



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

# NEWSLETTER

FALL 2003

## Island Legacy Project -- Chickadee Lake

On the morning of August 16, residents near Chickadee Lake were startled awake by neighbours calling Sunday sleepers with the worst of messages: "Fire at the Lake!" Grabbing hoes, shovels and buckets, volunteers followed the smell of smoke. With flames creeping along the bone dry duff of the forest floor and stretching close to crown in the old cedars, it was only the quick work of the fire department with help of neighbours and island visitors who managed to contain the fire at about an acre. By afternoon, the unmistakably acrid smell of saturated and charred wood greeted those who came to inspect the sad wound at Chickadee.

This close call has reinforced the need for the perpetual protection of this special area, which is a "hotspot for biodiversity" and is among the top 100 most critical properties for conservation in the Georgia Basin Ecosystem Catalogue. As previously reported, the Denman Conservancy Association has made two purchase offers at fair market value to the owners of the 32.5ha Chickadee property. Though both offers were turned down, funding for the purchase remains in place. However, significant institutional pledges will begin to expire at the end of the year and the promise of the five-year odyssey to acquire Chickadee will fade. However, DCA still hopes that this fragile sanctuary, dear to the hearts of so many on Denman, may yet be saved. ~ Patti Willis

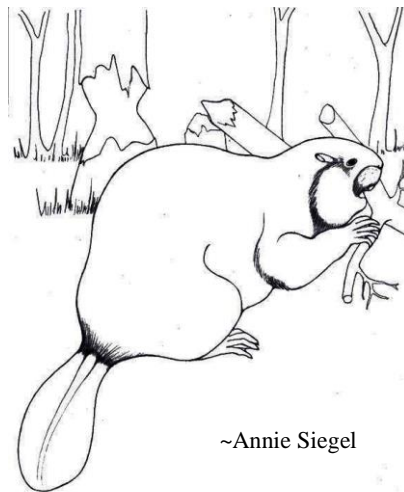


Fire Damage at Chickadee Lake Photo ~ Yasuo Yoshihara

Conservancy Web Site: [www.denmanis.bc.ca/conservancy](http://www.denmanis.bc.ca/conservancy)

## Winter Wren Wood at Chickadee Lake

The much anticipated fall rains have revived Winter Wren Wood: mushrooms are sprouting, step mosses are adding another layer to their carpet, sword ferns stand tall, and the Winter Wrens are calling. It will take a few more weeks of rain to fill the small wetlands and get the frogs to return. There was lots of activity in the Wood in June when 28 students from grades 4, 5 & 6 at the Community School biked in to learn some natural history "in the field". Four islanders with expertise in small mammals, birds, lake life and edible plants, showed small groups of students some of the animals and plants that can be seen and heard, if you



~Annie Siegel

really look and listen. When the fire hit 4064's nearby property in August, the Wood was closed to the public and a group of local residents organized to patrol the Wood to ensure no-one was there, especially after dark. The closure lasted till mid September. Previously, on several occasions during the summer, campers had

been encountered and were asked to leave. Camping and campfires are not permitted in the Wood at any time and prominent signs are posted near the entrance. The public is encouraged to enjoy Winter Wren Wood in all its seasons - there is always something interesting to experience.

~Patrick Fawkes

## Nature Walks & Workshops Starting this Fall

A series of Saturday morning Nature Walks will be lead this Fall through to next Summer. These walks are for all ages - adults, youths, children and families. Although we have experienced leaders for the walks we welcome anyone who has knowledge to share on these topics to come along. Meet 9.30 at the Old School.

8 Nov. Winter Waterbirds: Patrick Fawkes & Mike Morrell  
22 Nov. Bird Nestbox Building Workshop: Peter Karsten.

Watch for dates and more details of each Walk to be published in the Grapevine and posted in the Conservancy box outside the General Store.

**Walks we are planning for 2004 are listed on page 3.**

**This Place...**Sometimes, it's when we are away from Denman that those special places loom largest. Sitting in traffic in Vancouver, or in the middle of a round of endless town stops, or during a stressful emotional time, a Denman scene will flash brightly and leave a measure of peace. Those of us lucky enough to live here have many special places, visitors a few they often return to year after year ... McFarlane beach on a summer afternoon, kids splashing, adults visiting, hot, hot sun ... the cool of a swim in the middle of Chickadee Lake, silver quiet ... being enveloped by the ancient greenness on a path in Fillongley ... summer sunsets off Millard Rd. beach, when everyone at the potluck goes silent and watches, awed yet again ... the dinosaur-days flavour of the path to Betty's beach where one could easily sight a large head munching on ferns ... places that become part of each of us, forever.

To honour those places of and by themselves and respect that interaction between people and place, the Denman Conservancy Association was born in 1991. The DCA continues to give those places a voice, 12 years later. Without people willing to speak to that interplay between nature and society, without people willing to be vocal about the need to preserve a distance between use of the land and simple untouched existence of the land, we would all have fewer and fewer special places.

The Denman Conservancy is there to 'preserve, protect and enhance the quality of the human and natural environment of Denman Island.' In a tangible way: we now have the Pickles Rd. reserve, the Lindsay-Dickson Nature Reserve and Winter Wren Wood on Chickadee Lake, all thanks to enormous community effort spearheaded by the DCA. The huge task of preserving Chickadee Lake still lies before us, and the DCA continues to keep that effort in the forefront.

In the past few years, the DCA has been taken to task by some members of the community for advocating so strongly for the natural environment. There was public eye-rolling about the DCA role in the Great Logging Disaster of 1997, about its clear voice during the OCP process, about a 101 decisions made that were seen to be valuing place over people.

That is the whole point of the Conservancy. The DCA does speak for place, does fight for the retention of untrammelled land, and does say people must respect their intrinsic tie to the natural world around them. The voices shouting for the need to "use" all land are becoming louder and louder. We must have equally strong voices advocating simply leaving some land alone.

Of course there will be controversy. If the DCA is fulfilling its mandate, there will be voices raised in discussion about where the balance lies between use and land stewardship, between immediate human needs for housing and work and the long-term human need for a peaceful connection to land around them. To be a strong and sure community, we must speak of these things openly, we must discuss and agree or agree to disagree. This is not divisive, an "us and them" scenario of right and wrong, but rather a debate about the best way for our island to be. When all have been heard, and there is moment of silence, we, the lucky people of Denman Island can reflect on those special places, and be grateful that they exist and that we can hold them dear for ourselves, all our Denman children and children to come.

~ Leslie Gillett

## Lindsay-Dickson Nature Reserve

The trails committee has produced a recommendation for the location of trails in the reserve. We are currently awaiting Islands Trust approval of this plan so work can commence. Trails where the small amount of remedial work was done last fall on some of the heavily rutted areas, are looking mellower with the passing of the seasons. ~ Linda Mather

### Newsletter Editorial Committee:

Leslie Gillett, Susan-Marie Yoshihara, John Millen

Is your Membership up-to-date?  
**See us at the Xmas Faire!**

Cedar & Salal  
~ Annie Siegel

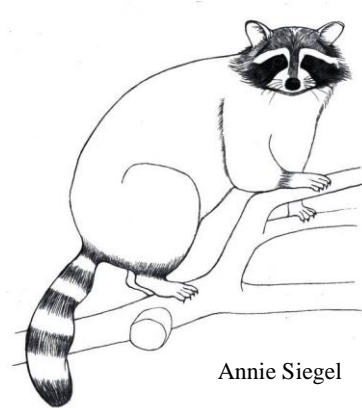


## Creating Moist Habitats

After the persistent efforts in the last century to “drain the swamps” for arable lands and urban real estate we welcome the new trend to protect and even recreate wetlands in many countries.

I was amazed to see the work of community volunteers in and around my old hometown in Germany in the eighties. Wetland advocates had banded together to clean up former water holes, previously used as refuse dumps, and to restore wet habitats on public land.

I saw many rich little ponds and wet ditches, where I remembered as a child searching for tadpoles and newts. These had been destroyed between 1950 and 1980, but now teamed with life again. This work had been done on many scales from several hectares to back yard ponds.



Annie Siegel

My friends who took me around to see the wet biotopes had a recycled bathtub behind their house, filled with aquatic plants, inhabited by three species of newts, and a frog. They lived in a residential district bordering on a forest. That area used to have an orchard, pasture land and wet ditches plus a small pond. All

had been levelled and erased.

Amphibians had lived in this macro habitat for eons and every spring wandered to the water bodies to breed. They could not find their water holes and instead entered swimming pools in their confusion and desperation. They died, either trapped there or poisoned by the chemicals in the water. Water, which they needed to reproduce, became a death trap.

The local naturalists had encouraged people to set up mini ponds, no more than clean freshwater with certain plant species, which the newts select to attach their eggs. Marsh forget-me-not is one of the “magnetic” species that lures the amphibians to the man made ponds. Newts of the genus Triturus fold the leaves under water and place one egg in the fold, while holding it for a few minutes for the gel to cure and fix the egg nicely in a little envelope. Our indigenous rough-skinned newt does not use this method, it simply attaches the eggs to plants, and other objects near the bottom. For those with swimming pools, floating a good size board on the pool with a ramp leading to the edge can save small animals (in Germany, hedgehogs) from drowning. Newts would use these ramps to escape and look for more suitable “ponds”.

We do not have to go to Europe to see wetland restoration. We must applaud the designers of the Inland Highway 19, who created many such habitats along the highway where run-off is

## DCA Legal action against 4064 Investments

On September 9 our lawyers (and the legal committee) met in the lobby of the Victoria Courthouse with lawyers representing the Defendants: Mike Jenks, Coast Mountain Enterprises, Northland Developments and 4064 Investments. The Defendants had applied to court for ‘Security for Costs’, that is they wanted to be sure that if our suit fails and they are awarded costs against Denman Conservancy, we will have the money available to pay them.

Without going before a Judge agreement-in-principle was reached on issues arising from the Security for Costs application. Denman Conservancy Association will keep a sufficient amount of funds in its bank account to cover the estimated costs. We will drop that part of our suit that names Mike Jenks personally and in exchange, the Defendants will agree that they will not claim that the Defendant, 4064 Investments Ltd., (of which Mike Jenks is a director and part owner), was not a party to, or obligated under, the Contract of Purchase and Sale that is the basis of our action. Denman Conservancy will have no liability for the Defendants' costs relative to the "Security for Costs" action, nor for any costs Mr. Jenks may have expended for his personal defence to date.

Our suit seeks to have covenants placed on the Railway Grade Marsh and Komas Bluffs as well as damages to compensate for the logging in the Railway Grade Marsh area that the covenants would have prevented.

The contracts by which 4064 bought these properties from Hancock on June 30, 1997 required that covenants be placed in these two areas. When logging occurred in the Railway Grade Marsh three years ago without the covenants in place, DCA asked Hancock to enforce the contract, which Hancock declined to do. However, they assigned their rights in the matter to DCA. Our action continues.

~ DCA legal

committee

**2004 Nature Walks ....** watch for details in the Grapevine

Herring Spawning Frenzy - with John Tayless

Medicinal Plants - with Sheelagh Salas

Denman Clams - with Mike Morrell

Spring Birds & Songs - with Jenny Balke & Patrick Fawkes

Low Tide Walk - with John Tayless

Sping Wildflowers - with Dorrie Woodward

Botany & Birding on Tree Island - with Dorrie Woodward & Patrick Fawkes



## **Creating Moist Habitats ctd.**

collected in ponds before it is released. There is also a toad migration under-pass towards Campbell River. I have stopped at these ponds and indeed tadpoles and newts can be seen there in the spring. ~ Peter Karsten

## **Buffalo Laundry Soap**

### **A Soap Operetta**

I'm afraid that I'm one of those people who never, ever wondered what happens to those little individually wrapped bars of hotel soap. I try to use only one bar, but beyond that I've never given it much thought. Of course it all ended up in the trash, or at least, that's what I thought.

Not so long ago I was amazed to see that someone has taken that "waste" product and turned it into something useful, Buffalo Laundry Soap. The soap that goes into Buffalo Laundry Soap is collected from hotels and motels in Victoria and the Lower Mainland. It is dried, powdered, and finally mixed with borax and washing soda, two environmentally friendly disinfecting and water conditioning agents.

I've been using Buffalo laundry soap in my front-loading washing machine for about a year now. I like it because it reuses something useful that would otherwise end up in a dump somewhere, but also because it doesn't make much foam and my washing machine seems to like that.

### **Washday Test Results**

While the soap works fine for me, a little more research was in order so I asked two intrepid volunteer researchers to test the laundry soap. Both volunteers have hard water.

The first volunteer found that with a warm water wash and rinse, the soap cleaned her laundry quite acceptably. However, she mentioned that she missed the bubbles that her usual brand of commercial laundry detergent produced.

Our second volunteer washed a load of really dirty work clothes and was also satisfied with the results. She, too, noticed that there were few soap suds. Both volunteers wondered if the assumption that soap bubbles equal cleaning power is conditioned by detergent advertising more than by experience.

### **Questions that came out in the wash**

The volunteers wondered if laundry soap was safe for a septic tank. They also wondered if any germs could be transported by the recycled soap. Finally, they wanted to know if the quality of the laundry soap would be consistent given the variety of bar soaps that could be used to make it--different colours, scents, quality.

An e-mail from the manufacturer, Roger Sevigny, addressed these concerns. "Soap is simply saponified fat, that is lye mixed with oil or fat. [Most] detergents are petroleum-based surfactants that contain florescent optical whiteners, nitrates, biocides, etc. I have been told by a chemist that soap is milder and better for septic fields," he wrote.

According to the manufacturer bacteria cannot live on soap, something that he had confirmed with a lab test.

Regarding consistency, Mr. Sevigny said that "almost all hand soap is saponified oil not tallow, (animal fats) mainly because it is cheaper than tallow and almost all the oil is palm or canola. The difference lies in how it is milled, scented, air content and colouring. Basically there is very little difference." The issue of scent is a concern to many Denman Islanders. Buffalo Laundry Soap smells like--soap. It has a light, pleasant scent, but those of us who react to scent may find this a problem. I did not.

Buffalo Laundry Soap can be found in the laundry detergent section of Thrifty's Stores. I paid \$6.25 for a two kilo bag. ~ Susan-Marie Yoshihara

## **Catching the Sky**

Plink, plunk, plink. We are crouching over a web of black plastic pipes on the concrete floor in John Millen's 'tank room', marking with chalk the level of the water remaining in the polyethylene tanks. It is October 2<sup>nd</sup> and though we had two good showers of rain in early September there has been nothing but beautiful sunny weather since then. So, John, what is that plink, plonk I hear? "That's the overnight dew draining off our metal roof and dripping into the cisterns. The dew doesn't amount to much water but it makes the point that every bit of rain contributes to our supply."

Now, in October he shows me that he has about 275 gallons left in his tanks. He and Donna have been using storage at 32 gallons per day in late September, and perhaps the dew has been adding 20 gallons some days. This supplies their needs for careful washing and cooking and some essential laundry. Their toilets are flushed with non-potable well water, and that well also supplies irrigation water for the garden.

They started this summer of drought with 6000 gallons stored in their cisterns, a total of five poly tanks of 1000 or 1500 gallons each. Three tanks are in the basement and two black ones are outside under a deck. Outside tanks must be black to avoid growing algae. John thinks poly tanks should also be shielded from the sun to prolong their life.

Did the Millens make it through until the rains finally come? Or did they resort to getting 1000 gallons delivered, pumped into one of their empty outside tanks? Hear the answer on November 5<sup>th</sup>, the first of two evenings of presentations and discussions on this subject at the Community School.

### **Learn About Cisterns**

Catching the Sky (for your domestic water stash) is a short course in the basics of low-tech and high-tech cistern water storage installation. Over the two evenings participants will learn about the different types of cisterns, the costs involved and the technical aspects of installation. Questions about cistern overflow, filtering, freeze damage, water quality, and water testing will be addressed.

Local Islanders who have already installed cisterns will tell us what worked and what didn't. Information from cistern suppliers and installers will also be available.