

# Winter 2011/12 Newsletter



Photo courtesy of Gordon Price

## Legacy of a Windstorm-Five Years After

**December 15, 2006 was one dangerously dark and stormy night that forever changed Stanley Park and the Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES). This shocking event, described as the worst windstorm in 40 years, galvanized private citizens and three levels of government into action and resulted in a legacy that is both remarkable and positive.**

Stanley Park Ecology Society has grown and reached a new level of maturity as a result of the restoration work that followed. Being the only non-profit society empowered with a Joint Operating Agreement with the Vancouver Park Board to deliver terrestrial education and to work with volunteers in the Park, this challenging event had an immediate and profound impact upon the society.

With the loss of 10,000 trees and severe damage to 40 hectares (100 acres) of forest, SPES was relied upon heavily to help investigate, advise and conserve the integrity of the Park ecosystem. Given that Stanley Park is a heavily utilized natural resource in an urban area, this made the restoration a daunting prospect. Strong, reliable collaborators were needed.

SPES was called upon to provide activities for newly inspired volunteers to work on for restoration and conservation in the Park and this large influx of hundreds of new participants was a balancing act. This increased capacity and sense of urgency resulted in the official formation and staffing of SPES's Conservation Programs. It's a small irony that in November of that same year, staff and the Board of Directors had identified through a strategic planning process that SPES's conservation efforts in Stanley Park required significant expansion. The events that followed so quickly afterwards greatly accelerated progress in this area.

The windstorm significantly raised awareness about the lack of ecological information available about Stanley Park and SPES was called upon for input into the December 2007, Stanley Park Restoration Plan. The final plan with its emphasis on protection, restoration and enhancement motivated SPES to move forward even more collaborative research efforts.

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### Contact Us

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Conservation Progs:	604-681-7099
Co-Existing w/Coyotes:	604-681-9453
Stewardship Progs:	604-718-6547
Volunteers:	604-681-7099
Nature House:	604-257-8544

## cont'd

SPES staff worked with biologists on environmental monitoring that was focused on keeping habitats and wildlife protected throughout the restoration activities. SPES developed a series of foundational documents mapping environmentally sensitive areas, identifying species at risk and invasive species. These documents which are archived at [www.stanleyparkecology.ca/programs/conservation/](http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca/programs/conservation/) continue to be valuable sources of ecological data today.

SPES also played a leadership role to cover another need, a Park inventory using an ecosystems understanding of what was facing Stanley Park now and in the future. SPES's *State of the Park Report for the Ecological Integrity of Stanley Park* was the first of its kind. Released in 2010, it described the Park's major ecosystems and potential stressors acting on them. It also identified gaps in ecological knowledge. New awareness of Park conservation issues was created as a result of this report. For example, within the report, the current state of the aquatic ecosystems in the Park was ranked as "poor with a declining trend". This is mainly due to the rapid disappearance of Beaver Lake, poor water quality in Lost Lagoon and threats to intertidal environments

located in the heavily industrial Port of Vancouver.

The final legacy pieces fitting with a new found maturity for the society are twofold. One is the ongoing recognition of SPES by local media, the Vancouver Park Board, environmental organizations and the general public as an expert on ecology and wildlife issues in Stanley Park.

The second is the significant contribution the organization was able to make towards a new era of Park management. The 2011 Stanley Park Ecological Action Plan, with its welcome goals of repairing degraded ecosystems, further strengthens the already strong working relationship SPES has with the Vancouver Park Board. This will ensure that SPES continues to be a mission-focused society promoting respect for the natural world and playing a leadership role in the stewardship of Stanley Park.

Indeed, the restoration work five years after the windstorm is ongoing as illustrated by the wildlife and habitats still in need of careful monitoring. Furthermore, the valiant fight against invasive species also has SPES staff and volunteers engaging in "hands on" invasive removal work with dependable regularity.



### A New Sky-High Investment Opportunity!

#### Adopt an Eagle Nest

Every nest adopted for \$100 helps the Stanley Park Ecology Society, a leader in urban conservation, regularly monitor and protect nesting eagles in Vancouver.

This holiday season give a nest as a gift or treat yourself to a unique opportunity to play a leadership role in conserving the local habitat of these magnificent birds.

Your \$100 investment has a great return...

- Official certificate of adoption suitable for framing
- Important information about eagles and nests throughout Vancouver
- Charitable tax receipt
- Invitation for 4 to attend a special Discovery Walk to observe eagles in Stanley Park
- Annual status report on important conservation issues in nesting areas
- Family Discovery Walk Pass (for up to 4 attendees) to be used for a regularly scheduled walk of your choice

Adopting a nest is also a great corporate gift and has special symbolism for your American friends. Call today and adopt your eagle nest in time for holiday giving: Call **604-718-6523** or email [sponsors@stanleyparkecology.ca](mailto:sponsors@stanleyparkecology.ca).

# Forest Bathing: Your Vitamin “N” Prescription

Anita Georgy, Acting School Programs Manager

**Visualize walking through the forest on a cool day and seeing a deep, luxurious bathtub filled to the brim with steaming water. Looking around, you realize you are alone and this is an irresistible opportunity. You undress, step in and relax into the warmth. As you soak, notice the incredible freshness of the air, hear birds singing and trees rustling gently overhead. Wouldn't this make you feel blissfully peaceful and refreshed?**



Literally bathing in the forest would indeed be a memorable and rejuvenating experience. However, you don't need a bathtub full of water to immerse yourself in the forest and to absorb the associated health benefits. The concept of forest bathing originated in Japan in 1982. It is also referred to as **Shinrin-yoku** or 'taking in the atmosphere of the forest'. Forest bathing can be as simple as enjoying a leisurely walk or sitting quietly in a favourite spot.

Studies have found there are numerous therapeutic benefits when time is spent in a forest or natural setting. Benefits include everything from reduced stress (including lower blood pressure, lower pulse rate, greater parasympathetic nerve activity and lower sympathetic nerve activity) to a significant increase in natural killer cells activity (the cells that fight tumors). Such research findings are significant and are of particular interest to the Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES) with its Public and School Programs designed to connect people with nature.

The idea that time spent in nature is beneficial to human health is not limited to Japanese medical practice. The Canadian Child and Nature Alliance recently hosted a conference entitled 'Healthy by Nature'. The conference brought together a diverse range of people interested in the health-

ful benefits of nature. Urban Planners attended to discuss how neighbourhoods could be designed to provide easy access to natural settings for people of all ages. Researchers brought stories from across the world of how access to nature has positive benefits on emotional, psychological and physical health.

Doctors attending discussed ideas to encourage people to spend more time outdoors. One doctor joked about writing prescriptions for 'Vitamin N' (N for nature). Educators praised Richard Louv's work in highlighting the various impacts nature deficit disorder is having on children. Further discussion focused upon how to create more opportunities in the school system for children to access nature. Though approaching the topic from different perspectives, all of these professionals agreed that people cannot continue to separate themselves from the natural environment.

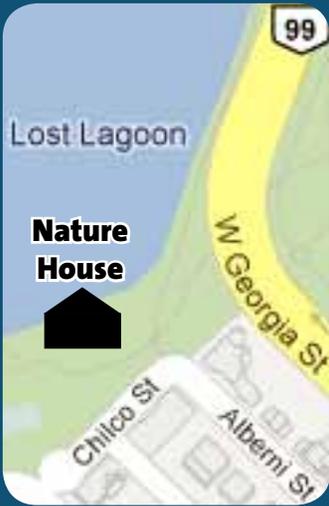
Having a wealth of scientific research quantifying the health benefits of spending time in nature reinforces what we all know intuitively. Because the human species evolved in nature, our senses are designed to detect subtle changes in our surroundings. We have the capacity to detect the change of seasons and weather, the availability of food sources and to perceive danger. Our bodies are built to move easily and confidently through forests. It is only in the last century that the majority of the world's population has become urbanized. Society has evolved to a point where North Americans now spend most of their time indoors. Both human intuition and medical research tell us that experiencing nature is critical for our well-being. SPES suggests there is no better place to take a rejuvenating forest bath than in the easily accessible and luscious temperate rainforest of Stanley Park.



## References

- 1) Park, Jin Bum et. al., 2008. The Physiological Effects of Shinrin-yoku (taking in the forest atmosphere or forest bathing): evidence from field experiments in 24 forests across Japan. *Environmental Health and Preventative Medicine*, 15 (1): 18-26.
- 2) Li, Qing, 2009. Effect of forest bathing trips on human immune function. *Environmental Health and Preventative Medicine*, 15 (1): 9-17.
- 3) Louv, Richard, 2008. *Last Child in the Woods: Saving Our Children From Nature Deficit Disorder*. New York: Algonquin Books.

# SPES Nature Programs



Nature Programs meet at the Stanley Park Nature House on Lost Lagoon

Open weekends  
10am - 4pm



## Birthday Parties

Educational, exciting and interactive birthday adventures for kids.

For more information  
604-718-6522

<p><b>The Edge of Winter</b> Looking for ideas on how to get through the winter? Join naturalist, Murray Lashmar for an enlightening look at how plants and wildlife adjust to survive the wet West Coast winter. Sun. Dec. 4, 1:30 - 3:30 pm</p>	<p><b>Celebrate Solstice</b> It's time to roast chestnuts and hang holly. Join naturalist, Jennifer Swanston to explore the history and customs of midwinter festivals. Learn about the traditions behind plants and decorations we associate with the holidays. Sun. Dec. 11, 1:30 - 3:30 pm</p>	<p><b>Young Naturalists' Club: Furry Creatures</b> Ever wish you had a thick coat of fur to keep you warm all winter? Kids aged 5 -14 can discover the incredible furry creatures of Stanley Park. For more information, email <a href="mailto:ync@stanleyparkecolgy.ca">ync@stanleyparkecolgy.ca</a> Sat. Jan. 7, 10 am -12 noon</p>
	<p><b>Rascally Raccoons</b> Always ready to lend a helping paw to finishing off your snack, everyone's favourite park resident is a mammal of mystery. Discover the wild ways of these sneaky creatures and the threats they face in an urban environment. Sun. Jan. 15, 1:30 - 3:30 pm</p>	<p><b>Birds of a Feather</b> A new year has arrived and with it new feathered friends in Stanley Park. Join naturalist and expert bird watcher Cathy Aitchison for a two-hour exploration of Stanley Park's varied and beautiful bird life. Participation by donation. Sun. Jan. 29, 9:00 - 11:00 am</p>
<p><b>Young Naturalists' Club: Winter Birds</b> Freezing temperatures and windy days don't seem to bother our feathered friends. Accompanied kids (ages 5-14) learn to identify neighbourhood birds. For more information email <a href="mailto:ync@stanleyparkecolgy.ca">ync@stanleyparkecolgy.ca</a> Sat. Feb. 4, 10 am -12 noon</p>	<p><b>Recipe for a Forest</b> Take six conifers, add deciduous trees to taste and blend in shrubs, herbs, and animals. Learn with naturalist Murray Lashmar how Stanley Park's forest has changed since the land was glaciated, through colonization, competition, succession and disturbance. Sun. Feb. 5, 1:30-3:30 pm</p>	<p><b>St. Valentine's Day in Stanley Park</b> Ever wonder how grandpa charmed grandma before the world of Facebook and online dating? Join local historian Jolene Cumming for a unique take on the amorous, curious and sometimes shady side of romance in Stanley Park. Sun. Feb. 12, 1:30 - 3:30 pm</p>
<p><b>Birds of a Feather</b> Spring is approaching and the birds and the bees are getting prepared. Join naturalist and expert bird watcher, Cathy Aitchison for a two-hour exploration to identify beguiling birds in Stanley Park. Participation by donation. Sun. Feb. 26, 9:00 - 11:00 am</p>	<p><b>Young Naturalists' Club: Spring Adventure</b> Join us for a nature hike, outdoor activities and an early spring adventure through Stanley Park. Learn to identify your wild neighbours in this program for kids 5-14 and parents, too. For more information email <a href="mailto:ync@stanleyparkecolgy.ca">ync@stanleyparkecolgy.ca</a> Sat. Mar. 3, 10 am -12 noon</p>	<p><b>Please pre-register for all Nature Programs</b> <a href="mailto:programs@stanleyparkecolgy.ca">programs@stanleyparkecolgy.ca</a> \$5 Members Seniors &amp; Children \$10 Non-Members</p>

## IVY BUSTERS NEEDED

Stanley Park's natural habitats are being overtaken! Come learn about the ecology of the park while helping to conserve its biodiversity from the threat of invasive plant species. A SPECIAL THANK YOU to the following corporate groups for helping stewardship efforts with hands and finances this fall: HSBC, Microsoft Canada and BC Hydro.



Showing off a mound of ivy, a community member takes action while having fun conserving Stanley Park's native biodiversity.

### Public Ivy Busting events are scheduled for:

November	12th Saturday, 10am - 1pm 27th Sunday, 12:30 - 3:30pm
December	10th Saturday, 10am - 1pm 18th Sunday, 12:30 - 3:30pm
January	14th Saturday, 10am - 1pm 29th Sunday, 12:30 - 3:30pm
February	11th Saturday, 10am - 1pm 26th Sunday, 12:30 - 3:30pm
March	10th Saturday, 10am - 1pm 25th Sunday, 12:30 - 3:30pm
April	14th Saturday, 10am - 1pm 29th Sunday, 12:30 - 3:30pm

For more information on registering, what to bring and meeting location, please contact Stewardship Coordinator, Greg Ferguson, [stewardship@stanleyparkecology.ca](mailto:stewardship@stanleyparkecology.ca).

STANLEY PARK ECOLOGY SOCIETY

## A Great Blue Gift Idea

### Adopt a Great Blue Heron Nest

Join the Stanley Park Ecology Society in our efforts to help protect these incredible birds. Sponsor a nest in one of the biggest urban heron colonies in the world, in your name or on behalf of a loved one.



[www.stanleyparkecology.ca](http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca)  
Email [nests@stanleyparkecology.ca](mailto:nests@stanleyparkecology.ca)  
Phone 604-681-9453



Get in the spirit of the Holidays - take a train ride through the forest transformed with two million twinkling lights, see the animated displays and listen to holiday sounds as you enjoy hot chocolate, fresh popcorn and roasted chestnuts. The event runs December 2, 2011 to January 2, 2012 (Closed Christmas Day).

For information: 604-257-8530 or  
[www.vancouver.ca/parks/events/brightnights/](http://www.vancouver.ca/parks/events/brightnights/)

### SPES Holiday Membership Perk

Members are invited to ride the train FREE  
Thursday, December 1 (6-9pm)  
Thursday, December 8 (3-10pm)

Enjoy a treat from the Stanley Park Ecology Society Cob House while at this event. We sell delicious organic popcorn and refreshing Whistler Water in biodegradable bottles to support our non-profit society's work.

# Cool wildlife sightings

**Robyn Worcester, Conservation Programs Manager**

In early October 2011, photographs confirmed that a hoary bat was found in distress in the West End of Vancouver a few blocks from Stanley Park. Although the animal was not recovered, the sighting proved valuable as it confirmed the presence of this rarely seen species in the vicinity of the Park. SPES had long suspected this bat was present, but due to their secretive nature we had never been able to document a sighting. The hoary bat has a tendency to roost in the branches of both coniferous and deciduous trees and can also be found using tree cavities. This bat is believed to be migratory with Pacific Northwest populations likely heading to southern California or Mexico for the winter.



Photo by Karen Davis  
This hoary bat was in poor shape when found on the ground near Stanley Park.



A SPES staff member returning with a volunteer from a regular fish trapping survey at Beaver Lake found a northwestern salamander heading across Pipeline Road in broad daylight. These large salamanders (up to 22cm) are pond-breeding amphibians that live in terrestrial habitats except when mating and laying eggs. Usually after early Spring breeding in Beaver Lake or in the small ponds around the Miniature Train area, this species migrates to upland sites. After this, adults and juveniles are rarely seen except during the fall rainy season. There is little known about the terrestrial habitat preferences of these salamanders but they have been found under rotting logs and in the abandoned burrows of rodents.

In early November, a SPES bird-monitoring volunteer came across a western meadowlark feeding in the grass near the north end of Pipeline Road. Others of this species have been sighted at Ambleside Park in West Vancouver. Although this bird is abundant across the grasslands of western North America, they appear to have almost completely disappeared from the Lower Mainland. This is mainly due to habitat loss, especially the decline of Garry oak ecosystems. They are seen casually in low numbers around Boundary Bay but only rarely in Stanley Park.



Photo by David Curror  
A western meadowlark is an unusual sight in Metro Van

# Footprints in the Forest

**Brian Titaro, Conservation Technician**

The rainy season is upon us in Vancouver and this is the very best time to see signs of wildlife as they scurry about in Stanley Park. Whether the forest floor is covered in a white blanket of snow or a thick layer of brown mud, when animals travel through the forest they leave behind tracks. Regardless of the material the tracks are imprinted upon, they can be easily identified based on size and spacing (also known as gait).

The best places to find tracks in Stanley Park are in Wildlife Management Emphasis Areas. These areas were designated after the December 2006 windstorm through the legacy Forest Management Plan. They are hotspots for local animal activity as they provide plenty of food and shelter. One of the most accessible of these areas is Beaver Lake. Below are footprints of creatures you're likely to find around Beaver Lake.

## **Raccoon (*Procyon lotor*)**

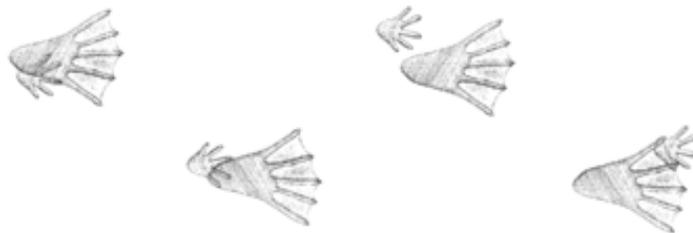
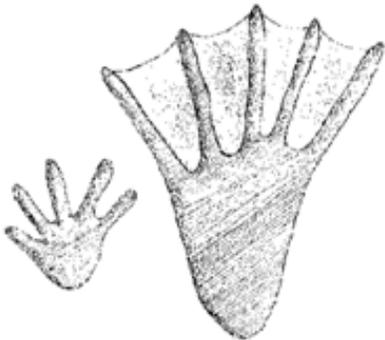
Raccoon feet and hands look a lot like those of people. Their front feet are both 7.5cm wide and long. Back feet are 8.5cm wide and 9.5cm long.



A raccoon's running gait (left).

## **Beaver (*Castor canadensis*)**

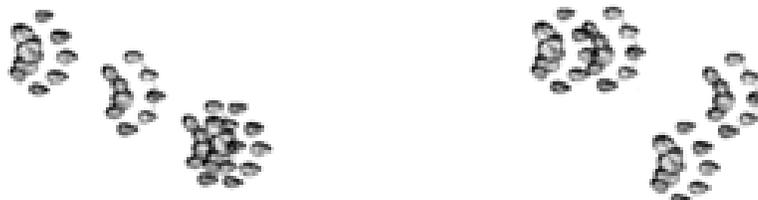
Beavers have webbed back feet to help them swim. Look for an 'S' shaped pattern between their tracks. This is from their belly and tail rubbing along the ground. Beaver front feet are 5cm long and 5cm wide. Back feet are 12.5cm long and 13.5cm wide.



A beaver's walking gait (left).

## **River otter (*Lontra canadensis*)**

River otters' front feet are 7.5cm wide and 6.5cm long. Their back feet are 8cm wide and 7.8cm long. Otter feet are webbed and this can be seen in their tracks, especially their back feet. Like the beaver, a trough the width of the animal's body can often be seen in the middle of otter tracks.



A river otter's loping gait (left).

...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, Family Programs and Events
- Seasonal activities calendar and our quarterly newsletter
- Special perks and promotions from community partners
- 20% Discount on general admission to the Vancouver Aquarium
- Free preview nights on Christmas Bright Nights and Halloween Ghost Trains plus Theatre Under the Stars

**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

**Thanks Also To Recent Donors:**

- BTR Productions Inc.
- Mark Angelo
- Louise Irwin
- Catherine Michitsch
- Nancy Henderson
- Mike Mackintosh
- Spencer Chandra Herbert
- Ann Marie Bennett

Donating to the Stanley Park Ecology Society has never been easier, thanks to **CanadaHelps** which provides secure service for monthly or one-time gifts.

Simply click the "Donate Now" icon on our website, [www.stanleyparkecology.ca](http://www.stanleyparkecology.ca). Tax receipts will be issued for donations over \$30.

**YES! I Want To Contribute!**

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

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 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)

This is a renewal membership

Send newsletter by **email**

or Send newsletter by post

**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

**WE THANK OUR RECENT DONORS AND PARTNERS**



This project was undertaken with the financial support of the Government of Canada through the Federal Department of the Environment.  
 Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier du Gouvernement du Canada agissant par l'entremise du ministère fédéral de l'Environnement.

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