



GaLTT Newsletter 2020



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Photo: Dyan Dunsmoor-Farley



Photo: Hugh Skinner



Photo: Hugh Skinner



Photo: Hugh Skinner

From top left clockwise: social distancing on the Great Winter Walkabout, Walkabout #1 trailhead, making seed packs for the Treasure Hunt, ABC Walk

TRAIL WALKING IN 2020

ABCs, Treasure Hunts, Great Winter Walkabouts

Early last January, an adventurous group of wet walkers joined the third in our Saturday morning series of guided walks "The ABCs of Gabriola Trails", starting at the Wilkinson Way trailhead on South Road, and damply walking up into 707 Community Park to explore the large Three Gates trail loop. Despite huge rain puddles, our monthly guided walk series continued in February, but as Spring approached park and trail walking was increasingly restricted as we tried to adapt to the pandemic. Our last walk was in early March.

Sadly, we cancelled our annual end-to-end trek in June. Instead, we launched a "treasure hunt". Participants picked up from North Road Sports a brochure with eight intriguing or obscure photos taken around our extensive trail system and were challenged to identify the exact spots. Families had fun and all who completed the test received wild-seed packets and a Gabriola colouring sheet. A little caged Garry oak seedling in 707 Community Park proved the hardest to find,



because quite early in the hunt someone removed the protective cage shown in the photograph and the deer ate most of the leaves; latecomers beware!

Covid shut us down again in gloomy November, so with very welcome financing from Gabriola Recreation Society, we launched our Great Winter Walkabout. People picked up a personal Trail Journal from North Road Sports and each week for twelve weeks we published a new trail route in neighbourhoods all around the island. Walkers were encouraged to take photos during their walks and post them on our Facebook and Instagram pages. Lots included their pooches! This took us more cheerfully into the new year and helped us discover corners of the island off our usual routes.

In promoting our activities, we are very grateful for the on-going support of North Road Sports, a great local business that routinely distributes GaLTT brochures and sells our trail maps, and also very generously donated prizes for our Great Winter Walkabout. THANK YOU!



Photo: Libby Gunn

Daphne removal at Gabriola Sands PP

ATTACKING INVASIVES

Last January, a large joint gathering of volunteers from our trail work and invasives teams tackled the young hand-pullable broom in the Drumbeq Park meadow and used the Extractigators to pull some of the mature *Daphne laureola* in the shady areas. A couple of weeks later they pulled another huge pile of Daphne, which the BC Parks people hauled away a few days later in their trucks. This was a great way to kick off 2020, but when working in close groups became impossible, many individuals and small groups continued to organize neighbourhood Daphne and broom cuts around the island. THANK YOU!

In March Libby Gunn rallied the invasives enthusiasts to tackle Daphne laurel at Twin Beaches, and Daphne, holly, and young broom in Drumbeq Park. Throughout May, while provincial parks were closed, the invasives team received special permission from BC Parks for small, spaced groups of volunteers to cut broom while it was blooming in Drumbeq Park's camas meadow. A huge amount was removed, and we were delighted to find camas lilies blooming and Garry oaks sprouting in areas cleared in the last year or two. At the end of July BC Parks came with their truck to help our volunteers take the piles of dried cut broom from Drumbeq Park to the disposal area for controlled burning later in the Fall.



Camas

A \$5000 grant for invasive plant management and restoration at Drumbeq allowed us to contract with a native plants expert to assess the meadows for restoration. Plots were seeded in late fall.

ADAPTING TO COVID

Like the rest of the world GaLTT had to adapt to Covid-19, which has affected every aspect of our lives. Board and Committee meetings have been held (quite efficiently!) on Zoom, and following our December meeting, we even managed an on-line Christmas party, though we missed the shared food and pretty lights. Our volunteer trail maintenance and invasives-removal crews had to become very much smaller and only a very restricted bubble of masked core volunteers was able to build boardwalks, since it requires working closely together. Beloved annual large-group activities like the end-to-end trek had to be cancelled, but as restrictions grew, Gabriolans took gratefully to our large network of trails—although in the spring even that took a blow when some parks were closed for a while.

DONATE TO GaLTT!

Membership fees and donations fund volunteer activities as well as land acquisition and other initiatives. Learn more about what your donations can do (you can earmark them for broad areas of interest) & how you can donate online or off by visiting galtt.ca/donate.



Don Hare clearing Giant Hogweed



Broombashing at Drumbeq

Photos: Libby Gunn



Photos clockwise from top left: Hugh Skinner, Barry Moerkerken, Barry Moerkerken, Dave Skinner

The Commons

Joyce Lockwood

Before social distancing

Elder Cedar

IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY

Following our beach and trails accessibility survey in 2019, GaLTT began negotiating with RDN parks department about the lack of flattish trails in 707 for walkers with limited mobility. At our request, they removed the steep berm at the Jeanette Avenue entrance to the park, and GaLTT volunteers spread a firm gravel mix over the soil there, giving much easier access to the forest trails. Our wonderful volunteers also donated wood to build some simple resting benches along the trail. It was a great start to our accessibility initiative...

GaLTT also negotiated with BC Parks, reminding them that improving accessibility to parks and trails is in their mandate. In June, our application for a grant to begin improving accessibility at Gabriola Sands Provincial Park (Twin Beaches) was approved by BC Parks. Our long-term goal is to get people with disabilities down to the beach on the Taylor Bay side, but we are starting by first improving the access to Pilot Bay viewing area, trails, and facilities—a less expensive and complex procedure. In December, our trailwork and accessibility committees did detailed logistical planning for work to start in mid-January on the Pilot Bay side, improving trail accessibility, creating an accessible viewpoint, re-topping the picnic table, and making the outhouse wheel-chair accessible. The work is to be completed by GaLTT and Lions volunteers by April 2021.

TRAIL WORK AND BOARDWALK BUILDING

Throughout February, our hardy crews dug ditches in an attempt to improve drainage on the regularly-flooding Keith Road right-of-way trail—neighbours reported great improvement. If any very wet patches persist, they will be boardwalked. As GaLTT shut down its volunteer group activities, of course, trees continued to fall across trails so many hardy individuals continued to work alone to keep our trails clear. THANK YOU! Our trailwork crews continued their work in small, spaced groups improving signage on the trail system and at public beach access points. Peter's limited crew brought March in by building some badly needed boardwalks over rapidly degrading, very wet areas in the Robinson Woods trail system.



A bench crafted by Jamie Doig

Photo: Jamie Doig

SHORE ACCESS COMMITTEE

In late 2019 the Board created an *ad hoc* Shore Access Committee, chaired by Hugh Skinner, to catalogue and assess the status of all 100+ public shore accesses (primarily MOTI but also at provincial and RDN parks).

The committee developed standard protocols and forms to evaluate the status, potential, and community importance of each access. A team visited each site, some virtually inaccessible, some possible viewpoints, others potential accesses to the beach. To create their database, they made detailed field notes, categorizing 63 accesses as "developed" and 49 "undeveloped". The resulting spreadsheet showed all evaluations and important site-specific data. The committee's Assessment Summary followed its general notes with recommendations for potential follow-up by the GaLTT Board. Having finished its mandated work the Committee was dissolved in late 2020. THANKS HUGH!

HELPING TO PROTECT COATS MARSH HEADWATERS

In October the RDN announced its purchase of the 3.6 hectare (9-acre) property abutting 707 Community Park immediately east of Coats Marsh Regional Park. This is the "remainder parcel" omitted in the rezoning proposal which enlarged 707 Community Park by 136 hectares (336 acres) a couple of years ago. GaLTT is proud to have donated \$57,000 from its Acquisition Fund toward the purchase of the remainder parcel, which includes part of a fragile wetland area. An important feeder stream and riparian area cross the property.



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DR. RICHARD HEBDA

Climate Change and the Gulf Islands Environment

Before our AGM on March 3, 2020, Dr Richard Hebda frightened us and entertained us speaking about Climate Change and the Gulf Islands Environment. He first depressed us with data confirming that rapidly changing climate is raising sea-levels significantly and will greatly change the array of native plants that can live in the Gulf Islands environment (such as the loss of western redcedar and hemlock), being unable to withstand drier conditions in summer or to adapt quickly enough. But then he heartened us with reminders of Gulf Island trees that may be happy in the new conditions, such as Garry oak and arbutus, and told us of ways to use appropriate native plantings more suitable to survival in a drier-summer, wetter-winter climate. He encouraged us to:

- protect our wetlands like Coats Marsh
- resist all healthy tree removal, especially clearcutting lots
- where trees must be cut or fall in the wind, toss them into the woods to rot into the forest soil
- remove and discourage invasive plants such as Daphne laurel and Scotch broom
- plant more resistant native species in invasive plants' place, as well as in our gardens. He mentioned Ocean spray (ironwood), Thimbleberries, Stonecrop, Fawn lilies, June plum, sea blush, Nodding onion, Woolly sunflower, and Camas lilies, among others.

Hebda also stated that the island was probably capable of being fully self-reliant for food, assuming we can capture the generous rainfall of winter. He cheered the gardeners among us considerably by suggesting the future possibility of growing olives and avocados here rather than importing them from California. He brought with him to distribute some interesting potatoes he had grown from seed, as well as some starts of "Nootka potatoes", long established on Vancouver Island by very early settlers.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Into alignment with CLTA

Throughout the year, the Board continued some routine process work, ensuring that we are following our Strategic Plan, meeting national and provincial requirements, and keeping our working methods up to date. We revisited our Operating Policies to ensure that they are in line with the revised Standards and Practices of the Canadian Land Trust Alliance.

A BUSY YEAR!

In February a Conservation Mapping Workshop asked knowledgeable Gabriolans to identify lands with high ecological and conservation values. In the spring we also initiated a new educational Nature Stewards outreach program for landowners, beginning with a series of Nature Tip videos on YouTube. As usual, we advocated for and worked on projects with



government agencies including BC Parks, the Islands Trust Conservancy, and the RDN. This year we added the Ministry Of Transportation and Infrastructure (MOTI), successfully pursuing the opportunity to hold permits for infrastructure such as boardwalks on undeveloped ROWs. We also consulted with the Museum about the covenant on their newly-purchased property and participated in community Zoom meetings of the Land-Based Learning for Reconciliation project.

BOARD CHANGES

Several board members retired at last year's AGM on March 3, 2020, and we welcomed two new board members: Barry Moerkerken and Dr Allan Posthuma.

The valuable and longterm work of Tom Cameron in particular was recognized by the award of an honorary life membership in GaLTT. Tom had served on the Board since 2005, with stints as Treasurer and President, and he was a strong advocate for accessibility. He remains active on some committees, including the Accessibility Committee.

NEST-BOX BUILDING EXTRAVAGANZA!

GaLTT member Ken Gurr is calling for your help this winter—he's aiming to install 40-50 nest boxes around the island before breeding season. Build simple nest boxes for swallows, wrens, chickadees and nuthatches using scrap wood, not painted or varnished, with no perching posts. For good plans see nestwatch.org/learn/all-about-birdhouses/right-bird-right-house/ Email Ken at kenpgurr@outlook.com for more info, to let him know you're building, and to arrange pickup for installation.

WE'RE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS!

Please join any of GaLTT's working committees and bring your skills and energy to help spread our ever-increasing workload. Email info@galitt.ca and we'll put you in contact with the right group for your interests. We have projects of all kinds—see the [board page](#) on our website to learn about what the committees do. There's a place for everyone, and it's a great way to get involved.

To volunteer on our two busiest committees, contact trailwork@galitt.ca or invasives@galitt.ca

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