

Sargeant Bay Society

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Newsletter #77

Editor: John Newell

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Annual General Meeting

The AGM of the Society was held, as usual, in the early spring. In his annual report to the membership, Tony Greenfield drew particular attention to the completion of the 800-metre trail extension around the east side of Triangle Lake. This project would not have been possible without the financial support of both the Union of BC Municipalities and BC Parks, Kye Goodwin's trail-building skills and John Nicholson's voluntary help. Its success has prompted a proposal to continue the trail around the south side of the lake, of which more later.

Our Treasurer, Maggie Marsh, reported that the Society remains in excellent financial shape, with in excess of \$6,700 invested in a GIC and bank deposits.

All of last year's directors agreed to serve again. The Society's bylaws do not limit the size of the Executive and Ron Breadner's name was proposed from the floor. The full slate of ten Directors was elected unanimously; their responsibilities are summarized below.

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| Tony Greenfield | President |
| Joop Burgerjon | Correspondence Secretary / Webmaster |
| Maggie Marsh | Treasurer |
| John Newell | Recording Secretary / Newsletter Editor |
| Katie Caple | Membership Secretary |
| Elise Rudland | Summer Program Organizer |
| Pam Runkle | Director at Large |
| Ron Dinsdale | Director at Large |
| Annette Clarke | Director at Large |
| Ron Breadner | Director for Neighbouring Wetlands |

Under 'New Business', Elise Rudland noted that there has been discussion among the Directors regarding the possible extension of the Society's mandate to include stewardship of other wetlands in the Halfmoon Bay area, specifically Smuggler Cove Provincial Park. Giving effect to this proposal requires a change in the Society's constitution. Accordingly, Elise proposed amending the Society's objectives by adding the words "and neighbouring watersheds" to the clause that reads: "To promote conservation of the natural habitat of Sargeant Bay".

This motion was discussed at some length, and passed unanimously, subject to it having no adverse affect on our charitable status. We have since received verbal assurance from the Canada Revenue Agency that our status will not be affected, but are still waiting for written confirmation. Once

the future of this initiative is assured, a committee will be struck to determine the next step.

Summer Program

This year's summer program, organized by Elise Rudland, comprised four events over the months April to June. Kye Goodwin guided a plant-identification walk in April and Tony Greenfield's traditional morning "Birding by the Bay" took place in May. New events this year were a hike from Trout Lake to the beach via the new Triangle Lake Trail extension with local forester Brian Smart, and Annette Clarke's Nature Awareness Day. The level of interest for these events is apparent in the picture below.



Photo: Joop Burgerjon

Trail circling Triangle Lake

All the necessary approvals and financing needed to extend the new trail on the east side of Triangle Lake were in place by the end of August. The extension around the west and south sides of the lake will complete a circle route. Construction will be on-going through the fall and winter. Anyone who would like to help should contact Kye Goodwin at 604-886-8414

Dogwood Trees

The *Pacific dogwood* trees, planted in memory of Eric Hoare, are not doing as well as we would have hoped, in spite of the volunteer effort put in to keep them watered through the summers. Of the twelve original saplings, the six placed south of Redrooffs Road all died within a year or so,

probably because this site is too shady. Six replacements were planted this April, all at the trail-head north of Redrooffs Rd. Of the original plantings at this location, one is doing very well and was approaching two metres tall this summer. Four have died and the fifth is not in the best of health.

Two of the six new saplings were healthy three months after planting, but the other four had dead tops. Mature trees are able to survive this disease, but saplings may be more vulnerable.

Birds

The birding success story of the season centres on the wood ducks. Two females were sighted briefly by John and Elvie Newell at the end of April. In mid-May, Joop Burgerjon photographed a very elegant male resting on one of the logs placed around the edge of Colvin Island the previous summer, but after that there were no reported sightings for two months.



Photo: Joop Burgerjon

It seemed very much as if these beautiful birds had passed us by this year. Then, on July 7, John Newell saw two females with four ducklings, along the edge of the cattails near the nesting boxes. The ducklings came in two distinct sizes, indicating two successful clutches. These birds were seen regularly through July and August and, on one occasion, Joop counted at least eight ducklings. The latest sightings were three immature birds on September 9 and one on September 29. The former were included in the first BC Coastal Waterbird count of the 2007-08 season.

Sargeant Bay may never rival Ruby Lake as a nesting site for these magnificent birds, perhaps because we don't feed them. However, they are now known to have bred successfully two summers in a row, increasing hopes that they will become firmly established.

This time last year I expressed the hope that we could look forward to the establishment of a *great blue heron* rookery at Sargeant Bay. This seemed to be happening in April, when there were four active heron nests in the tall timber above Redrooffs Road, the same location as last year.

Unfortunately this story does not have a happy ending. Heron activity in the wetland dropped off sharply in the middle of May. Joop checked the site in mid-summer and, although he found shell fragments on the ground there was



Photo: Joop Burgerjon

very little in the way of droppings below the nests. It seems probable that the nests were raided, most likely by eagles or ravens, soon after the eggs hatched, and no young survived. Hopefully the adult birds will return and try again next year. It would be good to see this blue-listed species, which is becoming relatively uncommon on the Coast, establish a permanent colony at Sargeant Bay.

Finally, a birding story with an uncertain ending. In the spring, a lone female *surf scoter* lingered on in Sargeant Bay long after most of its kin had left for their breeding grounds north of 60. It was first seen sitting on a ledge above high tide level on The Rock – an unusual behaviour. A week later it had moved to a log on Colvin Island, the same one used by the wood duck in Joop's picture. A scoter in freshwater habitat is a most unusual occurrence on the Coast. There it sat, seemingly for several weeks, apparently dieing a slow, miserable death from starvation. Then, at the beginning of June, it was seen splashing and preening on Colvin Lake, looking in the best of health. Thereafter it disappeared. We will never know what ailed it, or whether or not it survived.

Beavers

Immediately after we built the fish ladder in August 1991, the beavers built a dam above it. We and the occasional unknown volunteer have been clearing the dam in the fall to allow access for salmon. Usually the beavers rebuild it overnight.

In September 2003, although still present in the wetland, the beavers stopped rebuilding the dam, but have started again this year, in August.

Again, the dam is cleared once in a while by some unknown volunteer. Clearing the dam really becomes important towards the end of November through early December, when the salmon arrive at the fish ladder. It is advisable to do this early in the day, as the beavers start rebuilding it as soon as darkness provides them with cover.

Feedback

Finally, the customary note that feedback is always welcome. As you received this newsletter by e-mail, it is easy for you to let us have your comments: Just click the reply button, or: sargbay@dccnet.com