



Look out above you!

Vancouver's Bald Eagle Population Reaches New Heights

by Robert Boelens, Urban Wildlife Program Manager

Traditionally the image of a soaring bald eagle has been one we associate with pure wilderness. We imagine eagles in mountain ranges, along open coastlines, over still-water lakes or salmon-rich rivers. Studies from the 1960's suggest there were no more than 2 nesting pairs in the City of

Vancouver at that time; one in Stanley Park and the other near UBC. Forty years later, Bald Eagles are becoming an increasingly common part of Vancouver's skyline. They have been seen regularly flying around and over Stanley Park's shorelines and forests, as well as perched on branches and

flying across our fields of vision. But over the last few years they have become increasingly urban around the Lower Mainland, with one pair regularly perching on a neighbourhood church in East Vancouver and another parading up and down the skies of False Creek to and from Granville Island.



Photo: Stephen Hawkins

SPES volunteers monitored six Bald Eagle nests in the City of Vancouver in 2004, four of which were in Stanley Park. Three of the nests in the park are in locations where one would expect to find them, at the top of a conifer tree, in a

continued...

2004 THE YEAR OF THE HERON

2004 was the most productive year ever recorded at a Stanley Park heronry. There were more chicks in more nests, in more trees than ever previously noted. This is even more remarkable considering the unusual proximity of this heronry to human activity. The Stanley Park Ecology Society documented 151 chicks fledging from 60 nests in 10 trees adjacent to the Vancouver Park Board offices at 2099 Beach Avenue. Another 8 nests were unobserved due to leaf growth. Although this year was a successful one for Great Blue Herons in Stanley Park, the future of this provincially designated "species at risk" remains uncertain. Future heronry growth or reduction is unpredictable. For a SPES 2004 Heronry Study Report please contact 604-681-9453 or [e-mail coyotes@stanleyparkecology.ca](mailto:coyotes@stanleyparkecology.ca)

thickly forested section of the park. An eaglet fledged from each of two of these nests, while the third nest was primarily an eagle operated construction zone. The adult pair in the third nest spent the nesting season building a new nest in close proximity to their old one. They were often observed carrying branches from the nest they were dismantling in a totally exposed snag to their new nest in a very healthy, sheltered tree.

The average eagle nest can easily reach 2.5 meters in diameter and 200 kilograms in weight. The fourth nest in Stanley Park is in an area which has thousands of pedestrians each summer day and overlooks the Malkin Bowl stage which hosts theatre productions and music concerts. Even more surprising is the success of this nest in 2004 - 2 eaglets successfully fledged, which is double the average successful eagle clutch size.

The two nests outside of Stanley Park are in areas not automatically associated with eagles. One nest is in

a recreational park between a residential and an industrial area and the other overhangs a 4-way stop in a beach-side parking lot. Both of these nests are in deciduous trees and are



Juvenile Bald Eagle Photo: Peter Woods

much lower in the trees than a stereotypical eagle nest. Neither produced an eaglet in 2004.

Perhaps our most interesting eagle observation was their urbanized diet.

Judging from pellets, feathers and bones found under each of the nests, these eagles are feeding themselves and their young a predominantly bird-based diet, with rock doves (pigeon), crows and gulls comprising the majority of the nesting period meals. Fish bones were also found but on a much smaller and infrequent scale.

Bald eagles are still heard and seen in and around city limits during the winter months albeit with much less frequency. The easiest way to see an eagle this winter is to see 3,000 of them at their winter feeding ground in Squamish.

The eagles are likely to return to their nests in late February or March. Your contributions to the 2005 expanded SPES study as a monitor are most welcome. Please contact **604.681.9453** or **coyotes@stanleyparkecolgy.ca** for details on how you can help and enjoy the study of a creature that may one day be a symbol of pure urban wilderness.

CHANGING OF THE GUARD - A NEW FACE AS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In September we welcomed Patricia Thomson onboard as Executive Director, receiving the baton from Alix Mathias who, after three strong years with the Ecology Society, is returning to her roots in the Personal Wellness field. We thank Alix for her tremendous contributions to SPES, and wish her all success in future chapters.

Patricia's enthusiasm for the mission of SPES comes from over twenty years of experience in ecology and nature interpretation, as well as a solid foundation in business and the non-profit sector. She worked for a decade with BC Parks and Parks Canada, and

almost as long for the Vancouver Aquarium Education department. Since the late 1990's she has been the Director of Operations and Finance for The River League, a conservation-mandated eco-tourism company working to protect watersheds at risk.

Patricia loves to network both locally and globally, creating partnerships to mutually benefit nature and people. She has lived in Vancouver's west end for ten years, regularly enjoying Stanley Park's trails and seawall. Her passions include guiding wilderness river raft expeditions, camping, and taking her nieces on bird-watching walks.

COMFY GATHERING SPACE FOR RENT

Meetings
Birthdays

Yoga Classes
Parties

Looking for a place to meet? We have an **80-square-metre** sunny room on the 2nd floor of the classic Stanley Park Dining Pavilion near the Rose Gardens and Malkin Bowl.

100% of your rental fee for this **35-person capacity** room goes to the Stanley Park Ecology Society to help us to connect people with nature.

The rate is \$150 for corporate and \$100 for non-profit or personal. 1/2 days are 1/2 the cost

604.257.6908 info@stanleyparkecolgy.ca

THIS WORK IS FOR THE BIRDS!

Patricia Thomson, Executive Director

The sparrows and crows have a better opportunity than we do to easily see and visit the newest native plant garden in Stanley Park. Like a leafy toupee on the top of the Cob Earthen Architecture building, the "Living Roof" is now green and growing. In early October two tons of fine pumice and mushroom organics were layered strategically on top of a specialized waterproof roof membrane. Two weeks later, designers and students of BCIT's Green Roof Research Facility volunteered a wet Sunday to hand-plant over six hundred native plants supplied by local nurseries.

As it has been during all chapters of building the eco-friendly "Cob" popcorn stand, passers-by were keenly interested to 'get the scoop' on the benefits of sustainable building options: Living Roofs recreate ecological space otherwise removed by the footprint of the building. Since rainwater is partially captured by the growing medium, foliage and roots, such roofs also greatly reduce the harsh impact of storm-water runoff -



Photo: Kristi Tatebe

a challenge in urban settings. They may effectively moderate temperatures for the building as soil and vegetation absorbs excess heat during the day, and retains it during cool nights. The plants also absorb and retain carbon, and thus contribute as a carbon 'sink'. And, of course, Living Roofs have unique aesthetic value.

It will take the better part of a year for the seedlings and bulbs to fully establish on the SPES Cob roof. By then it will be a self-sustaining garden of coastal strawberries, camas lilies, nodding onion, yellow-flowered stonecrops, and Elijah's blue fescue. No need for grazing goats, this will remain a 'field for feathered friends'.

Come check it out, in the plaza of the Miniature Train and Children's Farmyard.

Special thanks to the many people who donated individual time and/or product:

Structural design: Dan Sundvick, P.Eng, BCIT Architectural and Building Engineering Technology

Welding details: Simmah Peterson, BCIT Welding

Roof Membrane, Product and installation: Terry Kellog, TEK Roofing

Growing Medium: Verdir Systems Inc.

Misc. Roof products and materials: BCIT Green Roof Research Program

Plant species selection and layout: Goya Nygan Landscape Architect

Plant donation: Nick Page (Raincoast Applied Ecology), Goya Nygan, Nats Nursery, BCIT Green Roof Research Program

Planting: BCIT Architectural and Building Engineering Technology Students

Eco Action - Shrinking our Ecological Footprint



Your ecological footprint is much bigger than the footprint that you make with your foot. An ecological footprint is how much space and resources you impact to survive.

You might think that the amount of land you need only includes where you live, where you play, and where you go to school. But it really is much bigger, because it includes the land where the food you eat is grown, where your garbage goes, and much, much more. Visit our website to discover the extent of your own Ecological Footprint: www.stanleyparkecology.ca - Fun and Games!

Patricia's Favourite Tip to Lessen an Ecological Footprint

"Baking soda is the best - and almost only - cleaning product I use. Nothing beats it for wiping out stubborn tea stains from favourite mugs. It is a healthy substitute for toothpaste. And cleaning the tub with baking soda is not only easy to do, it is fine for the environment, and inexpensive to boot!"

Source: http://www.scifest.org.za/2004/programme/ex_ground_floor.html

YOUR GUIDE TO

winter nature programs



www.stanleyparkecology.ca

DISCOVERY WALKS

Venture out into Stanley Park on a two-hour guided walking tour with a naturalist or local expert. Walk topics and leaders vary. Leave from the Nature House every Sunday at 1 pm. RAIN OR SHINE! \$8 public, \$5 members.

DEC 5 The Edge of Winter Looking for ideas on how to get through the winter? Join naturalist Murray Lashmar and find out how other animals and plants do it.

DEC 19 Winter Solstice Walk Join us on this annual celebration! Jennifer Swanston will explore the history and traditions of midwinter festivals, and discuss the lore behind some of the plants and decorations that have made their way into our seasonal celebrations. Hot drinks will be served during the walk.

JAN 9 Recipe for a Forest Take six conifers, add deciduous trees to taste and blend in shrubs, herbs and animals. Stir well. Join naturalist Murray Lashmar and find out the secret ingredients for creating a forest.

JAN 23 Birds on Vacation Dozens of bird species spend their winter in, or along the shores of, Stanley Park. Join naturalist and photographer Danny Catt for an exploration of three of Stanley Park's habitats (ocean, lagoon and forest) to search for their winter avian inhabitants. Bring comfortable walking shoes, binoculars and a bird field guide of your choice.

FEB 6 World Wetlands Day Walk Naturalist and photographer Peter Woods will take you to the Beaver Creek watershed from top to bottom - from estuary to riparian forest, freshwater

marsh, and bog. Along the way we'll examine the past, present, and future of wetland ecosystems and look at the factors re-shaping these landscapes.

FEB 13 Ducks in Love-Valentine's Special Unlike most other bird species, ducks start their courtship now, so they're all in fine new plumage. This makes it easy to identify the many species that are winter residents of Lost Lagoon and English Bay. Join birder Cathy Aitchison on an easy walk to practice your identification skills on ducks and other waterfowl.

FEB 20 Natural Heritage Day Walk Naturalist and artist Kirsty Robbins takes you on a walk that will focus on the theme of sustainability and its connections to the present and future preservation of our natural heritage. Stanley Park's unique diversity of ecosystems will allow us to explore many fascinating natural examples of sustainability. Develop an understanding of what sustainability is and why it is so important. This will be contrasted with a look at the disparity related to humanity's unsustainable practices and the effects

we have on nature: habitat loss, species extinction and pollution. We will conclude by looking at simple sustainable choices we can all make both at home and at work to help preserve our precious natural heritage.

MAR 6 The Soil of Transition Renowned botanist Terry Taylor will take you on a trip to the forest to understand what is taking place in the soil between winter and spring. Terry will also show how the fungi, bacteria, seeds and roots prepare the forest for the spring and how soil is made by the actions of thousands of micro-organisms recycling vegetation and woody debris.

NATURE HOUSE WINTER HOURS OF OPERATION Saturday and Sunday 9:30am to 4:30pm



Photo: Phillip Robbins

winter nature programs



SPECIAL EVENTS

BIRDING IN STANLEY PARK

The last Sunday of every month at 9am
DEC 26 JAN 30 FEB 27

Join naturalist and photographer Peter Woods for a 2-hour tour in Stanley Park to identify migratory and resident birds and learn bird watching skills. Meet at the Nature House.

By donation.

DROP-IN TOURS

The Women of Stanley Park:1850-1914

The first Saturday of every month 10am
DEC 4 JAN 8 FEB 5

In this 2-hour tour Leader Jolene Cumming explores the lives of the famous and the forgotten women of Stanley Park who either lived in or visited the park in this time period including women of diverse heritage. Meet at the Nature House.

\$10 public, \$8 members/seniors/students

DISCOVER THE WILD SIDE OF STANLEY PARK: CUSTOM TOURS

We'll design a customized nature walk or historical tour for your group

JUST ASK US!

Bookings: 604.718.6522



NATURE STORY & CRAFT

Nature games, stories and crafts for 3- to 6-year-olds. A fun way to learn about local plants and animals! First and third Saturday of each month at 11 am at the Nature House. \$5 per child, \$2 per member; parents no charge.

DEC 4 Sensational Snowflakes Falling from the sky no two snowflakes are alike. Come learn all about these frozen marvels and take home your own snowflake ornament!

DEC 18 Xmas Trees What do you really know about them? Learn the secrets of evergreen trees and make your own X-mas tree craft.

JAN 15 What happens to fish when the water is frozen? Join our team to make a great fish craft and find out this nature mystery.

FEB 5 Ribbit! Ribbit! I have sticky toes to help me climb trees and I change colour to protect myself from predators: who am I? Come learn about this native amphibian!

FEB 19 Wet Wetlands! What makes wetlands so important to wildlife? Who lives in the wetland in Stanley Park? Make a craft with your favourite wetland animal or plant.

MAR 5 Lovely Ladybugs It is the time of year to come out of hibernation and lady bugs are no exception! Find out why they have those black dots. Head home with a spotted craft of your own!

CREATURES OF THE NIGHT WALK

Our re-vamped Halloween Candlelight Walk was an absolute success this year. The program received very good reviews from the public.



Photo: Edward Park

Ultimately the success of the walk lay in the support provided by our Volunteers! By the table volunteers in registration and SPES promotion; by the sweepers in lighting the candles and in managing the group during the walks; by the promoters drawing people to our walks; by the actors who brilliantly performed the animal roles; by the security volunteers who guarded the actors in the midst of the dark forest, and by our committed and knowledgeable walk leaders Robyn Worcester (Eco Ranger Coordinator 2004), and Andrew Scott (long-time Walk Leader). So don't miss our 2005 Creatures of the Night Walk with many more surprises to come!

BRIGHT NIGHTS XMAS TRAIN SPES MEMBERS NIGHTS

SPES Members and their immediate family (max 4) ride free on the 3 Preview Nights of the Bright Nights Miniature Railway Holiday Event at Stanley Park.

Dates: Mon Dec 6, Tue Dec 7 & Wed Dec 8, 2004

Time: 3:00-10:00pm

Location: Miniature Railway and Children's Farmyard Plaza

* **Bring membership card**

For more information call 604.257.6908 or info@stanleyparkecolgy.ca

STANLEY PARK

ECOLOGY SOCIETY

Connecting People with Nature

OUR PURPOSE

The Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES) is a community-based, not for profit organization dedicated to encouraging stewardship of our natural world through environmental education and action.

AS A MEMBER, YOU ENJOY

- Discounts on all Discovery Walks, Family Programs and Special Events.
- Our quarterly newsletter with nature updates and our seasonal activities calendar.
- Voting privileges to help SPES plan for the ecological stewardship of Stanley Park.
- Special promotions to help lighten your ecological footprint and stay connected to Stanley Park.

AS A MEMBER, YOU MAKE POSSIBLE

- School and Public Programs that enable more than 12,000 children and adults a year to discover nature through hands-on stewardship adventures.
- The operation of Vancouver's only ecological interpretive centre, the Lost Lagoon Nature House with more than 15,000 visitors per year.
- The monitoring of wildlife at risk, the restoration of habitat, and the conservation of biodiversity in Stanley Park.

CONTACT US

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YES, I WANT TO BECOME A FRIEND OF THE PARK!

ENCLOSED IS MY GIFT OF:

\$20 \$50 \$100 Other \$ _____

I WANT TO BECOME A MEMBER

Family \$30 Individual \$15 Senior/Vol \$10 Junior (<19) \$7.50

I WANT TO BECOME A MONTHLY DONOR

I authorize the Stanley Park Ecology Society to receive the following monthly donation:

\$10 \$15 \$25 Other \$ _____

PAYMENT METHOD

Cheque Visa Master Card

CARD NUMBER _____

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I understand that I can change or cancel my pledge at any time

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Please make cheques payable to:

Stanley Park Ecology Society, PO Box 5167 Vancouver BC Canada V6B 4B2

Charitable Tax Receipts issued for donations of \$30 or more

SPES is a registered charity: # 11916 6890 RR0001

DECEMBER 2004