



# Sargeant Bay Society

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## Newsletter #85

Editor: Joop Burgerjon

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### Annual General Meeting

The 32<sup>nd</sup> AGM of the Society was held on April 28. Six directors were re-elected. Ron Dinsdale and Annette Clarke resigned because they moved away from our area. Both are thanked for the contribution they made to our society. Penny Hall was elected as a new director. The directors for this year are listed as follows:

- Tony Greenfield: President
- Joop Burgerjon: Secretary / Editor
- Maggie Marsh: Treasurer
- Katie Caple: Membership Secretary
- Elise Rudland: Summer Program Organizer
- Lexi Harrington: Director at Large
- Penny Hall: Director at Large

### Summer Events

Tony Greenfield's birding event at Sargeant Bay on May 22 and Kye Goodwin's nature hike around Triangle Lake on July 10 were well attended and appreciated.

### Highlights this summer

#### 1. Great Blue Herons

This year there were 3, maybe 4 nests in the alders at the south end of the wetland and the young birds were observed to leave the nests. Great Blue Herons tried to breed in the alders surrounding the wetland in 1999 and 2000, but the nests were abandoned soon after the eggs hatched.

#### 2. Wood Ducks

A female with ducklings was observed twice in the beaver pond. This is remarkable, as Ruby Lake, which has a well-established population of Wood Ducks, reported no ducklings this year, probably due to the cool spring.

#### 3. 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Wetland Restoration

This year it is 20 years ago that we completed the Wetland Rehabilitation Project. The final action was filling the hole in the berm that was dredged in 1977 by the previous owner who had the impracticable idea of creating a marina behind the berm. That was on August 22, 1991. A few days of heavy rainfall made the new lake fill up by the end of the month. This newsletter will be devoted to the history of the wetland and reflect on what has been achieved.

In 1977 the then owner of the foreshore dug a trench across the beach berm to create a marina in the freshwater wetland

behind it. The Sargeant Bay Society was formed to oppose this illegal action and the Provincial Government issued a cease-and-desist order. For 14 years the tide moved in and out of the wetland and eroded much of the topsoil.



Joop Burgerjon Photo

**Excavation of berm to create a marina - 1977**

The SBS proposed a Nature Park for the area and to return the wetland to its earlier state. In 1989 the Provincial Government bought the land for a Class "A" Provincial Park.

### The rehabilitation project

After the necessary grants were secured and all approvals were in place, BC Parks allowed the Society to go ahead with the project in 1991. As it was impossible to return the washed-out topsoil a little lake with an island was dredged out in the half of the wetland that was destroyed.



Joop Burgerjon Photo

**Installation of fish ladder - 1991**

A fish ladder was installed where there had been a culvert before and the breach in the beach berm was filled in.



Joop Burgerjon Photo

### Colvin Lake bottom - Filling of hole in berm - 1991

After the lake filled up it was allowed to re-vegetate naturally with minimal interference. The hope was that the new lake would attract waterfowl. The other half of the wetland was left in its original state. The fish ladder was to allow the passage of coho and chum that were known to spawn in Colvin Creek.

### The beaver effect

While the wetland was tidal, beavers were seldom seen but, with the fresh water beavers moved in too. They built dams in Colvin Creek, at the entrance to the lake and at the fish ladder. Initially, we cleared all dams to allow the salmon to access the spawning beds. Both chum and coho started spawning in fair numbers in the gravel beds downstream of Redrooffs Road. At present we only clear the one at the fish ladder, particularly during the spawning season. To see how this is done, click this short video:

[How to clear a beaver dam in 5 minutes.](#)

Chum stopped spawning in the creek but still may be spawning in the lake.

The beavers built a long dam across the wetland, which they kept building up over the years, raising the water level in the undisturbed part of the wetland by about 80 cm above that in the lake. Initially they had their headquarters on the island but moved it behind this long dam three years ago.

### Re-vegetation

After the rehabilitation project the island was void of vegetation. For 10 years Terry Taylor inventoried the re-vegetation of the island. As we expected Red Alder would colonize the island immediately, we pulled them out the first few years. We also removed invasive plants, notably



Joop Burgerjon Photo

### Colvin Lake in 1992

Himalayan- and Evergreen Blackberry and Yellow Flag. Now the vegetation is dominated by shrubs like Black Twinberry, Salmonberry and Thimbleberry. Of the trees three Sitka Spruces and a few White Birches stand out in the scenery. Of the grasses, Reed (*Phragmites communis*), already present elsewhere in the wetland, settled on the island and is the most conspicuous. Cattails formed a collar along the banks of the lake.

On the berm a dense impenetrable hedge of Nootka Rose now hides the wetland from view. See photo below.

The first aquatic plant to arrive in the lake was Floating Waterweed (*Potamogeton spec*). It was already in the surrounding beaver ponds and is now the dominating aquatic plant. In 2009 there was the first Yellow Pond Lilly and this year there were two.

### Return of Wildlife

Black-tail Deer give birth on the island. Elk and Bear wander all over the wetland. While waterfowl did not become abundant in the wetland, Canada Geese, Mallards, Common Mergansers, Hooded Mergansers and Wood Ducks are irregular breeders. Common winter visitors are Bufflehead, Ring-necked Duck, Pied-billed Grebe and occasionally, Trumpeter Swan.

For detailed checklists of plants and birds in the wetland click: <http://www.sargbay.ca/>

### Water management

At present the wetland consists of two distinct areas, separated by a long beaver dam: Most of the SW part, the original wetland, became a large pond of which the water level is controlled by beavers and rainfall. The NW part, the well vegetated lake and island, of which the water level is controlled by beavers and man. In August the level of the pond dropped by 20 cm during the dry summer months.

### Future plans

Because Nootka Rose bushes have grown to obscure the view of the wetland we planned to build a raised viewing platform in a suitable place. However, our application for a grant from the Provincial Community Legacy Program was unsuccessful. We may still consider this possibility.

### Feedback

We welcome your comments and suggestions. Just click the reply button or: <mailto:sargbay@dccnet.com> and give us your valued opinion.



Joop Burgerjon Photo

### Colvin Lake in 2009