

# Winter 2012/13 Newsletter



## Sneak Peek:

Twenty-five High Fives	1-2
Our Top Five Things to Do	3
Fall Nature Programs	4-5
Rain, Clouds and Bald Eagles	6
Volunteering	7
Thanks to Our Supporters	8

## Twenty-five High Fives

*Patricia Thomson, Executive Director*

In February, it'll be 25 years since SPES was founded. In 1988, the winter Olympics were heartily hosted by Calgary, the world was yet reeling from the "Black Monday" stock crash, and Canada introduced its one dollar "loonie". Topping the music charts were George Michael, INXS, and George Harrison. Rock legend Roy Orbison died, and current pop powerhouse Rihanna was born. That year the world's population had surged to five billion. NASA sounded an alarm to the US Senate that man-made global warming had begun. Stanley Park was in its 100th year, and the federal government designated it a National Historic Site of Canada.

Since the first Park superintendent began a collection of animals with an orphaned black bear cub in the late 1880's, a main attraction in Stanley Park was its zoo, which eventually included buffalo, kangaroos, monkeys, wolves and penguins, among other animals. In 1988 a band of passionate ecologists and powerful community members coalesced to seek profile and resources to upgrade the aging facilities: Stanley Park Zoological Society (SPZS) was born.

For a number of years SPZS proactively led conservation programs for threatened species across the Lower Mainland including barn owls and bats. It operated urban wildlife management programs, became the home of the still-successful "Co-Existing with Coyotes" initiative, and gave rise to the

now-independent Burrowing Owl Recovery project. Eventually the Society moved to tackle conservation from an ecosystem approach, serving a wider array of biodiversity with a priority on Stanley Park's "Beaver Lake Environmental Enhancement Project".

Educational aims also began to blossom: SPZS worked with Vancouver Park Board (VPB) and Nature Vancouver to strengthen Park interpretation. A boathouse on Lost Lagoon was converted to the Stanley Park Nature House and remains today as Vancouver's only ecology centre. In 1995 the operations were fully handed over to the Society.

Despite SPZS' sizable efforts, Vancouver residents voted in a 1993 referendum to phase out the Stanley Park Zoo. It closed

*Continued on page 2....*

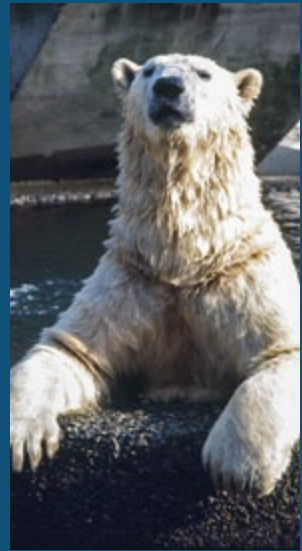
## Bright Nights Christmas Train

**SPES Members ride for  
free on December  
3, 4 & 5**

See page 5 for more  
info



# Our Top 5 Things to do this Winter



Tuk, the 36 year old polar bear, was the last remaining animal at the Stanley Park Zoo.

completely four years later.

In 1995 SPZS regrouped, re-strategized and rebranded as Stanley Park Ecology Society (SPES). As a leading Park Partner, a formal Joint Operating Agreement was struck with Vancouver Park Board to formally empower the Society to continue to grow its influence and expertise as the unique provider answering VPB's education mandate.

A popular outreach initiative in the early years of the Society was the 'Zoo to You' program, taking animals from the Children's Farmyard to facilities whose clients' abilities were housebound. Educational priorities shifted to BC wildlife, however, and SPES School Programs evolved to their current focus on local ecosystems.

Early in the new millennium, 'Urban Camping' became a still-sought two-day overnight nature immersion for local elementary students in Stanley Park. Public Programs introduced 'EcoRangers' whose trained volunteers still rove Stanley Park in summer as nature ambassadors to thousands of annual visitors. SPES started contributing monitoring reports to provincial data centres for species at risk including great blue herons in Stanley Park, and bald eagles across the city.

It was a wild windstorm in December 2006, however, that felled an estimated 10,000 trees and marked the single most influential event to mature SPES as a leading stakeholder. Blown into the Restoration Era, SPES created the Park's first reports on environmentally sensitive areas, species at risk, and invasive plants. We steered logging machines around breeding birds, and set baselines for evaluating ecological recovery. SPES also collaborated with VPB in creating the current, relevant 'Stanley Park Forest Management Plan' recognizing wildlife emphasis zones.

In 2010 SPES released the first ever 'State of the Park Report for the Ecological Integrity of Stanley Park'. Park Commissioners responded

by tasking their staff – collaborating with SPES – to create the 'Stanley Park Ecological Action Plan'. SPES' roles in it have included preparing 'Best Management Practices for Species of Significance in Stanley Park', decommissioning unsanctioned forest trails, managing invasive plants, restructuring islands in Lost Lagoon, restoring Stanley Park's bog, and much more.



Volunteers installing nest box. Photo by Don Enright.

Music today is ruled by new generations and genres led by Taylor Swift, Justin Bieber and a now adult Rihanna. Global population is over 7 billion. Oil transport dominates political environmental airwaves, and the world is again reeling from protracted economic crises.

Now 25 years strong, SPES has connected an estimated 500,000 people with nature. We continue to work for wildlife and enhancing their habitats, leading small mammal, bat, bird, amphibian, and fish surveys which contribute to regional and provincial data centres. With increased input at the city level and in the media, look to the near future to see new milestones: the unveiling of Stanley Park's restored bog and boardwalks, salmonid release programs in an enhanced Beaver Creek, strategic action for migratory birds, Beaver Lake restoration, and initiatives towards a Stanley Park Stewardship Plan.

We hope to count on your support as a member, donor, participant or volunteer as we embark on next chapters in our history and take advantage of new emerging opportunities that allow us to continue to play a leadership role in the stewardship of Stanley Park.

## Krystal Pyke, Public Programs Manager

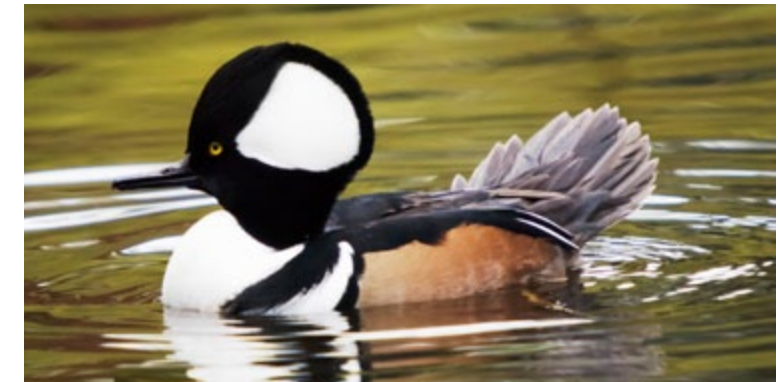
Don't let the wet west coast forecast leave you feeling soggy about exploring Stanley Park this winter. With over 400 hectares of rainforest with towering trees and diverse ecosystems to explore in Stanley Park, there are discoveries to be made around every corner. Here are our top five things to do in Stanley Park this winter:

- Witness North America's largest rodent keeping busy in Beaver Lake, aptly named after these hardworking engineers. Spot one of the lake's five beavers as they clear channels through the water lilies, forage for tasty tree bark and continue their home renovations on the lodge.
- Look up, look way up and take note of the forest above your head. Get a different perspective as you watch low clouds roll through the trees and try to count all the bird nests that become visible when the trees have shed their leaves for the winter. If you're lucky, you might spot a northern flying squirrel peeking its head out from a wildlife tree.
- Spot the soaring resident bald eagles and barred owls as they start to ruffle some feathers and try to catch the eye of a potential mate as the breeding season approaches (also see article on courtship behaviour, page 6).

- Follow the footsteps of celebrated writer and performer Pauline Johnson along Lost Lagoon, through the forest, to her memorial site at Ferguson Point to celebrate the 100th anniversary of her life and death this year.

- Join thousands of visiting winter waterfowl along the seawall that spend the chilly months taking shelter along our protected coastline. Try your hand at identifying the different species of incredible birds such as harlequin ducks, hooded mergansers and Barrow's goldeneyes.

So throw on a rain jacket and climb into your rubber boots; you're not going to want to miss these!



Hooded merganser. Photo by Don Enright.

## Field Guides and Nature Apps

### Anita Georgy, School Programs Manager

*"In the end we will conserve only what we love. We will love only what we understand. We will understand only what we have been taught."* (Baba Dioum, Senegalese conservationist)

In a perfect world, we would all have a grandparent or elder to mentor us in our explorations of nature as we grow up. Luckily, though,



Photo by Andre Chan

there are still many committed naturalists, and while we may not be able to learn from them directly, we can still benefit from their knowledge through the next best thing: field guides.

Field guides are incredible companions for naturalists of any age, and make great gifts for the holidays. Some SPES staff favourites are: Plants of Coastal British Columbia (Pojar and Mackinnon), Sibley Guide to Birds (Sibley), Marine Life of the Pacific Northwest (Lamb and Hanby), and Stanley Park: Wilderness on your Doorstep (this book is available at the Nature House).

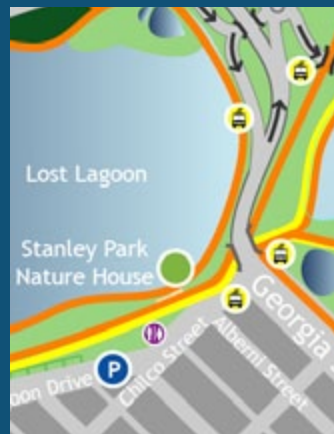
For the tech savvy nature lover in your life, there are many great nature Apps available from iTunes on everything from scats and tracks to mushrooms, plants and birds. Carrying your field guide with you makes you much more likely to use it. SPES staff love iBird for in-the-field bird identification. Audubon also has several nature Apps available, including mammals, butterflies, and insects.



# SPES Nature Programs

# Winter 2012/13

stanleyparkeecology.ca/events  
604-718-6522



**Nature Programs** meet at Stanley Park Nature House on Lost Lagoon located under the viewing plaza at the north end of Alberni Street.

Winter Hours  
Open Weekends  
10 am - 4 pm



## Birthday Parties

Educational, interactive and fun birthday adventures for kids.

For more information:  
programs@stanleyparkeecology.ca  
604-718-6522

<p><b>Preregistration recommended for drop-in programs:</b></p> <p>programs@stanleyparkeecology.ca 604-718-6522</p>	<p><b>Young Naturalists' Club looks at Savvy Scavengers</b></p> <p>Take a closer look at these sneaky creatures that survive in Stanley Park. From coyotes to crows we will explore the lives of savvy scavengers and their creative survival skills. For accompanied kids ages 5-14.</p> <p>Sat, Dec 1, 10 am-12 noon</p>	<p><b>Nature House Workshop Build a Bird Feeder</b></p> <p>Drop by the Stanley Park Nature House to build your own unique cone feeder, packed full of important nutrients to help our feathered friends as they prepare for another wet West Coast winter.</p> <p>Sun, Dec 2, 1:30-3:30 pm</p>	<p><b>Romantic Stanley Park: Amorous, Curious, &amp; Shady Sides</b></p> <p>Unofficially labeled as the most romantic spot in Vancouver for nearly 125 years, Stanley Park has history that is intriguing. Enjoy historical photographs on this easy walk.</p> <p>Sun, Feb 10, 1:30-3:30 pm</p>		<p><b>Birds of a Feather</b></p> <p>Discover how birds spend Valentine's Day as our feathered friends start strutting their stuff in preparation for mating season. Join us for a two-hour easy walking exploration to learn about bird identification and behaviour. By donation.</p> <p>Sun, Feb 24, 9:00-11:00 am</p>
<p><b>Christmas Bird Count for Kids</b></p> <p>The adventure begins as we learn about birds and how to identify them. Be part of a birding team led by an experienced birder. For accompanied kids ages 5-14. Register early as space is limited: Karen Barry, bcprograms@birdscanada.org</p> <p>Sat, Dec 8, 9:30 am-1:30 pm</p>		<p><b>Celebrate Solstice</b></p> <p>The chestnuts are roasting and holly has been hung. Explore the history and customs of midwinter festivals on this two-hour walk and understand the traditions behind the plants and decorations that we associate with the season.</p> <p>Sun, Dec 9, 1:30-3:30 pm</p>	<p><b>Young Naturalists' Club: Birdy Buffet</b></p> <p>Explore the world from the point of view of a bird. From feet to feathers, you'll be amazed at all the special features that help them find food. For accompanied kids ages 5-14.</p> <p>Sat, Mar 2, 10 am-12 noon</p>	<p><b>Owl Pellet Dissection Workshop</b></p> <p>Join us at the Stanley Park Pavilion as we explore the world of predatory birds. Examine real specimens and learn about their adaptations, and take apart an owl pellet to see what was eaten for dinner.</p> <p>Sun, Mar 17, 1:30-3:30 pm</p>	<p><b>Create a West Coast Garden</b></p> <p>Create habitat in your garden and encourage local birds and butterflies to visit as you promote a healthy ecosystem. On this walk learn how to incorporate native species into your garden and see the benefits these hearty local plants provide.</p> <p>Sun, Mar 24, 1:30-3:30 pm</p>
<p><b>Young Naturalists' Club and Animal Origami</b></p> <p>Try your hand at the unique art of origami as we create our favorite forest creatures from Stanley Park and around the world out of colourful paper. For accompanied kids ages 5-14.</p> <p>Sat, Jan 5, 10 am-12 noon</p>	<p><b>Winter Wandering</b></p> <p>Vancouver is a fantastic place for year round hiking, but are you prepared for what the wet West Coast might have in store for you? Join us for an easy walk and tips on how to enjoy the great outdoors safely this winter.</p> <p>Sun, Jan 13, 1:30-3:30 pm</p>		<p><b>Birds of a Feather</b></p> <p>With spring just around the corner, Stanley Park's birds are preparing for warmer weather. Join us for a two-hour easy walking exploration to learn about bird identification and seasonal behaviour. By donation.</p> <p>Sun, Mar 31, 1:30-3:30 pm</p>		
<p><b>Birds of a Feather</b></p> <p>Enjoy the birds of winter and discover how many species call Stanley Park home during the chilly months of the year. Join us for a two-hour easy walking exploration to learn about bird identification and behaviour. By donation.</p> <p>Sun, Jan 27, 9 am-11 am</p>	<p><b>Young Naturalists' Club: Discover Winter Birds</b></p> <p>Chilly temperatures don't seem to bother the birds. Learn to identify our local birdy neighbours in preparation for the Backyard Bird Count on February 17. For accompanied kids 5-14.</p> <p>Sat, Feb 2, 10 am-12 noon</p>	<p><b>Stanley Park Ecology Society's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary</b></p> <p>Join us at the Stanley Park Nature House as we celebrate 25 years of environmental education, conservation and stewardship programs. Join in on free family fun activities and learn about Stanley Park wildlife from local experts.</p> <p>Sun, Feb 3, 11 am - 3 pm</p>	<p><b>Nature Programs fees:</b></p> <p>\$5 for SPES members, children and seniors. \$10 for non-members</p> <p>Young Naturalists' Club: YNC members free, \$5 drop-in fee</p> <p><b>Bright Nights in Stanley Park</b></p> <p>Ride the Stanley Park train, watch animated displays, listen to holiday classics, and feast on fresh popcorn.</p> <p>Hosted by the Vancouver Park Board and the Firefighters' Burn Fund, this event runs Nov 29 through Jan 1.</p> <p><b>SPES Membership Perk:</b></p> <p>SPES' members are invited to ride the train FREE on the following dates and times (bring a valid membership card).</p> <p><b>Monday, December 3 to Wednesday, December 5 (7pm - 9pm only)</b></p> <p>Support SPES' conservation and education work in Stanley Park by enjoying a bag of delicious organic popcorn during Bright Nights. Our Cob House in the Miniature Train Plaza sells fresh organic popcorn with real butter.</p>		



## Need a Room?

Looking for a venue for your next workshop, meeting or party in a fantastic location and at a great price?

SPES has room rental facilities available on the second floor of the historic Stanley Park Dining Pavilion.

Contact us to find out more: 604-257-6908



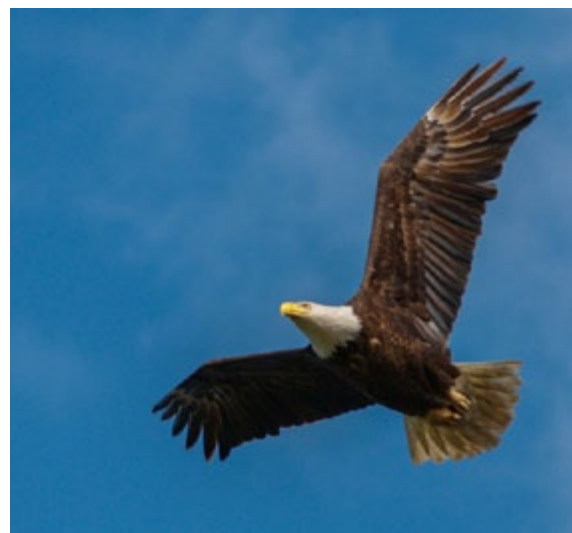
# Rain, Clouds and Bald Eagles

**Brian Titaro, Conservation Technician**

Signs of the winter abound. The rains have returned and glimpses of the white-capped North Shore mountains loom from behind the clouds. There are also many white-capped creatures that have returned to Stanley Park during this dark and wet time of year.

During the winter season, Vancouver's resident bald eagles return from their summer voyages to the northern and interior reaches of the continent. After spending the summer fishing in remote rivers, they're reverting to their urbanized routines.

While in the city, eagles are not too proud to take up a free meal when it's offered; stealing food from other animals, scavenging the seashore at low tide and even rummaging through the leftovers of messy park users. However, our residential eagles have also developed a rather unique preference for hunting birds including gulls, ducks, crows and pigeons, which make up their primary food source.



Soaring bald eagle. Photo by Michael Schmidt.

Lost Lagoon is an ideal place to witness the agile flight techniques required for a pair of bald eagles to successfully take down and drown an unlucky gull. In the fall of 2012, SPES installed five new floating logs on Lost Lagoon as part of HSBC Freshwater Initiatives in Stanley Park that

act as resting platforms for the eagles while feeding and provide a great viewing opportunity for photographers.



Eagle profile. Photo by Michael Schmidt.

Between December and the end of February, courtship begins between returning mated pairs. Bald eagles perform elaborate courtship displays that involve aerial acrobatics, chases and long calls that penetrate the forests of Stanley Park. It's also at this time of the year that pairs begin mending last year's nests. Each nest is repaired and added to annually which, over the average eagle's lifespan of 20 years, can result in the creation of the largest nests of any bird in North America - the size of a VW beetle.

So as you're watching the signs of the winter season go by, make sure to listen for the cries of the bald eagles that have returned to their foggy tree top homes in Stanley Park.

## Adopt an Eagle Nest

Become a partner in wildlife monitoring, stewardship and the long-term protection of the biodiversity of Vancouver.

By adopting a bald eagle nest for an annual donation of \$100, you help SPES steward the local habitat of these magnificent birds.

Call 604-718-6523 to find out more.

# Volunteering

## 1,200 Vancouverites Step up for Nature

**Julie Sabau, Volunteer Coordinator**

I think it's safe to say that there are never enough hours in the day and each of us is always short of time. Yet, more than 1,200 people in our community care so much about Stanley Park that they managed to find time to help us deliver our programs over the past year.

Volunteers help us in hundreds of different ways and are involved in almost everything we do. Some volunteers help us with our website and IT systems, others sell organic popcorn at SPES' Cob House in the Miniature Railway Plaza, organize our library and keep our databases up-to-date. The vast

majority of our volunteers, however, help us with hands-on conservation and stewardship projects in the Park.

Interested in getting involved? We currently have openings for bird monitors and community Invasive Species Management volunteers. To find out more about these positions and future ones, visit [stanley-parkecology.ca](http://stanley-parkecology.ca) and click "Get Involved".

If you have any special skills that are relevant to our work, we would love to hear from you. Contact [vols@stanleypark-ecology.ca](mailto:vols@stanleypark-ecology.ca) or 604-681-7099.



Volunteer bird monitors. Photo by Peter Woods.

## Introducing a Different Type of Ivy

**Ivy Smith, Stewardship Programs Coordinator**

Hello, I'm Ivy and have recently joined SPES as the new Stewardship Coordinator. I'm thrilled to be a part of such an amazing and dedicated group, and I look forward to coordinating the management of invasive species, restoration and enhancement of habitat in Stanley Park with the support of dedicated volunteers.

I grew up in Alberta and moved to Vancouver to complete a BSc in Natural Resources Conservation at UBC.

After graduating, I have coordinated conservation volunteers and delivered various environmental outreach programs with a number of nonprofit groups, including the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative of the Rocky Mountains.

You'll find the schedule of upcoming community invasive species events in the sidebar on your right. I look forward to meeting you out in the field soon!

## Ivy Busters

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

Dec 8, 10 am - 1 pm  
Dec 30, 12:30 - 3:30 pm  
Jan 12, 10 am - 1 pm  
Jan 27, 12:30 - 3:30 pm  
Feb 9, 10 am - 1 pm  
Feb 24, 12:30 - 3:30 pm

For our meeting location and information on how to register and what to bring, contact: [stewardship@stanleyparkecology.ca](mailto:stewardship@stanleyparkecology.ca) or 604-718-6547.



Ivy Smith. Photo by Michael Schmidt.

# A Great Blue Gift Idea

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

## A SPES membership supports:

- Education programs helping more than 30,000 children and adults experience nature each year
- Wildlife monitoring, habitat restoration and biodiversity conservation

## As a Member You Get:

- Discounts on Discovery Walks, Family Programs and Events
- Seasonal activities calendar and quarterly newsletter
- Special perks and promotions
- Free preview nights for Christmas Bright Nights, Halloween Ghost Train and Theatre Under the Stars

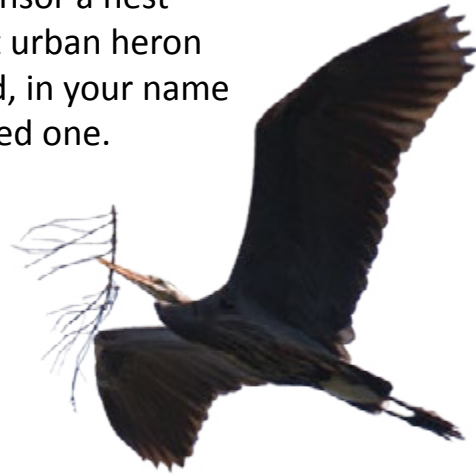
## Contact Us:

Stanley Park Ecology Society  
PO Box 5167  
Vancouver BC V6B 4B2  
stanleyparkecology.ca

Memberships: 604-257-6908  
Communications: 604-718-6523  
School Programs: 604-257-6907  
Public Programs: 604-718-6522  
Conservation: 604-718-6547  
Co-Existing  
with Coyotes: 604-681-9453  
Volunteers: 604-681-7099  
Nature House: 604-257-8544

## 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

## Thanks to our Supporters 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.

## Thank You to our Recent Donors:

Faimont Pacific Rim, Joslin Kobylka, Patricia Thomson, Alexandra King, Eckhardt Ferdinand, Gail Neale, Louise Irwin, Donald Ferguson, Spencer Chandra Herbert, David Leung, Nancy Henderson, Diana Joy, Rory Wallace and Sheyla O'Flynn.