



NEWSLETTER

P.O. Box 60, Denman Island, B.C. V0R 1T0

September 2019

Wetlands Week Recap

On the Land

by Erika Bland

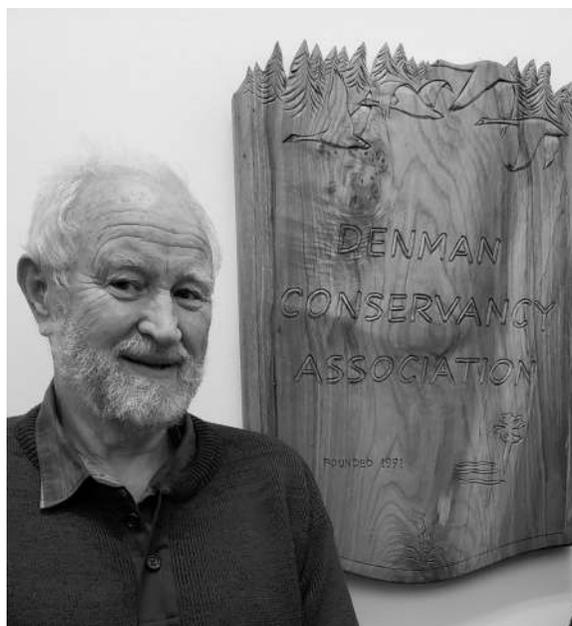
I hope you made it to the video screening of the EcoDFNDRS Youth Film Camp on August 17. The wonderful short films made by 12-15 year olds from near and far creatively addressed the theme of water – a perfect way to kick off DCA's Wetlands Week! Jenny Balke and I led a youth workshop about wetlands at the camp, including a 'Wetland Critter Council' exercise. It was inspiring to speak with so many enthusiastic and environmentally conscious youth. Congratulations to Hilary Pryor and the other organizers of this camp.

DCA's Dinner & Talk at the Back Hall on August 19 was an informative evening featuring four researchers from Sherbrooke, QC, who spoke about their day sampling of Chickadee Lake for the national Lake Pulse Project. (Thanks to Laura Pope for initially putting me in touch with the researchers.) Their guiding question was, 'how healthy are Canadian lakes?' Even if the talk was a bit more technical than expected, I want to let you know that the students were absolutely thrilled to be on Denman and present their work to us. It was their "favourite day of the whole summer," and I found out afterward that they had never before had the opportunity to speak to the communities where they've worked across the country. Nobody had ever asked them!

Attendees had excellent questions that kept the students on their toes. We raised about \$300 for DCA, after expenses, but it took significant volunteer effort. Huge thanks to Deb Bishop for your 20+ volunteer hours of expert catering assistance, and to all the other volunteers that helped out that evening.

A workshop on water quality monitoring was scheduled as part of Wetlands Week, but was postponed due to low registration. If you are interested in taking this workshop, which will include a field trip to DCA's Settlement Lands to use water quality testing equipment, please get in touch and I'll let you know when it is rescheduled.

Finally, on Saturday, August 24 DCA hosted a Wetlands Celebration at the Old School. Jenny Balke, Andrew Fyson and Steve Carballera discussed the importance of water and wetlands to the island, and Jenny led us through an exercise of imagining the world from the perspectives of various other-than-human wetland critters. What is it like to be a water-strider? A beaver? A rough-skinned newt? A Taylor's Checkerspot? This discussion was followed by a lovely botany-focused walk in Central Park, led by Andrew. Thank you to everyone who participated in celebrating the island's wetlands with us. It was a perfect time of year to do so, when persistent drought makes these precious places seem especially important.



This lovely commemorative maple plaque carved by Peter Karsten now hangs at the entrance to the Conservancy Room. Photo Erika Bland

Contributors to this Newsletter:

Jenny Balke, Erika Bland, DD Fuchs, John Millen, Patti Willis

Home and Garden Tour Wrap Up

The weather was beautiful, the gardens were in full bloom and the homeowners were welcoming and gracious. What else could we ask for? Every two years Denman Islanders open their homes and gardens in support of the Conservancy and this past June, DCA hosted another enchanting Home and Garden Tour. The Tour is the Conservancy's main fundraiser and thanks to its tradition of excellence and to the vision and social media savvy of our coordinator Katrina Meglic, the tour attracted close to 1250 visitors and netted the Conservancy over \$18,000.

As always, a huge thank you goes out to all the volunteers who made it possible, but most especially to the homeowners who opened their homes and gardens: Rick & Ann Paisley; Des & Sandy Kennedy; Mary Jane & Howard Stewart; Leyah Kelly; Sam Croome & Emily Anderson; Lindsay Ross; Pelka & Rob Wiltshire; Selinda & Mike White; Pat & Selwyn Jones; Mitra Ghaffari & Mark Prior; and David & Joan Scruton. And of course, special thanks to Roxanna Mandryk and Doug Bell for hosting a wonderful after-party and to Jarrod Kirk for his delicious catering.

As islanders, we are fortunate to have this opportunity to journey up our neighbours' driveways for a closer look at the hidden beauty all around us, but for visitors the Tour is a highly anticipated and inspiring event. In addition to stunning West Coast-style homes, lush gardens, and working farms, this year introduced visitors to Central Park, where DCA land manager Erika Bland and DCA members provided information and invited visitors to experience some of the natural beauty of a Conservancy property.

Thank you to all who visited the tour, to all the gardeners, to the lunch and dessert providers, to the bike tour coordinators and to all the volunteers who made this year's tour such a success. Next year we get to relax but be prepared for another great tour in 2021!

Book Sale Results

The 2019 annual DCA book sale at the Blackberry Faire was a little different this year because of the rainy end of the summer. But thanks to DIRCS, the book sale was moved into the Community Hall, which made for a warm, dry and cozy spot to peruse the many, many books for sale. The book sale continues to be a successful fundraiser for the Conservancy due to the tremendous support of the community. Thank you to everyone who donated books and to everyone who purchased books by donation. This year we had hundreds (thousands?) of books donated by Denman Islanders and by the Hornby Island Community Fund. The Hornby Island Community Fund collects book donations throughout the year for their own sale and distributes the

proceeds to Hornby non-profit organizations. For a number of years, they have donated their unsold books to the Conservancy for the Blackberry Faire book sale. As with the last several years, we've had so many books that we decided to continue the sale on Saturday mornings throughout September in the Conservancy Room at the Old School.

So far this year, donations of books and cash towards the purchase of books has contributed over \$2100 towards maintaining conservation lands on Denman Island. Thank you to everyone, but it's not over yet! Books will still be available for purchase by donation on Saturday morning, September 29. As in the past, at the end of our sale, all the left-over books will be donated to the Rotary Club for their book sale in Comox. **See you on Saturday for the last chance book sale!**

Nature Reserve Work Bees Scheduled this Fall

→ Wednesday, October 9th 9am-11am. Inner Island Nature Reserve. Meet at Pickles Bridge. We will find and remove English Holly and Scotch Broom plants.

→ Wednesday, October 16th 1pm-3pm. Morrison Marsh Nature Reserve. Meet at far south end of Greenhill Rd. We will find and remove English Holly and Daphne Laurel plants.

→ Sunday, October 20th 1pm-3pm. Lindsay Dickson Nature Reserve. Meet at Junction of Owl Cr and Mallard Way. We will check stumps of previously cut English Holly plants and remove any new shoots, as well as remove other new plants.

FOR ALL OF THE ABOVE: Snacks provided. DCA has some tools to share, but please bring gloves, water, and one of the following tools, if you have them: Loppers, pruning saw, secateurs, brush hook axe, pick/mattock, battery powered reciprocating saw. (Please RSVP to Erika if you can bring a chainsaw: dcalandmanager@gmail.com or 250-702-7773)

This fall/winter, DCA will once again be working with DIRA Pesticide Free Committee and BC Parks to carry out manual removal of English Holly in Fillongley Park (dates TBC).



Spiders, Worms, Frogs and their Student Allies

During the 2018-2019 school year, DCA teamed up with the Community School to introduce the Youth Environmental Education Program. Students explored the woods in three seasons identifying plants, animals and habitats, coupled with classroom nature-oriented art, photography and research. The program culminated in a public presentation of posters by the students describing their work, and a power-point produced by two students. This collaborative program, supported by numerous community volunteers, will continue this year, benefiting from student, teacher, parent and volunteer feed-back about the initial year of this ambitious project. DCA congratulates the students on their great work!



Inner Island Nature Reserve
on Pickles Road

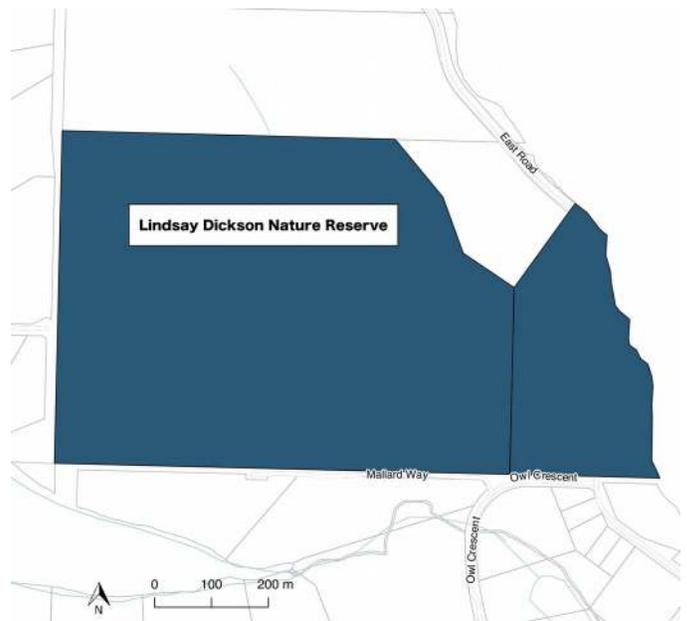


Photo: M. Tuttle Bat Conservation International

Islands Trust Conservancy Nature Reserves Management Planning

Public consultation is currently in progress for updated draft management plans for Lindsay Dickson Nature Reserve and Inner Island Nature Reserve, as well as a new draft management plan for Valens' Brook Nature Reserve, Denman Island's newest conservation area.

DCA is coordinating focus groups of neighbours (and other interested persons) for each of these properties as part of this consultation. If you have thoughts you would like to share about these protected areas, please contact Erika (dcalandmanager@gmail.com or 250-702-7773). I look forward to walking these lands with you while discussing management issues. You can go to http://www.islandstrustconservancy.ca/denman_mp_surveys/ to fill out online questionnaires for Lindsay Dickson and Inner Island. I can also provide PDF copies of the draft plans to those interested in reading them and providing comments. Thanks to those who have already done so, and for the great turnout at our recent Open House Sept 7.



Lindsay Dickson Nature Reserve
on East Road

International BAT WEEK is Oct 24-31!

“Bat Week is an annual, international celebration of the role of bats in nature. Bat Week is organized by a team of representatives from across the United States and Canada from conservation organizations and government departments.” <http://batweek.org/about/>

Invasive Species

Why Should We Care? by Erika Bland

Biological invasion – that is, the introduction and persistence of flora and fauna species within areas outside their places of origin – is one of the top causes of biodiversity loss and species extinctions across the world, and can have particularly detrimental effects in island ecosystems.

In a 2016 study published in the journal *Biological Letters*, Bellard et al. assessed the prevalence of alien species as a driver of recent extinctions in five major taxa (plants, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals). Their results showed that alien species are the second most common threat associated with species that have gone completely extinct from these taxa since AD 1500. Alien species are the most common threat associated with extinctions in three of the five taxa analysed, and for vertebrate extinctions overall. ‘Invasive Alien Species’ are known to reduce resilience of ecological communities and habitats, making them more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. For example, the presence of some species can significantly alter fire regimes, especially in areas that are becoming warmer and drier. They can also impact agricultural systems, by reducing crop and animal health.

‘But...’ I hear some of you say, ‘what about the need to embrace *novel ecosystems*? What if these new plant and animal assemblages are just our new normal? Shouldn’t we just accept it and move on to thinking about how these new assemblages might be beneficial to us?’

The problem, for me, is in the way that human benefit is usually placed firmly at the centre of this way of thinking. I prefer to draw on the precautionary principle to guide my actions in this realm. We can’t anticipate the long-term effects of novel ecosystems (be they ‘positive’ or ‘negative’ for humans). But we *do* know that biodiversity underpins ecosystem functioning and that the spread of invasive species reduces biodiversity. In this context, it seems to me that removing small patches of invasive plant species here on the Inner Island is achievable in a world of overwhelmingly complex challenges.

Invasive species and associated loss of biodiversity can also have cultural implications. This summer, I was speaking with an elder from the Qualicum Nation, who expressed concern that invasive plants like Scotch broom are responsible for significant reductions in the availability of important traditional foods such as soapberry (*Shepherdia canadensis*).

The most effective approach to dealing with invasive species, according to the IUCN, starts with prevention, and then small-scale eradication in areas where populations are still small and isolated. Time to get a handle on them is now!

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Learning About Our Bats

Bats are voracious consumers of bugs!

Mosquitos, moths, beetles, etc...

DCA began the bat project knowing almost nothing about the lives and needs of our bats. We tend to think that the 100’s of other species on Denman just do their own thing independently from us. Yet we all share this small island and the space and resources it has to offer. We know but tend to forget that our actions affect our neighbours, 2-legged, 4-legged or winged. As we record observations, we are slowly learning and appreciating more about our winged nocturnal neighbours.

The bat project has learned:

* Now we have records of all nine expected bat species on Denman.

* Thus far, the island has been able to maintain Denman’s important known colonies of both the rare Townsend’s Big-eared bats and the endangered Little Brown bats.

* About one quarter to one third of our bat houses have had bat visitors, and at least two have maternal colonies, one of Little Brown Bats and another of Denman’s smallest bat, the little California bat.

* Bat counts and the observations recorded are beginning to give us some idea about bat behaviours and their movements during the summer. Some sites are occupied in spring and fall, others in summer. Bats move around – probably chasing the bugs they need.

* This summer we were sadly reminded about the possibility of rabies in mammals. This virus can be brought to Denman with a tiny fraction of the bat population. Despite our seeming insulation from the greater world, many hazards are present. As a result, we are reminded not to handle wild animals or animals behaving strangely without adequate precautions against personal exposure. Also, vaccinating pets against rabies is obviously important. A friend reminded me about the ever-present possibility of tetanus (another deadly and horrible disease, from a bacteria in our soil) and the wisdom of up-to-date vaccination!

* There are a few bats still in bat houses and flying around at night. But many of our bats have headed to parts unknown to hibernate for the winter. We now think they likely over-winter in small groups or as individuals, possibly in the mountains on Vancouver Island where temperatures can be maintained at a steady 1-5 degrees Celsius with constant moderate humidity.

Erika has supported her Invasive species article with references to the published scientific works (mostly online). To request a copy of her original paper please contact: dcalandmanager@gmail.com