



Stanley Park Ecological Action Plan Approved

On January 17th, 2011, Vancouver Park Board unanimously approved the staff report, "Stanley Park Ecological Action Plan" and acknowledged SPES for its dedicated efforts on the task force. This Action Plan was a direct result of the release of SPES's State of the Park Report for the Ecological Integrity of Stanley Park" (SOPEI) in spring 2010 and will pave the way towards preserving the ecological integrity of Vancouver's most beloved park for generations to come.

How did the Ecological Action Plan come to be?

To fully appreciate the value of this plan, we need to go back to December 2006, when Stanley Park was hit by a massive windstorm. Park visitors were in awe and disbelief as over 10,000 trees had crashed to the ground and exposed root balls and branches lined the roads and

trails. The Park Board staff was faced with a seemingly insurmountable task of how to deal with the aftermath.

While some viewed these disturbances as negative impacts to Stanley Park, the strong winds actually provided many benefits to the ecosystems such as creating new, diverse habitats for wildlife

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Spring 2011 Newsletter

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and setting back the clock on unnatural succession processes. For SPES, they also led to a new opportunity – to work more closely with the Park Board as an ecological advisor and learn more about how the different ecosystems in the Park are currently performing in terms of ecological integrity.

The 2-year creation of the SOPEI report and the resultant “Stanley Park Ecological Action Plan” will jointly work towards objectives such as restoring disappearing Beaver Lake and its associated bog ecosystem, finding solutions for poor water quality at Lost Lagoon, repairing fragmented habitats to facilitate wildlife movement, expanding control of invasive plant species, and providing better management for the Park’s wildlife species.

These goals are supported by:

- a) The Park Board’s Strategic Plan 2005-2010 which states that the “preservation and enhancement of the natural environment is a core responsibility of the Park Board” and includes actions to preserve existing native habitat and vegetation.
- b) The Stanley Park Forest Management Plan (2009) that recommends facilitating projects that protect or enhance wildlife and their habitats.



The Stanley Park Ecological Action Plan includes setting best management plans for native species of significance, and mitigating introduced species. Photo: Robyn Worcester

- c) The City’s “Vancouver 2020: A Bright Green Future” plan, which includes direction towards the restoration and protection of wetlands, stream and riverbanks, and a program to monitor and control harmful invasive species.

The Ecological Action Plan represents success in several different ways – not only is it integral to the restoration of Stanley Park’s ecosystems, but it has also strengthened the already strong working relationship between SPES and the Vancouver Park Board and has helped us fulfill our mission of playing a leadership role in the stewardship of Stanley Park.

To view the Ecological Action Plan report, visit: <http://gw.city.vancouver.bc.ca/parks/board/2011/110117/index.htm>

Stanley Park Ecological Action Plan Recommendations

Beaver Lake Bog

- Update baseline information and take actions to restore the bog’s size and habitat values
- Install a boardwalk and viewing platform with signage to reduce further damage to the bog from off-trail activities

Lost Lagoon’s Water Quality

- Conduct required maintenance of the lagoon’s existing biofiltration pond
- Continue with on-going restoration of existing shoreline vegetation and other environmental improvements
- Develop protocols to prevent sedimentation in the lagoon from trail/road runoff and operational activities where possible

Invasive Plant Species

- Use chemical control for the treatment of hogweed and knotweed, and update invasive species maps of the Park
- Develop a program to increase awareness about invasive plant management within Park Board staff and contractors
- Provide material support for SPES’s efforts to control the majority of species

Fragmentation of Habitat

- Construct a raised boardwalk connecting Cathedral Trail and Rawlings Trail for improved pedestrian safety
- Replace 50 existing undersized culverts beneath trails to better facilitate the flows of both water and wildlife
- Increase vigilance against off-trail bicycling and introduce bike barriers at minor trails in particularly sensitive habitats
- Obstruct unofficial trails as part of routine forest maintenance

Species of Special Significance in Stanley Park

- Produce Best Management Practices (BMPs) for Species of Significance, a joint effort by Park Board and SPES staff
- Develop programs to increase awareness within Park Board staff and contractors and to integrate BMPs into operations

Cool Wildlife Sightings in Stanley Park

Robyn Worcester, *Conservation Programs Manager*

As we put on extra socks, chest waders, toques and gloves and headed out on a misty November day, we could not shake the feeling of excitement, like Christmas morning, when imagining what we might have caught in our traps. It had been more than 10 years since the last fish study in Stanley Park. In 1999, a remnant population of coastal cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki clarki*) was documented in North Creek during a study that was done in preparation for the widening of the Stanley Park Causeway. These fish were considered a “geographically isolated” population because their stream is bordered by Beaver Lake and its outflow weir on one end and high chlorine levels at the source of the creek on the other. This small tributary had dried up almost completely the summer before and the fish’s only other refuge was Beaver Lake - a rapidly disappearing wetland that has been deemed “unsuitable for salmonids” due to its high water temperatures and low oxygen content during the summers.

The minnow traps were set the day before; we baited them, added rocks for small fish to use as cover, added balloons to keep them afloat and a small platform to act as a raft if a water shrew or other air-breathing species was accidentally trapped. We were pleased to find that the traps, situated in the back eddy of a small log jam, had stayed in position throughout the night. Working in an urban park presents unique challenges for field work - one not only has to plan for environmental conditions, but also for human interference.

As Steller’s jays and chickadees surrounded us, we carefully lifted the traps out of the water and to our surprise and delight, we had caught two beautiful, young cut-



Brian Titano, SPES's Conservation Education Assistant, is fish trapping project team leader.

throat trout. They were shiny, speckled, splashed with pink, and shone against the dark forest around us. We weighed, measured, and photographed the precious fish as quickly as possible so we could release them back to their home. We were so elated about our catch that we were high-fiving and grinning from ear to ear all the way back to the SPES office. Another species at risk confirmed living and breeding in Stanley Park.

Finding these beautiful fish in this tiny stream in the middle of a large metropolitan city not only reinvigorated our efforts to continue gathering baseline data, but also gives us a strong basis for our ongoing efforts to protect and restore their fragile habitat.



Coastal cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki clarki*) caught in North Creek, December 2010.

Radio Tagged Barrow's Goldeneye Spotted on Stanley Park's Foreshore

In January a local naturalist photographed a female Barrow's goldeneye (BAGO) near Second Beach in Stanley Park. This female is likely one that was tagged near William's Lake, BC in 2008 during a Canadian Wildlife Service / Simon Fraser University project. The project aims to fill gaps in information about BAGO migration and habitat usage by using satellite telemetry. This duck apparently splits her time between Stanley Park in winter, Riske Creek for breeding, and the Alberta border for molting.



Spring 2011 Nature Programs



The Nature House

Have you been to the Nature House lately? You'll see some of our favourite displays like Nibbles the Beaver but also a whole new look: new interpretive panels, new displays and a new space with something different happening all the time. To keep up on events, go to <http://www.stanleyparkecolgy.ca/WebCalendar/month.php> or, email programs@stanleyparkecolgy.ca to be included on our monthly bulletin.

Located on the southeast shore of Lost Lagoon, at the foot of Alberni Street underneath the viewing plaza, the Nature House is open weekends September through June from 10 am to 4 pm. During July and August the Nature House is open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 am to 6 pm.



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

Sat, Mar 5
10:00 am – 12:00 pm **The Young Naturalists' Club of Stanley Park (see sidebar Page 5).**

Sun, Mar 6 **Environmentally Sensitive Stanley Park**
1:30 – 3:30 pm Walking through Stanley Park, your eyes are delighted by striking yellow skunk cabbage, your nose assaulted by their smell! The streams trickle by and Beaver Lake's beauty thrills us all. Why are these places environmentally sensitive and a topic of great discussion? On this walk we will wander through some of these Environmentally Sensitive Areas, as determined by SPES's State of the Park Report, discussing factors of concerns and possible remedies.

Sun, Mar 13 **Stanley Park Walking Tour: history, gender and landscape**
1:30 – 3:30 pm The story of ecology plays out for all to see in Stanley Park. There are stories, however, that are not so plain to the eyes. The Herstory Café and SPES mark International Women's Day/Week with historical interpreter Jolene Cumming. This tour will focus on women, ethno-culture, socio-economics, recreation and other meaningful topics relevant to Stanley Park's past, 1860-1914.
Note: Departs and returns from Stanley Park Pavilion

Sun, Mar 20 **Stanley Park: The Essentials**
1:30 – 3:30 pm Do you love the wonder that is Stanley Park? Curious to know the basic ecological principles that make it all come together? Join VCC Science Instructor Maria Morlin for a walk through Stanley Park's temperate rainforest ecology. Nurse stumps, lichens, moss, bugs, poop, new growth; one for all and all for one! Great for the casual Stanley Park user or visitors from out of town.

Sun, Mar 27 **Birds of a Feather**
9:00 – 11:00 am Join naturalist and expert bird watcher Cathy Aitchison for a two-hour walk exploring Stanley Park's varied and beautiful bird life. Donate What You Can.

Sat, Apr 2
10:00am - 12:00 pm **The Young Naturalists' Club of Stanley Park (see sidebar Page 5)**

All Discovery Walks meet at the Stanley Park Nature House at Lost Lagoon unless otherwise indicated.
\$5 Members/Seniors/Children
\$10 Non-members

STANLEY PARK ECOLOGY SOCIETY

Community Invasive Species Management



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

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

- Mar. 12 10am - 1pm
- Mar. 27 12:30 - 3:30pm
- April 9 10am - 1pm
- April 24 12:30 - 3:30pm
- May 7 10am - 1pm
- May 29 12:30 - 3:30pm
- June 11 10am - 1pm
- June 26 12:30 - 3:30pm

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



The Young Naturalists' Club of Stanley Park

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

- Sat, Apr 3 **Spring Forward!**
1:30 – 3:30pm
Ahhhh, when winter changes to spring we can all feel it! But how does it all work to make us feel so darn good? Join botanist Terry Taylor and explore some of the building blocks of spring; from the changes in plants, to how flowering works and much more.
- Sun, Apr 10 **Mysteries, Myths & Misconceptions of Historical Stanley Park**
1:30 – 3:30pm
Join historical interpreter, Jolene Cummings, on this fascinating walk through the human history of Stanley Park.
Note: Meet in front of the Stanley Park Pavilion at Malkin Bowl
- Sun, Apr 17 **The Life of Plants**
1:30 – 3:30pm
Walk with Terry McIntosh, botanical naturalist, through the plant life of Stanley Park. Terry will guide you through various habitats, pointing out how different groups of plants, from mosses to trees, work together to produce a functioning and healthy ecosystem. The ecological and human-related roles of the Stanley Park ecosystem within the urban landscape will also be a focus.
- Sun, Apr 24 **Birds of a Feather**
9:00 – 11:00 am
Join naturalist and expert bird watcher Cathy Aitchison for a two-hour walk exploring Stanley Park's varied and beautiful bird life. Donate What You Can.
- Sun, May 1 **Stanley Park Primer**
1:30 – 3:30pm
New to town? Long-time resident? Join VCC Science Instructor Maria Morlin for this two hour foray into Stanley Park to learn about the broad concepts of ecology and how they relate to Stanley Park habitats and its denizens.
- Sat, May 7 **The Young Naturalists' Club of Stanley Park (see sidebar)**
10:00am - 12:00 pm
- Sun, May 8 **Citizen Science and Beyond!**
1:30 – 3:30pm
Join experienced naturalist Shelley Cherkowski on this informative walk in Stanley Park, learning and utilizing some basic techniques of naturalists. Great for the amateur naturalist!
- Sun, May 15 **Insects: Family, Friends or Foes?**
1:30 – 3:30pm
Family?? That would be one awkward family reunion. Insects and humans have a complex relationship that goes back to prehistory. We compete and co-operate and exploit each other's attributes. Join insect expert Andrew Scott to find out more on how insects have acted to limit the human population and why the mosquito is the most dangerous animal in Africa.
- Sun, May 22 **The Great Blue Herons of Stanley Park**
1:30 – 3:30pm
Herons have settled in the 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 herony tour we will look at the life cycle of the Great Blue Herons and what the Stanley Park Ecology Society and local residents are doing to be welcoming and helpful neighbours to them.
- Sun, May 29 **Birds of a Feather**
9:00 – 11:00 am
Join naturalist and expert bird watcher Cathy Aitchison for a two-hour walk exploring Stanley Park's varied and beautiful bird life. By donation.

Stump Stories

AL Grass, Discovery Walk Naturalist

Somewhere in a forest glade, a “snag” stands with its gnarled branches reaching outward like welcoming arms. Nearby, a well weathered dead tree, weakened with the advance of time, rests in a mossy carpet on the forest floor, hosting a garden of ferns, liverworts, mosses and huckleberry shrubs on its decaying wood. The fact that these trees are dead does not mean they are not full of life – indeed; they are a celebration of forest abundance itself.

Various insects that are “willing workers” in nature’s tree recycling team include beetles, termites, and carpenter ants. Termites (our local species is the Pacific dampwood termite) actually digest wood with the aid of bacteria in their guts. Their “frass” (excrement) looks like pellets, but it is damp. Ants, whose frass is dry and sawdust-like, don’t digest the wood, but simply excavate galleries in trees. A forest beetle, the rugnose stag beetle is found in alder snags. This interesting insect resembles a miniature rhinoceros in profile.

These insects are important food for birds, like the hairy and pileated woodpeckers. Excavation holes of the pileated are unique often having a squarish shape, but not always.



A handsome de-constructor of trees is the pileated woodpecker. Photo: J Grass

Various studies have shown that woodpeckers like the pileated carry spores of fungi, like the red-belted fungus (*Fomitopsis*, sp.) on their bills. Red-belted fungus is common in Stanley Park, especially on dead or nearly dead western hemlocks. When woodpeckers excavate for insects, they inoculate trees with fungal spores. Fungi digest the wood making it softer or “punk,” enabling

other cavity nesting bird species, like the hairy woodpecker and chestnut-backed chickadee to excavate a hole. Abandoned nesting holes of woodpeckers, like the northern flicker, hairy, or pileated become available to secondary users like bats, flying squirrels and small owls.

I have an inkling that woodpeckers carry other fungi about the forest such as turkeytail (*Trametes*) and sulphur-top (*Hypoloma*), since they seem to go hand in hand with their excavations.

In bygone days, standing dead trees were called “snags” (a term sometimes still used), but a better term is “wild-life tree.” When a tree crashes to the ground, in time it can develop into a “nurse log,” supporting a garden of plants, fungi, small mammals (mice and shrews), invertebrates (millipedes, centipedes, snails), and amphibians.

More wildlife use dead or dying trees than fully vibrant trees. Thus, it is clear that dead trees (snags) are a fascinating and vital part of forest ecology. It may be truly said that new life springs from the remains of the old.

To learn more, Google “woodpeckers and fungi,” and you will find a list of papers including “Ecological Relationships Between Fungi and Woodpeckers” by J.A. Jackson (2009).



The drilled holes of the pileated woodpecker are often characteristically squared. Photo: Jude Grass

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Making a Difference!

Spring and Summer Volunteering Opportunities

What can one person do to help the environment? SPES offers you the opportunity to connect yourself and others with nature. By volunteering in our education and conservation programs, you can help foster an appreciation and a caring for our natural world. SPES volunteers are a dynamic and diverse group of individuals who provide indispensable support for our society. They are involved in all aspects of our School, Public and Conservation programs as well as graphics, photography, IT and office work. During this past year alone, over 1440 volunteers contributed almost 18,000 hours to SPES.

Spring and summer volunteer opportunities include bird counts, Nature House hosting, and assisting with the Co-Existing with Coyotes program. Longer term volunteer internships can be tailored to a volunteer's needs; we welcome persons with diverse backgrounds and life experiences.

If you wish to join a team that is dedicated to making a difference to your ecological community, please contact Koren Johnstone, SPES Volunteer Coordinator at vols@stanleyparkecology.ca or phone 604-681-7099.



Nest Box Program

In its third year, the Stanley Park Nest Box Program is seeking motivated volunteers to install, monitor, and maintain nest boxes for the blue orchard mason bee, tree and violet-green swallows, and wood ducks. Help SPES enhance and document the breeding success and population status of target species. Your efforts will also contribute to educating the public about these cavity nesting species and ways to help conserve their habitat. Volunteers will gain experience in ecological field data collection and reporting. This program suits volunteers who are self directed, attentive to detail, and excited about conserving cavity nesting birds and bees. A commitment to monitor nest boxes once per week from mid April to early July is required.

For more information, please contact:
 Greg Ferguson, Stewardship Coordinator:
 Phone: 604-718-6547; Email: stewardship@stanleyparkecology.ca

Eco Rangers

The very popular summer Eco Rangers program is back! In its tenth season, the program offers volunteers, ages 15 and up, extensive training in June on Stanley Park's natural and cultural history, visitor attractions and bylaws, as well as interpretive techniques. In July and August, working in pairs, volunteers offer on-the spot interpretive services to the public, providing visitors an opportunity to better enjoy the natural surroundings and history of the park. Roving, or at select stations, Eco Rangers greet visitors, answer questions, provide directions, and raise public awareness about this beautiful park. It's a tonne of fun to interact with locals and visitors from around the world.



Email ecoranger@stanleyparkecology.ca for more information.

We THANK OUR RECENT DONORS AND PARTNERS



Collette Foundation Charitable Fund of Tides Canada Foundation



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

Keith Lord Sports Foundation Fund held at the Vancouver Foundation

Thanks Also To Recent Donors:

lululemon athletica, Fiona Beaty, Marianne Worcester, Alvin Quiring, Audrey Hetherington, Rory Wallace, Ray McNabb, Gwyneth Foulds, Sharon Wright, Monica Wilson, Cora Whiting, Dan and Jan Phelps.

Coyote Corner



After mating in late winter, female coyotes bear one litter of 3 to 9 pups in April or May, depending on the size of the territory and abundance of food.

The SPES **Co-Existing with Coyotes** program receives many reports of coyote activity at this time of year as parents are actively seeking more food for their young and daylight is extended. For more information, or to report a coyote sighting contact: coyotes@stanleyparkecology.ca phone 604 681 9453

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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 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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