

# Knockan Hill Park News

F R I E N D S   O F   K N O C K A N   H I L L   P A R K   S O C I E T Y

## SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- **June 21**—come out and help
- Park management plan under way
- Good Neighbours spreading the word

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### Watch for Colour-banded Cooper's Hawks

A study of the ecology of Cooper's Hawks nesting in the urban environment of Greater Victoria has been underway since 1995. To date over 1200 of these hawks have been colour-banded at over 85 nest sites. You can greatly assist this research project by watching for and reporting observations of these banded hawks.

Colour-bands are uniquely coded with 2 vertical alphanumeric characters (i.e. number over letter, letter over number) and are placed on the left leg. Band codes are repeated 3 times around the circumference of the band and can be read as far away as 20 m with binoculars or up to 75 m using a spotting scope. Red bands were placed on females and black

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bands were put on males. If you observe one of these marked hawks, please record the band colour and code,



date and time, whether it was in adult or juvenile plumage, as well as the location.

Please report all sightings, even if you were unable to determine the band code. Band colour in itself provides very useful data.

To date approximately 2000 observations of these marked birds have been reported from

as far away as Nanaimo on Vancouver Island, and from the Delta/Boundary Bay area of the mainland coast. About 20 of these hawks have been re-encountered in Washington, Oregon, Nevada, and southern California. Over 90% of year-round sightings, however, come from the Greater Victoria and Saanich Peninsula areas. A great many were reported hunting in the vicinity of backyard bird feeders.

### Please report Cooper's Hawk observations to:

Andy Stewart  
Wildlife Biologist  
3932 Telegraph Bay Road  
Victoria, B.C. V8N 4H7

Phone: (250) 477-1328  
E-mail: andy.stewart@shaw.ca

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Please come and join in on **Saturday morning, June 21st from 10:00 to noon** to help with invasive species removal. Meet at the top of the hill. Wear long sleeves and bring gloves. The Municipality of Saanich has asked that volunteers register for these activities both to mitigate risk exposure and also to provide insurance coverage for the volunteers. We'll have the necessary paperwork on hand at the event. This is not to discourage volunteers for fear of injury or lawsuit, but to encourage us

to carry out work with due care.

The more one reads about strategies to cope with the effects of climate change, the more you notice the importance of strong local communities. Here at Knockan Hill, we are seeing the emergence of a growing sense of community. Research projects are underway in the park, there is a pocket market every Saturday

in the parking lot of the Strawberry Vale Community Hall and people are happily using the park on a daily basis to recharge their batteries. So while the risks to the park are quite real, and potentially severe, we are fortunate to have a beautiful park to provide a strong sense of local community. Volunteering on behalf of the park isn't just about pulling broom, it is about becoming engaged in your community.

## ROYAL ROADS UNIVERSITY PROJECT

Dear Friends and Community Members,

As you walked through Knockan Hill Park this spring, enjoying the beautiful camas blooms and hearing the mating calls of the bald eagles at their nest, you may also have noticed students with GPS units and clipboards collecting information about the park. Those students are known as 'One Planet Consulting', a group of Royal Roads University Environmental Science students working in partnership with the Friends of Knockan Hill Park Society to develop a Management Plan for the park. The final product will be a living document accessible by anyone which will include: the geological and social history of the park, recommendations to the municipalities of Saanich and View Royal on how to harmonize their

park management plans, a comprehensive flora survey including native and exotic species, management options for controlling the invasive species (Scotch broom, English ivy, Daphne, English holly, Himalayan blackberry), and GIS maps of the trails, ecosystems, and invasive species of Knockan Hill.

Knockan Hill Park has both a Douglas fir ecosystem and an endangered Garry oak ecosystem. Less than 10% of the original Garry oak ecosystems remain on southern Vancouver Island and these are currently threatened from human development, fire suppression and invasive species. Our management plan focuses on invasive species and we have been researching various methods for mitigating the impacts these exotic species have on the native ecosystems. The project began in January and will be completed in August, when the

document will be available to the public.

Also, to engage the public with the project this spring we will be conducting a face-to-face community survey to understand how the community currently uses the park and how it is envisioned for the future. We will also be concluding our flora survey so please feel free to stop and talk to us if you see us walking through the park.

If you would like more information, or would like to share information with us, you can contact us at:

[RRU-students-FSAS-environment-envscnc-bsc-y0708f-ca1f-mp-team1@royalroads.ca](mailto:RRU-students-FSAS-environment-envscnc-bsc-y0708f-ca1f-mp-team1@royalroads.ca)

Or our Faculty Advisor, Dr. Jonathan Moran at

[jonathan.moran@royalroads.ca](mailto:jonathan.moran@royalroads.ca)

*"...high quality public pedestrian space in general and parks in particular are evidence of a true democracy at work. Parks and public spaces are also important because they are the only places where people meet as equals...in a city parks are as essential to the physical and emotional health of a city as the water supply."*

*- Enrique Penalosa*



### Butterfly Study Underway

The Garry oak ecosystem is one of the most threatened ecosystems in Canada. Land conversion for agricultural, residential and industrial development leading to habitat loss and fragmentation, as well as fire suppression, and invasion of exotic species has vastly reduced the extent of the ecosystem. There are over 100 species that are disappearing along with the ecosystem and several species are found nowhere else in Canada. The butterfly and plant communities of the Garry oak ecosystem are especially diverse and unique. Many butterflies are heavily dependent on their host plants so that if the plants disappear so will the butterfly species.

This summer, a team of graduate students from the University of British Columbia's zoology department are surveying butterfly communities in some of the remaining Garry Oak

habitat patches across the Saanich peninsula. Previous students have collected data on the plant communities in the same patches. We would like to better understand how the amount and type of human disturbance surrounding these patches impacts the butterfly and plant communities within them. Are there more exotic species and fewer species at risk in residential areas compared to rural areas? Knockan Hill Park is found on the more impacted end of the disturbance gradient so it will be interesting to see whether the types of species in Knockan Hill differ from other patches.

If you would like to share any thoughts or observations on the butterfly or plant communities of Knockan Hill or any other Garry oak site, please feel free to email me at [kharouba@zoology.ubc.ca](mailto:kharouba@zoology.ubc.ca).

## Hold on to your HAT

This spring and summer *Habitat Acquisition Trust* (HAT) is working with local residents and municipalities to protect and restore Knockan Hill Park, which contains some of the **last Garry oak meadows** in Victoria. The *Friends of Knockan Hill Park Society* (FKHPS) invited HAT to provide community outreach services to over 400 residents bordering the park. The goal of this project is to raise awareness about the high value of natural areas for biodiversity and community health. This project is part of HAT's award winning *Good Neighbours* strategy to protect our region's last remaining significant habitats.

Although officially protected as a municipal park, Knockan Hill still faces increasing threats that could reduce its biodiversity and habitat values over the long term. Invasive species, isolation, soil erosion, and inappropriate recreational uses impact the park's sensitive ecosystems.

"Local residents play a crucial role in park protection", says HAT's Land Care Co ordinator Todd Carnahan. "Citizens can make a real difference in the park's health through simple actions on their own land and on Knockan Hill."

Interested homeowners can get a free information package, a unique map of the area, and a confidential visit by HAT biologists. Eco-friendly neighbours are eligible to join HAT's network of **Habitat Stewards** throughout our region.

"The Friends of Knockan Hill Park Society are thrilled that HAT is delivering a Good Neighbours Project in the area, said resident David Trudel. "This should go a long way towards enhancing the neighbourhood's appreciation of the park and will also significantly mitigate the risks to the park."

Many events are planned in and around the park for residents and students. In May and June, HAT's **speaker series** highlights the spring wildflower bloom, ecological functions, and native history of these rare habitats. Topics will include insect pollinators, tree care, native plants for food and medicine, nature photography, and naturoscaping for wildlife.

HAT is also planning a naturoscape **garden tour** that features some of the best landscaping practices for drought tolerant, wildlife friendly gardens. Students and boy scouts will pursue activities like bird box building, invasive plant management, and nature tours. It is hoped that these kinds of activities can be maintained and included in the **park management plan** to guide park activities over the long term. HAT welcomes inquiries from local groups interested in hands on learning activities that support the park's integrity.

Project sponsors include the District of Saanich, the Town of View Royal, BC Gaming Commission, Telus Community Investment, and TD Friends of Environment Foundation.

For more information on HAT or this project, including maps and photos, contact **Todd Carnahan** Tel. 995-2428 [hatmail@hat.bc.ca](mailto:hatmail@hat.bc.ca) fax 920 7975 [www.hat.bc.ca](http://www.hat.bc.ca).

## The Garry Oak Gardener's Handbook: Nurturing Native Plant Habitat in Garry Oak Communities

A resource for people who are fortunate enough to have remnants of Garry oak habitat in their yards; for community groups and schools undertaking projects on public land; and for volunteers or professionals working with a landowner.

In the handbook you'll find design plans and plant lists for Garry oak meadows, woodlands, rock outcrops, moist-soil gardens, hedgerows and thickets, container gardens, and butterfly gardens, as well as tips on planning your garden, removing invasive species, acquiring plants, soil preparation, caring for Garry oak trees, dealing with deer, and much more.

In addition to contributing toward the recovery of our local endangered Garry oak ecosystems, there are many benefits to becoming a Garry oak gardener. You can:

- reduce maintenance chores such as mowing lawns, watering and replacing short-lived ornamental plants
- enjoy the beauty and diversity of your yard's attractive wildflowers, butterflies and birds
- save water by replacing water-hungry lawns and ornamental gardens with water-thrifty native plants
- eliminate the need for harmful chemical fertilizers and herbicides
- watch your property values grow as trees mature and your easy-care native garden becomes more highly regarded

If you would like to explore the idea of working with native wildflowers such as camas, chocolate lilies, and shooting stars, along with native grasses, shrubs and trees, please take a look at the handbook. Printed copies are available by donation, either through Saanich Environmental Services, [Municipal Hall, 3rd Floor Planning Department] or by request through the GOERT office ([info@goert.ca](mailto:info@goert.ca) or 383-3427). You can also view or download the book online: [www.goert.ca](http://www.goert.ca) under 'at home and in your community' and then to 'the Garry oak gardener'.

Good luck and happy Garry Oak gardening.

### Recently read and recommended:

The Upside of Down, Thomas Homer-Dixon, Vintage Canada, 2006

Deep Economy; The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future, Bill McKibben, Holt, 2007

Plan B 3.0; Mobilizing to Save Civilization, Lester Brown, W.W. Norton & Co., 2008



THINKING GLOBALLY,  
ACTING LOCALLY

**F R I E N D S   O F  
K N O C K A N   H I L L   P A R K  
S O C I E T Y**

The Friends of Knockan Hill Park Society is a volunteer non-profit society dedicated to serving the interests of the park. Some of the ways you can help include:

- Become a member of FKHPS
- Serve on the Board of Directors
- Assist with removal of invasive plant species
- Help with the upkeep and restoration of the Stranton Lodge garden
- Assist with newsletter production and distribution

**F K H P S**

Executive Board:

President: Nancy Densmore 727-0600

Vice President: Andria Tetlow 479-1947

Secretary: David Trudel 479-2778

E-mail: David-Trudel@shaw.ca

Membership/Treasurer: Jean Screech  
479-1782

Director: Charles Krusekopf  
382-0256

Director: Bob Burow 479-3086

Director: Rex Welland 479-2063

Director: Evie Chauncey 479-5499

**Memberships**

Send \$5.00 along with your name, address and phone number to:

FKHPS c/o Jean Screech  
1256 Burnside Road West,  
Victoria, B.C. V8Z 1N8

This newsletter is published by the Friends of Knockan Hill Park Society.

