

# Volunteers in Parks

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## 2021 Virtual Volunteer Recognition Event

By Colleen Long

Last summer as things were going so well with COVID-19, we set the date for the Volunteer Recognition Event to take place on Sat., Nov. 6 at the Olympic View Golf Club in Colwood. Unfortunately, Omicron reared its ugly head and we were not able to meet in person. As the next best option, we decided to go with a virtual event and were very fortunate to have Dr. Nancy Turner, Professor Emeritus in Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria be our keynote speaker.

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Joan McDonald, 5th year award



Lisa Davison, 5th year award



Karen Wray-Benson, 5th year award

Dr. Turner has worked with First Nations elders and cultural specialists in northwestern North America for over 50 years, helping to document, retain and promote their traditional knowledge of plants and environments, including Indigenous foods, material and traditional medicines. Her presentation: *Caring for the Plants, Caring for the Lands: Northwest -Coast Indigenous Peoples Stewardship, Past, Present and Future* gave us some insight into the incredible importance that plants played in the First Nations culture in BC and all of the practices that they developed and continue to use today to manage these culturally important species.



Licorice Fern

She also talked about introduced species and their negative impact on native species and the important work that is needed to be done to protect these resources. After Dr. Turner's presentation, we had a brief question period and then moved onto the awards ceremony. The award winner's names were listed off for each of the categories and the winners were given their awards at a later date.

This year 14 volunteers were recognized for their years of service ranging from 1-15 years. Eight volunteers were recognized for completing their first year of volunteering, four volunteers received 5th year awards and two volunteers received 15th year awards.

Ellen Kowalyk, one of our 15th year award winners, is a Park Steward on the Lochside Regional Trail. Ellen does her weekly patrols on the Lochside by bike from Mount Newton Cross Road to Mattick's Farms, so roughly between Km8-Km16 on the Lochside. For many years she also did weekly patrols at Coles Bay Regional Park until 2019 when another Park Steward came on at Coles Bay.

Ellen and her husband are avid skiers and hikers and they often head south during our dark, rainy months to visit with family in Arizona. Ellen sent me a note in mid-November letting me know that they were heading to Phoenix looking for some sunshine and that if all went well they would be back at the end of March. Come the beginning of April, I will start getting weekly reports from Ellen again, until they head south for their winter break.

## 2021 Recipients

### 1st Year Award Recipients

- » **Cynthia Brossard** –  
Restoration Volunteer
- » **Coreen Chiswell** –  
Devonian Restoration Volunteer
- » **Sharon Dowling** –  
Naturalist Francis/King
- » **David Dvoracek** –  
Restoration Volunteer
- » **Cindy Parker** –  
Beekeeper Francis/King Nature Centre
- » **Jacqui Whiteway** –  
Naturalist Francis/King
- » **Ethan Xu** –  
Naturalist Francis/King
- » **Andrew Yatsko** –  
Devonian Restoration Volunteer



Ellen Kowalyk, 15th year award

# 2021 Recipients

## 5th Year Award Recipients

- » **Nancy Blenkiron** – Naturalist Francis/King
- » **Lisa Davison** – Park Steward Mill Hill
- » **Joan McDonald** – Park Steward Thetis Lake and Sooke Hills Wilderness
- » **Karen Wray-Benson** – Park Steward Witty's Lagoon

## 15th Year Award Recipients

- » **Ellen Kowalyk** – Park Steward Lochside
- » **Bryce McCaughey** - Park Steward and Volunteer Naturalist Francis/King



*Bryce McCaughey, 15th year award*

Our second 15th year award winner is Bryce McCaughey. Bryce is both a Park Steward and Volunteer Naturalist at Francis/King Regional Park. Until recently, he also lived in the private residence at the park and hiked many of the trails every day with his two dogs. Over the years, Bryce has gotten to know every inch of Francis/King Regional Park. His knowledge of the park and friendly and engaging manner make him a great ambassador to visitors to

the Nature Centre and the park itself. He is also a great resource for the other volunteers and is always willing to help out and answers questions that they might have.

We can't thank Ellen and Bryce enough for their commitment and dedication to Regional Parks and we hope that they will continue keeping a watchful eye on things and assisting visitors for many more years to come.

**Congratulations to all of our award winners! Thanks also to all of you for all that you do on our behalf. Your efforts do not go unnoticed.** Fingers crossed that this was our first and last virtual Volunteer Recognition Event and that we can all gather together in the fall of 2022 to celebrate the 40th anniversary of volunteers in CRD Regional Parks. I will be sending out more information about the event once I have more of the details confirmed. Stay tuned!



*Cynthia Brossard, 1st year award*



*Red Squirrel at Mill Hill Regional Park, photo by Phil Peterson*

# Volunteer Profile - Julie Thomson

Julie has been a Park Steward at Bear Hill Regional Park since Feb. 2014.

## What do you most enjoy about volunteering with Regional Parks?

I enjoy hiking in a relatively untouched natural landscape with vistas of distant mountains, cumulus clouds cresting on the horizon, and the sea bordered by rural settings. I relish the opportunity to engage with people who share an appreciation of the native flora and fauna.

## What is your favourite volunteer memory or experience?

I enjoy the positive response and interest of the public when I show them a stunning *Calypso bulbosa* (calypso orchid or fairy-slipper), and *Erythronium oregonum* (white fawn lily), or a western tanager with its lemon yellow body, and bright orange head of the male species.



White Fawn Lily, photo by Deborah Kerr Designs

## Tell us a bit about yourself?

I spent my early childhood playing in the woods, skating in the winter, on our small acreage with a winding creek, wandering through the property, on the fringe of Winnipeg. That experience instilled in me my love of nature which led to my undergraduate Geography degree at the University of Manitoba, and graduate work at the University of Calgary.

An early scuba diver certification introduced me to the incredible life, and colour of the seas, especially “Browning Pass”, just north of Vancouver island, the “best temperate diving in the known universe”, with soft pink corals, wolf eel and octopi. I joined, in my late 40’s, the Alpine Club of Canada [Vancouver Island Section] and became a mountaineer [amateur leader] and backcountry skier. I was introduced to incredible wildflowers of the alpine meadows, hoary marmots, white tailed and rock ptarmigan, and rufous hummingbirds. Membership with the Victoria Natural History Society, BC field ornithologists, Nature BC, Nature Vancouver and Botany BC honed my knowledge through endless field trips [where Latin words filled the air] on wildflowers, mosses, lichens, grasses, and birds.

I have enjoyed trekking, birding, botany trips to Nepal and Bhutan in the Himalaya, and mountaineering locally, on Rainier, and in Mongolia. Recently, I have resurrected my rock climbing habit, and enjoy great workouts at Cragx and Crest Creek Crag in Strathcona Park.

# Staff Profile - Miles Albu

*Miles has worked as a Restoration Assistant since May 2019.*

## **What do you most enjoy about working at Regional Parks?**

Spending time with other people who are passionate about plants!

## **Tell us a bit about yourself.**

I was introduced to environmental restoration in UVIC's Environmental Studies program in 2010 and I've been hooked ever since! My experience with Regional Parks actually began as a volunteer.



I have been involved in restoration projects for a lot of different organizations and municipalities on Vancouver Island since 2010, and I enjoy volunteering just as much as I enjoy leading groups.

I am a part-time horticulturalist, avid home gardener and I love to camp. Often on weekends (when I'm not on Mill Hill, in the Sooke Hills or in one of our other beautiful parks!), I can be found exploring Vancouver Island's vast network of logging roads on the back of an ATV with my partner Casey. With so much to explore, there's always a new place to fish, forage and hike.

Anyone who has spent time with me outdoors probably knows that I love solving a plant mystery from pictures, descriptions or seeing something new in person. Identifying plants is equally as important to me as learning their traditional uses, edibility, ecological function and population distribution, so if you want to talk ethnobotany, I'm always interested!

I have a Bachelor's degree in Environmental Studies and Sociology, and I am currently in my third year of a Bachelor of Social Work degree. As a lifelong learner I am grateful to be on Coast Salish Territory where there is so much to see and so many wonderful people to learn alongside. Working for the CRD gives me the opportunity to connect with some truly exceptional people and I love it.



*Salal and Bracken Fern*

**Thanks for all your hard work volunteers, we absolutely couldn't do any of this without you.**

**See you on the hill!**

# Volunteer & Park Updates

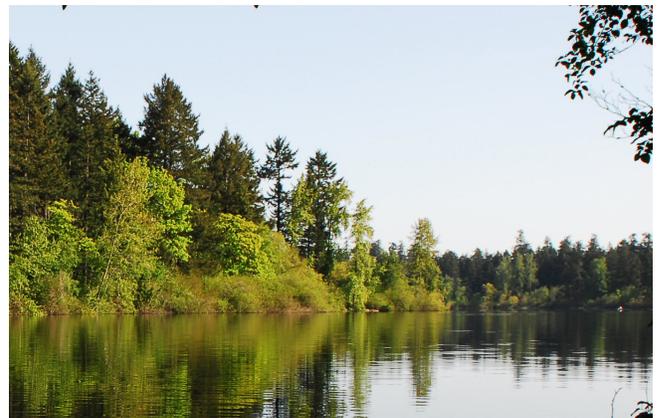
## **The Capital Regional District (CRD) is updating the Regional Parks Strategic Plan.**

The CRD Board initiated an update of the Regional Parks Strategic Plan 2010-2021 on December 8, 2021 and extended the current Plan until July 2022.

A new Regional Parks Strategic Plan will be brought forward for approval at that time. First Nations engagement and stakeholder meetings are underway and will be followed by public feedback opportunities starting in March.

For more information and to subscribe to updates regarding public engagement, visit: [getinvolved.crd.bc.ca/regional-parks-strategic-plan-update](https://getinvolved.crd.bc.ca/regional-parks-strategic-plan-update).

Regional Parks is in the process of **replacing the existing washroom building at Hamsterly Beach**. Elk/Beaver Lake Regional Park is our most visited park in the system with just under 2 million visits in 2021. New washroom facilities were required to meet visitation levels and demands. The fully accessible washroom will be plumbed with flush-toilets and fitted with energy efficient LED lighting and skylights.



*Beaver Lake, photo by Deborah Kerr Designs*



**Work is beginning on the Mayne Island Regional Trail.** The Mayne Island Regional Trail is classified as a “Bike and Pedestrian Trail”. These trails provide opportunities cycling, walking and running for both recreation and for active transportation. This 2.3 km bike and pedestrian trail will be developed between Village Bay and Miners Bay village. The CRD’s Engineering Services and Regional Parks divisions will oversee the development of the trail. Construction is anticipated to start in Spring 2021 and be completed in 2023.

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