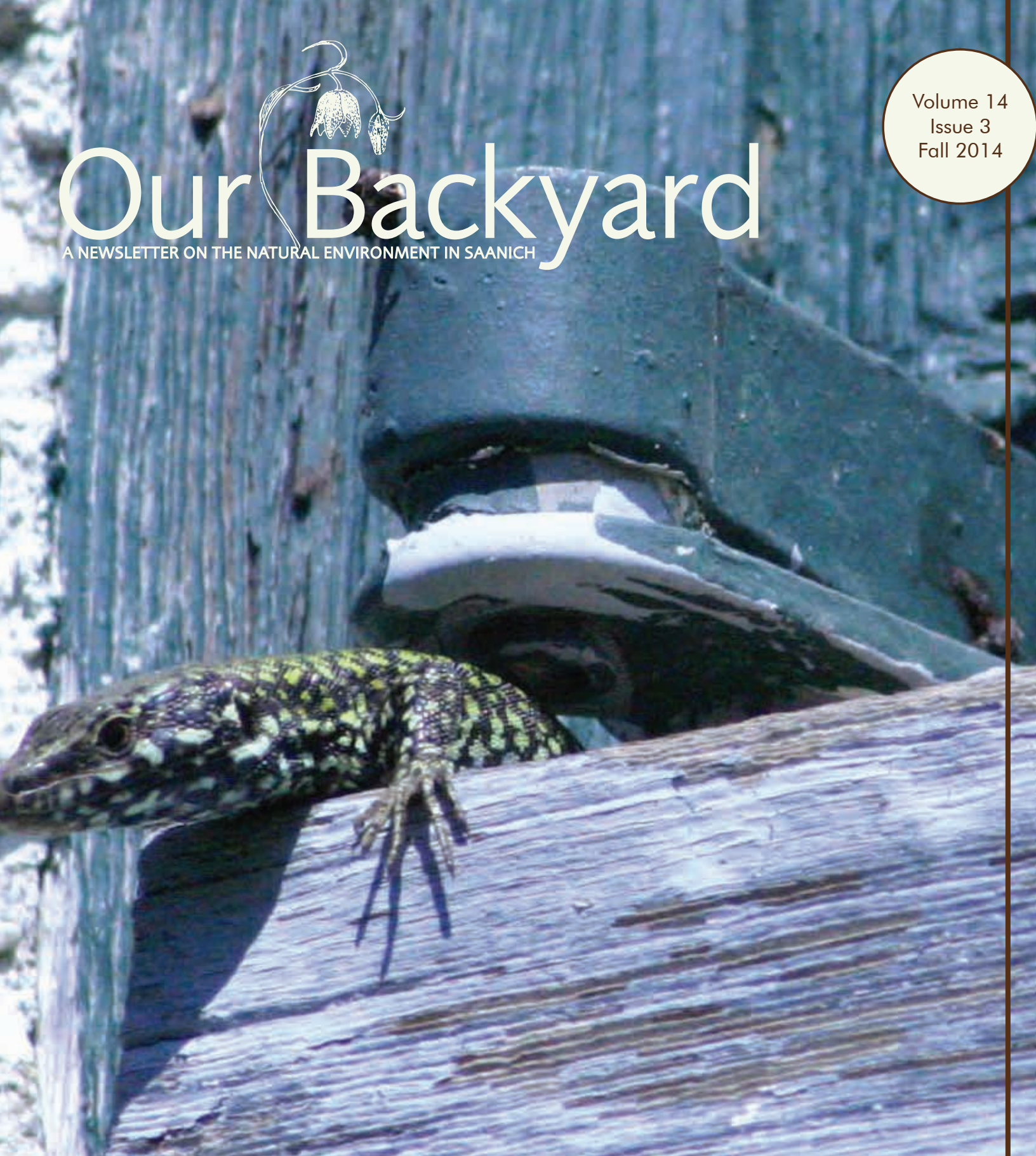




Our Backyard

A NEWSLETTER ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAANICH

Volume 14
Issue 3
Fall 2014



In This Issue:

A Species A Day **Saanich Environmental Awards: Meet the Winners**
Another Lizard in the Wall **Pulling Together** **Urban Forestry and**
Natural Areas Corner: Creek Restoration and Invasive Removal
Invasive Ants in the Capital Region **The UVic Campus Community**
Garden: UVic's Ode to Bees **Upcoming Events** **New Bridge, New Signs**

A Species A Day

By David Fraser and Leah Ramsay, Leaning Oaks, Saanich.

At the beginning of the calendar year we decided to start trying to document the flora and fauna of our Saanich property (which we call Leaning Oaks) through a website. The goal was to have a photograph of the species and a small paragraph or three that touches on some interesting aspect of the species. We decided to do this for a number of reasons; it would be a great learning experience, it might encourage our neighbours to look a little harder at the species they have in their back yards, it would get us outside with our cameras more, we would learn how to build and run a website, and lastly, it would be fun. By these measures this has been a total success.

Our cameras have never been so well used and every plant and critter is another opportunity. Turning a rock – grab the camera! Cutting firewood – grab the camera! Pull a tick off the dog – grab the camera! Open the compost bin – grab the camera!

It has been an interesting exercise and we have learned so much. Many identifications have been more challenging than we thought that they may be, historical and cultural uses of species have been fascinating, learning about macrophotography and setting up the website has been another learning curve. The site is looked at far more often than we thought it would be, we've had some interest from the local media,... and we are still learning!

David and Leah's website:

www.leaningoaks.ca/a-species-a-day.html

For a video clip about David and Leah's "A Species a Day" project click here:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=-BY00oK6qvs

Saanich Environmental Awards

Meet the Winners of 2014

Visit www.saanich.ca/enviroawards for more details!

Bruce Hardy - Individual Award

Bruce is a regular volunteer at a number of parks with the Pulling Together program. He works in Gorge Park, Cuthbert Holmes Park, and Swan Creek Park and has been a regular volunteer at the Horticultural Centre for the Pacific. Bruce has participated with habitat restoration at Point Ellice House and has been heavily involved with Peninsula Streams Society for a number of years.

Judith Sales - Individual Award Honourable Mention

Judith is the Community Association contact for the Tree Partnership Program in Gordon Head. She liaises with residents and local gardening groups to coordinate the program in her neighbourhood. She has personally coordinated over 75 Partnership Tree Plantings on Saanich boulevards. Judith continues to work hard to educate residents about the environmental and aesthetic benefits of trees in Saanich.

Saanich Baptist Church - Volunteer Organization Award

This church is a leader in faith-based stewardship activities in Saanich. The congregation is the active Lead Steward for the Pulling Together Volunteer Program for Falaise Park. The Young Adult team at the church have been spearheading this work and educating their congregation about ecological restoration through hands-on action.

EY Properties - Business Award

In 2013 EY Properties completed the first rental accommodation units in Saanich to be built in over 25 years. EY Properties has worked with the community to create much needed housing while at the same time achieving Built Green Platinum status for their buildings. This project sets the example for the future of construction, with its use of energy efficient design, LED lighting, solar ready construction and bicycle parking.

Jordan and Colin Mann - Biodiversity / Conservation Award

The Mann family purchased this agricultural property when it was in a very poor state for both farming and the environment. Jordan and Colin hired Aqua-Tex to help restore O'Donnell Creek for habitat and agricultural drainage purposes. Now, the creek is fenced from livestock, is revegetated with 800 plants, and has habitat features such as large woody debris, islands for nesting birds, and ponds.

Woody and Carmel Thomson - Long Term Achievement Award

As the third generation of family owners at Maltby Lake, and caretakers for over 30 years, Woody and Carmel Thomson have recognized the high ecological values of this near pristine land and lake ecosystem. They have worked diligently to protect the natural and heritage values of this treasured part of the Prospect Lake Community and Tod Creek Watershed.

SPOKES - Sustainability Award

The SPOKES program was established at the University of Victoria in 2003 as an innovative way to combine recycling with cycling. Volunteers take old, unwanted bicycles from around the community and fix them up for loan, rental or purchase for students, faculty and staff members. The concept behind SPOKES is to introduce individuals to the benefits of cycling through a low-barrier program.

Peter Dixon - Individual Award - Posthumous

Peter Dixon was dedicated to environmental sustainability and water stewardship. He authored and co-authored a variety of policy papers that continue to guide water and environmental regulation in Saanich and the Capital Region. He was a long-time member and former chair of the Sierra Club Victoria and Veins of Life Watershed Society. Pete served as a member of the Water Advisory Committee to the Regional Water Supply Commission. He lent his sage advice on water and environmental issues and initiatives as a long-serving member of Saanich's Environmental Advisory Committee.

Pete passed away after braving a long battle with cancer, on April 17, 2013. It is a fitting tribute to Pete's enduring legacy in our community to honour him posthumously with a Saanich Environmental Award for Individual Achievement.

Another Lizard in the Wall

By Gavin Hanke, Curator of Vertebrate Zoology, Royal BC Museum 675 Belleville Street, Victoria, BC, V8W 9W2
E-mail: ghanke@royalbcmuseum.bc.ca Phone: 250-952-0479

If you have recently visited Triangle Mountain in Colwood or almost anywhere on the Saanich Peninsula, you likely are familiar with European Wall Lizards (*Podarcis muralis*). These colourful lizards really get around, thanks to our help. Their native range extends across Europe from northern Spain to southern Belgium, southern Netherlands, and south east to Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania. Introduced populations also exist in southern England and the Channel Islands, and in Cincinnati (Ohio), Fort Thomas (Kentucky), and Clarksville (Indiana). This introduced species is a concern because of their tolerance for temperate climates and invasive colonisation. They spread naturally once a population is established, and spread even more rapidly with our help.

Yes Wall Lizards are cute, and would make charming ant-and earwig-munching additions to a garden, but the specimens released here originally were from Italy. They represent an invasive alien species here in BC. Around 1970, 12 or so Wall Lizards were released near the end of Rudy Road in Saanich when a private zoo closed. From that small population, we now have thousands of lizards and there is no sign their population growth is slowing.

With the help of citizen scientists reporting sightings to the museum, we now have evidence of lizards up near the Aviation Museum in Sidney, and near the Oak Bay Recreational Center, behind Costco in Langford, and we have filled in many gaps in the species' range across the Saanich Peninsula. Our Wall Lizard population shows the potential of these lizards to spread mainly in urban environments. I see plenty of Northwestern Crows, gulls, Cooper's Hawks, and many domestic cats prowling urban environments – yet European Wall Lizards have spread far and wide. Even in the newest population near Hillside Mall, one homeowner said "there must be hundreds of them". They are found in almost any open sunny area, and can be seen basking near rocks and other objects that serve as cover. They are often very visible on wood piles and rock walls, and are regularly found climbing trees, or the side of buildings.

At an extremely conservative guess of 10 lizards per dwelling (larger properties can have over a thousand lizards), and if we guess that half of the 45,390 dwellings in Sannich (from the 2011 census) have lizards, that gives us 226,950 lizards. Of course many yards still lack lizards, but that is easily compensated by locations like Saanich Commonwealth Place where people say there are 100s of lizards in sunny spots. People on Tanner Ridge say that their yards are crawling with lizards, and around Triangle Mountain lizards seem to be very densely distributed across entire neighbourhoods and into more natural areas.

Satellite populations have appeared in the last 10 years in Oak Bay, just west of Hillside Mall, and there is a dense population along May Street to Moss Rocks Park. How did these satellite populations begin? Who knows? Someone may have intentionally released lizards to populate their yard, pets may have escaped, or perhaps the lizards were stow-aways in gardening supplies from further up the peninsula. The first lizards all could have been from a clutch of eggs or a communal nest in a potted plant. It would be easy to transport plants with buried eggs, and you'd never know until hatchlings scrambled out and made themselves at home in your yard. Perhaps one gravid female was transported accidentally and she deposited her eggs in some sheltered spot. Their eggs are roughly the size and shape of a TicTac candy – so they are easily overlooked.



Pretty-much everyone asks whether Wall Lizards have an adverse impact in our region. Personally I doubt they will impact much in the urban environment – the original ecosystems have been all-but-destroyed. However, multiple thousands of lizards will need thousands more crawling insects and spiders as prey. I am sure homeowners won't lament the loss of ants, flies, earwigs, beetles and spiders - and several of our terrestrial arthropods also are exotic species. The lizard's insectivorous diet also may reduce the need for pesticides in the region. However we should remember that there are many rare and endangered insects and spiders that they could have a negative impact on. There is also a concern that they may spread more into natural areas, potentially competing with our native Alligator Lizard. People note that Alligator Lizards leave an area when Wall Lizards arrive - perhaps it is more from Wall Lizards eating newborn Alligator Lizards (Wall Lizards also eat their own young), but we have no studies yet to show this.

The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resources recently moved the European Wall Lizard to the Schedule "C" Species list - and that means you don't need a permit to catch and destroy these invasive animals, though they need to be humanely euthanized (contact a veterinarian). However, many people will welcome the presence of the European Wall Lizard, and so it is unlikely we'll ever be rid of them. As a result, I am interested in following the dispersal of these European Wall Lizards to see how far and how fast they spread. If anyone in the region finds Wall Lizards, please report the location to the author (date and street address, or a detailed location description for any parks or industrial locations).

Here's how to distinguish the European Wall Lizard from the native Alligator Lizard in our region:

European Wall Lizard (*Podarcis muralis*): Body with square-ish scales only on the belly; back and sides with minute bead-like scales; green and copper coloured females (middle), green and black males (left), or entirely copper younglings (right).



Northern Alligator Lizard (*Elgaria coerulea*): Body with rhombic to square scales on belly and back; with fine bead-like scales only along the flank; copper to grey-brown colouration. Found on the southern mainland and coastal islands, east to the Creston area.





Pulling Together - Growing, growing, green!

an assortment of the latest news from our program

By Jenny Eastman, Saanich Pulling Together Volunteer Coordinator
jenny.eastman@saanich.ca

Saanich's *Pulling Together* Volunteer Program supports volunteers of all ages (including community groups), in their efforts to remove invasive plants and restore ecosystems on public lands in Saanich. *Pulling Together* provides start-up training, on-going ecological advice, restoration plan guidance, staff and equipment for selected work parties, plant debris removal, and annual training and recognition events. *Pulling Together* teams are at work in more than forty Saanich Parks - there is one near you! Come join us. New volunteers are always welcome.

Why volunteer?

Volunteers are integral to invasive plant management and restoration efforts in Saanich.

Come join us to...

- Meet like-minded people
- Care for your local parks
- Make a difference in your community
- Gain practical experience with hands-on ecological restoration work

You are needed!

Need an opportunity for your business, agency, church, or team to volunteer together?

If you would like to do some hands-on work to make a difference in one of your Saanich Parks and to connect as a team, come work with us. We provide all tools and refreshments. We'd love to pull together with your team.

All our events, contact information, and program details can be found at www.saanich.ca/pullingtogether



Volunteers planting Garry Oak trees and providing deer browse protection with plastic tree sleeves (Saanich Parks).

Douglas Creek Restoration in Mount Douglas Park

Partnering with the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society and the Pacific Salmon Foundation, Saanich Parks implemented the 3rd stage of a five-year restoration plan for Douglas Creek during the last week of August.

Under technical guidance and onsite supervision from D.R Clough Consulting Ltd. (Dave Clough), six loads of 1-3 metre diameter rock and six loads of 1-3 metre diameter stumps were trucked into Mount Douglas Park to armour eroding and sloughing creek banks between the weir and Ash Road. The installation of the rock and stumps also helped to increase the complexity of the creek, providing better pool and riffle habitat for salmonids. The creek was temporarily dammed during the project and the water was pumped around the work area to limit sediment flow.

Saanich Parks' staff played an integral part of the creek work and salvaged vegetation prior to the start of the project for use in the restoration of the site. Large woody debris was redistributed throughout the work area and complete restoration of the site will take place later this fall with the planting of hundreds of native species.

A special thanks goes to the Friends of Mount Douglas Park Society for their support in the project and the Arbutus Excavating Ltd. equipment operators for their intricate work in difficult terrain.

Right: Dave Clough directing the placement of a large boulder

Urban Forestry & Natural Areas Corner

By Andrew Burger, Saanich Parks Natural Areas Technician

Removal of Invasive Golden Willow in Bowker Creek

In partnership with Saanich Parks, Vancouver Island Health Authority, local residents, and community associations, invasive Golden Willow trees have been removed from a segment of Bowker Creek that is located north of the Royal Jubilee Hospital helipad.

The removal of the Golden Willow will help to restore some of the function for that stretch of Bowker Creek that has been choked out over the years, as well as provide a clear flight path for Royal Jubilee Hospital's Air Ambulance.

Restoration of this reach of Bowker Creek began with bioengineering in 2003 by Saanich Environmental Services and Public Works. In 2008 Dave Polster was retained to develop a plan to remove Golden Willows. In 2009 and 2010, Saanich Environmental Services contracted the removal of Golden Willows in two stretches of the riparian area.

Restoration of the area will include soil-amendment with organic mulch and planting of hundreds of native plants along the segment of Bowker Creek to increase the habitat value. Approximately 20 large trees will also be planted in the open field to the north of the creek to compensate for canopy loss and provide some screening for the residents bordering the flight path of the air ambulance.

The restoration and planting area will be a focus site for Saanich Parks 2014 Tree Appreciation Day on November 2nd, 2014. Join Saanich staff, volunteers, and local residents to help plant trees and shrubs and connect with other members of your community.



INVASIVE ANTS IN THE CAPITAL REGION



By Kelsey Cullen, Coastal Invasive Species Committee

The latest alien invader to plague coastal communities is the bug with a bite: the European Fire Ant (*Myrmica rubra*). These small red ants are identified by their characteristic rapid swarming and readily stinging behaviour. Much is unknown about these pesky pests, and that is why the Coastal Invasive Species Committee is working with Dr. Rob Higgins from the Thompson Rivers University to find out more about European Fire Ants on Vancouver Island.

As the Coastal ISCs Field and Outreach Assistant, I have been working collaboratively with various homeowners to test new controls for European Fire Ants and offer assistance in finding and baiting current nest sites for the species. I've also been conducting some random sampling and mapping the distribution of European Fire Ants in the Greater Victoria area, Nanaimo, and Courtenay throughout the month of August to get a better understanding of their spread.

Of additional concern is the presence of secondary invasive ant species on Vancouver Island. *Myrmica specioides*, the "Lesser Fire Ant", has been identified in Saanich and Oak Bay. This species spreads quickly with the aid of multiple flying queens present in the colony. Other invasive ant species present in the Greater Victoria area include the Argentine Ant and the Tropical Stinging Ant; both have the ability to become a widespread nuisance in the future.

At this time, there is no guaranteed control method for European Fire Ants but residents are encouraged to contact the Coastal Invasive Species Committee by phone at 1-250-857-2472 or e-mail at info@coastalisc.com if they believe that they might have these ants on their property.

Experimental testing is being done in the Greater Vancouver area and closer to home in Oak Bay to try and find a deterrent and/or treatment method for this highly invasive species. At present, the most effective way to battle them is to keep your yard clear of any preferred habitats such as lawn ornaments and paving stones, and to check potted plants purchased from nurseries for any surprise hitchhikers. If we can use early detection and rapid response, we may yet be able to stop these ants from marching two by two into our neighborhoods, public parks, and backyards.

For more information:

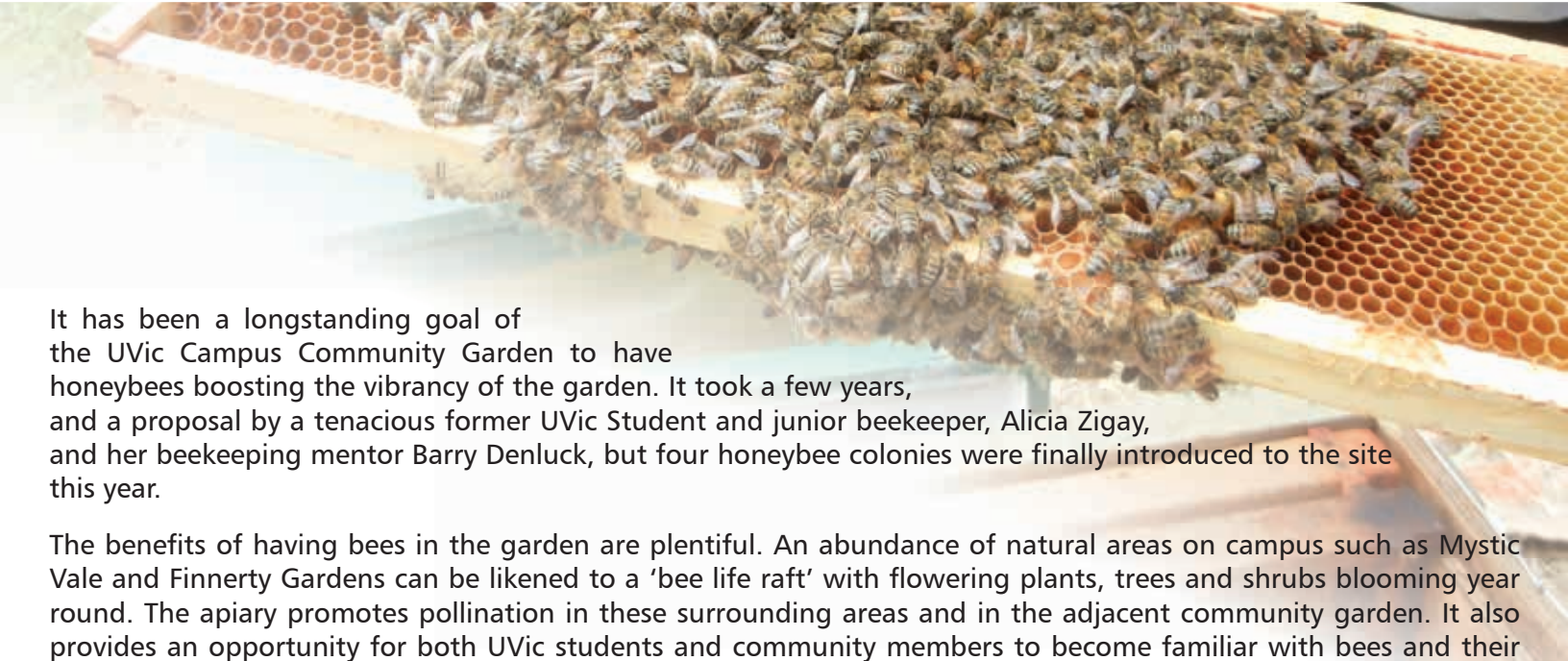
www.saanich.ca/living/natural/invasives/europeanfireants.html

www.for.gov.bc.ca/hra/invasive-species/fire_ants.htm

faculty.tru.ca/rhiggins/myrmica_rubra_index.htm

The UVic Campus Community Garden Apiary: UVic's ode to bees

By Zöe Yunker,
UVic Sustainability Intern



It has been a longstanding goal of the UVic Campus Community Garden to have honeybees boosting the vibrancy of the garden. It took a few years, and a proposal by a tenacious former UVic Student and junior beekeeper, Alicia Zigay, and her beekeeping mentor Barry Denluck, but four honeybee colonies were finally introduced to the site this year.

The benefits of having bees in the garden are plentiful. An abundance of natural areas on campus such as Mystic Vale and Finnerty Gardens can be likened to a 'bee life raft' with flowering plants, trees and shrubs blooming year round. The apiary promotes pollination in these surrounding areas and in the adjacent community garden. It also provides an opportunity for both UVic students and community members to become familiar with bees and their incredible effects on our biosphere. The non-profit group Science Venture brings Grade 1 summer program students to experience the apiary and learn that bees don't earn their hardworking reputation for nothing: Barry tells those young students that bees provide for 1/3 of the world's plant pollination, and importantly, bees are not the aggressive creatures we sometimes think they are.

This is all good news for an important species in a critical state. Over the past decade, bee health has become a serious concern due to the phenomenon called 'colony collapse disorder', which bee colonies around the world are experiencing. Every year close to 50% of bee colonies in our region experience die-off as a result of multiple interacting factors, such as neonicotinoid pesticides, parasites and mites, and habitat loss. Beekeepers like Barry and Alicia are working on boosting bee populations, and are happy that partners like UVic and its Community Garden are helping make more stable colonies a reality.

The Campus Community Garden is a University of Victoria Students' Society funded organization supported by the University of Victoria and the Office of Campus Planning and Sustainability. The community garden is committed to offering an accessible space for engaging with food and food issues by learning skills, sharing knowledge and growing organic food on campus.

To find out more about the community garden and to sign up for their newsletter check out:

web.uvic.ca/~ccgarden/. For more info, contact ccgarden@uvic.ca

The garden gate is open-feel free to drop by the garden at 2500 McKenzie Road to pay a visit to the bees and experience the garden for yourself.



Upcoming Events

Rithet's Bog Conservation Society

www.rithetsbog.org 250-658-5167 rpym@shaw.ca

Non-Native Cattail Clearing at Rithet's Bog (Volunteers Needed)

Saturday, September 13, 10 am - 3 pm

Saanich Parks, Ducks Unlimited, and the Rithet's Bog Conservation Society are hosting a volunteer event to remove invasive non-native Narrow Leaf and Hybrid Cattails from the wetland adjacent to Chatterton Way at the west end of Rithet's Bog. The goal is to improve the habitat for waterfowl by reclaiming areas of open water and mudflat that have become overgrown. This will also improve wildlife viewing. The native cattail will not be removed in significant amounts, as it is an important part of the marsh ecology.

Meet at: corner of Chatterton Way and Dalewood Lane.

Parking: On Dalewood Lane and in the business complex off Chatterton.

Bring: Gloves, water, rain/sun gear, rubber boots or sturdy footwear, and clothes that you don't mind getting muddy.

Provided: Gloves, safety vests, and tools, as well as on-site instruction.

Please no dogs or small children.

Contact Russ (above) for more information.

Prospect Lake District Community Association

www.pldca.ca 250-708-0702

fredhaynes.saanich@gmail.com

Local Food & Country Market (Drop-in)

Saturday, September 20, 9 am - 1 pm

This seasonal market provides the opportunity to sample and celebrate the bounty of life in the backyards of rural Saanich. Come and meet your neighbours and enjoy local foods, plants, crafts, and more.

The Native Plant Study Group

www.NPSG.ca 250-598-1999

Urban Forests Hold Answers To Their Own Health (Presentation)

Thursday, September 18, 7 pm

UVic, MacLaurin Bldg, Rm D116

A steward for the forests surrounding Goward House on Arbutus Road for more than 10 years, Everett Peterson has observed how these forests react to natural and man-made threats. How long trees live, when trees are removed, their forest location, the amount of shade they receive and how much moisture is in the soil, are factors that affect how effectively we can re-establish trees and their understory species. Slides will highlight the insights from this six-acre property and teach us how we can better manage our urban forests and our own backyards.

Non-member drop-in fee: \$3. \$2.50 for parking at UVic

Habitat Acquisition Trust

www.hat.bc.ca 250-995-2428

Tod Creek Planting Day (workshop)

Saturday, October 18, 10 am - 1 pm

Join HAT staff and volunteers on Tod Creek for a few hours at a tree planting and streamside restoration workshop. HAT staff Todd Carnahan will train participants in riparian species identification, planting skills, and invasive species management. Learn about the long history of local stewardship to recover the natural values of this rural watershed and meet other people who care about healthy streams. Carpooling is possible and registration for this event is required for planning purposes.

Equipment, snacks, and drinks provided. Please bring boots, gloves, eye protection, long sleeves, and long pants.

Meet on Farmington Road off Wallace Road just south of Willis Point Road (closest address is: 5648 Wallace Drive).

Bus routes: 74 and 81 to intersection of Wallace and Benvenuto (then head south on Wallace Drive for 3km by bike). A map to the site will be provided upon registration.

Please register for planting and carpooling before Thursday, October 16th

Compost Education Centre

compost.bc.ca

250-386-WORM (9676)

Rainwater Harvesting Open House (FREE Drop-in Event)

Saturday, September 13, 10 am - 3 pm

1216 North Park (at Chambers)

Join us in our fabulous demonstration gardens to learn more about rainwater harvesting systems and practices in your community. Rainwater management looks at how we can work to maintain or restore natural water cycles and use rainwater as the wonderful resource that it is! In partnership with the CRD and with funding from the RBC Bluewater Project, we'll be bringing together community and municipal groups involved in rainwater management, as well as hosting two free workshops about stormwater education, rainwater harvesting, and choosing the right systems.

Register for this FREE workshop at Eventbrite

www.eventbrite.ca/o/compost-education-centre-3022484318

The Bowker Creek Initiative

www.crd.bc.ca/bowker-creek-initiative

Bowker Creek Restoration through Oak Bay High School (Open House)

Thursday, September 18, 6 pm - 8 pm

Oak Bay Recreation Centre, 1975 Bee St. (Small Lounge)

- Meet the Project Design Team
- Learn about the creek restoration
- Ask questions, provide input

Saanich Recreation Trails & Treks

www.saanich.ca/parkrec/parks/trails/index.html

250-475-5408

Sunday Hikes (FREE Drop-In)

Sundays, 1 pm - 3:30 pm

Although these hikes follow mainly chip trails and pavement, there may be some rough or steep sections, so please wear sturdy and supportive footwear. Carry adequate drinking water. Walks go rain or shine, and are for adults of all ages.

Sept 21 - Swan Lake to Christmas Hill

Meet at the Saanich Municipal parking lot (end of Darwin Ave)

Oct 19 - Rural Saanich Ramble

Meet at main entrance to Van. Island Technology Park, end of Markham Road, off West Saanich Road

Nov 16 - Coves and Parks of Gordon

Head Meet at Vantreight Park on Vantreight Drive

Dec 7 - Winter Walk around Gorge Waterway

Meet at Gorge Waterway Park, (Tillicum & Gorge Rd)

Gentle Walk & Talk (FREE Drop-In)

Thursdays, 9:30 am – 11 am

Enjoy beautiful scenery, a friendly chat, and gentle exercise as we walk through our parks & trails. Suitable for all walking abilities, but wear suitable footwear. Dogs not permitted.

Sep 18 – Tod Inlet

Meet at access point on Wallace Dr. opposite Quarry Lake

Sep 25 – Cedar Hill Golf Course to Kingsberry Pond

Meet in Cedar Hill Golf Course parking lot, end of Derby St.

Oct 2 – Sayward Hill

Meet at Lochside Park, north of Cordova Bay Rd

Oct 9 – Knockan Hill

Meet at Strawberry Community Ctr, on High Street

Oct 16 – Hyacinth – Marigold Park

Meet in parking lot at Hyacinth Park, 900 Marigold Ave.

Oct 23 – Bow Park

Meet at Gordon Head Rec lobby, 7100 Lambrick Way

Oct 30 – Blenkinsop Valley

Meet at Lochside Elementary School (Royal Oak & Lochside).

Nov 6 – West Saanich Interurban Rail Trail

Meet at Red Barn Market, 5550 W. Saanich Rd. parking lot

Nov 13 – Lambrick to Sierra Park

Meet at Gordon Head Rec lobby, 7100 Lambrick Way

CRD Parks & Environmental Services

Our naturalists lead guided walks, hikes, canoeing, and drop-in events for all ages. Most are free, all are fun! The Parks Nature Outings and Events brochure can be found here:

www.crd.bc.ca/parks 250-478-3344

Grow a Native Plant Garden (Course)

Sunday, September 27, 1 to 4pm

Sunday, October 5 & 19, 1 to 4pm

Wednesday, October 8 & 22, 9:30-12:30pm

Saturday, November 1, 9:30-12:30pm

Swan Lake Nature House (3873 Swan Lake Road)

Residents of the CRD are invited to participate in a FREE workshop on gardening with drought-resistant native plants. Instruction on native plant identification, their benefits, and how to use them will be covered. Pre-registration is required by calling 250-479-0211.

Hawk Watch (Drop-in Event)

Saturday, September 20, 11 am - 3 pm

East Sooke Regional Park (East Sooke)

Join CRD Parks and the Victoria Natural History Society for this annual migration event with live raptor demonstrations and activities at Aylard Farm. The hike up to the viewpoint requires sturdy footwear and a 20-minute trek up a steep and rocky trail. Bring binoculars, water and a lunch.

Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary

www.swanlake.bc.ca 250-479-0211

Guided Bird Walks (Drop-In)

Every Wednesday and Sunday, 9:00 am

Bring your binoculars and walking shoes and meet in the parking lot for this walk.

Célébrons la nature! (Drop-in Event)

Sunday, September 28, 12 pm - 3 pm

Join us for a celebration of nature in French. Find out who really lives beneath the water of Swan Lake and some of the weird and wonderful adaptations they have to live here.

Spooktacular Spiders (Drop-in Event)

Sunday, October 26, 12 pm - 3 pm

What carnivorous animal spins threads stronger than steel, injects venom to liquefy its prey, and ingests food with a sucking stomach? Meet the locals, find out which of the few are dangerous and the most that aren't, and make a craft.

Wild About Mushrooms (Adult Course)

Wednesdays, Oct 15 to Nov 12, 7 pm - 9 pm

Saturday, November 1, 2 pm - 4 pm

Call the Centre for prices, program, and instructor details.

Wild Mushroom Show (Drop-in Event)

Sunday, November 2, 10 am - 4 pm

Discover the wacky and wonderful world of Vancouver Island mushrooms. The huge variety found in our forests, fields and gardens will be on display. Bring your specimens for identification by the South Island Mycological Society.

Victoria Natural History Society

Visit www.naturevictoria.ca for more programs

Natural History Night (every 2nd Tuesday)

Discover the Yukon (Tuesday, Oct 14, 7:30 pm)

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

Botany Night (every 3rd Tuesday)

Garry Oak Wetlands (Tuesday, Sep 16, 7:30 pm)

Plants of Costa Rica (Tuesday, Oct 21, 7:30 pm)

Swan Lake Nature Centre

Birder's Night (every 4th Wednesday)

Hummers in the Mist (Wednesday, Sep 24, 7:30 pm)

Bird collisions with glass (Wednesday, Oct 22, 7:30 pm)

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

Marine Night (last Monday of the month)

Galapagos Marine Environment (Monday, Sep 29, 7:30 pm)

Fraser River White Sturgeons (Monday, Oct 27, 7:30 pm)

UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

New Bridge, New Signs

by Kitty Lloyd, Gorge Waterway Initiative

The new Craigflower Bridge across the Gorge Waterway opened in April, and maybe you've noticed some new interpretive signs that are there. Construction of the new bridge provided an opportunity for the municipalities of Saanich and View Royal to reach out to the Esquimalt and Songhees Nations to design and create artwork for a large sign now at the centre of the bridge. This dramatic three-panel sign highlights the deep cultural and spiritual roots of the Lkwungen-speaking people, and the significance of the Gorge Waterway and surrounding lands within their traditional territory. It also symbolizes a bridge between cultures and generations, and celebrates the foundation and legacy of the living Lkwungen culture left to the Songhees and Esquimalt people by their ancestors and elders.

Three smaller signs were also installed as part of the new bridge project. These were all created as part of a series of signs designed by the Gorge Waterway Initiative (GWI), focusing on the natural, historical and cultural features of this beautiful waterway. One sign featuring the early settler and farming history now stands on the View Royal side of the bridge. The other two are attached to the bridge railings, and highlight the bird life and underwater ecosystems of the waterway.

The entire inlet from Victoria Harbour to Portage Inlet is a federally designated Migratory Bird Sanctuary. The upper reaches in particular provide an important refuge and foraging area for resident and migratory birds and other wildlife. One of the largest beds of the endangered Olympia oyster on the southern BC coast lives in this part of the Gorge. These bivalves are important features of the marine ecosystem, filtering large volumes of water and providing food and habitat for many other organisms. Herring are another vital part of the marine ecosystem. In the past, large schools of herring swam up the Gorge to spawn in Portage Inlet. Although the numbers have declined in recent times, fisherfolk still line the bridge railings in spring hoping to catch some of these small schooling fish. A school of herring is depicted along the bottom of the First Nations sign panels and also imbedded in the concrete beneath the sign, acknowledging the importance of this species in the local marine ecosystem. Lkwungen land means "land of the smoked herring".

Learn more about the Gorge Waterway, Portage Inlet and the Gorge Waterway Initiative at www.gorgewaterway.ca.

Left: Lkwungen peoples' sign on the new Craigflower Bridge. Artwork and graphic design by Darlene Gait (Esquimalt Nation) and Butch Dick (Songhees Nation).



New Rebates for Energy Saving Home Improvements

By Glenys Verhulst, City Green Solutions

Worried about high heating bills this winter? Maybe it's time for some energy saving home improvements this fall! Luckily, there is a new energy efficiency rebate program from BC Hydro and FortisBC to help you out.

Rebates are available for the following upgrades:

- Insulation
- Draftproofing
- Space heating (ductless heat pumps for electrically heated homes, gas fireplaces)
- Water heating (tank or instantaneous gas)

A **\$750 Bonus Offer** is available for those who complete three eligible upgrades, from the list above and/or in combination with the list below:

- Windows and doors
- Heat Recovery Ventilator
- Gas furnaces/boilers for natural gas heated homes

Get a prioritized energy saving plan based on building science from an independent energy efficiency specialist by having a home energy assessment with a Certified Energy Advisor. A home energy assessment is recommended before you start upgrades, and pre- and post-retrofit home energy assessments are required in order to access the draft proofing rebate and the \$750 Bonus Offer. Some restrictions apply. Visit www.bchydro.com/homerebates or www.fortisbc.com/homerebates for more information.

To schedule an energy assessment, contact City Green, your local non-profit energy efficiency experts, at 250-381-9995 or savings@citygreen.ca.

Join the *Our Backyard* mailing list!

Be kept up to date on local community stewardship projects and environmental issues. Subscriptions to this quarterly newsletter are free and available in electronic or paper version. To subscribe, please send your contact information to the editor or visit the following website www.ourbackyard.saanich.ca

Editor: Darren Copley | Phone: 250-475-5579 | Email: Darren.Copley@saanich.ca

