



## Spring 2010 Issue

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## Stanley Park's First State of the Park Report

Robyn Worcester, Conservation Programs Manager

**In 2007 the Stanley Park Ecology Society identified the need for a first State of the Park report for Stanley Park as one of the primary objectives of our new Conservation Programs. The purpose of creating such a report for our society is to identify information gaps that can be filled over time through our research initiatives, as well as identify aspects of the Park's ecology which are most in need of restoration and enhancement.**

The first stage of the process was conducted by BCIT students who researched how these reports are constructed by other agencies (especially Parks Canada) and created an outline of the report. The next step was for SPES staff and volunteers to collect baseline data and to compile background resources concerning all ecological aspects of the Park.

Much of this data and information was made available through the Vancouver Park Board's 2007-09 Windstorm Restoration process which stimulated renewed interest in Stanley Park from local academic institutions and research biologists contracted by the Park Board. Information also came from the compilation of background reports and publications that had been produced for the park over previous decades. In addition,

SPES staff and volunteers have been working since 2007 to gather new baseline field data on a variety of species and habitats.

Through the spring and summer of 2009, an extensive literature review and compilation of data was conducted, and by fall a draft Biophysical Inventory of the Park was complete. Background information on all species is documented in this inventory including complete lists of all known species occurrences for both plants and animals.

Over the fall and winter a collection of experts in a variety of fields have reviewed the document, and added their valuable expertise which has strengthened the document tremendously.

continued on page 2...



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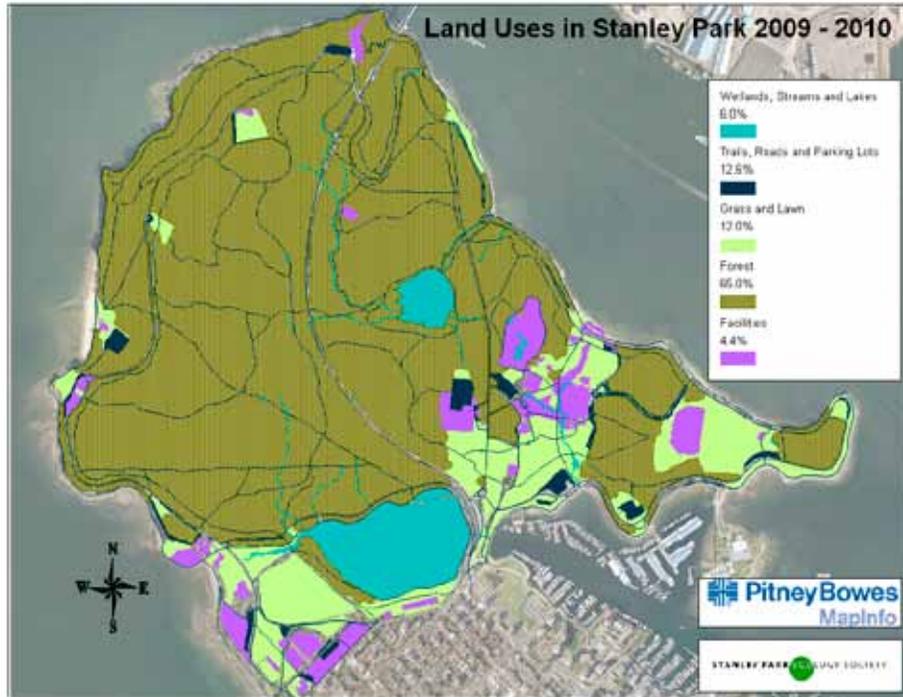
For more information, call  
(604) 257-6908

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...continued from cover.



Many new maps, graphics and other figures are being created for the report. A new map of land uses in Stanley Park is shown above.

fragmentation, as well as predictions of future detrimental effects due to invasive species and climate change.

The preparation of this first report was undertaken with the understanding that all of the data needs have not yet been met and many of the measures for assessing these indicators have not yet been determined. The assessment of indicators is somewhat of a subjective process, but incorporates the most reliable data available, as well as direct observations by SPES staff, park managers, and local naturalists who know the Park best.

This report will not only prove to be a valuable resource for SPES and Park managers but will also serve to guide SPES's future research and restoration efforts in the Park. It is our hope that this document may also serve as a critical component in the long-term ecologically-based management of the Park and the creation of a Stanley Park Master Plan.

Once all of the known information about the Park's ecology had been compiled, SPES staff used this information to conduct an analysis of the condition or 'state' of the Park's ecology. This analysis aims to describe changes or trends within the Park when possible, and, when not, identifies gaps in the available information.

For the previous example, the reasoning included many factors such as the number of extirpated species since the Park's creation, edge effects and forest

The report is anticipated to be launched in April 2010 and to be uploaded to [www.stanleyparkecology.ca/conservation](http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca/conservation)

To provide such an assessment, the Park's ecological features were broken down into broad areas (terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems, native biodiversity, and climate and atmosphere), and several Environmental Indicators were identified to provide a broad representation of key factors influencing the Park. The use of indicators helps to describe the state of the environment for particular issues in a concise and easily understood manner. An example of one indicator used to assess the state of native biodiversity in the Park was 'overall native species richness (the number of species)'. Considering all of the information in the biophysical inventory, it was determined that species richness in the Park is currently 'fair with cause for concern' and is experiencing a 'decreasing' trend. Each indicator assessment is fully explained in the report and all of the background information is provided.



Ecological Integrity (EI) is key to State of the Park reporting and is central to the analysis in this report. The EI of Stanley Park includes all of the living and non-living components of the ecosystem as well as the processes, such as windstorms, that influence it. Complete EI will never be fully achieved in the Park because of its location in the heart of a major city, and because of past and present influences that surround it. EI is, however, an appropriate goal when working towards the conservation and restoration of the Park's natural resources.

## SPES's Environmental Youth Programs

Looking for a great place to volunteer with a fun group of people this spring or summer? Interested in learning career skills and helping with an important cause? Come volunteer for SPES's Spring Break Intensive Program, Invasives Removal Youth Team (SPIRYT), or Eco Rangers, three of SPES's most popular programs involving youth.



Photo: SPIRYT and Eco Ranger volunteers remove invasive plants at Lost Lagoon

**Spring Break Intensive (March 9-12) and SPIRYT (select weeks in summer)** provide youth teams aged 14-20 with the opportunity to remove invasive plant species, learn about west coast ecology and conservation issues, gain experience with public outreach, and develop organizational and leadership skills while working in beautiful Stanley Park! Participants are enthusiastic, enjoy interacting with people, have an interest in ecology, and enjoy doing physical work in the outdoors.

For more information, contact:

Greg Ferguson, Stewardship Coordinator:

Ph. 604-718-6522; Email: [stewardship@stanleyparkecolgy.ca](mailto:stewardship@stanleyparkecolgy.ca)

**Eco Rangers** is a very popular program which is open to volunteers aged 15 through retirement. In summer months, Eco Rangers work in pairs as roving naturalists or at set stations such as Beaver Lake in Stanley Park, answering visitors' questions about local animals and plants. Participants are extensively trained on the Park's wildlife, plants and cultural history, as well as in interpretive skills. It's a great way to get hands-on experience in Stanley Park, learn more about nature, and make new friends!

For more information contact:

Koren Johnstone, Volunteer Coordinator,

Ph. 604-681-7099; Email: [vols@stanleyparkecolgy.ca](mailto:vols@stanleyparkecolgy.ca)

## Community Conversation about Coyotes

**Phil Dubrulle,**  
CWC Coordinator

On January 23rd, 73 people set aside two hours of a rare rain-free winter weekend to congregate in the Dunbar region for Vancouver's first Coyote Forum. The forum was led by SPES which has been actively operating the Co-Existing with Coyotes (CWC) program since 2001 with the support of the Vancouver Park Board and Ministry of Environment. The forum intent was to bring together stakeholders and community residents to foster communication regarding the long-established coyote management system.

Panelists included both governmental and non-governmental organizations who described their roles and responsibilities and the contexts that support their respective services. Community groups and residents also had opportunity to voice both concerns and support.

Forum speakers included:

- CWC Coordinator, Phil Dubrulle
- Vancouver Park Board Commissioner, Loretta Woodcock, who has personally experienced the loss of a pet to coyote kill, but who, in the spirit of tolerance and dialogue, initiated the creation of

this forum when a local group advocated a city-wide coyote culling program

- Kristine Webber, MSc, who wrote her Master's thesis on Greater Vancouver coyotes and spearheaded the creation of the CWC program in the 1990's

- Mike Mackintosh, a wildlife expert and former Vancouver Park Board Supervisor who was also a founding designer of the CWC program

- Mike Badry, Wildlife Conflict Prevention Coordinator, BC Ministry of Environment

- John Gray, Assistant Manager of Animal Services for the City of Vancouver

- Sara Dubois, MSc, Manager of Wildlife Services for the BC SPCA

- Meg Toom, Program Delivery Specialist for Bear Aware, Squamish

No coyotes were involved at the forum or pre-press, but, had they been, they may have been optimistic that indications are that a majority of Vancouverites continue to support a co-existence philosophy. This is a significant outcome in itself as public attitudes towards coyotes haven't been publicly gauged since the late 1990's while the issues and profile of the coyote has certainly developed



since that time. It was clear that the community recognized an ownership to educate and act within neighbourhoods to not habituate coyotes. This in part includes:

- Feed pets indoors;
- As per city by-laws, walk dogs on-leash;
- Maintain personal property so as to not provide denning sites.

For speaker summaries and additional forum information, please visit [www.stanleyparkecolgy.ca/coyotes](http://www.stanleyparkecolgy.ca/coyotes)

The CWC program is committed to expanding on the momentum that the forum has generated and views this event as a litmus test towards future forums and surveys.

# Spring 2010 nature programs

All Discovery Walks meet at the Stanley Park Nature House at Lost Lagoon unless otherwise indicated. \$10.00 adults, \$5.00 members and children.  
For further information call 604-718-6522



For more information, visit [www.stanleyparkecology.ca](http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca) or call (604) 718-6522

- |                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| Sun, Feb 28<br>9-11 am | <b>Birds of a Feather</b><br>Join expert bird watcher Cathy Aitchison for a two-hour walk to explore Stanley Park's varied and beautiful bird life. Pay what you can.   |
| Fri, Mar 5<br>7-9 am   | <b>Owl Prowl</b><br>Join renowned birder Al Grass for an evening with the owls in Stanley Park. An indoor presentation will be followed by a walk to Beaver Lake to listen for these secretive and nocturnal creatures. Meet at the Dining Pavilion, 2nd floor. Registration required: 604-681-9453<br>Fee: Pay what you can.   |
| Sat, Mar 6             | <b>The Young Naturalists' Club of Stanley Park (see sidebar)</b>  |
| Sun, Mar 14            | <b>Special Places: Environmentally Sensitive Areas of Stanley Park</b><br>Areas in Stanley Park are deemed "environmentally sensitive" for a variety of reasons: unique opportunities for food, shelter, water and living space. They provide habitat for hundreds of species of plants and animals, some of them rare or endangered. On this walk we will visit some of these areas exploring why they are environmentally sensitive and what we can do to help. |
| Sun, Mar 28<br>9-11 am | <b>Birds of a Feather</b><br>Join expert bird watcher Cathy Aitchison for a two-hour walk to explore Stanley Park's varied and beautiful bird life. Pay what you can.   |
| Sun, Apr 4<br>1-3 pm   | <b>Stanley Park: One Big Bird Nest</b><br>Blue eggs, yellow eggs, we even have green eggs! (Sorry, ham not included.) Take a look with us on the shores and in the woods for different eggs to be found in the park! Great for families!  |
| Sun, Apr 18<br>1-3 pm  | <b>Who's in the 'Hood? Biodiversity and Stanley Park Celebrating Earth Day Every Day</b><br>How many creatures does it take to make an ecosystem? Biodiversity is the sum of all the plants and animals found in an ecosystem. In this Year of Biodiversity, we ask: Is it important? On this walk, the park is our classroom as we wander along exploring the state of biodiversity in the park and discussing the issue in a global context.                    |
| Sun, Apr 25<br>9-11 am | <b>Birds of a Feather</b><br>Join expert bird watcher Cathy Aitchison for a two-hour walk to explore Stanley Park's varied and beautiful bird life. Pay what you can.   |
| Sat, May 2<br>1-3 pm   | <b>Roses or Thorns? Invasive Species and Stanley Park</b><br>Purple loosestrife, eastern grey squirrels, English ivy: invasive species may be pretty but also pretty damaging. Explore many invasive species in the park, what we're doing about them, what you can do about them, and what this fascinating issue tells us about the changing view of ecology in Vancouver in the last century.  |
| Sun, May 9<br>1-3 pm   | <b>The Mother of All Checklists</b><br>Clean the house, pick up the kids, get to work...sound familiar? You should see the checklist for the mothers of Stanley Park creatures! Build the house from scraps, fight predators, teach the kids to fly... Join us on this walk on various forms of parenting in the natural world.   |



## Ivy Busters

Stanley Park's forests are being overtaken! Lend a hand and learn a lot about the ecology of your park. Work to protect it from the army of invasive plant species that threaten the park's biodiversity.

Community invasive plant species management events occur on the second Saturday and the fourth Sunday of most months.

For information and to register, contact Greg, SPES's Stewardship Programs Coordinator:

Phone: 604-718-6522  
Email: [stewardship@stanleyparkecology.ca](mailto:stewardship@stanleyparkecology.ca)  
Ph. 604-718-6522

# STANLEY PARK ECOLOGY SOCIETY

Connecting People With Nature

Sun, May 23  
1-3 pm

**The Great Blue Herons of Stanley Park**  
These magnificent avians have settled in Stanley Park in increasing numbers over the past years. Like any new population they have had their challenges: wind storms, an urban environment and raccoon attacks. On this heronry tour, we will look at the life cycle of the great blue herons and what the Stanley Park Ecology Society is doing to be welcoming and helpful neighbours.

Sat, May 30  
9-11 am

**Birds of a Feather**  
Join naturalist and expert bird watcher Cathy Aitchison for a two-hour walk exploring Stanley Park's varied and beautiful bird life. Pay what you can.

Sun, Jun 6  
1-3 pm

**Manager's Special! Bike the Highlights**  
Why was the Nine O'clock Gun once aimed at City Hall? How do ferns, stumps and towering trees work together to create a lush forest? Join SPES' Public Programs Manager for this bike tour of cultural and natural history highlights of Stanley Park. **Participation is limited to ten cyclists only. Registration required: call 604-718-6522. Blue Light Special Price: SPES Members free, non-members, \$5.**

Sun, Jun 13  
1-3 pm

**The Perfect Storm: Stanley Park Recovery Since 2006**  
In the early morning hours of December 16, 2006, hurricane force winds swept unchallenged across English Bay. Stanley Park lay directly in the path. Thousands of trees were toppled, animals displaced, habitats devastated, and a city lay heartbroken in its wake. Three and a half years later, tour an area of the park that was especially hard hit. Witness the age old cycle of destruction and the amazing natural forces of renewal.



A Young Naturalist separates mason bee cocoons from other hibernating insects.



This monthly event is a chance for children (with their parents) to enjoy two hours of nature exploration. Activities include hiking, games, wildlife observation, outdoor art, and more! Presented by the Stanley Park Ecology Society 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!

We meet from 10 am to noon, the first Saturday of every month at the Stanley Park Nature House at Lost Lagoon.



Young Naturalists work alongside their parents and SPES educators to explore fascinating mysteries of nature while contributing to the health of Stanley Park.

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A Great Blue Heron is perched on a nest made of sticks and twigs, situated in a tree. The background is a clear blue sky.

## Dog Days in the Park?

**Roger Keyes**, *Public Programs Manager*  
**Robyn Worcester**, *Conservation Programs Manager*

Lowers blood pressure! Improves social life! Induces feelings of unconditional love! If this were a drug, we'd want to bottle it, not leash it. While dogs do produce all these benefits for humans, they do not for Stanley Park's wildlife, soil or vegetation. When the Park Board investigated creating an off-leash dog area in or near Stanley Park, SPES stepped up to offer an ecological perspective.

Two sites had been proposed: one in the treed rise near Second Beach, the other in Devonian Park. While not counseling the creation of any dog park, the one in Stanley Park was the least acceptable from an ecological point of view. Off-leash dogs and wildlife are incompatible in naturalized park areas due to the disturbance dogs cause to wild animals.



Birds and other small animals that use the ground for foraging (such as towhees, song sparrows and flickers) are subject to being displaced.



Even birds that spend most of their time in trees can be affected by dogs on the ground.

One study of dog walking in natural areas found that bird diversity was reduced by 35% and bird abundance by 41% (Banks and Bryant, 2007)\*. Birds and other wildlife, even if they habituate to human presence, perceive dogs as a potential predator and avoid areas where they are present. Needless expended energy leaves wildlife vulnerable to malnutrition and predation, more so for the young or weak.

There are already well-documented pet conflicts in the park including wildlife disturbance, mortality and injury from dogs both on and off-leash. Raccoon and dog altercations occur too regularly and waterfowl and squirrels have been killed or injured by dogs. The official designation of an off-leash area would compound these issues.

While not perfect due to its proximity to

nearby wetlands and the intertidal zone, the proposed off-leash area in neighbouring Devonian Park is deemed by SPES to be the only cautiously accepted option. This uniform lawn between the seawall and the cycling path across the inlet from the Rowing Club provides low habitat value for native wildlife. To mitigate off-leash concerns, SPES counsels:

- No net loss of habitat: No more natural areas in Stanley Park should be converted for recreational purposes to the detriment of wildlife habitat.
- Fencing: All dog off-leash areas should be adequately fenced to reduce the amount of 'spill over' into non-designated areas. Signage alone has not proven effective for creating boundaries in most existing dog off-leash areas.

That ecological opinion held the day: The Stanley Park location was dropped in favour of a portion of Devonian Park.

Dogs are our charges. Letting them charge off into the woods opens them up to a world of delightful scents. It also, however, takes them into a world of pathogens such as parvovirus, keds, muscle cysts, leishmaniasis, tapeworms, ticks and fleas. Many of these can be transferred through the scat dogs find and leave in the forest. Beyond pathogens, encounters with coyotes and raccoons can leave a dog badly injured or dead.

\*Banks, P.B. and J.V. Bryant. 2007. Four-legged friend or foe? Dog walking displaces native birds from natural areas. *Biol. Lett.* 3(6): 611-613.

## Environmental Lesson Plans Available for all of BC

Looking for a fun, innovative way to bring excitement to your science class? With so much going on in our natural environment, how do you focus it all into an easy to teach format? Simple. With the Stanley Park Ecology Society's Urban Stewards teacher resource! This wonderfully designed and easy to use CD-ROM resource is based around a 12-unit lesson series that is approved and recommended by the BC Ministry of Education. This all-in-one environmental science resource includes ready to use lesson plans, visuals, activities and hand outs on climate change, ecosystems, biodiversity and sustainability. Each lesson is directly linked to the prescribed learning outcomes for grades 4 to 7 science. This teacher resource is available exclusively from the Stanley Park Ecology Society at the tax-inclusive price of \$25! Email or call for more information or to get your own copy of this exceptional resource that will allow you and your class to explore the wonders of our natural world and the role we all play in it!

Contact: School Programs 604.257.6907 / [school@stanleyparkecology.ca](mailto:school@stanleyparkecology.ca)

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# The Climate Change Conundrum

Dan Chalmers  
Communications Systems Developer

In this, the Year of Global Biodiversity, climate change remains a much debated conundrum around which solid consensus eludes us. Fact merges with fiction, theories are displaced and re-emerge, policies are discredited and then re-visited. We are living in an age of global uncertainty.

What cannot be denied, however, is that changes to the integrity of ecosystems are occurring at a far greater rate than ever witnessed before. Impacts are felt globally with rising sea levels and temperatures, decreasing ice cover, changing water patterns, rampant wildfires and insect outbreaks. Such upheavals have vast impacts on the phenology, migration, reproduction, dormancy and range of species. Drivers of climate change are truly global; even dedicated action at the regional scale has limited prospects for ameliorating regional-scale impacts. Natural forcing factors combine with progressively more powerful human factors to produce climactic rates of change.

Are we seeing such changes right before our eyes here in Stanley Park? Peering out of the SPES office windows in the Park in late January, there were signs that Spring had come early. It was an unseasonal 12 degrees. Should that red-winged blackbird be here already? Why were we seeing blossoms emerging and sustaining in mid January? What EXACTLY is going on, and how are these changes affecting the flora and fauna of Stanley Park?



Are the unusually high concentrations of pine siskins in Stanley Park linked to unseasonal early catkin bloomings? Photo by: Robyn Worcester

Stanley Park lies within a Coastal Western Hemlock zone characterized by high precipitation, rich biodiversity and abundant wildlife. Stark effects of climate change are expected to be seen across the Lower Mainland with increasing temperatures and a consequent shift from hemlock to coastal Douglas-fir, with attendant changes in the basic natural ecosystems. As always in nature, certain species benefit whilst others decline. Species with smaller populations, limited ranges and a highly specialized lifestyle, such as the tailed frog or the Pacific water shrew have lower chances of survival, especially if they cannot adapt to rapid, unnatural changes or migrate to still-appropriate habitats. The basic consensus is that with a drying-out and warming-up trend, birds and ungulates will gain whereas fish and water-based species will lose (Taylor, 2004). The latter are more intensely affected by river flow, water level and temperature changes, as well as human-forced factors such as degraded water quality and habitat and pollutants.

It is difficult to culminate any climate change article on a positive note. Rapid solutions are required from the top to

bottom; from a consistent behavioural shift on a personal level, to local actions to stronger leadership in the corridors of planning power. But with increased recognition of the value of biodiversity, a building of knowledge through monitoring and education, and constant action in the form of habitat restoration, protection and invasive species removal, SPES works hard to mitigate against climate change and its effects. The impact of how we as humans decide to act, with shared responsibility or in divisive isolation, will be borne out very soon.

For more information on how you can make a positive difference, visit the following sources:

- [www.davidsuzuki.org/Take\\_Action/](http://www.davidsuzuki.org/Take_Action/)
- [www.climateactionnetwork.ca/](http://www.climateactionnetwork.ca/)
- [www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/campaigns/climate-and-energy](http://www.greenpeace.org/canada/en/campaigns/climate-and-energy)

Reference.

Taylor, B (2004), "Climate trends in BC, Canada and the World", 16th Int'l conference, Society for Ecological Restoration, August 24-26, 2004 Victoria, Canada

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## STANLEY PARK ECOLOGY SOCIETY

...promotes awareness of and respect for the natural world by providing a leadership role in the stewardship of Stanley Park through collaborative initiatives in education, research and conservation.

### SPES Members Enjoy:

- Discounts on Discovery Walks, hikes, Family Programs and Events
- Seasonal activities calendar and our quarterly newsletter
- Special perks and promotions from community partners
- Free preview nights on Christmas Bright Nights and the Halloween Ghost Train

### 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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