



Important Bird Area of Canada Designation for English Bay-Burrard Inlet

Krista Englund, BC Nature IBA Caretaker Coordinator

Stanley Park is a great place to check out birds in the winter months. Thousands of scoters, hundreds of goldeneyes and lesser numbers of buffleheads, grebes, loons and mergansers can be easily spotted. Along the shoreline, you can usually count on seeing large numbers of mallards, wigeon and gulls as well as some teal, scaups, and other ducks and shorebirds. You may also spot a great blue heron fishing or a bald eagle soaring in the sky or perched in a tree.

The waters off the seawall are not the only good place to view waterbirds - nearly the entire coastal area of Greater Vancouver provides excellent habitat for overwintering birds. The value of English Bay, Burrard Inlet, and Indian Arm for birds is recognized with the international designation, the English Bay-Burrard Inlet Important Bird Area (IBA).

The IBA program (<http://www.iba-canada.com>), which is coordinated by BirdLife International, aims to identify, conserve and monitor essential bird habitats around the world. Canada

joined the network in the 1980's and, since then, nearly 600 Canadian sites that meet the stringent scientific criteria have been designated as IBAs. Our Canadian sites are complemented by 11,000 sites spread across nearly 200 countries worldwide (as of 2009).

Now that sites have been identified in Canada, the program's focus has shifted to monitoring and conserving these essential bird habitats. In this province, BC Nature (the Federation of BC Naturalists) works closely with Canadian BirdLife

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partners, Bird Studies Canada and Nature Canada to coordinate monitoring and conservation efforts. Monitoring and conserving BC's 84 IBAs is no small task. Adapting a model proven to be successful in Denmark, Cambodia, Tanzania and Mexico, the BC IBA partners initiated a volunteer-based Caretaker Network in 2007. Birders, naturalists, and other knowledgeable volunteers have now been matched with over 90% of BC's IBAs. Caretakers act as "eyes, ears, and hands" on the ground, watching for changes in bird population levels or conservation threats.

In locations where IBAs are small, Caretaker activities can be easily managed by a single individual or a small group of people. However, 'caretaking' large, com-



Photo: Mark T. White

plex IBAs like English Bay-Burrard Inlet requires a coordinated effort by several individuals and/or groups. Together with Krista Englund of BC Nature, June Ryder of Nature Vancouver, and Patricia Banning-Lover of the Wild Bird Trust of BC, Robyn Worcester of the Stanley Park Ecology Society has volunteered to be a joint-Caretaker for the English Bay-Burrard Inlet IBA.

As Caretakers, our primary duties are to monitor bird populations, habitat and conservation threats, work towards greater local awareness of the importance of the area for birds, and participate in conservation and stewardship activities within the IBA. The data from these monthly bird counts are invaluable for alerting us of possible long term population changes of coastal waterbirds within the IBA.

Unfortunately, even with four Caretakers and numerous other volunteers, current efforts only cover a small portion of the IBA. Together with other volunteers who participate in this Bird Studies Canada citizen science monitoring program, only half of the 40 Coastal Waterbird Survey stations within English Bay-Burrard Inlet IBA are currently being monitored.

We thank all the volunteers who have collected bird data and encourage other birders and naturalists to participate in the Coastal Waterbird Survey or other monitoring and conservation efforts within the IBA.

If you would like to join the monitoring program visit <http://www.bsc-eoc.org/volunteer/bccws/> or email BCprograms@birdscanada.org. You can also help by informing others about the importance of this area for birds and advocate for its protection - either through conversations or by including information about the IBA in written materials, newsletter articles, and on websites.



Photo: Mark T. White

A Bird by Any Other Name...

Don Enright
SPES Director & Professional Naturalist

We have a new species of bird in Stanley Park, and it has been singing right under our noses for years! Now, before you grab your binoculars, rest assured that you have probably already seen (or more likely heard) this little forest dynamo. The winter wren, known for its secretive behaviour and not-so-secretive song, has been split into three distinct species: the winter wren (found roughly from the Rockies eastward), the Eurasian wren, and, locally, the Pacific wren.

This name change is just the latest development in the ever-changing science of bird taxonomy. For many years, there has been a steady push and pull between "lumpers", who tend to find commonalities between species, and the "splitters", who try to establish differences.

The splitting of the winter wren was based on some interesting sleuthing done in eastern BC, where the two types overlap. It seems that, while wrens of both types can recognize each others' songs, females will only select males of their own type. DNA studies have confirmed that they are distinct species, and have likely been that way for several million years.

It looks like the splitters are holding sway these days: the tiny cackling goose is now distinct from the Canada goose, and the blue grouse has been split into the dusky and the sooty.

Look for another new species off the shores of Stanley Park in late autumn. Among the thousands of surf scoters that often visit, you might see a few black scoters, which were recently split from the common scoter of the old world. Fortunately, we get to keep the

latter name.

And on the horizon? Studies of the calls of red crossbills show that there may be up to ten distinct types. Will there be a name change? For the moment, it appears that the lumpers rule.



Photo: Don Enright

Cool Wildlife Sightings In Stanley Park

Robyn Worcester, Conservation Programs Manager

Reptiles Rise Again !

For the first time in over 5 years a **garter snake** was found in Stanley Park. This tiny, first-year snake was found by Park Board wildlife staff at the old zoo hospital building. It is wonderful to know that snakes may still be breeding in the park, but the possibility remains that it found its way into the Park by some other means. Keep your eyes peeled, as we would love to find more!.



Baby beavers! Local naturalists have confirmed that, as of September, 3 small beaver kits are now residents of Lost Lagoon. They were first observed late in the summer, eating willow and alder to the delight of locals and visitors.



Photo: Mark T. White

A worn out **ruddy duck** was a source of great interest near the Nature House in late October. This migrant bird was so tired that it seemed to hang around and pose for pictures, but eventually it moved on towards its destination.



Photo: Mark T. White

Wilson's snipe have become regular visitors to Stanley Park and this year was no exception. This beautiful bird was caught feeding on the grass and can sometimes be seen near or in the Rose Garden.



Photo: Mark T. White

A **silver-haired bat** was found near Beaver Lake in October. This disoriented chiropteran, found by a passerby on Lake Trail, was measured, weighed and released by SPES staff. It is only the 2nd of its kind ever noted in the Park.



The first-ever **giant water bug** (*Lethocerus americanus*) documented in Stanley Park was found by SPES staff in Beaver Lake in September. This aquatic insect, which is also an excellent flier, is one of the largest insects in Canada. And yes, it will bite!



In late November, a **snow bunting** was photographed near Prospect Point close to the seawall by SPES board member and BCIT Fish, Wildlife and Recreation instructor Danny J. Catt. According to SPES' diligent records, this is a first ever sighting for Stanley Park! These small white birds of the high Arctic come south for the winter and are more commonly observed at Iona Island's south jetty and peninsulas.

Maybe this little bird just ran out of steam on its way past Stanley Park and decided to stop for a breather?



Photo: Danny Catt

Winter 2010/11 Nature Programs

For more information, visit www.stanleyparkecolony.ca or call (604) 718-6522

All Discovery Walks meet at the Stanley Park Nature House at Lost Lagoon unless otherwise indicated.
Members \$5, Public \$10



Sun, Dec 5
1:30 –
3:30 pm
Wild at Art!
Cedar Orbs, tree weaves and more! Check out Stanley Park's Environmental Art Project. Four semi-permanent pieces have been placed in the wilds of Stanley Park from Lover's Trail to the Totem Poles. We will visit as many as time allows all the while talking about art, ecology and the dialogue between the two. A great opportunity for those who want to learn more about the broad concepts of ecology and art.

Sun, Dec 19
1:30 –
3:30 pm
Celebrate the Solstice!
T'is the season! Join naturalist, Jennifer Swanston, to explore the history and traditions of midwinter festivals, and to discuss the lore behind the plants and decorations that we associate with the season.

Sun, Jan 2
1:30 –
3:30 pm
The Logging of Stanley Park
Join UBC Lecturer, Sonya Powell, for a forest history walk through Stanley Park. Examine evidence of hand logging in the park, visit known harvest sites, and discuss turn-of-the-century technologies for extracting massive old growth trees. Threaded through our walk, we will reflect on our changing values with respect to cultures, forests, and natural resources. Come and see how the forest that built our city has recovered (or not) a century later.

Attention Teachers!

SPES offers a dozen diverse, fun, and engaging park and classroom programs for students, K-Grade 7. Including the outstandingly popular 2-day overnight "Urban Camping" immersion for Grades 5-6, these field trips are curriculum based, and are highlights of a school year.

For information: call 604-257-6907 or see www.stanleyparkecolony.ca/programs/school.

Teacher workshops also available.

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STANLEY PARK ECOLOGY SOCIETY

Sun, Jan 16 **Stanley Park Primer**
1:30 – 3:30 pm New to town? Long-time resident? Join a SPES Educator for this two hour foray into Stanley Park to learn about broad concepts of ecology and how they relate to Stanley Park habitats and their wildlife denizens.

Sun, Jan 30 **Birds of a Feather**
9:00 – 11:00 am Join naturalist and expert bird watcher Cathy Aitchison for a two-hour walk exploring Stanley Park’s varied and beautiful bird life. By donation.

Sat, Feb 5 **Raptor ID workshop**
1-3 pm Join local birding expert Al Grass to learn raptor identification in Stanley Park. This event is perfect for bird experts and beginners alike. An indoor instructional workshop is followed by a walk to learn field identification. Meeting location: Stanley Park Dining Pavilion
Cost: by Donation Registration required: 604-681-7099

Sat, Feb 5 **Young Naturalists’ Club of Stanley Park**
10 am – 12pm Please see sidebar

Sun, Feb 13 **Ducks in Love!**
9:00 – 11:00 am Join Al Grass, expert in birds and love, for an enjoyable walk around Lost Lagoon and environs for an intriguing look at the courtship and mating habits of the bird world.



Happy Birthday, YNC! Jennifer Swanston, YNC Clubs Coordinator

On Saturday, November 20, the Young Naturalists’ Club of BC was delighted to share our “Recycle, Upcycle, Buy-less” 10th birthday party with SPES. Hosted at the Pavilion, it was a wonderful day, with a sprinkling of snow on the ground making Stanley Park more beautiful than usual.

Member families from the Stanley Park, Vancouver, Lynn Canyon and Home Learners YNCs shared in an afternoon of nature still-life artistry, Japanese Gyotaku fish printing and wrapping paper creation. Our display of gifts made from recycled materials provided some great gift-giving inspirations.

Robert Bateman donated a beautiful signed print to YNC, and we held our draw for this treasure right before we served our lady bug-and-flower-covered birthday cake. Everyone enjoyed a great party and went home stuffed with ideas, artworks and birthday cake. To the next decade, YNC!

Community Invasive Species Management

Stanley Park’s natural habitats are being overtaken! Learn about the ecology of the park while helping to conserve its biodiversity from the threat invasive species.

Community invasive species management events are scheduled for the following dates and times:

- Dec. 11 10 am - 1 pm
- Dec. 26 12:30 - 3:30 pm
- Jan. 8 10 am - 1 pm
- Jan. 23 12:30 - 3:30 pm
- Feb. 12 10 am - 1 pm
- Feb. 27 12:30 - 3:30 pm
- Mar. 12 10 am - 1 pm
- Mar. 27 12:30 - 3:30 pm



For our meeting location, and more information on how to register and what to bring, please contact SPES’ Stewardship Coordinator: stewardship@stanleyparkecology.ca



The Young Naturalists’ Club of Stanley Park

This monthly event is a chance for children (with their parents) to enjoy two hours of nature exploration. Activities include wildlife observation, outdoor art, easy hiking, games, and more! Presented by the Stanley Park Nature House at Lost Lagoon and the Young Naturalists’ Club of BC, please call 604-718-6522 for more information or to sign up. Drop in and check us out!

Community Quilt

Roger Keyes
Public Programs Manager

The Stanley Park Nature House Community Quilt has been received with awe by visitors throughout the autumn. This beautiful quilt was created by over 30 eastside kids and volunteers under the creative direction of artist Donna Polos. Learning principles of ecology in tandem with principles of art, they created an ode to biodiversity in Stanley Park. Come down to the Nature House to see it and learn more about the project.



Coyotes and Ducks and Frogs, Oh My!

Mariee Devereux
School Programs Manager

It is that time of year again when we bring the wonders of the park right into local classrooms. This year our classroom programs are getting a fresh new spin by including the latest information gathered through SPES' newly published Report, State of the Park for the Ecological Integrity of Stanley Park. Flying squirrels, salmon and raccoon

puppets tell important stories of Stanley Park, lucky students get dressed up like trees, and valuable hands-on explorations with cool bio-facts like coyote pelts, little brown bats and other specimens are featured alongside completely new and fresh activities. All three of our classroom program offerings - Salmon Forest, Resourceful Rainforests, and Our Living Planet- include updated songs, visuals and hands-on conservation action activities. For contact info, see page 4.



Forward Focus for Ecological Action

A panel of six invited professionals each took five fast and succinct minutes at Stanley Park Ecology Society's October 17th AGM to focus for 'next steps' regarding Ecological Integrity of Stanley Park. The collective input exceeded our hopes in the diversity and depth of dialogue regarding considerations of future conservation priorities and education initiatives: In part it included:

- Continue focus on dead/dying trees and their role in the ecosystem
- Wildlife movement studies: look to creating wildlife trail underpasses
- Invasive species research - contribute to broader community knowledge re: early detection and response, management vs. removal
- Fragmentation - explore its impact

and how to decrease it

- Focus on climate change - e.g. Are current restoration plantings appropriate for future conditions?
- Beaver Lake – prepare with surveys and participate in FrogWatch program; sample invasive bullfrogs for Chytrid fungus, a possible cause of decline in native species.
- Analyze ephemeral ponds as sources of native species and potential reintroduction sites
- Ensure accessibility so visitors can fully explore the park; consider boardwalks
- Employ outdoor facilities to extend capacity for education programs
- Keep VPB informed of important nesting sites
- Educate the public about forest management – e.g. stand thinning

- Connect people with nature through stories and programs where people are (e.g. seawall), park/community events (i.e. Sun Run, walks, etc), and via media
- Encourage members to call on politicians to keep ecological issues on front burners

We extend a sincere thank you to our panelists:

Caroline Astley, consultant, Invasive Species researcher;
Ralph Wells, UBC Forestry alumni;
Dennis Thoney, Vancouver Aquarium Director of Animal Services;
Maria Morlin, Vancouver Community College Biology instructor;
Bill Stephen, Vancouver Park Board Superintendent of Arboriculture;
Spencer Chandra-Herbert, BC MLA for Vancouver-West End and Official Opposition Critic for Tourism, Culture and the Arts

Cultivating Native Plants: Working Collaboratively to Enhance and Restore Natural Ecosystems

By Jill Taylor and Wilma Mosmans
Native Plant Garden Volunteers

The Native Plant Demonstration Garden co-exists with the Stanley Park Community Garden at the bottom of Robson Street. Established in 2003, it's a partnership between the Vancouver Park Board (VPB), Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES), and West End Residents' Association. The native plant section's purpose is to demonstrate the beauty and diversity of native plants and to educate locals and visitors about native plants and how they can use them in their own gardens.

People often don't realize that the plants we know and love are native species, well suited to our climate and easy to grow. Examples include currants, columbines, lupins, and asters. Using these species in an urban plot or balcony, one can obtain wonderful colour from March into the fall, while providing benefits to local birds and insects and helping to safe-guard the health of our local ecosystems.

A century ago, when great parks were established, it was assumed they would be, within themselves, healthy ecosystems. Contemporary research, however, shows that we need 'ribbons' (e.g., greenways) and 'stepping stones' to re-connect what have now become islands. Thus, gardening with native species becomes an important part of maintaining biodiversity.

Recently, the demonstration garden has provided plants for SPES's habitat restoration projects. In 2010, youth volunteers with SPES's spring ecology program split perennials, dug up excess ferns, and took cuttings, all for future use in rehabilitation areas. In the process, this enthusiastic group of teens acquired hands-on skills in gardening, plant propagation, and team work.

In the late summer of 2010, well over one hundred fringecup, foamflower, columbine, and coastal strawberry seedlings were taken by SPES and potted in a nursery space provided by the VPB.

This fall, two large red-osier dogwoods, together with bitter cherry and baldhip rose runners, were transferred directly into areas around Lost Lagoon where volunteers have worked hard at managing invasive Himalayan blackberry.

Through shared stewardship with the Native Plant Demonstration Garden, SPES continues to conserve and restore Stanley Park's natural areas and educate society about its ecological values and how to be environmental stewards.



We THANK OUR RECENT DONORS AND SPONSORS



Financial support was provided by the Government of Canada through the Department of the Environment

Thanks Also To Recent Donors:

Telus, lululemon athletica, Michitsch Systems Inc, YMCA Toronto, Michael Price, Joslin Kobyłka, Louise Irvin, Nancy Henderson, James and Wanda Pickell, Lucy Ryan, Mark Anthony Group Inc,



Icebreaker (www.icebreaker.com), the New Zealand merino wool company, had their Fall Winter 2011 BC Line Launch on Nov 25th in the SPES Pavilion rooms and in the Nature House. The collection was well received by the 30 outdoor sports retailers from around BC, and the fresh snow of the day illustrated the fantastic insulating properties of the clothing. To host your own event, see page 1 for rentals.

Canada Helps! Donating to the Stanley Park Ecology Society has never been easier, thanks to CanadaHelps! This online donation portal is accessible through our website, www.stanleyparkecology.ca. Simply click the "Donate Now" icon on our homepage. CanadaHelps provides secure service for monthly or one-time gifts. Tax receipts will be issued for donations over \$30.

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SPES Membership Supports:

- School and Public Programs helping more than 30,000 children and adults to discover nature each year through hands-on stewardship adventures
- The Stanley Park Nature House at Lost Lagoon, Vancouver's only ecological interpretive centre, welcoming over 15,000 visitors each year
- Wildlife monitoring, habitat restoration and biodiversity conservation in Stanley Park



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www.fishhousestanleypark.com

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