



# Denman Conservancy Association

# NEWSLETTER

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

February 2006

## Morrison Marsh Property Preserved

A 125-acre block of forested land, adjacent to Boyle Point Park has been donated to Islands Trust Fund, to be preserved in perpetuity for its conservation values.

Part of the original land holdings of 4064 Investments Ltd., this parcel was the first large block sold by the company. The new owner, at the time of purchase, intended to dedicate much of the land to conservation. DCA was then in the throes of its Legacy Project and fundraising to try to purchase the Chickadee Lake property. Nevertheless the owner's good intentions and the natural values of the land were compelling.

DCA obtained a grant to help with the cost of preparation of a conservation covenant, baseline studies, mapping and surveys. Ultimately the owner decided that a transfer of the bulk of the property to the Islands Trust Fund was a simpler solution. DCA will hold a conservation covenant on the land.

We are sure we speak for the whole Island when we express our great appreciation of the owner's generosity that has preserved this valuable block of natural landscape.

See the back page for the Press Release from Islands Trust Fund.

## Memberships Due

Reminder to Denman Conservancy Members. It is time to renew your membership for 2006. There will be a table at Recycle on March 4, 10:00am – 12:00. See you then **or at the AGM on March 27<sup>th</sup>**.

## A New Acquisition Target

It has been a while, precisely since November 30, 2000, since the Denman Conservancy Association has made a land acquisition. At that time the property known as Winter Wren Wood was purchased and protected, now a lovely spot enjoyed by the public.

The Acquisitions Committee has been considering several properties, which were ranked in an order of desirability, for many months. We are now giving strong consideration to the 147-acre (approx. 50 Hectare) property across from the Old School Centre. Denise MacKean purchased this property for conservation purposes last year. Denise has made a very generous offer to sell this property to the DCA at no financial gain to her and including an offer to take back a mortgage for part of the price at no interest. As she is a member of the DCA board, Denise has stepped back from these considerations so as not to create a conflict of interest.

Denise has proposed the name 'Central Park Nature Reserve' for the property.

Attractive features of this land include:

- proximity to the Inner Island Nature Reserve through Crown Land
- significant wetlands and riparian areas
- large size
- proximity to the Old School Centre

The Acquisitions Committee will recommend purchase of the land to the membership to add this link to the protected conservation land. Approval of the membership of DCA is required for the expenditure of funds of this magnitude. Members will be gathered for the AGM on Monday March 27 at 7.30 pm at the Old School Centre.

## A Call to All Denman Artists!

The Denman Conservancy is holding a juried competition for a new Tee Shirt design. The design is for the front of small and large sized shirts – printed with two colour screens, on shirts of varied colours. It must include the wording “ Denman Conservancy Association”.

Artists please submit your design by March 15<sup>th</sup> to Box 60, Denman Island, B.C. or deliver to 1200 Pickles Road. (Phone Carol Freeman 335-2535 for more information)

The winner will be announced at the Denman Conservancy Association AGM, March 27<sup>th</sup> at the Old School.

The reward for the winner, you ask? It will be massive publicity in island newspapers, photo opportunities, seeing your design everywhere on and off island being worn by the young and old and, of course, knowing that you have made a valuable contribution to fundraising for Conservancy.

## That Other Central Park

You may know that Manhattan Island is about the same size and shape as Denman Island. So comparisons with their Central Park come rather easily when we propose that name for a block of Denman land. (See the front page). Well, we have some distance to go to equal their example. Central Park, New York is 843 acres, about 6% of Manhattan’s total area. They have 150 acres in seven water bodies and 250 acres of lawns, though surely we won’t go that way!

Surprisingly they report 136 acres of woodlands. A final comparison: Central Park, NY being 6% of Manhattan Island is equivalent to all our Parks and conservation lands, which total 6% of Denman Island.

Announcing the  
Denman Conservancy Association

### **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

March 27, 2006 at 7.30pm  
At the Old School Centre

If you would consider serving on the Board of Directors please contact Roxanna Mandryk or Laura Pope.

## Walks & Talks – 2006

Watch for notices of dates and places in the Grapevine.

Plankton – Herring – Sea Lions	John Tayless	26th February
Impact Trauma Workshop: Raptor Silhouettes for Windows	Peter Karsten	March
Winter Waterbirds	Joan Scruton	March
Humans’ & Domestic Animals’ Impact on Wildlife	Peter Karsten	April
Wild Flower Walk	Richard Martin	TBA
Birds & Birdsong	Jenny Balke & Joan Scruton	May
Tree Island: Botanizing & Birding	Andrew Fyson & Joan Scruton	May
Wild Medicinal Plants	Sheila Salas	June
Low Tide Walk	John Tayless	June
Nitrogen Fixing Plants	Andrew Fyson	June
Forest Ecology	Hamish Kimmins	8th July

## Progress on the Settlement of DCA’s Legal Case against 4064 Invests. Ltd

Preparation of the covenants for the Railway Marsh and Komas Bluff areas is nearing completion. The work included legal surveys, baseline ecological studies and reaching agreement on the legal text of conservation covenants for each of the two areas. Once completed the covenants must be submitted to the Agricultural Land Commission (ALC) as some small parts of the covenant areas are within the ALR. When the approval of the ALC is obtained the covenants can be registered and the settlement concluded.

The agreed settlement involves registration of the conservation covenants as well as the donation to DCA of two parcels of land, which total 156 acres, to the north of the Inner Island Nature Reserve on Central Road. The settlement is conditional on the completion of the sale of the lands to Mr Nielsen’s group. Should that sale not go through, DCA’s suit against 4064 would continue.

During negotiations, the DCA neither discussed nor took a position on any development plans the purchaser may have for the 4064 lands and confined itself to obtaining a fair settlement of its claim against 4064 Investments Ltd. DCA’s legal case against 4064 Investment Ltd. Is based on the Hancock sales contract (to 4064 Investments Ltd.), which required that these lands have covenants placed on them. The rights of Hancock to enforce that contract were assigned to DCA.

## How Railway Marsh got its Name

In the 1970s and '80s one of the places inviting exploration by new arrivals on Denman Island was an intriguing trail heading Southeast off Northwest Road, just south of the entrance to Komas Ranch. Under a canopy of tall firs a wide mossy trail, easy walking despite the regular humps across it, led one to peak-a-boo views of a hidden wetland area with large open water stretches. It was apparent that the 'regular humps' were indeed the remains of railway ties. The name Railway Grade Marsh was coined.

The railway grade itself starts at Henry Bay, adjacent to Pat McLaughlin's house, and continues alongside the marshes and then down Island past the gravel pits to within half a mile of Swan Road. It dates from the era of the 1920s and '30s when railway logging was prevalent on Denman Island.

According to Winnifred Isbister's *My Ain Folk* the Henry Bay Railroad Company logged between 40,000 and 50,000 acres of Canadian Collieries lands at the northern end of the island. (Actually there are not that many acres on Denman Island. Perhaps they logged 4000 to 5000 acres.) The operation began in 1925. Some 50 men were employed and most of them lived in the camp at Henry Bay, except for a few islanders who lived at home. A diminutive and ancient steam loco, a Climax engine that came to Vancouver Island in 1902 was the workhorse of this railroad.

## Ecological Significance of the Komas Bluffs

(extracted from the Baseline Study prepared by Ryan Durand of *Taara Environmental* for the conservation covenant.)

The property lies within one of BC's rarest forest types; the Coastal Douglas-fir moist maritime (CDFmm) biogeoclimatic ecosystem, which is restricted to low elevations along southeast Vancouver Island from Bowser to Victoria, the Gulf Islands south of Cortes Island, and a narrow strip along the Sunshine Coast near Halfmoon Bay.

The CDFmm lies in the rainshadow of the Vancouver Island and Olympic mountains resulting in warm, dry summers and mild, wet winters. Growing seasons are very long and feature pronounced water deficits on drier sites. The CDFmm represents the mildest climate in Canada.

Three Biogeoclimatic Site Series were classified on the property. They included: Fd – Salal, FdBg – Oregon grape and CwBg – Foamflower.

The ecological significance of the Covenant Area cannot be overstated. Its steep slopes, high groundwater table, and old forest and mature second growth forests make the area important and highly sensitive.

In a landscape dominated by second growth forests, all old growth areas and trees are ecologically significant. Many species which can exist in second growth forests require large standing trees, snags, or fallen trees for seasonal or periodic habitat. As long as these features are available, they can exist in younger forest habitat.

Jenny Balke of the Denman Conservancy Association described how the Covenant Area has been identified and protected by various government agencies, the community, and scientific assessments:

“The Bluff has been identified by government agencies and the Denman community as a significant area for conservation for many years. In 1984, community intervention resulted in the cessation of logging on the Bluff. The following year, the Bluff was designated a Development Permit Area in the Denman Island Zoning Bylaw. In 1991, the Bluff was included in the Environmentally Sensitive Areas and Development Permit Areas designations in the Official Community Plan by the Islands Trust. The Bluff was one of the important areas identified in the submission to the Vancouver Island, Regional Protected Area Strategy, Goal 2 Initiative in 1993; it was also included in the Sensitive Ecosystem Inventory in 1994. The Bluff was included in the Denman Protected Area Network by the Denman Conservancy Association in 1996.”

Of particular importance are the old forest and older second growth stands that occur on the southeastern slopes of the Covenant Area. These forest stands are increasingly rare due to pressure from logging and development.

Therefore, the conservation of the old forest and older second growth forest on the Komas Bluff is of great ecological significance to the island and constitutes a sizeable portion of a constantly diminishing forest type. In addition, the relatively large contiguous forest stand that will be protected within the Covenant Area is rare on the Gulf Islands and one of the largest on Denman Island. The bluff also contains at least one blue-listed species, the red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*), and several red and blue listed ecosystems.