



LIGHTHOUSE PARK PRESERVATION SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

January, 2006

Volume 1, Issue 5

"It is not the language of the painters, but the language of nature to which one has to listen." Vincent Van Gogh

SOCIETY NEWS

by Marja de Jong Westman



We have reasons to celebrate the arrival of this new year. A few of the Society's long term goals were finally realized. It is with joy that I announce the proposed establishment of a no-take fishing area along the park's shores and a successful first phase of restoration work along Beacon Trail.

The society's gifts to the forests of Lighthouse Park in October were some 340 sword ferns, 70 salmonberry, 80 Oregon grape, 149 salal, 70 huckleberry, 9 vine maples, 15 red elderberry, 25 snowberry, 7 red currants, and 2 cascara! These were all lovingly planted over the course of two days by the hands of some 30 volunteers on each occasion. This is a project we could not have possibly undertaken without the help of West Vancouver Parks Department. They brought in the soil amender, put up the protective fences, ordered and delivered the plants, and provided energy both in the form of food "fuel" for our planting crew as well as gardeners of their own.

The total cost of the project, \$3238.47, was shared equally between West Vancouver Parks and the Lighthouse Park Preservation Society. We still have \$800 left from the Jenny Anglin fund and have received a further a \$2000 grant from Mountain Equipment Co-operative.

This kind of restoration work, not only repairs the human footprint in the park, but potentially increases the usefulness of the area for wildlife. Edges of forests are often spots of pressure, where urban activities encroach and native plants and animals are at risk from disturbance and predation by domestic animals and natural predators. These same concerns can be applied to the outer edges of Lighthouse Park where neighbourhoods share their backyards with the park.

Since the Society's conception, its concern for the flora and fauna of Lighthouse Park has not been limited to just the terrestrial landscape.

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DIRECTORS

President—Marja de Jong
Westman, Biologist,

Acting Secretary—Sylvia Mather

Membership Secretary—
Sheena Vennesland

Treasurer—David Foreman,
Grain Executive, Retired

Directors at Large -
Doug Caldwell, Environmental
Planner, Retired
Beans Justice, Architect, Retired
David Cook, P. Eng., Geologist,
Biologist, Retired



WEST VANCOUVER
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

SOCIETY NEWS (cont'd...)

In 1997, in one of our first reports to Council, members encouraged the protection of the park's seashores and offshore reefs. The reasoning for this, is that the park's bay-pocketed shoreline is a common feeding and resting spot for overwintering and resident waterfowl, shore-birds, cormorants, and herons, as well as being the home to river otters. The reefs offshore are home to several long-lived and declining rockfish species. With a bit of good timing and input from the Vancouver Aquarium and Department of Fisheries and Oceans, it was announced at the December 12th Council meeting that a no-take zone (i.e. no hook and line fishing) is proposed extending from Tyee Park (Horseshoe Bay) along to and including Lighthouse Park's Caulfeild Cove. The zone will likely exist as a shoreline strip closure, extending 50 m. offshore, and will function virtually as a marine protected area and is a part of the larger Passage Island Rockfish Conservation area. West Vancouver's rocky shorelines are popular poaching areas and unfortunately rockfish are very often the preferred prey. Included in this larger protected area is the Vancouver Aquarium's black rockfish research area at East Beach, which until now, has been the world's smallest marine protected area — a 100 m. by 80 m. patch!

It is indeed good news that the arms of conservation now potentially extend from Lighthouse Park's land to sea!



North entry to Officers' Mess, photo courtesy Roy Edgell

OFFICERS' MESS DEMOLISHED

by Elaine Graham

On January 4th, 2006, one of the oldest buildings in the park was taken down. As you walked down Beacon Trail, it was the first building in view—referred to as Hut #1 or the Officers' Mess. It was one of several army huts built by the Department of National Defence in 1939, to house conscripts for World War II. Gun emplacements at Point Atkinson, and a searchlight at East Beach were installed for surveillance, on the alert for enemy submarines or ships entering Burrard Inlet.

More "residential" in style than the other huts, the Officers' Mess had a large lounge with fireplace, a substantial kitchen, communal bathroom, and two smaller rooms at one end. During the 1970's, West Vancouver Parks' staff used the hut to create a Nature room, complete with a darkened "theatre" for slide shows. Leaf printing, animal tracks, and plant study were feature items. In summer, Sunday movies in the park were included as part of the nature program. They were shown in the outdoor theatre area, now called Songbird Meadow. People were allowed to drive their cars down to the field (Salmonberry Meadow) and out again up Beacon Trail, after dark. These nature movies were quite popular, despite the mosquitoes. In the 1980's and 90's the building housed the Parks Department's summer day camp for children, and was used several times as a film set. At the same time, the West Vancouver Girl Guides received permission from Parks to use the building for nature workshops for guiders. Paddy Copeland, Park Attendant, always had a fire ready for these events. Eventually the Girl Guides received a "Lease to Occupy" one of the buildings to continue their nature studies. They chose the dining hall.

All the army huts were built on block foundations with shingle siding and no insulation. They were designed for temporary occupation, and as a result, have deteriorated from lack of use. Some have been removed. The dining hall and bunkhouse have been revitalized by the community into the Phyl Munday Hut and Ski'witsut Hut.

Discussions are underway between Parks and our Society to rehabilitate the land vacated by the Officers' Mess.

NATURE WALK PROGRAM IN LIGHTHOUSE PARK

by David Cook

To promote awareness of the unique natural history of Lighthouse Park and encourage interest in its preservation, I began a program of walks in 2005. These are on the third Sunday of every even month, and begin at the Phyl Munday Nature Hut at 2:30 p.m. By starting the walks when the Nature Hut is open, weekend visitors to the park can also participate. Each of these Sunday afternoon walks covers a different theme. Themes for the past year included tree species, mushroom species, and a comparison of Lighthouse Park's temperate rain forest with tropical rain forest ecology. In October, 2006, Terry Taylor, renowned mycologist, will complement the series with his Fall mushroom walk.

Suggested themes for this year include:

- How did the forest of Lighthouse Park begin and where is it going?
- Why is the heather family (Ericaceae) of plants so successful in our rain forests?
- Micro-habitats of Lighthouse Park.
- Insects and other invertebrates.
- Inter-tidal life.
- Climate change: it is a fact and can nature adjust?
- Managing small urban natural spaces: is sustainability possible over the long term?

The next walk focusing on

“Biodiversity: What is it and why is it the buzz word of the times?” is on

Sunday February 19th, 2006

Wanted Green Thumbs

We began our trail-side restoration in the park last year by planting hundreds of native trees, shrubs and ferns. We now need to add some of the small plants that would naturally grow below them.

We'll need large quantities, so we plan to grow them ourselves from divisions

and seeds. Would you like to lend a hand?

If you have experience with plant propagation—great! If you don't—not a problem! Come to a hands-on afternoon workshop, and we'll help even black thumbs to get started.

BOARD POSITIONS

Our Society couldn't exist without the work of its volunteer members. In the past year we saw the retirement of long term board member and secretary, Daphne Hales. Fortunately, Daphne remains an active member along with her role as a dedicated grandmother. Sylvia Mather has kindly stepped in as acting secretary and we all appreciate her quick production of concise minutes.

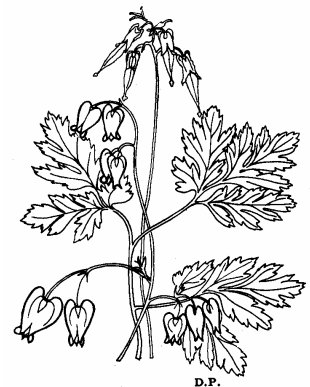
Our guest lecture series requires someone to talk to prospective guests, and book meeting space for the events. Peggy Keane accepted this role for 2006. At the time, we had no idea that the demolition of the Community Centre would drastically increase competition for meeting space in West Vancouver. Our thanks go to Peggy for her dogged persistence in arranging the upcoming series.

Given these changes, we encourage members to give some thought to serving on the board in the upcoming year. Let us know if you are interested.

Please contact Marja de Jong Westman at 604-921-3382 or e mail at mdjw@telus.net.

We'll be meeting at
**2:00 p.m. on Saturday
March 11, at
4939 Water Lane.**

If you are planning to
attend, please call
Elspeth Bradbury at
(604) 926-9390.



Bleeding Heart, *Dicentra formosa*

A SECRETIVE AMPHIBIAN

by Elaine Graham

Along the Pacific coast of North America, from Central California to Southern British Columbia, living in cool, humid forests, are several species of salamander. Deep in the damp woods where there is plenty of leaf litter and woody debris for protection, some entirely terrestrial species can survive without standing water.

My first sighting of this type of salamander was when I was with a group of children on the Valley Trail in Lighthouse Park. Snugly curled in the damp soil beneath a log I overturned was a translucent, embryonic looking creature with hooded brown eyes. It looked so vulnerable, I instinctively felt the urge to protect it. Replacing the log to avoid crushing this fragile creature wasn't easy. The pinkish brown skin, pale pink limbs, and light grey undersides were typical of the *Ensatina*, *Ensatina eschscholtzi*, variously called the Red or Oregon Salamander. Although I accompanied many groups of children on nature walks after that, it was some time before I found another one. And typically I had no camera ready to capture the moment.

The *Ensatina* is a lungless amphibian, breathing through twelve costal grooves on each side of its body. It is about 8-12 cm long with four limbs. There are four toes on the front feet and five on the hind feet, all without claws. The tail, which is as long as the body, is rounded in cross-section with a definite constriction at its base. If frightened suddenly, or disturbed, an *Ensatina* will rear up stiffly on all four legs and wave its tail in the air. Glands on the dorsal side of the tail secrete milky alkaline toxins which are extremely distasteful and irritating to most predators. Since the tail is easily broken off at its basal constriction, any predator who tries to grab the tail will be distracted by a writhing, foul tasting appendage, but no salamander. Salamanders are unusual in that they can grow back lost toes, whole limbs, and parts or all of their tails. Regeneration in amphibians is a fascinating process, and an active area of research. After a limb is lost, cells take on an embryonic-like state. These cells then multiply and differentiate into the specific cell types required to replace the lost structure.

Colour varies across the *Ensatina*'s range, from pale pink to darker orange and brown, with some flecking, and forms the basis for the classification of different subspecies along the coast. Juveniles are similar in color to the adults but tend to have more light and dark flecking on the sides.

A sticky mushroom-shaped tongue, attached by a stalk to the floor of the *Ensatina*'s mouth helps it to catch its prey of spiders, mites, sowbugs, beetles, springtails and crick-

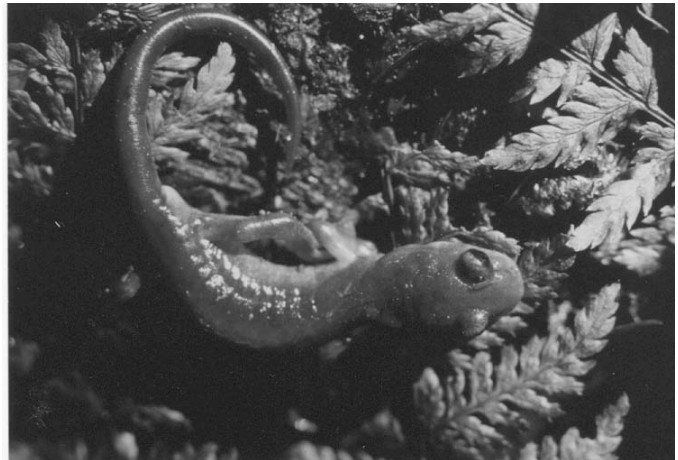
ets. It has teeth along the jaws and in a cluster on the roof of the mouth.

Mating in early Spring involves several hours of elaborate courtship. The male deposits on the ground a gel pack of sperm, which the female picks up and uses to fertilize her eggs. This procedure requires complex co-ordination between the partners for successful mating to occur. Once achieved, the female deposits a cluster of some ten colorless jelly-coated eggs in an underground chamber or rotting log. She broods these eggs all summer. It takes four to five months for the eggs to hatch into perfectly formed miniature salamanders, about 1" long. All the developmental stages occur within the egg. As in other plethodontid salamanders, like the Western Red-Backed Salamander and Clouded Salamander, there are no aquatic larvae.

After the Fall rains, the young salamanders disperse to new homes, become wide ranging and remain active. In cold or dry weather they retreat into caves, animal burrows and crevices among rotted roots and logs. At three to five years of age, salamanders are sexually mature, and can live for up to ten more years.

As most salamander species are nocturnal, they are sheltered from daytime predators and heat. Even a few minutes of direct exposure to sunlight can be deadly for this amphibian, which requires high humidity to survive.

Simply imagining these tiny animals navigating their way through the forest soil, beneath nurse logs and roots, eluding the predatory grasp of claws and beaks heightens my respect and concern for their survival. But the thrill of seeing an *Ensatina* is truly heartening. It restores my faith in the resilience, fragility, and mystery of a healthy forest ecosystem.



Ensatina, Oregon or Red Salamander, *Ensatina eschscholtzi*

AWARDS



The Corporation of the District of West Vancouver, through its Heritage Advisory Committee, recognizes and honours outstanding projects and accomplishments in Heritage Conservation and Awareness. In 2005 it was the privilege of our Society to receive a "Heritage Achievement Award" in recognition of our continuing efforts to preserve the natural heritage and environmental values of Lighthouse Park. The application outlined our dedication to the maintenance of the park and gave numerous examples of co-operation with the Parks Department in the process of park improvement. Our President, Marja de Jong Westman, accepted the award on our behalf and, in so doing, confirmed our ongoing commitment to the well-being of the park.



On the same day one of our members, Katharine Steig was presented with a 2005 Heritage Award for her steadfast leadership in preserving our environmental heritage. Katharine Steig has the ability to pull together diverse stakeholders, sometimes with diametrically opposite views, and build a shared consensus in an atmosphere of mutual respect. She has shown us the importance of keeping our wild lands accessible to everyone with minimal restrictions, both now and in the future. Because of Katharine's dedicated research and conservation work on old growth trees in the Upper Lands, she has become a respected volunteer consultant on important environmental issues affecting the North Shore.

GRANTS



We have been successful in obtaining three grants. The first from Toronto Dominion Green Trust Fund is for \$2000.00. It is being used to develop a portable interpretive display, much like the temporary display being manned here by Doug Caldw. The permanent display will have more interactive components for educational purposes. Over the past year, Society members have voluntarily taken our temporary display to each of the West Vancouver high schools, the Senior Centre, the two Recreation Centres, the Kay Meek Centre, and the West Vancouver Library.

A second generous grant of \$3000.00 came from the West Vancouver Community Foundation, allowing the Society to keep in touch with members via this bi-annual newsletter.

Most recently, \$2,000.00 has been received from Mountain Equipment Co-op Environment Grant Fund. This money will be used to purchase native plants for the continuation of restoration work in Lighthouse Park.

The Society gratefully acknowledges these generous funds which support the active stewardship of this much-loved park.

MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

GUEST LECTURE SERIES—SPRING, 2006

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 18th

2:00—4:00 p.m.

West Vancouver Memorial Library
Peters Room

DR. KEITH WADE

“The forgotten animals: the hidden world of reptiles & amphibians”

MONTHLY BIRD COUNTS

First Sunday of each month
at 8:00 a.m.

February 5, March 5, April 2, May 7, June 4,
July 2 and August 6.

Meet at the upper kiosk of the parking lot

The January bird count recorded 60 noisy surfbirds by Juniper Point, a dozen bald eagles soaring high around the Lighthouse, topped off by the likely sighting of a rare bird — a black-chinned hummingbird which should have been wintering in Central America!

VOLUNTEERS REQUIRED

IVY PULLS

Saturday, February 25th, 9:00-12:00 a.m.

&

Saturday, March 25th, 9:00-12:00 a.m.

BROOM PULL,

Saturday May 27th, 9:00-12:00 a.m.

Dress for the weather, wear old clothes and work gloves. Meet at the upper kiosk in the parking lot.

SATURDAY, APRIL 8th

2:00—4:00 p.m.

Ski'witsut, bottom of Beacon Trail
Lighthouse Park

DR. LORI DANIELS

“What does old-growth mean to you? Understanding why old-growth forests are unique”

SUNDAY AFTERNOON WALKS

with

David Cook, P.Eng., Geologist, Biologist

meet 2:30 p.m. at the

Phyl Munday Hut, bottom of Beacon Trail

FEBRUARY 19TH

APRIL 16th

JUNE 18th

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday, June 24, 2006

5:00 p.m. Ski'witsut Hut

We will be forwarding an agenda of this important event to encourage all members to participate in the selection of officers and enjoy a potluck supper afterwards at 6:00 p.m.

Members are encouraged to contribute articles and photographs to the newsletter. Submissions should be made to Elspeth Bradbury 604-926-9390.

To become a MEMBER of the Society, please contact Sheena Vennesland at 604-913-9272.