



# FRIENDS OF BEACON HILL PARK SOCIETY

www.friendsofbeaconhillpark.ca

October 2001

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The Friends of Beacon Hill Park is a Society dedicated to preserving the natural and cultural history of Beacon Hill Park and promoting appropriate uses in keeping with its varied ecosystems.

As the population of Greater Victoria continues to grow and place greater stress upon the park, we count on your support to help us continue our projects and work to help protect the park.

Membership is \$5.00 per household. Benefits include the satisfaction of helping preserve the park, input in management of the park for the future use of all, and participating in the Society's activities:

- monitor and keep abreast of park developments
- contribute to the newsletter and share information on the park
- work on projects such as Native Plant Mapping
- guided walks
- organizational - phoning, programme, refreshments, newsletter

You are welcomed to attend the monthly meetings of the directors. Please call for date and location.

**Friends of Beacon Hill Park**  
1-366 St. Charles St.,  
Victoria, B.C. V8S 3N3  
250-592-6659

## *What Happened to the Cedars?*

*by Dr. Michelle Gorman, Integrated Pest Management Coordinator*

*Many Park visitors have noticed the dying cedars near the waterways and lakes.*

These cedars are known as Lawson Cypress also known as Port Orford Cedar, *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*. They have been infected with the disease: *Phytophthora lateralis*.

The disease was first reported on lawson cypress near Seattle Washington in 1923. It was not until 1942, in the Willamette Valley of Oregon, that the fungal cause was discovered and named. The fungus is somewhat unique in that swimming spores (zoospores) burst forth from the sporangia in saturated soil and move with the surface water. New infections of root tip occur as spore-bearing water percolates into the soil. Rootlets infected with *P. lateralis* first appear to be water-soaked; then they darken. Fine roots quickly disintegrate. As the fungus advances, the inner bark and cambium of larger roots discolor to a deep cinnamon brown. The disease then proceeds to spread up the trunk of the tree.

Foliage of infected trees appears slightly lighter in color than that of healthy trees and on warm spring days, wilts slightly. Later the foliage withers, turns bronze and finally red

brown. Once the tree turns from slightly lighter in color to more of a yellowish tinge - in general - 50% of the roots have already been infected. Once the tree turns bronze, 75% or more of the roots are involved with the disease.

The fungus depends upon free water for spread and infection so that trees along water ways around lakes and sloughs or in mild moist regions are the first to become infected.

**Biological Agents:** The City of Victoria cooperated with Dr. R. S. Utkhede of Agriculture Canada to study the use of *Enterobacter aerogenes* as a biological control agent for *P. lateralis* in 1994 and 1995 with promising results. Unfortunately federal cutbacks removed the resources for the continuation of this research and the findings remained inconclusive needing a third year of testing.

**Fungicides:** One fungicide is registered for the control of *Phytophthora* on ornamentals in Canada and the City of Victoria has used this product for the control of *P. lateralis* with limited success. Early detection of the disease is of the utmost importance with controlling

*(continued on page 3)*

# Bikes in the Park

by Cornelia Lange

On going concerns about people's actions in the park will be addressed with signs planned in specific areas of the Park. These signs will have **Statements of Conduct** while in the Park says Joe Daly – Park Designer. Currently there are no signs telling cyclists where they can ride their bikes in the park, which must happen before enforcement can take action. Mountain bikers frequent the rocky outcrops in the park, as well, ride directly over grass meadows and along trails.

Painted on asphalt walkways is “NO CYCLING”, although it has been worn over time. Signs prohibiting bikes on the Dallas Road Walkway will be up in the Spring. A future meeting with **Friends** and Joe Daly – Park Designer, will include the cycling and mounted police to discuss concerns of bikes off road in Beacon Hill Park.

The Bicycle Master Plan (City of Victoria, February 1995) states: page 7, 1.1.7

“Experience in other communities suggests that separated bicycle or joint bicycle-pedestrian paths can support commuting and recreational cycling by all age groups. Separated paths may be feasible where there is limited cross line and signs saying whether the path is for exclusive bicycle use or joint pedestrian use.

For joint use paths, special control measures are necessary. “Pedestrian Keep Right” signs should be posted and a *speed limit* should be considered. Whatever the design, complaints are expected. A review process should be available to evaluate the trends and to involve a committee such as the Bicycle Advisory Subcommittee, City staff and the public:

Beacon Hill Park south of Dallas Road from Menzies Street in the west to Bushby Street in the east;

Beacon Hill Park from the intersection of Cook Street and Dallas Road in the southeast to Southgate and Blanshard Streets in the northeast (with a spur to the Park Boulevard

terminus of the Vancouver Street)...

The existing Westsong Way path is 4 m wide. Cycling is banned along this path due to concerns raised about pedestrian safety. The conflicts between cyclists and pedestrian could be reduced by providing adequate control measures. It is suggested the city test signs informing users that it is a “Joint Use Path” and that “Cyclists must Yield to Pedestrians,” in addition, posting a bicycle speed limit of 10 km/hr, and paint a center line. In addition, during high use periods when conflicts would increase, the City should be prepared to assign Victoria Police bicycle patrols to the area.

In Beacon Hill Park, the City should review the provision of joint use of paths. This will require upgrading the standard of existing paths. The Parks Department and the Bicycle Advisory Subcommittee should collaborate on the amendments due to the safety concerns raised by the Parks Department.”

According to the recent Beacon Hill Park Management Plan Phase I Final Report by AXYS Environmental Consulting Ltd., page 93: quote

“Recommendation 18: Increase enforcement within the park prohibiting bicycling and roller-blading outside of roads and pathways.

The practice of biking and roller-blading has raised public concern about the potential damage to natural areas caused by bikes particularly on ‘The Ridge’ area in the north-western section of the park which experiences a high incidence of use by mountain bikers both on and off trails. A city by-law prohibits biking, roller-blading and skateboarding on sidewalks, however, the application of this by-law to pathways within city parks is a gray area. There is no signage in the park restricting the locations of these uses and enforcement of the city by-law is limited.

(Continued on page 3)

## *Bikes in the Park (Concluded from previous page)*

It is recommended that bicycling and roller-blading continue to be permitted along roads and, as an interim measure pending the outcome of Phase II, continue to be accepted along all formal pathways but not encouraged. Enforcement of 'no cycling or roller-blading' outside of roads and pathways should be increased. A more detailed inventory of trails and further public consultation with the cycling community, roller-bladers and other park users should be undertaken as part of Phase II to determine which park trails could potentially be upgraded to better accommodate multiple users and which

trails, if any, should be closed to cyclists and/or roller-bladers."

Integrated into Phase II of the Beacon Hill Park Management Plan, will be:

- Refining/ assessing appropriate activity
- Traffic & Trail Management Plan
- Natural Areas Management Plan
- Heritage Component
- Operational/ policing and bylaws review
- Communication Plan
- Children's Farm & Lawnbowling agreement review

Please write to Mayor & Council your interests on bicycle use in Beacon Hill Park. ❖

## *What Happened to the Cedars? (concluded from page 1)*

this fungus; if more than 50% of the roots have been invaded, the fungicide won't work. Unfortunately, it takes an extremely well-trained eye to catch the disease when the tree is just slightly lighter in color.

If a *Chamaecyparis* has died of *P.lateralis* then a non-host to the fungus should be replanted at that site. The disease already exists in the soil throughout Victoria, Vancouver and extends from northern California to southern British Columbia. Asiatic *Chamaecyparis* and Alaska-cedar (*C. nootkatensis*) are more resistant than Lawson cypress. Upgrading with more of these types of trees in our forested areas would be an option. ❖

## *What do you think?*

Is it a chair to relax on or is it a tombstone in memory of a deceased tree? There are mixed reviews on the axe cutters actions when trees are removed from the Park. Some see the initialed stumps as an act of vandalism, and others see it as a whimsical organic seat for a restful stop. The Parks staff are interested in your opinion, but please request that your comments are recorded: 361-0060 ❖

## *Well Mow Me Down*

Success in our natural areas depends on the summer time mowers. Unfortunately mowing tall grass is deemed necessary to reduce fire hazard in an area susceptible to fires. Friends have worked with park staff to mow mid July in order that meadow wildflowers can seed. Mowers move around the city boulevards and parks, so communication is essential when trying to protect vulnerable areas in Beacon Hill Park. Friends planted native plants near the new crosswalk area of Southgate last fall, and park staff planted Garry Oak saplings near ornamental trees along the Heywood Meadow. Miscommunications with replacement mowers caused these treasures to be mowed under. Mike Matthews, acting manager of the Parks Department, will look for solution before next year. ❖



# *Sea Shore Erosion by Dr. T. Christopher Brayshaw, August 2000*

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## **A. CHARACTER OF THE SHORE:**

The sea shore fronting Beacon Hill Park is mainly rocky from Holland Point to Finlayson Point; Fonyo Beach being the only extensive stretch of shingle and cobble beach.

The rock shore is not eroded naturally by the sea at any significant rate; but the cobbles of Fonyo beach, exposed to southeasterly gales, are shifted back and forth along-shore by heavy wave action.

The long stretch of beach between Finlayson Point and Clover Point has been shaped by the sea until, after thousands of years of natural erosion, the beach and the banks behind it have become adjusted to an alignment of maximum sustainability. Erosion now is slow, and is spread out along the length of the beach.

The rock promontories of Clover and Finlayson Points control the rate of erosion and the alignment of the beach by preventing the removal from the intervening bay and beach of any material that the waves may move along-shore.

Any disturbance of this shore line, however, can lead to accelerated local erosion as the sea attempts to re-adjust and restore the shore to a sustainable line.

## **B. THE PERCIEVED EROSION:**

The erosion that is seen to be taking place today along the shore has two aspects:- (a) Locally, erosion is seen to affect the shore directly where there has been human intervention in the shore line. (b) In other places, erosion affects primarily the slopes above the shore, and secondarily the shore itself, where it becomes covered by material brought down from the eroding slopes above.

## **C. CAUSES AND EXAMPLES:**

Most of the erosion seen is of artificial origin: -- the consequence of either deliberate interference with, or inadvertent influence on, the natural shore line or its hinterland.

Deliberate attempts to improve on Nature are exemplified by the construction of promenades and sea walls on the shore. These projects undercut and steepen the slopes, and put structures to seaward of the natural high tide line, exposing them to damage or displacement by wave action.

The current condition of the promenade and sea wall on Fonyo Beach – built on a shiftable cobble beach and cut into the slope above, is an example of this type of project, and what can happen to it. Not only has the sea wall been broken, thus committing the City to on-going damage control, dumping rocks on the breached wall, but the undercut and over-steepened slope above is experiencing a renewed cycle of erosion.

Casual or inadvertent use includes the making of paths down the steep slopes to the shore, and along the shore, undercutting the base of the slopes.

The erosion of the banks at Finlayson Point is an example of the effect of inadvertent action. Material slumped down from the upper slopes left bare slopes at the upper edge, which receded rapidly for several years.

The erosion was affecting the upper slopes primarily, while the shore itself was maintaining its alignment. Any soil that crossed the high tide line has been swept away and redistributed by wave action. The sea devours what we feed it.

The sea was thought to be responsible for the slope erosion. However, an artificial berm built on the beach in Horseshoe Bay, while protecting the base of the slope from wave impact, did not stop the erosion of the slopes above.

That erosion stemmed mainly from a ponding of run-off water from Beacon Hill in a depression behind Finlayson Point, whence the water found its way to the shore via the clay subsoil, which became saturated and semi-fluid; hence the instability and slumping of the seaward slopes.

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## *Sea Shore Erosion (concluded from previous page) .*

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The recent extension of the storm drain system through the upland area behind these seaward slopes has led to a drying out and stiffening of the subsoil as its main source of water has been channeled away; and to stabilization of the slopes, where slumping has ceased, and the once-bared slopes have become revegetated.

### **D. CONCLUSION**

It is noteworthy that the most conspicuous erosion phenomena seen along our shore are effects of our intervention in the natural processes maintaining the shore line and its hinterland.

It behooves us to exercise restraint in the face of temptation to tinker with the shore and its environment.

## *Beacon Hill Park Management Plan Phase 1*

*Excerpt from Final Report p. 89* 7.4.6. Summary

“Deriving recommendations on appropriate uses, particularly those endorsed by the public, is confounded by the broad range of public views. The public comments received during Phase I spanned the spectrum between removing all facilities and gardens and restoring the site to natural vegetation, to adding more facilities such as food concessions, sports fields, a go-cart course, a maze, and developing an enhanced tourism product at Mile Zero. Beacon Hill Park means different things to different people and there is clearly no consensus among the public. Decision-makers are led to attempt to manage Beacon Hill Park to be ‘all things to all people’, which cannot possibly be accommodated in a park of its size. Additionally, the central location of the park, and its free and open access, make prohibiting otherwise legitimate public uses difficult from both a political and enforcement standpoint. Decision-makers are thus faced with making unpopular decisions regardless of their best intentions. Therefore, it is important that decisions on appropriate use be framed and coordinated with respect to activity allocation, siting, timing, management and enforcement at a more detailed planning level.

While it has been established that the public has widely varying views on appropriate use, there is clear agreement the Beacon Hill Park is a place for strolling, picnicking, relaxing, admiring flowers, bird and wildlife watching, enjoying scenic vistas and visiting historic sites. Furthermore, based on an understanding of the existing policy framework (Trust, legal rulings, laws, policies and guidelines), a comprehensive review of public opinions regarding appropriate use, and an analysis of the park’s carrying capacity, it is concluded that no activity currently occurring in the park are consid-

ered wholly and unequivocally inappropriate with the exception of illegal uses (Section 7.6.1.), specific commercial uses aimed at corporate or private profit generation, and specific large events as defined by the ruling of Justice Wilson, 1998. Most of the activities themselves, can be in keeping with the Trust, by operating in a manner which complements the character and nature of the park, and by implementing mitigation measures which minimize the environmental and social impact as long as, when taking into account the cumulative impact of other activities, they do not exceed the carrying capacity of the park.

Further, it is recommended that recreation and leisure facilities currently in use can remain in use and may be enhanced as needed provided these facilities are operated according to the current policy framework. Specifically, the present operation of the Children’s Farmyard and Lawnbowling Club appears to contravene the terms of the Trust and is inconsistent with the direction provided in the Long Term Policies for Beacon Hill Park.

The application of agreed-upon criteria in the assessment of human uses in Beacon Hill Park will serve to ensure both the spirit of the Trust and the vision for Beacon Hill Park are realized into the future.”

You can check out the Consultant’s Summary Report on the city’s website

<http://www.city.victoria.bc.ca/beaconhill/>

The consultant’s environmental report outlines that the Sensitive Natural Areas of the Park have reached their environmental capacity. Friends continue to be concerned about any activity spilling over into sensitive areas because the nature of the park is open and accessible. Activity containment has not been successful. ❖

# Roundtable Update

by J. Goldman

The Roundtable discussions, having been reconvened October 13, 2001, found the Environment Sector and others yet again requesting that legal and historical references be made available to the participants. The rationale behind this insistence is, when all else fails, reference must be made to documents that govern Beacon Hill Park in order to aid deliberations. That there be resistance to consulting these documents, when in any negotiations dealing with a trust asset, failure to do so would be regarded as negligent and downright reckless, continues to confound.

The Environmental Sector, of which the Friends of Beacon Hill Park is the active constituent, shall continue to strive to protect Beacon Hill Park. It remains steadfast in its commitment to ensure the appropriateness of all activities vis a vis this park by asking the most pertinent question, "Is an activity necessary or incidental to the defining characteristic of the park?"

In other words, does the park need the event or does the event need the park?

It is of interest to note why the park is considered to be a desirable venue:

1. It is attractive
2. It is accessible
3. Little or no liability is attached
4. Most important of all – it is a FREE venue

The next meeting of the Roundtable will address 'commercialism' in the park. That this must be considered at all reflects the lack of responsible stewardship under which the park so long has languished.

That said, the Environmental sector is gratified a 'state of the Environment Report' has been created by AXYS Consultants and shall do its utmost to rectify any inaccuracies, inconsistencies, or omissions should they be discovered.

Roundtable discussions to "Restrict Commercialism" will be held at City Hall, City Council Chambers 9-4 PM on November 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup> and December 8<sup>th</sup>. Anyone may come to observe and your interests/concerns can be communicated to the Environment Chair – Helen Oldershaw. ❖

## A Sea of Blue: Beacon Hill Park, Victoria, BC

by Brenda Costanzo, M.Sc., Registered Professional Biologist

Reprinted with permission from the Newsletter of the North American Native Plant Society

As early as 1850, the Hudson's Bay Company set aside a public park in Fort Victoria. However, Beacon Hill Park was not made official until 1882 through an amendment by legislature to the *Public Parks Act*. Beacon Hill Park was intended for the citizens of Victoria as a place to relax, to enjoy nature and to get away from city life. Over the years, various formal flowerbeds, walking paths, roadways and ponds were constructed, partially based on John Blair's 1889 plan for Beacon Hill Park. Around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a cricket pitch and lawn bowling green were added to the park, and today there are soccer and baseball fields, tennis courts, a putting green and a petting zoo. Beacon Hill Park is

now approximately 154 acres in size, surrounded on three sides by the City of Victoria, and by the Strait of Juan de Fuca on the fourth.

Beacon Hill has retained its wild side and is now famous for its stunning views of native purple flowering camas (*Camassia quamash*) in April each year. These fields of camas were originally part of native Garry oak (*Quercus garryana*) grassland and woodlands - ecosystems currently ranked as endangered by the provincial Conservation Data Centre. Beacon Hill Park has 15 rare plant species native to these Garry oak habitats. Dr. Christopher T. Brayshaw (Research Associate and Emeritus Curator of Botany, Royal British Columbia Museum) has outlined six vegetative types within the park. Along with the Garry oak grassland and woodlands, there are also

## A Sea of Blue *(continued from previous page)*

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Douglas-fir woods, black cottonwood forests and moist shrub habitat. There are approximately 60 native plant species within the Garry oak habitats and 53 native plant species in the Douglas-fir woods. Both of these areas became the subjects of restoration projects over the past ten years.

In 1989 a group called the Friends of Beacon Hill Park formed in an effort to preserve a section of the park known as the Southeast Woods. The Friends approached City Council in April 1989 to preserve these woods and to ask permission to conduct a restoration project. After City Council's approval, Anne Fletcher, Helen Oldershaw and Joel Ussery led the project for the Friends from 1990 to 1995. The restoration began with the removal of encroaching weedy species in the 800-metre-square plot. The Southeast Woods were originally a coniferous canopy of Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and grand fir (*Abies grandis*), with smaller numbers of broad-leaved maple (*Acer macrophyllum*), red alder (*Alnus rubra*) and pacific yew (*Taxus brevifolia*). The understory shrubs and the forest floor had been altered by past activities in the area, and exotic trees had also been introduced.

In November 1990, the restoration project in the Southeast Woods began with the planting of Douglas-fir, grand fir, trailing blackberry (*Rubus ursinus*), swordfern (*Polystichum munitum*), star flower (*Trientalis latifolia*), tall Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*) and dull Oregon grape (*Mahonia nervosa*), lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) and trillium (*Trillium ovatum*). These plantings were monitored, plant species listed and location documented, and progress reports were sent to the City of Victoria Parks Department. The Friends were supported by a grant from the Victoria Natural History Society. The Royal British Columbia Museum's Botanical Curators offered advice on species for the restoration project, and assisted with ongoing plant inventories within the park. Weeding and planting were carried out by a volunteer committee and by the Ninth Victoria Girl Guides (Cadboro Bay), led by Agnes Lynn. Native plants were obtained from a specialized nursery (Fraser's Thimble Farms), from the Heritage Tree Program and donations from volun-

teers. During one salvage operation performed by the Girl Guides, numerous corms of white fawn lily (*Erythronium oregonum*) were collected from a subdivision site in Victoria. Now, these fawn lilies bloom every spring in the Southeast Woods and are one of the success stories of the project

An objective of the Friends of Beacon Hill was to ensure park management practices included the enhancement and preservation of natural areas. Accordingly, a second restoration project was completed in conjunction with the City Parks staff of Beacon Hill Park, who propagated the plants for the project. In February 2000, they planted a variety of native species in a Garry oak/rock outcrop area that had been degraded by mountain bikers. In this site, clumps of small *Quercus garryana* seedlings were set out in three bed-like arrangements dug out of the non-native grass under existing Garry oaks. These oak seedlings were complemented by several species of native shrubs and perennials including: red-flowering currant (*Ribes sanguineum*), Nootka rose (*Rosa nutkana*), fawn lilies (*Erythronium oregonum*), shooting stars (*Dodecatheon hendersonii*), satin flower (*Sisyrinchium douglasii*) and two species of camas (*Camassia leichtlinii* and *C. quamash*).

Due to the various changes and uses within the park over the 100 years, these sensitive Garry oak habitats have been altered by development, mowing, planting of exotic species and seeding of large areas with non-native grasses. In 1958, the grassy southern slope of the park, where camas bloom each spring, was planted with daffodils. Once native plant species have been disturbed, they are susceptible to replacement by aggressive exotic species such as Scotch broom (*Cytisus scoparius*) in open areas, and English ivy (*Hedera helix*) and holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) in wooded areas.

Throughout the past ten years, the Friends of Beacon Hill Park have tirelessly served the interests of the general public in preserving and partially restoring the natural plant communities of Beacon Hill Park. They have also promoted the awareness of these

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## Sea of Blue (cont'd)

plant communities at various community events. Along with the Royal British Columbia Museum and the Victoria Natural History Society, the Friends conduct a natural history day in the park every April, known as Camas Days. There are archaeological/anthropological, ornithological/entomological and botanical tours offered to the public free of charge. By organizing this day of events, as well as spearheading the restoration projects, the Friends have successfully increased public awareness of the natural heritage in Beacon Hill Park. The Friends have collaborated with the City Parks Department and ensured the natural areas are considered in park management practices.

*Brenda Costanzo is a past chair of the Native Plant Study Group of the Victoria Horticultural Society, and currently one of the directors for the South Coastal Region of the Native Plant Society of British Columbia. She has been involved with native plant gardening for 20 years, and has planned, designed and implemented two public plant gardens: one at Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary in Victoria, B.C., and one at the University of Victoria. ❖*

## Announcements

### Victoria Horticultural Society

#### NATIVE PLANT STUDY GROUP

Uvic, D.F. Strong Building in Room C108 at 7 PM every third Thursday  
\$2 contact: 361-3122

OCTOBER 18, 2001

Jill Harris, Coast Salish Penelakut tribe, speaking on Cultural Landscapes in Indigenous Cultures.

NOVEMBER 15, 2001

Brenda Callan, PhD, Forest Pathologist, Canadian Forest Service, speaking on "Trees and Tree Diseases".

JANUARY 17, 2002

Rob Cummings, PhD, Curator of Entomology, Royal BC Museum, speaking on the Natural History of Dragon Flies.

## Special Events Report

### by Friends of Beacon Hill Park

Friends documented the difficulties attendant with special events in 2000-2001—crowds, trampling, noise, disregard for park bylaws and event guidelines, commercialism, and impact on the Park's character. Friends presented the resulting report to mayor, council, and city staff. We thank those who met with us:

Mayor Allan Lowe  
Councillor Denise Savoie  
Councillor Rob Fleming  
Councillor Jane Lunt  
Councillor Pamela Madoff  
Councillor Helen Hughes  
Joe Martignago – City Manager  
Donna Atkinson – Community Services  
Elizabeth Low – Community Services  
Joe Daly – Parks

Councillor Bea Holland, Councillor David McLean, Councillor Art Vanden Berg have not responded. ❖

### Friends Board of Directors

Helen Oldershaw – chair  
Roy Fletcher – treasurer  
Cornelia Lange – secretary  
Agnes Lynn – membership committee chair  
Dr. Renata Varwig – phoning committee chair  
Dr. T. Brayshaw – botany specialist\ honorary director

Many thanks to our members who support the preservation of Beacon Hill Park with your \$5.00 annual membership fee. Please invite your friends to join. We are committed to send quarterly newsletters communicating a variety of Park issues and information.

If you have a red dot on your mailing label, this means that we haven't received your annual \$5.00 membership. Your monetary contribution helps with postage and other expenses. A special "Thank you" to those who sent in donations. ❖

### Bev Glover

We regret the passing of Bev Glover, a trusted Victoria Natural History Society member who attended Camas Day faithfully. She was well regarded by botanists, birders and her students at UVic and will be missed by Friends members. ❖