

# Sargeant Bay Society

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## Newsletter #79

Editor: John Newell

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### Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Society was held, as usual, in the early spring. Tony Greenfield was unable to attend and the President's report was read by Ron Breadner. It summarized the achievements of the past year, including the completion of the circle trail around Triangle Lake and the registration of the change in the constitution (approved at the previous AGM) to extend the Society's mandate to include "neighbouring watersheds". More on this in the next item.

Our Treasurer, Maggie Marsh, reported that the Society remains in good financial shape, with a year-end balance of almost \$3,000 invested in a GIC and bank deposits. An additional \$1,000, BC Parks contribution towards the cost of signage on the new trail, was received after the books had been closed for the year.

All of last year's directors agreed to serve again. The full slate of ten Directors was elected unanimously; their responsibilities are summarized below:

Tony Greenfield	President
Joop Burgerjon	Correspondence Secretary / Webmaster
Maggie Marsh	Treasurer
John Newell	Recording Secretary / Newsletter Editor
Katie Caple	Membership Secretary
Elise Rudland	Summer Program Organizer
Pam Runkle	Director at Large
Ron Dinsdale	Director at Large
Annette Clarke	Director at Large
Ron Breadner	Director at Large

### Frog Park

Annette Clarke's initiative to restore a wetland in Welcome Woods was noted in our previous newsletter. She reported progress on this project to the AGM and requested the Society's support, particularly with respect to seeking legal protection for the area. A motion was passed to write a letter to the SCRCD in support of rezoning as a park or protected wetland area.

Annette's project covers a strip of land 275 metres long and 20 to 30 metres wide, that was dedicated as public access when the area was subdivided. It is lower than its surroundings and dips below the water table in some places. Drainage is poor because of the clay subsoil. There have always been frogs and salamanders in the area, although it

has been badly disturbed by development work on adjacent properties.

Thanks to the co-operation of the SCRCD, notably Parks Planning Coordinator, Sheane Reid, there has been remarkable progress in protecting this area and making it conveniently accessible to the public. The plank across the ditch has been replaced by a proper bridge, the footpath has been graded and a viewing platform built.



The beautiful woodwork was designed and built by SCRCD staff, John Miller and Michel Frenette.



While the SCRCD excavated the area to restore wetland habitat, Halfmoon Bay Elementary School Students, lead by teachers Jill and Laurie Short, helped with revegetating the wetland. Annette's son Nicholas was also actively involved,

rescuing tadpoles during the excavation and caring for them in the ponds in his garden. Community School Coordinator, Sue Lamb, provided communication between the many parties involved.

**Annette will be making a presentation on this project at the Halfmoon Bay Elementary School, at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesday, October 23.**

## Beaver Activity

Since the fish ladder was built in 1991, beavers have generally been diligent in blocking it. For reasons known only to them, they seemed to lose interest in the fall of 2004. They returned in 2007, and this year have been more industrious than ever, raising the height of their dam to close to a metre.

By early summer the dam had become a massive structure, capable of resisting anything but a strong, concerted effort to remove it. In July, a crew of seven from the Halfmoon Bay Volunteer Fire Department took on the job. The dam proved to be a marvel of beaver engineering, with logs 25 cm in diameter used in its foundations.



Photo: Joop Burgerjon

Needless to say, it has since been rebuilt – several times! Some visitors to the park regularly take the time and trouble to clear it. Though this is no longer the huge job it was before the firefighters pitched in, it is still quite a chore and these efforts are much appreciated. It is particularly important to clear the fish ladder a few times each week between mid-November and mid-December when returning salmon attempt to enter the lake and reach the spawning beds. Mornings are the best time to do this, as this provides salmon with the widest possible window before the beavers rebuild the dam overnight. Mornings after a heavy rain are best of all, as the increased flow helps flush away the debris. A rake, stored underneath the bridge, is an essential tool for this job. Work gloves and sturdy boots make the task a little easier.

## Birds

For the last several seasons, the return of the *wood ducks* in the spring has been eagerly awaited by the bird enthusiasts amongst us. There were very few sightings this year.

A single female was spotted on April 20, and two males a week later, then nothing, or at least, nothing reported.

We rather thought they had passed Sargeant Bay by as a place to nest this year. Then two juvenile birds were seen on July 6, and four on July 26. It therefore seems almost certain that at least one pair bred in the wetland this year, but they were very secretive until the ducklings were almost fully grown.

This summer there were three active great blue heron nests again in two trees in the forest above Redrooffs. However, Joop inspected the heron nests on July 27 and found no live birds. There was one dead half-grown immature under one tree and only egg shells under the other. We assume the nests were raided by eagles or ravens.

A male *Baltimore oriole* was seen on the berm by John and Elvie Newell on June 14. This beautiful bird is rare on the Coast and this is believed to be the first record for Sargeant Bay. However, without much question, the bird of the year was the *red-throated loon*, photographed close to the beach by Joop Burgerjon, in late June.



Photo: Joop Burgerjon

This loon species is a primarily an Arctic breeder, but its breeding range does extend southwards to Georgia Strait. Although it winters as far south as Baja California, it is a relatively rare visitor to the Sunshine Coast, even in the winter months, so its appearance in Sargeant Bay in the summer caused a ripple of excitement in local birding circles.

Some of you may have read the article in a recent edition of The Vancouver Sun, reporting on the catastrophic decline in the populations of migrant songbirds, particularly insect eaters like swallows and flycatchers, around the Georgia Basin. This lends support to my own very unscientific observations, at Sargeant Bay and elsewhere on the Coast, that point to the same broad conclusion. The problem appears to be by no means confined to the insectivores. It seems to me that, for the last couple of summers, there have been far fewer Brewer's blackbirds on the golf course and much smaller numbers of sparrows and finches almost everywhere.

## Feedback

We welcome your comments, suggestions and questions. As you received this newsletter by e-mail, it is easy for you to let us have your comments: Just click the reply button, or [sargbay@dccnet.com](mailto:sargbay@dccnet.com).