



GaLTT Newsletter 2021

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*Ken Gurr and
Linda Hellenius
on a Nature
Stewards
walkabout of
her property*

WILDING YOUR OWN PROPERTY

Over two thirds of Gabriola 's land is privately owned and only 12% is formally protected from development. The long-term ecological health of Gabriola depends on our actions on private land. In 2021 GaLTT initiated two programs to help— **Nature Stewards** (coordinated by Ken Gurr—email naturestewards@galtt.ca) and the **Native Plant Depot**.

What you do on your own land is critical to the health of our island ecosystem— and you CAN make a difference.

Nature Stewards

At your request, our Nature Stewards team will work with you to help discover the special features of your property and identify ways to preserve biodiversity and wildlife-friendly habitat. Our goal is for as many islanders as possible to volunteer to keep at least 30% of their land as natural habitat.

- clear fewer trees, and garden with native species, rather than exotic, possibly invasive species
- encourage wildlife by using hedges, berms, and wildlife-friendly fencing, and building bird boxes.

Native Plant Depot

Invasive plant removal is most effective when you immediately replace them with vigorous native species such as Oregon grape,

sword fern, Nootka rose, flowering currant, and salmonberry. Last spring GaLTT started our Native Plant Depot at Gabriola Commons, where native plants can be picked up or dropped off.

- Clearing your land for building or farming? Dig out and pot healthy native plants and take them to the depot.
- Wanting to make a more natural garden? Pick up native plants for free from the Depot.
- Need help from our Rescue Team? Contact us at invasives@galtt.ca

Landscapers' workshop

Last spring, a GaLTT workshop trained local landscape professionals to identify and control invasive plants in the course of their work.

CONSERVE



INVASIVES: culls, disposal...

On Earth Day we organized an island-wide pick up of cut invasive species and took them by truckloads to the South Firehall for disposal. Some islanders took their own cut invasives there. THANK YOU Gabriolans! Disposal remains a problem that GaLTT is working to solve with the help of our Fire Department and the RDN and BC Parks Departments.

Daphne laurel

In January '21 our Covid-distanced volunteers removed HUGE piles of Daphne laureola from the Whalebone Community Parks. RDN Parks staff hauled away the piles for disposal in Nanaimo. Work parties continued until March to pull Daphne all around the island before it went to seed. In January '22 we removed more from the Drumbeg neighbourhood to prevent park reinfestation—it's taking over our forest understorey, especially on private land.



Restoration is impossible without plants! Here's a Native Plant Depot crew working to recover some for community use.



the south end. Our volunteers led broom bashing sessions at Drumbeg Park, Burren's Acres, on Paisley Place, and at the school. Gabriolans were encouraged to tackle broom in their own neighbourhoods and near their favourite walks. Amazing island-wide work was done.

The culled broom was collected all around the island and trucked to the South Firehall parking lot (with permission!) for fire-safe disposal later. THANK YOU to the many volunteers who helped cut, haul, truck and pile the cut broom.



Tansy Ragwort:

In summer our volunteers shifted focus to Tansy Ragwort working hard in cooler evenings to remove it before it went to seed a little earlier than usual this very hot summer.

The invasives team finished up a year of very hard work in early December, by removing a variety of pesky plants (the holly and the ivy too!) from Gabriola Sands Provincial Park at Twin Beaches, noting with satisfaction the still-clear areas where they had previously removed a bad infestation of Daphne laurel—plans are afoot to replant the spaces with native plants.

...and restoration work

Camas lilies are spreading nicely again in Drumbeg Garry oak meadow, and we finished our summer work there by removing clumps of orchard grass, which impede the spread of wildflowers. In November, using a Park Enhancement Fund grant from BC Parks, GaLTT bought native plant plugs and resumed restoration work in the meadow where broom had been cleared.

Scotch broom

On Easter Sunday, a work crew pulled dozens of immature green Scotch broom plants from the meadow in Elder Cedar Nature Reserve—before they become a seed-spreading problem! As May approached, we turned our attention to broom that was already blooming vigorously at the

GUIDED + SELF-GUIDED WALKS

Great winter walkabouts WW1 and WW2

February '21 saw the last neighbourhood trail walk in our first Great Winter Walkabout. Many Gabriolans had discovered new trails while "Walking into Spring"—thanks to Lou's great idea and Nola's 12 super trail maps. We left the signage and ribbons up until February 28 because January rain meant very muddy trails, delaying explorations. We had such positive feedback about these walks during Covid shutdowns, that we spent the Fall planning another Winter Walk series to be launched in January '22 with 10 weekly walks focussing on favourite trees.

We are grateful to Gabriola Recreation Society for providing funding, and to North Road Sports for distributing the trail journals and donating the prizes.



Gabriola End-to-End Trek

On September 11, over 100 people walked with GaLTT guides on 16km of trails or quiet roads from Silva Bay to Surf Lodge. We took it easy, with two rest stops along the route where people could join or leave our walk. There was a little light rain, and it was great to arrive at Surf Lodge for refreshments after the last damp and most strenuous leg.

Silent Sound Walks with DinahD

On a blustery October morning, around 30 walkers joined sound-artist DinahD for a spaced and silent 4-km Soundwalk at Gabriola's north end. They focussed on the sounds in their environment and pondered their human role in this place. They heard the swoosh of raven wings, rain dripping onto salal leaves, and rustles underfoot, while learning how to audio-map their environment and document the adventure. Afterwards they gathered over hot chocolate (thanks Clever Trevor!) to discuss their insights and went home with a broader sense of their environment, a keepsake journal, and many good memories. Dinah followed up with another silent guided walk at Gabriola's Tle:ltxw Village site on False Narrows—great idea to fine-tune our senses!



TRAIL WORK AND BOARDWALK BUILDING

Our trail crews have been inhibited during Covid because much of their work, especially Boardwalk building, requires them to work closely together. So a small "bubble" of core workers kept the work going during restrictions. Special thanks are due to Barry Moerkerken and Peter Danenhower, who nearly always participate, and to Don Machel, who singlehandedly and regularly trims trails all over the island. Trail-work volunteers closed out 2021 by rerouting (to avoid trespass) part of the trail connecting Lockinvar Lane to the clinic through the new RDN park. They carefully removed the sword ferns and other native species and took them to our Native Plant Depot.

MacDonald Peterson boardwalk completed

A major accomplishment in 2021 was completing the 170-metre MacDonald Peterson boardwalk over deep wetland. A 3-day October work party installed a 27-metre section of the boardwalk to complete the planned project, but needed to install another 16ft of boardwalk in December because water was pooling at the Peterson end. The work was partially funded with a third much-appreciated grant from the Gabriola Recreation Society.

Improving accessibility at Twin Beaches

A year ago, our wonderful trail-work volunteers bent low (supervised by an archeologist and a Snuneymuxw representative) to carefully excavate beside the trails on the Pilot Bay side of Gabriola Sands Provincial Park. This, with some salal clipping, was preparation for widening and flattening pathways from the parking lots to a shore-side viewpoint, an adapted picnic table, and an accessible outhouse—our first steps to improve accessibility in the park for those with physical disabilities. Gabriola Lions Club pitched in with people and equipment to spread huge loads of "cart-path gravel" on top of landscaping cloth over the paths. Once it was tamped down, the paths became wheelchair- and stroller-accessible. Barry Moerkerken rebuilt the picnic tabletop to accommodate a wheelchair. A small but mighty crew shifted the outhouse, put in grab bars, and made the doorlatch reachable, so that it too could become accessible. The work, including a little weather-dependent concrete-pouring for the enlarged picnic table and outhouse pads, continued until April.

We are very grateful to Gabriolan Mark Halliwell who used his wheelchair to field test our improvements, ensuring that they actually helped! We were sad to learn that Mark passed away in October.



Jamie Doig's resting benches

Part of trail accessibility is the provision of opportunities for walkers to rest periodically. Using fine maple donated by Tom and Charlotte Cameron, volunteer Jamie Doig has built a series of very beautiful, simple resting benches, which he and other volunteers installed beside trails in Cox and 707 Community Parks. THANK YOU, JAMIE!



Our first commemorative bench

GaLTT recently ran a pilot project by installing a commemorative bench at the public shore access just north of Drumbeg Park. This bench was purchased by his family to lovingly honour the memory of Captain James R. Ewart, MM. It was built by Dave Needs, using live-edge maple donated by Linda Harrison in memory of her husband Konrad Mauch.

BOARD OPERATIONS + COVID

Throughout 2021 (and continuing) monthly Board meetings were held on Zoom. Committees met carefully, following provincial health directives. When the full Board met in person in July (outside, distanced, and double-vaxed) several members elected at the AGM had not met the rest of us in person before.

Since meeting in large groups and inviting speakers from “away” weren’t possible, we tried holding a Zoom AGM. It was very successful, with over 50 members (the most ever!) participating and no technical glitches. The Board reported a successful year of achievements despite Covid restrictions. We bid a sad farewell to two very hard-working board members, Lou Skinner and Peter Danenhowe, though they promised to continue their committee work, and we were delighted to welcome five new Directors: Lars Hulstein, Pat Jacobsen, Sarah Kopjar, Hugh Skinner, and Tom Wojcik.

Policies and capacity

During 2021 we updated our Policies and Procedures and ensured they were in keeping with provincial and national standards. In Fall we met with Dyan Dunsmoor-Farley and Associates to begin assessing GaLTT’s capacity, as a volunteer board, to fulfil its mandate according to its current Strategic Plan. If staff need to be hired, which tasks would be best suited for their work and how would they be funded? Will such a change be acceptable to board members who enjoy being “hands-on”? The work continues...

Community partnerships

We strengthened partnership through shared interests with The Commons (Native Plant Depot), the Museum (helping with the McRae covenant) and Gabriola Recreation Society (support for Boardwalk construction). We were invited to participate in the newly formed Gabriola Island Land Stewards Society (GILSS). We cooperate with GISKA, Gabriola’s shore-keepers, and participate in Gabriola’s reconciliation work through GES’s research project with SFU. Vitally, we work to support reconciliation through the **Intergenerational Land Based Learning For Reconciliation** project and other initiatives.

DIGITAL COMMUNICATIONS

Our digital presence, created during the very active trail-building years of GaLTT’s existence, needed to better emphasize the conservation part of GaLTT’s mandate and the importance of our community’s involvement in our work. Volunteer Paula Brent created a beautiful new Facebook page to publicize GaLTT’s interests and activities and has converted the old page to a more general “Gabriola Nature” community discussion page—both pages are thriving.

Our ten-year old website needed a facelift too, so we moved it to a Wordpress platform, and have redesigned, reorganized, and expanded the information. You will find new pages about Conservation, Ways You Can Support Us, and Ocean Foreshore, and blog posts of news going back several years. The new site launched in January ‘22, still at galtt.ca.

Saturnina Island— a new nature reserve!

GaLTT and other organizations advocated to protect Saturnina Island, an undeveloped 4-ha island near Silva Bay. BC Parks Foundation bought Saturnina in the spring of 2021 with funds donated by the Wilson 5 Foundation. It is a popular day kayaking spot and will be managed as a nature reserve by the Islands Trust Conservancy, with GaLTT’s help.

CONSERVATION SURVEY

In July 2021 GaLTT surveyed Gabriolans to find out how people get information and how much they were aware of our conservation work. Over 320 people participated; read the results at galtt.ca/conservation-survey-results.

WE’RE ALWAYS LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS!

Please join any of GaLTT’s working committees and bring your skills and energy to help with our ever-increasing workload. Email info@galtt.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@galtt.ca or invasives@galtt.ca

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