

**Credits:** Paul Colangelo, Jessie Hannigan, Martin Passchier

## Winter 2009/10 Issue

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## Competition Amongst the Locals

Patricia Thomson , *Executive Director*

**Stanley Park is a near-island surrounded by cities and seas. Immigration for most flightless animals that would inhabit the hollows and heights of this pampered parkland is not an easily accomplished act. Finding a fit amidst bike trails, invasive alien species, and a highway bisecting the bowers, is a daily competition for urban wildlife.**

The Canadian icon, a single sleek beaver (*Castor canadensis*) ripples the shallows of Beaver Lake in the early dusk and dawn hours. It arrived in Stanley Park about two years ago, likely having followed north shore rivers downstream to Burrard Inlet, along the coastal shorelines, and ultimately up the fragrant freshwater of Stanley Park's north-flowing creek. Following in the historic webbed tracks of its forebears (almost 60 years earlier), it promptly set about raising a mud and stick lodge in the midst of the pond and blocking the outflows from the lake. In so doing, the beaver has been working

water lilies and other invasive tubers into its constructions, accomplishing a manner of dredging that has long been needed for this little infilling lake. As it works to deepen its adopted lake, this beaver competes with Park staff who regularly re-open the mud dams in order to preserve the local landscape from flooding. In addition, staff are wary that the beaver has been gnawing down delectable deciduous trees – the bark and young limbs are a preferred source of food for this buck-toothed vegetarian.

continued on page 2...



**Venue Rental facilities available**  
 on the second floor of the historic Stanley Park Dining Pavilion.

For events, meetings, workshops, parties, and presentations within the heart of Stanley Park!

Downtown Vancouver is only minutes away & Stanley Park is right outside the door.

For more information, call  
 (604) 257-6908



## Bright Nights

**Stanley Park Yuletide Train**

Nov.27 - Jan 2, 3 - 10 pm

For more info, see page 5

**SPES Members ride free Nov 30, Dec 1, 2**

...continued from cover.

The **Canada goose** (*Branta canadensis*) prefers to pluck the Park's manicured meadows. On lawns and even green roofs, it has a veritable feast at its feet, pruning grasses, roots, young sprouts at a rate that can be measured in a reputed 2 lbs of poo per day. These geese - famous for their monogamous mate-loyalty - have a competition for serenity: During their breeding season, to avoid the plethora of people and pooches that prance through the park, many have moved away from traditional stream-side reed beds in favour of nesting on the podium heights of topped trees and rooftops. At an earlier Olympics, Canadian athletes sported this stately waterfowl on their uniforms, a tribute to the birds' team cooperation during high spring and autumn migrations - up to 1,000 km per day! Canada geese fly in a "V" formation, it is believed, for the "drafting" effect: Each follower goose, like a cyclist in a race, benefits from the air currents cut by the leader, thereby expending less energy on the wing.

**Great blue herons** (*Ardea herodias*) can be found on the same shorelines as the Canada goose. They exhibit lightning reflexes as well as statuesque stealth to snag minnows and bottom fish with their javelin-sharp beaks, flipping their catches slickly down their sinewy necks. During the breeding months between March and July, parents of voracious chicks make many trips per day between their hunting grounds and their compact colonies of sometimes hundreds of twig nests high in groves



Credits: Martin Passchier, Robyn Worcester

of trees. Such a grove of some 25 trees is on the manicured perimeter of Stanley Park. As early as January, the great blue herons re-stake their boughs above Beach Avenue in a clacking chaos of new mating and chick rearing. In the grand diversity of life strategies, they return year after year to a region rife with brave opponents: Among other predators, they are a temptation for eagles and raccoons, creatures that also range from water shallows to arbour heights:

**The raccoon** (*Procyon lotor*) is a competitor of clever proportions. Opportunistic and adaptable, this ring-tailed animal often patters through Stanley Park by day, rather than traditionally by cover of night. After all, despite the park's No Feeding Wildlife Bylaws, it can flaunt its cute factor in hopes of a fast unhealthy hand-out from visitors. What the raccoon should be eating is fish, protein-rich frogs, even Canada goose eggs along the shared shallow waterways. Raccoons have recently begun to prey

upon the herons, as well. Bravely confronting the sharp beaks of the parents high in the tree tops, these marauders grab eggs and even large chicks.

**Bald eagles** (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*) congregate with herons and raccoons by aquatic environments. The talons of these weighty birds are strong enough to snatch salmon from deeper ocean waters, ducks and gulls closer to shore, and carrion from beaches. As the top ranked predator of Stanley Park, eagles will also take heron chicks: Within the park there are four life-long pairs of eagles, and each guards its own territory against each other and transient birds of its own kind. In a strange strategic twist, the heron colony, being in close proximity to these territorial eagle pairs, thus has limited the number of potential eagle predations. At least for the herons, it would seem that, in the competition for survival, this is one arena in which it doesn't pay to be a stand-out.

### Did You Know?

Beyond their trademark "honk", there is evidence that Canada geese may be one of the most talkative animals after humans. Goslings, or baby geese, begin communicating with their parents while still in the egg!

Raccoons have amazing dexterity and use their front paws to pry things open, turn knobs and handle objects. It is a myth, however, that they wash their food. The raccoon's English name comes from the Algonquian word arukan, meaning "he who scratches with his hand."

The bald eagle gets its name from an old English word, "balde" which means "white," not "hairless." When a bald eagle loses a feather on one wing, it will lose a feather on the other in order to keep its balance. Sometimes, their nests reach 3 m (10 ft) across and weigh as much as a tonne!

Herons choose a new mate each year. The female lays about three to five eggs, which she sits on at night. The male sits on them during the day. Most chicks die before their first birthday.



Photo: David Thomson

The sharp, ever-growing incisors of the beaver are capable of chiselling any tree up to 25 cm (10 in) in diameter in a matter of minutes

# Olympians of Another Class

**Greg Ferguson**

*Stewardship Programs Coordinator*

In 2010, Vancouver hosts the 21st Winter Olympics. Over 5,500 Olympians from over eighty countries will participate. They will come from countries as far away as Romania, China, and Argentina. Their goal is to compete against other Olympians, including our native Canadians, for the right to be the strongest, fastest, and best in the world.

You may be surprised to hear that in Vancouver and other parts of Canada there has been a different competition of Olympic proportions underway for over 100 years. Like Olympians, these competitors have arrived from other continents, as far as Asia, Europe, and Africa. Their goal is not medals, but resources, such as food, space, and water



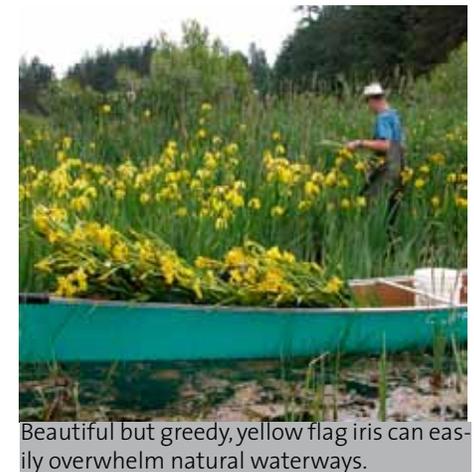
The weight of invasive English ivy can pull over trees

- in essence, survival. These non-native invertebrates, plants, and animals have been brought here by people either deliberately or accidentally. Their biological strengths - growing fast, reproducing rapidly, spreading quickly, and using up valuable resources, along with a lack of natural controls on their populations (e.g. climate, predation) - make them extreme competitors for our own native species. The common term used for such 'Olympians' is non-native - even alien - invasive species.

On a local and global level, non-native species are one of the greatest threats to biodiversity in our world today. If left unchecked, invasive species will out-compete native species for resources and degrade an area's natural habitat.

Here in Stanley Park we have more than 45 of these invasive species. Their names often flag them as foreign to this soil: Examples include Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), European starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), and American bullfrog (*Rana catesbeiana*).

Since 2004, SPES has been working with the Vancouver Park Board and community members to remove invasive plant species from Stanley Park, and to educate individuals about these unwanted competitors. We also strive to increase public awareness of ways to prevent the spread of invasive species and our own native organisms abroad. We are notably grateful to HSBC, the world's local bank, which has been SPES' major supporter of invasive species control and conservation programs in 2009.



Beautiful but greedy, yellow flag iris can easily overwhelm natural waterways.



An adult bullfrog can eat even a duckling. Photo By: Robyn Worcester

## The Way we Talk

**Dan Chalmers**

*Communication Systems Developer*

We are all communicators. We talk, listen and share, as we always have and always will. Yet how we interact and the tools we use are changing daily. Hourly, 25 million tweets are posted daily. 20 hours of YouTube video are uploaded every hour. News is upon us and gone before we know it. This equates to a barrage of content and a bombardment of filtering both for the producer and consumer. We are boxed, listed and categorized.

Here at the Ecology Society we occupy a unique position in the communication and education worlds. We upload Facebook, Twitter and YouTube content, bouncing events, notices, news and images across the Park and around the world. Yet we remain beautifully rooted in the realities of the natural world around us. We update Twitter lists and streamline online fundraising strategies. Meanwhile our Conservation and Stewardship educators tramp around the office with groups of school children in rubber boots and full raingear, carrying kitchen sieves with which to clean Mason bees, spades to up /root invasive species and sheets to record new bird arrival counts.

This is the modern world we inhabit, and how we straddle these apparently divergent realms defines us as people, and the Society as an organization. Technology leads us in new and increasingly diffuse directions. We can embrace these developments or we can struggle against them. Social media marketing provide us with unique and vital channels of communication to connect, share and listen with our members, partners and clients, as well as fundraise and strategize.

At the Ecology Society we venture forth into both these worlds with a sense of wonderment and awe.

Share these adventures with us:

Facebook: Stanley Park Ecology Society

Twitter: StanleyPkEcoSoc.

# Winter 2009 nature programs

## **It's Games Time ... & We've Got Our Game On!**

SPES WELCOMES YOU TO A  
WORLD OF NATURE!

During the Olympics, take an Eco  
Walk on the wild side, through  
Wetlands, Forests & Beaches!

Guided by a SPES Environmental  
Educator, these 1.5 hour walks leave  
from the Stanley Park  
Information Booth.

**10:30 am & 1:30 pm**  
**February 17, 18, 19 & 20**  
**and 24, 25, 26 & 27**

Also check out our regular Sunday  
Discovery Walks!

Phone Public Programs at  
604-718-6522 for more  
information.

[www.stanleyparkecology.ca](http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca)



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

Sat, Dec 5	<b>The Young Naturalists' Club of Stanley Park (see sidebar)</b>
Sun, Dec 6 1-3 pm	<b>The Edge of Winter</b> Looking for ideas on how to get through the winter? Want to find out how to avoid the mid-winter blahs naturally? Join naturalist Murray Lashmar and discover how other animals and plants do it.
Sun, Dec 13 1-3 pm	<b>The World of the Skwxwumesh Peoples</b> Join artist and naturalist, T'Uy"Tanat – Cease Wyss – who will share her knowledge of traditional plant foods, medicines, and stories of the local indigenous peoples who continue to dialogue with this forest.
Sun, Dec 20 1-3 pm	<b>Celebrate the Solstice!</b> 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.
	<b>The Young Naturalists' Club of Stanley Park (see sidebar)</b> No January Meeting: Next Meeting February 6
Sun, Jan 17 1-3 pm	<b>Wild at Art!</b> 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, Jan 31 9-11 am	<b>Birds of a Feather!</b> Want to know your birds? Join naturalist and expert bird watcher Cathy Aitchison for this two-hour walk exploring Stanley Park's varied and beautiful bird life. Admission by donation
Sat, Feb 6	<b>The Young Naturalists' Club of Stanley Park (see sidebar)</b>
Sun, Feb 14 1-3 pm	<b>Nature and the Single Girl! (And Guy)</b> Think your partner isn't romantic? Think everyone is in a couple but you? We will take a look at both nature's most romantic creatures and biggest scallywags! Come on this walk through the park and find out about the courting and mating habits of the Stanley Park's creatures.
Sun, Feb 28 9-11 am	<b>Birds of a Feather!</b> Join naturalist and expert bird watcher Cathy Aitchison for a two-hour walk exploring Stanley Park's varied and beautiful bird life. Admission by donation.
Sat, Mar 6	<b>The Young Naturalists' Club of Stanley Park (see sidebar)</b>

# STANLEY PARK ECOLOGY SOCIETY

Connecting People With Nature



Participants of all ages can connect with nature during SPES programs.

Sun, Mar 14 1-3 pm **Special Places: Environmentally Sensitive Areas of Stanley Park**  
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, many 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 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. Admission by donation.

Sun, Apr 4 1-3 pm **Knock, knock! Who’s there? Biodiversity and Stanley Park**  
How many creatures does it take to make an ecosystem? Biodiversity is the variety of flora and fauna found in an ecosystem. Is it important? If so, why? On this walk, the park is our classroom as we wander along exploring the state of its biodiversity and discussing the issue in a global context.

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

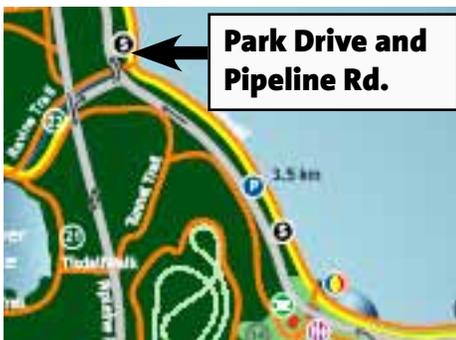
## The Young Naturalists’ Club of Stanley Park

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

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

Call 604-718-6522 for more information or to sign up. Drop in and check us out!

\* Please note: The Young Naturalists’ Club will not be meeting in January. It will resume the first Saturday of February.



**Park Drive and Pipeline Rd.**



**Lost Lagoon Nature House**

## Bright Nights in Stanley Park



### Yuletide Train at the Stanley Park Miniature Railway

Nov 27, 2009 - Jan 2, 2010  
3 - 10pm daily  
(closed Christmas Day, Dec. 25)

The Vancouver Park Board and the BC Professional Fire Fighters’ Burn Fund have together created nights of magic and illumination in the middle of wondrous Stanley Park.

Adults: \$8.00  
Discount: \$5.00 (children, seniors)

Bright Nights Info Line: 604-257-8351

Call 604-280-4444 or visit [www.ticketmaster.ca](http://www.ticketmaster.ca) for advance tickets



Getting up close and personal, a Young Naturalist investigates a mason bee.

# Stanley Park: A History of Nature and Culture

By Sean Kheraj

Department of History  
University of British Columbia

As Vancouver enters the world's gaze during the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games, visitors to the city will, no doubt, tour our landmark urban park. Stanley Park is synonymous with Vancouver, like Central Park to New York City or Golden Gate Park to San Francisco. Millions of tourists pass through the park every year to admire the spectacle of many hectares of dense forest on the doorstep of one of Canada's largest metropolises.

While the natural splendour of the park is remarkable and often leaves visitors with the impression that they have witnessed a sample of undisturbed British Columbian wilderness, the forest of Stanley Park disguises a rich, complex history of change and disturbance. The landscape of Stanley Park is a dynamic hybrid of nature and culture, and its history brilliantly demonstrates this interdependence between people and their environments.

Human beings have lived on the peninsula and interacted with the natural environment that forms Stanley Park for millennia. Three separate local First Nations lay claim to Stanley Park as ancestral land and archaeological evidence suggests a human presence on this peninsula dating back more than 3,000 years. Some of the trees and stumps within the park still bear evidence of human modifications that pre-date European colonization. Long before Spanish and British navigators charted the waters of Burrard Inlet in the mid-nineteenth century, the region's Aboriginal population inhabited the area for generations and had established village sites, known as Whoi Whoi and Chaythoos, on the Stanley Park peninsula.

Contact with European peoples transformed the human presence on the peninsula and further modified its ecology. Some colonists chose to marry into and live among the Aboriginal families, and forged new settlements at Brock-



Waste heaps of shells 5 feet deep and acres in breadth evidence thousands of years of aboriginal encampments. Credit: City of Vancouver Archives SGN 91, Charles S. Bailey

ton Point in the 1860s. These colonists brought with them the plants and animals of the Old World. Alien species of animals, including horses, cows, pigs, and chickens, joined their human owners as new residents of the peninsula. European peoples also introduced new industrial technologies and methods for exploiting natural resources, especially through lumbering. From the 1860s to the 1880s, Europeans selectively logged the Stanley Park peninsula, modestly transforming the landscape in previously unknown ways.

By the mid-1880s, with the anticipation of the completion of Canada's first transcontinental railway and increasing European resettlement of the land surrounding Burrard Inlet, the burgeoning new city of Vancouver decided to reserve the western peninsula of the municipality as an urban park. This decision to create Stanley Park did not eliminate the human presence from the peninsula, but in fact increased human interventions and interactions with its natural environment. The earliest park advocates sought to construct a space with a naturalistic appearance, but one that was a union of art and nature. The city and Park Board worked for decades to evict residents in order to reconstruct the landscape as a beautiful wilderness park. This, however, required active management and alteration of many of the messy natural characteristics of the landscape, including insect and disease ridden trees, muddy tidal flats at Coal

Harbour, and bothersome crows and owls.

This tidy condition, of course, has been subject to the capricious power of natural forces beyond the purview of human control, none more evident than the impact of violent windstorms on the landscape of Stanley Park in the twentieth century. Stanley Park has been ravaged on many occasions in its history by powerful windstorms that have left the forest in a tangle of fallen, broken, and uprooted trees, most recently in the winter of 2006-2007. Upon each such occasion, Vancouverites and their Park Board have worked to restore the landscape to its previous naturalistic appearance, as can be observed today.

The relentless, devastating winds that tore through Stanley Park just three years ago should remind us of the continued influence of both natural and cultural forces upon this dynamic landscape. As visitors to our city drive through the park and walk its trails, hopefully they will also learn something about the history of our interrelationship with this natural environment. Stanley Park's history very effectively demonstrates the social and biological interdependence of people and the natural environment. Perhaps by recognizing this interdependence in such a relatively small space as Stanley Park, we can envision a better way of living within a global environment.

# New In Town? Just Need To Get Off The Couch?

Check out this amazing 30minute walk by the wetlands and through the forests near the Stanley Park Nature House at Lost Lagoon.

Facing the Nature House, go left (east) along the trail around the Lagoon.



### Your First Stop:

#### Artificial Biofiltration Ponds

- Created in 2001 to combat the affects of over 70,000 vehicles a year travelling along the Causeway.
- Constructed wetlands reduce sediment, lead, phosphorus, and other metals by significant amounts - anywhere from 40-80% depending on the pollutant.

From the ponds, keep on the trail until the stairs going up to Lagoon Drive. Follow these steps, cross the road, and you will find yourself at the Tatlow Walk trail head.

On Tatlow & Lees Trails you will see:

- Stately examples of western hemlock, Douglas-fir and western redcedar trees
- Nurse stumps and logs that slowly decompose, turning into nutrient rich soil for new saplings, beginning the forest renewal cycle all over again. Unique to temperate rainforests.



Photos: Jessie Hannigan

On Cathedral Trail you will see:

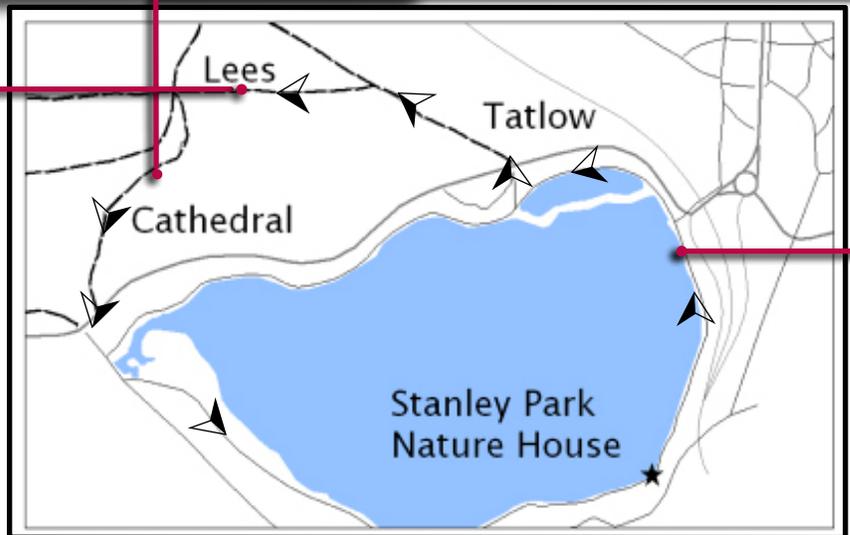
- The awesome effects of the 2006 hurricane force wind storms.
- Three years on, forest succession well illustrated with shrubs and new saplings well underway.
- Many active forest edge birds, such as chickadees, woodpeckers and wrens.

When you are finished Cathedral Trail, you will be back at Lost Lagoon. From there continue to Second Beach and the Inter-tidal Zone or head back to the Nature House.

This is but a taste of the many impressive trails found in the park. Drop by the Stanley Park Nature House to learn more.



**Interpretive signage along the way tells a broad story**



The Nature House is located at the foot of Alberni Street on the southeast corner of Lost Lagoon, only minutes from Denman Street!

# THANKS TO OUR RECENT DONORS AND SPONSORS



Keith Lord Sports  
Foundation Fund  
held at the Vancouver  
Foundation



## Thanks Also To Recent Donors:

Ethical Bean, lululemon athletica, Kruger Products, Daniel Group, Super Natural Films, Bobs and Lolo, Victor Cottingham, Kiwano Marketing, Red Case Creative, Urban Eden Design, Dale Collin Essar, Joslin Kobylka, Ray McNabb, Wanda and James Pickell, Dan Phelps, Nancy Henderson, Jania Chilima, Gwyneth Foulds, Louise Irwin



*Thank you for supporting my love of nature!*

**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.stanleyparkecolgy.ca](http://www.stanleyparkecolgy.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.

## YES! I Want To Contribute!

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_  
Postal Code \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

All information will be kept confidential according to the Personal Information Protection Act.

### Payment Method

Cheque  Visa  Mastercard

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_  
Expiry Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Cardholder \_\_\_\_\_

Cheques are payable to:  
Stanley Park Ecology Society  
PO Box 5167  
Vancouver, B.C. V6B 4B2 Canada

### I Want to Become A Member

Family (\$40)  Individual (\$20)  
 Junior <19 (\$15)  Senior/Volunteer (\$15)  
 Renewal membership  
 Send newsletter by e-mail

### My Gift Is Enclosed

\$20  \$50  \$100  \$\_\_\_\_\_

### I Want to Make A Monthly Donation

I Authorize the following monthly credit card donation to the Stanley Park Ecology Society:

\$10  \$15  \$25  \$\_\_\_\_\_

SPES is a registered charity #11916 6890 RR0001. Charitable Tax Receipts issued for donations of \$30 or more

## STANLEY PARK ECOLOGY SOCIETY

### OUR PURPOSE

Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES) 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 & 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

### Contact Us

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Nature House: 604-257-8544