



# Volunteers In Parks

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Pacific tree frog photo Analise Zocher



Red-legged frog photo Dan Dzurisin

## Harbingers of Spring

By Colleen Long

To me, one of the first signs that spring is really on its way, besides the Indian plum blooming, is the sometimes deafening chorus of the Pacific tree frog (*Hyla regilla*).

I am always amazed at how a chorus will suddenly start and then simultaneously end. In studies, it has been shown that one male acts as the chorus master leading the night time revelry.

There are two native species of frogs on Southern Vancouver Island, the Pacific tree frog and the red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*). Both come back to ponds and marshes to breed in the early spring, but both spend most of their adult lives out of the water. Red-legged Frogs are mainly found in the cool, moist, coastal forests, while the Pacific frogs can be found in a variety of habitats from woodlands to mountainous areas and meadows, and they are also often found in urban areas such as gardens. Red-legged frogs are a medium sized frog and can be 7-10 centimetres in length.

Pacific tree frogs are small frogs at only 2-5 centimetres in size. As in most species of frogs, the females are slightly larger than the males.

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# Regal and splendid frogs of Vancouver Island



Pacific tree frogs change color to adapt to their environment photo CRD

Pacific tree frogs can be quite variable in colour, from tan to bronze or bright emerald green, as well as shades in between.

Part of their name *Regilla* means “regal or splendid.” They can change the colour of their skin rapidly from light to dark, possibly due to changes in temperature and humidity. Pacific tree frogs have a distinctive dark eye stripe which runs from the tip of their nostril through their eye and as far back as their shoulder. The skin on their back is smooth and does not have folds or ridges, though it is often marked with dark patches or stripes, and is usually a creamy, pale colour underneath. Another unique feature is the sticky, round pads at the ends of their toes which allows the frog to climb almost any surface.

When returning to wetlands to breed, Pacific tree frogs make their way to shallow, “ephemeral” ponds, which are temporary ponds created during our wet winters that tend to dry up by midsummer. In this way, they can avoid predatory fish and amphibians such as bullfrogs, which require permanent bodies of water. The tadpoles metamorphose in approximately two months, so they have moved out of the ponds before the dry summer. The newly metamorphosed frogs may only be one centimetre long and are often ready to breed the following year.

The breeding call of the male tree frog is a two-syllable krek-ek, while their call the remainder of the year is a one syllable c-r-rick. It is doubtful that you will ever hear the mating call of the male red-legged frogs as they make their calls underwater, to a depth of up to one metre. Pacific tree frog recordings have often been used in Hollywood movies and hence another common name for them is the “Hollywood Frogs.”

As Pacific tree frogs have a variety of habitats in which they can live, there is no real conservation concern with them at present, though populations may decline in future if wetland loss continues.

So now that spring is here, the next time that you are outside in the evening near a wetland, be certain to listen for the chorus of the Pacific tree frogs. You won’t be disappointed. To learn more about and help our native frog species, check out the BC Frogwatch Program [www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/frogwatch/whoswho/key.htm](http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/wld/frogwatch/whoswho/key.htm).

## Sources:

*BC Frog Watch – Factsheet #4 and #5, Ministry of Environment Lands & Parks.*

Corkan, C, & C. Thoms. 2006. *Amphibians of Oregon, Washington & British Columbia*. Lone Pine Publishing, Edmonton, AB.



## Volunteer Profile

Diane Knight and Gordon Tolman have been Park Stewards at Mill Hill Regional Park since 2008.

### What do you enjoy most about volunteering?

We love the parks themselves and enjoy interacting with park visitors. Volunteering gives us more opportunity to get out and enjoy the parks in all seasons. We are so fortunate that we are all able to hike and visit regional parks all year long. This is also an opportunity to give back to the community that we are so fortunate to call home.

### What is your favourite volunteer experience or memory?

Our favourite experiences are where we can share our enthusiasm and passion for the parks. For example, meeting park visitors on Mill Hill during wildflower season which is just amazing. We can share our knowledge, experiences and advise on other similar regional experiences. As we are both long-time Victoria residents, we have knowledge of the area that we can share with park visitors.

### Tell us a bit about yourself.

Gordon is a retired Park Operations Manager. He was with Regional Parks for 31 years and has had a passion for the outdoors all his life. As a young man, he grew up in Haida Gwaii and spent his time exploring those beautiful islands. He returns there for visits whenever he can. His passion now is spending more time with his favourite pastime, photography! Some of his pictures can be found on Instagram @gordontolman. Diane is also now retired from the Township of Esquimalt after nine years and previously worked at Regional Parks for 16 years. She has a passion for the outdoors, wildflowers, birds, beaches, volunteering and her children.



## Staff Profile

Tracey Moss is the Coordinator of Environmental Interpretation at Regional Parks. She's been at the CRD since 2016.

### What do you most enjoy about working at the CRD?

Protected areas have always been dear to my heart, so I love that I get to work as part of the regional parks team. These places that we work to protect and interpret are the very places that I go to in my spare time with my family, so they hold deep meaning and value for me. The work that I do is varied, fast paced, and there is never a dull moment! I also love that we are surrounded by nature at our headquarters. Sometimes woodpeckers drum on our metal roofs in spring!

### What is a favorite memory at Regional Parks?

Last fall I was leading a guided salmon walk at one of our events. My youngest daughter, who is 4, was attending the walk with her grandparents. At one of the stops she pulled a picture of an eagle out of her pocket, turned to the group, and said "have any of you seen this bird here? It eats salmon!" She stole the show! It excites me to see not only my children, but the kids who come to our interpretive programs build their own connections to our regional parks and the plants and animals who call them home.

### Tell us a bit about yourself.

I grew up in Saanich and my time exploring parks set me on a path to work in protected areas. Working in park interpretation has taken me to some of the most beautiful places in our country. I live with my family in Sooke and we love hiking in East Sooke and Sea to Sea Regional Parks, swimming at Sooke Potholes Regional Park, and biking the Galloping Goose Regional Trail. We have adventure right outside our back door!

# Volunteer & Park Updates

## New Volunteers Welcomed

**Owen Enright** – Naturalist Witty's Lagoon Regional Park

**Lauren Sherwood** – Naturalist Witty's Lagoon Regional Park

## Staff Departures

We have had some recent staff departures from Regional Parks. Though they will be missed, we wish them well in their future endeavours.

### Mike Walton

Mike Walton, Senior Manager Regional Parks, retired on Friday, March 9. Mike began with Regional Parks in September of 2013 and came to us from Parks Canada as a Field Unit Superintendent in Northern Ontario. Mike and his wife, Sylvie, are moving to Whitehorse where two of their three children live. Mike has lived and worked previously in the Yukon as Manager, Resource Conservation with Parks Canada between 2001-2008. He is looking forward to returning to the north and has taken on a new leadership role as the Executive Director of the Yukon Conservation Society.



Mike Walton

### Sara Mimick

Sara Mimick, Park Interpreter, recently accepted a position with Metro Vancouver Regional Parks, where she worked previously for 3 years as a Parks Interpreter, before coming to the CRD in 2016. While with us, Sara oversaw the Nature Centre and Volunteer Naturalists at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park.



Sara Mimick

## Resident Survey Results

A CRD survey in 2016-2017 collected information about residents' use of regional parks and trails, their satisfaction, as well as their opinions about priorities for conservation, recreation and funding.

Here are some of the findings:

**5000 Households  
1245 Participants  
27% Response**



*Data statistically valid and representative of CRD (95% confidence level)*



### Why do you visit?

- 68% Walking
- 58% Hiking
- 45% Viewing nature
- 36% Dog walking
- 27% Bird watching

### Where do you go?

- 73%** Galloping Goose  
→ 1,909,389 Visits in 2016
- 58%** Elk/Beaver Lake  
→ 1,462,933 Visits in 2016
- 49%** Lochside  
→ 1,182,548 Visits in 2016

*Survey data aligns with the 2016 Traffic and Trails count data*

The survey results help guide staff in planning and service delivery. You can download the survey report and a fact sheet from the CRD website [www.crd.bc.ca/about/data/fast-facts/regional-parks-trails](http://www.crd.bc.ca/about/data/fast-facts/regional-parks-trails).