



Clockwise from top: trail crew working on Cox Park water management (Lynne Young); working on the new Honeysuckle Trail (Jamie Doig); the improved Windecker access trail (Lynne Young); working on the Windecker access trail (Tom Cameron).

Volunteer trail-work crews

Throughout the year, as always, regular crews kept the trails trimmed all around the island—lots of spring rain provided lush salal growth despite the summer drought. Our trail stewards alerted Rob to specific maintenance jobs that were needed on “their” trails, so that he could schedule the work ensuring that sufficient materials and tools were on hand.

Cox Park work

Photo: Tom Cameron



Right at the end of 2016 Rob Brockley’s sturdy workcrews in rubber boots laboured in foul weather to divert and control the winter flow of rainwater down the trails in Cox Community Park. During three Sunday sessions, they dug and deepened ditches beside the trails, and installed a 14-foot drainage pipe and a series of water bars over drainage rock. It was hard work just hauling their gear in from Taylor Bay Road before they got started. At the final snowy session Dr Vannini of Royal Roads University made a video of our work as part of his Gulf Islands project. So we were able to welcome the new year by finishing a significant trail project. Early in January another crew installed the RDN’s lovely new entrance sign and benches in Cox Community Park—finishing a two year project to make the park more user-friendly.

Windecker Drive access trail into Elder Cedar

Lots of snow in early February gave Rob a scheduling challenge for trail work, but on February 19, our volunteer work crews made an excellent start on our very ambitious Windecker Drive trail improvement project, which was completed in March. This frequently used trail was often muddy and sometimes waterlogged, so our volunteers removed vegetation, levelled the grade, and dug a drainage ditch beside the trail route. On March 5, another vigorous team shoveled a huge load of gravel to improve the mucky trail access.



McDonald to Peterson neighbourhood trail—a major 3-month project

One rainy Sunday in September our energetic trail work crew started to solve a long-standing problem on a trail that provides important neighbourhood connectivity. Rob Brockley described it:

“The trail between McDonald Rd and Peterson Rd is a critical link in GaLTT’s end-to-end walking route and is also important for local neighbourhood connectivity. Unfortunately, it passes through a swampy area that floods during the winter, making it impassable for several months unless a canoe or walking stilts are available.

We’ve tried several remedies over the years, all of which have ultimately been overwhelmed by the water level during the rainy season. The only practical solution is a lengthy section (~150 feet) of elevated wooden boardwalk. It’ll take more than one work party to complete this big job.”

A local walking in the area early in October wondered why the elevated boardwalk suddenly ended in midair halfway through the trail, but was assured that the crew would finish the job in mid October after Rob returned from holiday and had time to cut more wood with Jamie Doig. Then, in November they nailed non-skid diamond metal lathe strips to the 150-foot walking surface and installed signposts and handrails at the access points. All just in time for the winter floods...

Invasive plant removal— it takes a village...

GaLTT continues to attack the severe problem of invasive plants all across Gabriola. We produce brochures, organize removal work parties, include information on our website

www.galtt.ca, and work with other community groups to solve the problem. The seeds last for decades in the soil, so it’s an ongoing, increasing problem that cannot be solved without the whole community getting behind it. Unless private landowners remove the invasives from their own property, it’s a hopeless task.

The Commons continues to attack the Daphne laurel invading the understory on its property, and for several years the visitors at Camp Miriam have enthusiastically helped. Many anonymous trail walkers and riders pull up the tansy ragwort in late summer before it goes to seed, and GaLTT member Nick Doe personally cleared the whole Coats Marsh area during his frequent visits there. Board member David Boehm continues his personal campaign against the very toxic Giant Hogweed.



Photo: Lynn Young

Scotch broom

As always, we worked with the Gabriola Lions Club to control the major broom infestation in Drumbeg Park, but we also went after the serious patch near the firehall. The local Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, and Cubs got energetically involved in solving the problem at the Petroglyph Heritage Park. Numerous residents worked tirelessly to eradicate broom from their neighbourhoods and Christine Purfield, Dallas Rose and Rob Maynard enlisted GaLTT’s help in disposing of the vast piles of broom they had destroyed. GaLTT will be organizing an island wide broom bash when blooming begins in the spring and interested volunteers can contact board member Lou Skinner.

Cooperation with the museum

In the early spring GaLTT and the Gabriola Museum launched a two-pronged initiative, co-producing a Gabriola-specific brochure on the worst local invasives and co-sponsoring a panel discussion with three subject experts from Vancouver Island communities who talked about their work on removing broom, tansy ragwort, and giant hogweed. The focus of both the brochure and discussion was how to identify and safely and effectively remove harmful plants.

AGM and speaker: Elke Winde tells us about amphibians in BC



Photo: Nola Johnston

In February 2017, over 50 people turned out to the Roxy to hear Elke Wind talk about amphibians in BC. Although in many areas such as California amphibians are severely threatened by climate change and by invasive species such as bullfrogs, they are doing reasonably well in the cool, damp forests of the northwest. They have semi-permeable skin and need access to both aquatic and terrestrial habitat, particularly ephemeral water bodies without fish (which eat their tadpoles). This was important news to us on Gabriola where so many of our water systems are ephemeral.

GaLTT's 2016 AGM

After Elke’s talk 37 members attended GaLTT’s AGM, to hear reports of a successful previous year in which GaLTT used some of its restricted funds to donate \$10,000 toward the purchase of parkland adjacent to Dodd Narrows on Mudge Island. We sadly said goodbye to long-serving Director John Peirce, who left us to serve as Vice President of American Friends of Canadian Land Trusts, and also to Madeleine Ani. The new Board was elected by acclamation, including three new Directors: Peter Danenhower, Nola Johnston, and Lou Skinner. The lovely door prize basket of goodies was won by Peter Hellenius.

Honouring our top trail workers

The three top trail work volunteers were honoured for their huge contributions: Frank Rotering clocked 78 hours single-handedly managing Haven Woods in 2016. Peter Hellenius and Jamie Doig were thanked also for clocking 25 and 30 hours respectively. All were given new clippers or shears.

Ribbon cut on new park on Mudge Island

Photo: Nick Doe



Article courtesy Derek Kilbourn, Sounder News, October 3 2017

Officials and Mudge residents gathered on September 23 to cut the ribbon on a new park for Mudge Island - the second community park purchase by the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN). The board voted in favour of purchasing the park in September 2016.

The property, on the north end of Mudge Island, overlooks Dodd Narrows. It was purchased almost 50 years ago by Captain Robert Littlejohn. It was sold to the RDN by his son Scott.

Cutting the ribbon were Scott, fellow islander Jes Anderson, as well as Jenni Gehlbach of the Gabriola Land and Trails Trust, and Howard Houle, RDN Director for Electoral Area B (Gabriola Mudge, DeCourcy islands). Scott explained in his letter to Mudge residents that when his father purchased the property, "he had no desire to build a cottage or home for himself at Dodd Narrows - because he was a boater.

"He valued, treasured and fiercely protected this spot for the jewel that it has always been. And he was so very proud to be its guardian until the end of his days."

Capt. Littlejohn died four years ago. Scott wrote, "I have no doubt whatsoever, that from his vantage point now, he is here among us and extraordinarily happy to see this gathering of people who share the deep love and enthusiasm he had for Mudge - people who came together to see this special place protected as a park."

Houle said on the purchase of the park that "this is an exciting acquisition for all those who visit and live on Mudge Island.

"The public has been enjoying this piece of property for years thanks to the generosity of the former owners and now that they have allowed the RDN to purchase the lot, we can ensure continued public access for years to come."

Lot 25 Ling Cod Lane is a .55 acre property that fronts on Dodd Narrows across from the City of Nanaimo's Joan Point Park. The lot was purchased for \$235,000 by the RDN, with support by donations

from the Mudge Island Land Trust Association (\$8,000) and Gabriola Land and Trails Trust (\$10,000).

The RDN will now begin the process of developing a management plan for the park, which will include creating the park's official plan.

Guided walks

Exploration of proposed new public trails: Our guided walks team took a break last winter, but in March GaLTT guides led 54 Gabriolans on an exploratory walk (with permission) through some of the 'donor lands' of the Potlatch density transfer proposal. They explored the beautiful existing trails in the 300 acres of forested land adjacent to Coats Marsh and 707 Community Park, which will also become wilderness park in perpetuity if and when the proposed bylaw changes are finally adopted early in 2018, following Ministry approval granted late in 2017.

Gabriola End-to-End Trek

On a wonderfully sunny May 21, about 35 walkers kicked off the summer by trekking with several GaLTT guides from Silva Bay to Surf Lodge. They used mostly public trails but also crossed some private land with permission. Afterwards refreshments at the Surf Pub were most welcome, and Gertie returned our trekkers to Silva Bay courtesy of a Canada 150 grant from Land Trust Alliance of BC.

Summer park discoveries

During July and August, Rob Brockley, Kerry Marcus, Hugh Skinner, Rebecca Furnell, and Bob Weenk led locals and visitors on guided walks in 707 Community Park, Cox Community Park, and Descanso Bay Regional Park.

Gertie bus tour

In September, plant ecologist and board member Tom Cameron led a Gertie bus tour around Gabriola to discuss the island's forest ecology. He touched on issues such as indigenous plant use, fire history, climate change, logging, agricultural settlement, animal populations, and invasive species, which influence our present-day landscape, emphasizing the ecological attributes of the most important tree species in Gabriola's Moist Maritime Coastal Douglas-fir Forest Subzone.

Oceanic matters

Although the ocean is not really our mandate, GaLTT loves all things wild, so on April 9 at The Roxy, we co-sponsored with GROWLS and Streamkeepers a heartening presentation by Jackie Hilderling, Humpback Researcher and Education Director of Marine Education and Research Society. She described the remarkable come-back of humpbacks to our coast and showed some wonderful pictures of their fishing techniques and startling interactions with boats. We also heard their beautiful song.



Shorekeepers

GaLTT is delighted to hear that a "Shorekeepers" group recently started on Gabriola and we look forward to collaborating on issues of mutual interest where the land meets the sea.

Gabriola Reconciliation speaker and film series

In the Fall, a group of Gabriolans invited a series of speakers to Gabriola to discuss the broad topic “From Truth to Reconciliation”. GaLTT board has for some time wished to improve and develop friendly working relationships with the Snunéymuxw and other local First Nations groups, partly because we are neighbours, but also because our bylaws (#13.3.f) require us to “work closely with the community, First Nations, the Regional District of Nanaimo, the Islands Trust, and other land trusts and conservation groups to acquire, develop, and sustain such properties as meet the general purposes of the Gabriola Land and Trails Trust and support the objectives and policies of the Gabriola Island Official Community Plan”. Also our most recent Strategic Plan (2015–2020) developed with our members, includes the specific goal “to develop a plan to make meaningful progress in establishing a relationship with the Snunéymuxw First Nation and/or the Hul’qumi’num Treaty Group to work together on areas of potential common interest (e.g., protection of culturally sensitive areas, invasive species management, recreational trail access).”

For these several reasons the Board decided to financially support this series of speakers and films and bring it to the attention of our members. Several board members also had a great personal interest in this issue and were very happy to participate.

Photo: Nola Johnston



Preserving Elder Cedar's beauty

Over the past year there has been an ongoing problem with vandalism in Elder Cedar Nature reserve. The sign and split-rail barrier set up to protect the Elder Cedar's roots from too much love have been repeatedly damaged and removed. GaLTT finds itself baffled as to the motivations behind these activities, which are both determined and persistent. The problems caused by soil compaction over tree roots are well researched and documented, and as the sign explains, the mitigation of the barrier is designed to protect this wonderful tree so that future generations can also enjoy it. Late in 2017, Islands Trust Fund (who own Elder Cedar Nature Reserve) received a TD Friends of the Environment Foundation grant to enable the building of a boardwalk up to and around the beloved old cedar, and the spreading of mulch (by GaLTT) over the compacted area. A great way to kick off 2018!

Board development

For our Society to remain viable and vibrant, it is essential for the board to refresh itself regularly, bringing in new energy and knowledge. We encourage our members to get involved. Our three new board members this year, Lou Skinner, Peter Danenhowe, and Nola Johnston, jumped in with both feet, and brought a fine set of skills to the board. We were sad to bid farewell to Ron Bilquist, who resigned due to pressure of his professional work, and the Big Tree Registry will miss his bushwhacking, tree-searching and measuring skills. We were also very sad to say goodbye to Heather Kay, who has done wonders with our membership records and reminders.

We have also attempted to develop our board members' thinking and skills, checking regularly to ensure that we are meeting our mandate and following our strategic plan.

LTABC conference

BC's Land Trust Alliance hosted a national conference this Fall in Victoria, bringing together land trusts both tiny and huge from the east coast to the west. The focus of the conference was on ensuring sustainability of our land trusts, bringing good business sense and analysis into consideration to support our ideals. We learned how to keep our boards vibrant and how to judge whether to take on a new project. There were helpful sessions on fundraising tips and pitfalls, and how to engage our communities. We heard some very inspiring stories of success such as Mayne Island's "Save St John's Point" campaign, and it was good to hear how GreenTeamsCanada.ca has found a way to bring young people together on an ad hoc basis to work on habitat restoration and invasive plant removal.

Communications

Our website, while full of useful information, was beginning to look a little dated, so our communications team have given it a facelift, with new colours and some beautiful photos heading each page behind GaLTT's elegant new logo. While we were at it, we updated the stories and links—let us know how you like it at info@galitt.ca.

GaLTT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2017 OFFICERS

President: Anne Landry
Vice-president:
Kerry Marcus
Past President:
Norm Harburn
Treasurer: Heather Kay
Secretary: Jenni Gehlbach

2017 DIRECTORS

David Boehm
Rob Brockley
Tom Cameron
Peter Danenhowe
Rebecca Furnell
Chris Hills
Nola Johnston
Lou Skinner

Advising accountant Maureen O'Rourke assists the Treasurer.



Nelder and Laura Boulton visit the new sign at Nelder's Pond with GaLTT President Anne Landry (far left) and Vice-President Kerry Marcus (far right).

Photo: Norm Harburn