

# Our Backyard

A NEWSLETTER ON THE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT IN SAANICH



Volume 18 | Issue 3 | Fall 2018

## In This Issue:

**Maltby Lake | Jellyfish and Sponge in Maltby Lake | 25th Anniversary Secchi Dip-In! | Park Ambassador 2018 Pilot Project Deemed a Success Make Yourself Cozy With EfficiencyBC | Take Part in Updating the Saanich Climate Plan | Swan Creek Restoration | Volunteer-Run Garry Oak Nursery | Events | Salmon in the City Project**





# Maltby Lake

By Carmel Thomson  
Friends of Maltby Lake Watershed Society

Maltby Lake is a pristine body of freshwater in the Prospect Lake area. The 21-acre lake is located at the headwaters of Tod Creek, a major water course in the District of Saanich. Maltby Lake is vital to Tod Creek's almost 22 km<sup>2</sup> watershed, which includes 29 wetlands and four other lakes.

Critical to Maltby Lake's health are the 172 acres of relatively undisturbed forest and wetlands that surround it. The property is an example of unspoiled lake and land ecosystems. Wetlands that surround Maltby Lake filter the water to provide habitat within the wetlands as well as deliver water of pristine quality downstream through Philippa Lake, on to Prospect Lake, and through Tod Creek Flats. Eventually the water flows into the ocean at Tod Inlet, behind the Butchart Gardens.

Much of the forest surrounding Maltby Lake is mature and wild, with Western Yew, Western Flowering Dogwood, Garry Oak, Arbutus, and old growth Douglas-fir, including a 600+ year old veteran and one of the largest trees in the Capital Regional District. The lake hosts rare aquatic species such as freshwater jellyfish and sponge. The natural habitat is home to hundreds of species – Great Horned Owls, Northern Pygmy-owls, Red-tailed Hawks, Purple Martins, Western Painted Turtles, and more.



Sponge Photo Credit: Kayla Anderson, Director, FMLWS



*"It is significant that Maltby Lake contains populations of both jellyfish and sponges. Although these two groups of organisms are common in the marine environment, it is very unusual to find them in freshwater. Where they do occur in lakes, both jellyfish and sponges are generally considered to be ecological indicators of unproductive (low nutrient/good water quality) and undisturbed lakes - where little human activity has occurred in the watershed and the conditions are relatively stable and show no significant deterioration."*

– Dr. Rick Nordin, University of Victoria

# Jellyfish & Sponge in Maltby lake

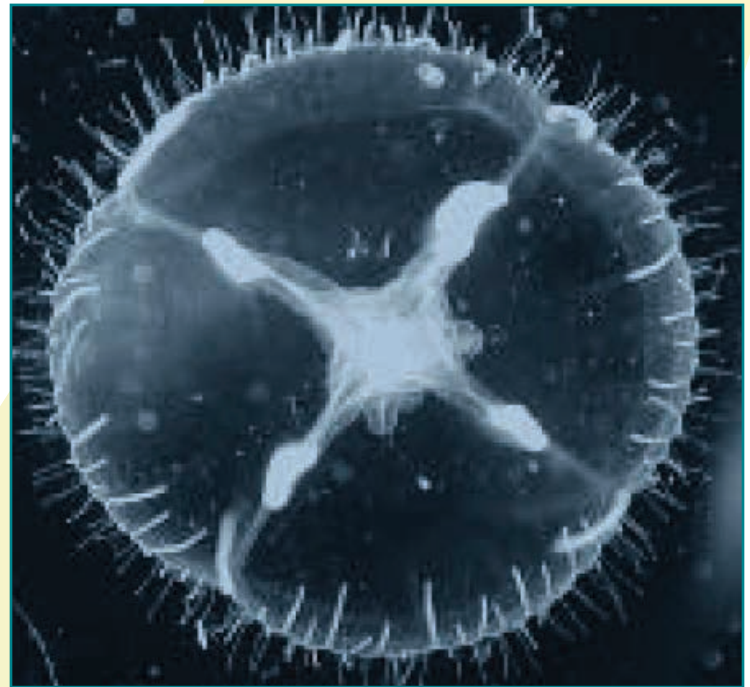
By Woody Thomson  
HAT Steward

**Freshwater jellyfish (*Craspedacusta sowerbii*) are often seen swimming just below the surface of Maltby Lake**

In mid-August; varying in size from 20 to 30mm (between the sizes of a shirt button and a loonie), and never less than a metre apart. The west side of Maltby Lake is often thick with them. One cannot avoid contacting them when swimming, but no sting is felt following contact.

Freshwater jellyfish are considered benthic indicators of aquatic ecosystem health because they are sensitive to pollution and sudden changes in their environment.

Freshwater jellyfish have three life history stages. The non-moving stage is a very small polyp or hydroid, which can be either male or female and is attached to the lake bottom. When conditions are right, these will bud asexually into male or female medusae (jellyfish). Eggs and sperm of adult jellyfish are shed into the water where fertilization occurs. The resulting free-swimming larval stage, or planula, settles to the bottom of the lake creating the polyp or hydroid stage. Most populations are either all males or all females. Locally only males have been found.



**Maltby Lake is also home to a freshwater sponge.**

The sponges live at the bottom of the lake and grow on submerged objects, such as rocks and fallen trees. They are invertebrates (have no backbone) and do not have organs, but instead have specialized cells that help them filter water for food.

Similar to freshwater jellyfish, sponges are sensitive to water conditions. Their presence indicates high water quality and low levels of pollutants. Freshwater sponges are delicate in structure, growing as branching masses. They usually appear greenish because of the algae that live on them.

Sponges are filter feeders. They obtain food from the flow of water through their bodies and from symbiotic algae. They also serve as food for ducks, crayfish, and a variety of macro-invertebrates.





# 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Secchi Dip-in!

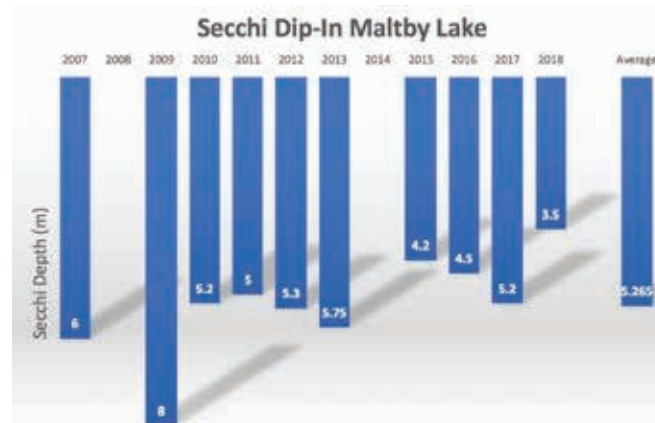
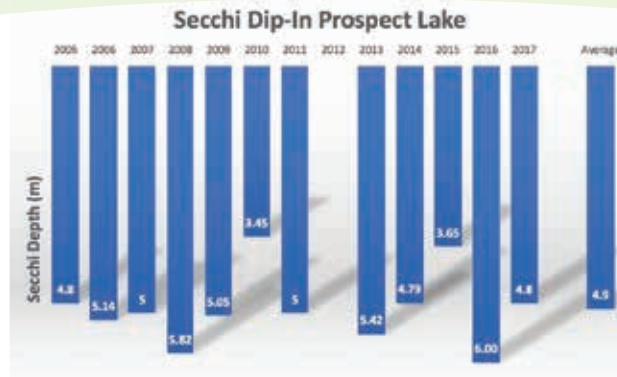
*July is Lakes Appreciation Month in BC!*

By Friends of Maltby Lake Watershed Society

During the month of July, Watershed Stewards across the province dedicated to the promotion of clean and healthy water sources took to their local lakes to measure water transparency (turbidity) using Secchi disks and other testing instruments.

In rural Saanich's Prospect Lake District, Tod Creek Watershed Chair, Winona Pugh, with support from Peninsula Streams Society and Friends of Maltby Lake Watershed Society held Dip-ins in Prospect and Maltby Lakes. Since 1994, more than 10,000 trained volunteers have generated 42,000 transparency records, giving a glimpse of lake water transparency at sites across North America and the world.

The BC Lake Stewardship Society coordinates the province-wide Dip-in. Data collected are used to assess trends in water turbidity and contributes to the body of information needed to develop policies to protect lakes. Through regular status reports, the initiative provides communities with monitoring results specific to their local lake and educational material on lake health in general.



The Secchi Dip-In reading is a snapshot of water clarity during the month of July, and the range in measurements doesn't necessarily indicate a problem. If transparency is measured through the season and from year to year, trends in transparency can be observed and can serve as an early warning that activities on the land are affecting water quality. The Secchi Dip-In numbers for Prospect Lake are fairly consistent and Maltby Lake shows a slight decrease over the years. Further sampling would be required in order to determine overall trends.

– BC Lake Stewardship Society



Photo Caption: 25th Anniversary Secchi Dip-in concluded with a small Celebration (with cake). L-R Pat Carfra, Audrey Barnes, Mary Haig-Brown, Michael Derry, Lori James Derry, Winona Pugh, Kayla Anderson, Brian Koval, Woody Thomson, Ian Duncan and Anne Allen.



# PARK AMBASSADOR 2018 PILOT PROJECT

## DEEMED A SUCCESS!

By Megan Sim  
District of Saanich, Parks Student Technician

Saanich Parks and the Friends of Mount Douglas are pleased to let everyone know that the 2018 Park Ambassador pilot project in Mount Douglas Park this summer was a success! Council approved the project as a pilot for the busy 2018 summer season.

Beginning right before the May long weekend, the Park Ambassador Project grew to seventeen volunteers by July. They roamed around Mount Douglas Park in safety vests, armed with a backpack full of supplies (even doggy treats!) Ambassadors educated park users about etiquette, provided directions, picked up litter, and kept our park safe and welcoming.

Our five goals for the project were to: enhance visitor experiences, provide rewarding volunteer opportunities, engage First Nations, improve park management objectives, and provide park visitors education. As part of the proposal, we tried to measure all of these goals. To date, volunteers, the Friends of Mount Douglas Society, and Saanich Parks are proud to say that all five of the project's initial goals have been met or exceeded!

The work that the Park Ambassadors did this summer was not only gratifying for volunteers, but also improved experiences and conditions in Mount Douglas Park so everyone could enjoy the natural beauty in the park.

Park Ambassadors contributed more than 260 hours of their time during different times of the day and different days of the week. This helped to collect information for Saanich Parks to prioritize management objectives. Some of the areas that we focused on were: clear messages about our Bylaws, more effective signs and exploring different approaches to address garbage, especially cigarette butts and dog waste.



Since we could demonstrate the positive effect this short pilot project had on the volunteers, park and the community, on October 1st, Council approved the remaining dedicated budget can be used to continue to support the program until the spring of 2019. During that time, we will continue to build upon our success and approach Mayor and Council with longer-term funding options during the annual budget process.

We hope that you are able to meet one of the Park Ambassadors this fall and winter. Saanich Parks welcomes any feedback you might have regarding the project, and more importantly, if you interact with one of the awesome Park Ambassadors. Please let us know your thoughts about the Park Ambassador project by contacting us at [parcs@saanich.ca](mailto:parcs@saanich.ca) or 250-475-5522.

Park Ambassadors, Saanich Staff, knowledge keepers with the Tsawout First Nation, members of the Parks Trails and Recreation Advisory Committee and Council during a Park Ambassador Meet and Greet held in Mount Douglas Park in July of 2018.





# Make yourself cozy with EfficiencyBC

By Maggie Baynham, District of Saanich  
Senior Sustainability Planner



Thinking about keeping warm affordably this winter? You can now benefit from the new EfficiencyBC program, which is offering thousands of dollars in rebates for energy saving upgrades such as insulation, windows and doors, air source heat pumps, high efficiency furnaces, water heaters, and more.

## Getting to 100% Renewable

If you are heating with a fossil fuel (e.g. oil or natural gas), consider accessing \$2,700 to switch to an air source heat pump, thanks to funding from the Province and \$350 in top-ups from both Saanich and the Capital Regional District. Saanich is committed to becoming a 100% Renewable Energy community by 2050, and retrofitting our existing building stock to run on low-carbon heating systems, such as electric air source heat pumps, will be a cornerstone to achieving this goal.

## Why people love their Heat Pumps

Do you remember that heatwave we had in July? By 2050 we're likely to have nearly four times as many hot summer days above 25°C. Air source heat pumps provide heating and cooling, and filter air, which is helpful on smoky days. They are much more efficient than other heating systems such as baseboards or gas furnaces, so provide all these services for less cost than baseboard heating, and comparable operating costs to gas heating.

## Join Your Efficient Neighbours!

Over the past decade, more than 4,000 Saanich homes have undergone energy improvements, and on average reduced their climate pollution by 54%, or 3 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e per year (that's similar to taking a car off the road from January to August). Now is the time to do your part for the planet, and save on your monthly fuel costs too! If you aren't sure where to start, EfficiencyBC has a free Energy Coach service (1-844-881-9790) to help you find the right incentives for you and your home.

# 100% Renewable & Resilient Saanich

## Take Part in Updating the Saanich Climate Plan

By Glenys Verhulst, District of Saanich  
Sustainability Planner

The District of Saanich is updating the Climate Plan: 100% Renewable & Resilient Saanich. The Plan is being developed over the next year and will identify the actions needed to:

- become a 100% renewable energy community (and corporation) by 2050,
- achieve an 80% reduction in GHG emissions (from 2007 levels) by 2050, and prepare for and adapt to a changing climate.

The new Climate Plan will address transportation, housing, land use, consumption and waste, energy, resilience to a changing climate, and more. You can read the Climate Plan Backgrounder at [saanich.ca/climateplan](http://saanich.ca/climateplan) which provides an overview of the project, information on the theme areas, and some great examples of climate action already happening in our community.

Opportunities to participate include:

### Survey

Please complete the Saanich Climate Survey [saanich.ca/climateplan](http://saanich.ca/climateplan) and also invite your networks to participate. You do not need to reside in Saanich to complete the survey, as long as you work or visit Saanich.

### Fall Public Workshops & Open Houses

We are planning two interactive half day open houses and workshops on both climate mitigation and adaptation where you will have a chance to delve into the issues and shape emerging strategies:

**Thursday November 29**, afternoon/evening - more info and RSVP opportunity at [saanich.ca/climateplan](http://saanich.ca/climateplan)

**Saturday December 1**, morning - more info and RSVP opportunity at [saanich.ca/climateplan](http://saanich.ca/climateplan)

### Climate Updates

You can sign up to the Climate Action Quarterly and the 2050 Climate Plan Update e-newsletter to be kept up to date on latest news, updates and events. Sign up at [saanich.ca/climateplan](http://saanich.ca/climateplan)

### Any Additional Questions

Please contact [sustainability@saanich.ca](mailto:sustainability@saanich.ca) or 250-475-5494 x. 3448



# Swan Creek Restoration

## A Great Partnership Helping to Improve Fish Habitat

By Rick Hatch

District of Saanich, Assistant Supervisor Natural Areas

In 2018, the partnership between Saanich Parks, Saanich Public Works, Peninsula Streams Society, and Friends of Swan Creek Watershed, continued with the restoration of another significant stretch of Swan Creek. The section of Swan Creek from Carey Road to McKenzie Avenue has now been mostly restored for improved water flow and fish spawning habitat. The significant plug of sediment and invasive plants has been replaced with spawning gravel, large woody debris, and boulders to stabilize the bank, making it much more hospitable to salmon and trout. Swan Creek is one of nine major tributaries of the Colquitz River, the most productive fish-bearing stream in the urban Victoria area. It is essential for Swan Creek and other tributaries to contribute clean, healthy water to the Colquitz River.

In 2017, the section from the Columbine Way footbridge towards Carey Road saw the creation of two pools, a spawning bed, and a riparian bench that was reinforced with large woody debris and boulders. In 2018, another ~80m was dredged, starting from the footbridge working west. The Saanich Parks Natural Areas crew worked with the Creeks & Waterways crew. Before this project started, the creek was barely visible through the thick Reed Canarygrass and other invasive plants. Dozens of yards of 2-3 inch spawning gravel was brought in to enhance the creek bed for fish spawning. About 100m downstream, Peninsula Streams and the Friends of Swan Creek Watershed (FoSCW) were busy this year building two new pools/riffles and adding several yards of spawning gravel.

Public Works supplied their Hydro Vac Truck to remove two truckloads of silt material directly under the McKenzie overpass. Peninsula Streams and FoSCW then constructed a new pool/riffle complex with spawning gravel.

An Urban Forestry Arborist crew joined the creek restoration effort with the removal of two mature Golden Willows (which are very invasive) just up from the junction of Colquitz Creek and Swan Creek. Once the trees and creek debris were removed, the Natural Areas crew, along with consulting Biologist Dave Clough's advice, re-aligned boulders, re-built rock crests and brought in two yards of spawning gravel.

Over the past two years, the partnership of the District of Saanich, Peninsula Streams Society, and Friends of Swan Creek has worked well to restore a significant area in Swan Creek. Later this fall, with contributing funds from Peninsula Streams, Saanich Parks, local Scout troops, and volunteers from Friends of Swan Creek Watershed will plant the disturbed riparian area with dozens of native trees and shrubs to replace the invasive English Hawthorn, Golden Willow, Reed Canarygrass, and other invasive plants that were removed.





# Volunteer-Run Garry Oak Nursery Continues to Grow



By Jenny Hebb  
Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society

The Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society's (GOMPS) Garry Oak Nursery is in its second full year of operation. The Nursery addresses the rapid loss of Greater Victoria's native flagship tree, the Garry Oak, by producing local trees for future sale to municipalities, major landowners, and the public.

Our fall 2018 acorn collection, supported by wonderful volunteers, has just closed and we are well on our way to meeting our goal of producing 1000 trees per year! This past spring volunteers planted all the acorns that were collected in fall 2017 and stored over winter in a fridge on site. In total we planted 2,400 acorns, doubling our goal, meaning that we currently have a stock of about 6,000 Garry Oak seedlings!

Our Garry Oak Nursery is run by volunteers, and we're always looking for new people to join our team! We host biweekly work parties on Saturday afternoons to carry out the enjoyable and rewarding work of planting acorns, weeding, potting up seedlings, and the various other tasks required to keep our trees healthy and vigorous. We provide training, tools, and refreshments. You provide a willing pair of hands!

Contact Jenny Hebb, at [jenny.gomps@gmail.com](mailto:jenny.gomps@gmail.com), if you're interested in attending a volunteer event. For more information or to become a member of GOMPS, visit [www.garryoak.info](http://www.garryoak.info).





# Upcoming Events

## Saanich Recreation Trails & Treks

[saanich.ca/EN/main/parks-recreation-culture/parks-events-in-park.html](http://saanich.ca/EN/main/parks-recreation-culture/parks-events-in-park.html)

### Sunday Walks (FREE Drop-In)

Sundays | 1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Discover the beauty of Saanich parks and nature in your backyard. Guided walks are open to adults of all ages. Please wear sturdy footwear and bring water. Walks go rain or shine. Leashed, well-socialized dogs are welcome unless specified.

Nov 18 | Lambrick Park to Mount Douglas: Meet at main entrance to Gordon Head Recreation Centre, on Lambrick Way off Feltham  
Dec 9 | Circle Route Along Colquitz and Swan Creeks: Meet at entrance to parking lot behind Saanich Hall, at end of Darwin Ave.

### Gentle Walk & Talk (FREE Drop-In)

Thursdays | 9:30 am to 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.

Nov 1 | Beckwith to Maltwood and Stoneywood Parks  
Meet by washroom building in Beckwith Park off Beckwith Ave  
Nov 8 | Sayward Hill  
Meet at Lochside Park, off Cordova Bay Rd, past Mattick's Farm  
Nov 15 | Rithet's Bog to Brydon Park  
Meet at kiosk on Dalewood, off Chatteron Way  
Nov 22 | Glencoe Cove  
Meet at Vantreight Park, on Vantreight Rd, off Ferndale Ave  
Nov 29 | Prospect Lake Centennial Trail  
Meet at Whitehead Park at Prospect Lake Rd & Goward Rd

## Swan Lake Nature Sanctuary

[www.swanlake.bc.ca](http://www.swanlake.bc.ca) 250-479-0211

### Guided Birdwalks (Drop-in Event)

Every Sunday | 9 am

Bring your binoculars and walking shoes and meet in the parking lot for this informal walk around the area. By donation.

### Gardening with Native Plants (Workshop)

Sunday, November 4 | 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm

Capital region residents are invited to a FREE workshop on gardening with native plants. Includes plant identification, an overview of their benefits and cultural history and an introduction to CRD water conservation programs. Pre-registration is required.

### Soil Safari (Drop-in Event)

Sunday, November 25 | 12 pm to 3 pm

Discover a 12,000 year old beach in the middle of the forest and go back in time by digging underground. View soil decomposers under a microscope, mold clay with guest potters, and take home your creation.

### A-gnawing Mammals (Drop-in Event)

Sunday, January 27 | 12 pm to 3 pm

Mice, squirrels and voles oh my. This event features bones, pelts, and games. Admission by donation

## CRD Parks & Environmental Services

Our naturalists lead guided walks, hikes, canoeing, and events for all ages. Most are free, all are fun! The Parks brochure can be found here: [crd.bc.ca/parks-events](http://crd.bc.ca/parks-events) 250-478-3344

## Victoria Natural History Society

Visit [www.naturevictoria.ca](http://www.naturevictoria.ca) for more programs

### Saturday Morning Birding (most Saturdays)

Check the Calendar page to find out the week's location & time ([http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page\\_id=1518](http://www.vicnhs.bc.ca/?page_id=1518)). All levels of birders welcome, and non-members can participate up to three times.

### Natural History Night (every 2nd Tuesday)

The Peace River Valley | Tues, Nov 13, 7:30 pm  
Habitat Connectivity in BC's Northeast | Dec 11, 7:30 pm  
UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

### Botany Night (every 3rd Tuesday)

Plants of Western Australia | Tues, Nov 20, 7:30 pm  
Members Night | Tues, Dec 18, 7:30 pm  
Swan Lake Nature Centre

### Birder's Night (every 4th Wednesday)

Birds on the Edge | Wed, Oct 24, 7:30 pm  
Call of the Western Screech-owl | Wed, Nov 28, 7:30 pm  
UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

### Marine Night (last Monday of the month)

Biodiversity of Clam Gardens | Mon, Oct 29, 7:30 pm  
Hydroid biodiversity | Wed, Nov 26, 7:30 pm  
UVic Fraser Building, Room 159

### Christmas Bird Count (Drop-in Event)

Saturday, December 15 | all day

Greater Victoria Area

The Victoria Christmas Bird Count is here again. Everyone is welcome! Novices will team up with more experienced counters. For more information, please visit: [vicnhs.bc.ca](http://vicnhs.bc.ca)

## Nature Conservancy of Canada

[natureconservancy.ca](http://natureconservancy.ca)

### NatureTalks: Grizzly Tales (Free Event)

Wednesday, November 14 | 6:30 pm

St. Ann's Academy Auditorium, 835 Humboldt Street  
Join Grizzly Bear biologist Michael Proctor for insights into the habits and habitats of this iconic species. His stories show how their future will be shaped by the decisions and actions we take today. This event is free, but please register to reserve your space.

## Continuing Studies @ UVic

[continuingstudies.uvic.ca](http://continuingstudies.uvic.ca)

### Conservation and Restoration in the Gulf Islands (Course)

Saturday, November 3 | 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm

This short course provides a detailed story-rich case study of the conservation and restoration work of the Galiano Conservancy.

### Traditional Plant Cultivation on the Coast: Indigenous Estuary Root Gardens (Course)

Thursday, November 8 | 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

In this short course, we will learn about various forms of traditional plant management, with a specific focus on estuary root gardens as a case study.

### Conservation at the Interface: Indigenous Knowledge and Environmental Science (Course)

Wednesdays, November 4-28 | 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Join Raincoast Conservation Fellow and National Geographic Explorer, Lauren Eckert for this three-part course exploring aspects of local knowledge, traditional ecological knowledge, and Indigenous knowledge.



# *SALMON IN THE CITY PROJECT*

By Dorothy Chambers  
Salmon in the City Project

In October of each year, an amazing salmon spawning spectacle takes place in our urban Colquitz River. After hatching from brilliant orange eggs laid in the Colquitz and Swan Creeks, the Coho salmon spend another year in our freshwater streams.

Then they are off to sea, for two to three years.

We meet them as they return to their natal stream (where they were hatched). As adults now, they head up the Colquitz River, and are counted and assessed at a Department of Fisheries and Oceans counting fence, behind Tillicum Mall.

Their mission at this point is to reproduce in areas of the watershed that provide good spawning habitat, completing their life cycle. They die after spawning, and the rich nutrients from their bodies, go towards feeding our coastal forests and many birds, mammals, and insects.

Volunteers check the counting fence multiple times per day once the run begins and school classes attend. The public is also invited to visit and learn about the watershed. Saanich has installed a large education sign at the counting fence, and has cleared brush around the fence to allow better viewing.

***RAINY DAYS ARE OFTEN THE BEST TIME TO SEE THE FISH!***







Cover: A Pacific Great Blue Heron (a federal and provincial Species-at-Risk) foraging in spectacular urban eel-grass beds. This photo was taken west of the Gorge Bridge in Canada's oldest Migratory Bird Sanctuary in the Pacific (est. 1923). Photo: Jacques Sirois.

For more information on Common Eel-grass:  
[crd.bc.ca/education/our-environment/  
wildlife-plants/marine-species/eelgrass](http://crd.bc.ca/education/our-environment/wildlife-plants/marine-species/eelgrass)

## 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 [saanich.ca/ourbackyard](http://saanich.ca/ourbackyard)



Editor: Darren Copley | Phone: 250-475-5579 | Email: [Darren.Copley@saanich.ca](mailto:Darren.Copley@saanich.ca)