years although our encounters were infrequent. He was a true Renaissance man, incredibly knowledgeable and proficient in a wide range of fields. He was a planner, forester, beekeeper, gardener, naturalist, singer and lover of nature. He was a gentleman, incredibly kind and humble, and always willing to chat and pass on his knowledge.

He will be deeply missed by his family and all that knew him well, but hopefully they will find solace in the many fond memories they have of Bill. For me, I will always remember Bill in his Tilley hat with a smile on his face.



2010 Volunteer Recognition Event