



Denman Conservancy Association

NEWSLETTER

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

April 2019

The Denman Island Community
Is Invited to Attend

A Community School

NATURE GUIDE

SHOWCASE

Wednesday, May 29th

Cake & Punch @ 1:30pm

Home and Garden Tour Still Needs Volunteers

Now that spring has arrived, the Home and Garden Tour is fast approaching and our event coordinator, Katarina Meglic, has been busy organizing and laying the groundwork for another delightful tour. On **June 15 and 16**, eleven homes and gardens will open their doors and garden gates; some are old favorites, several are back after a long hiatus and four are completely new to the tour. This wonderful event is DCA's most important fundraiser, and as we all know it's a lot of work, not only on the part of our generous homeowners and gardeners but on the part of many, many volunteers. Katarina is still looking for helpers, so if you are willing to help home owners with yard work before the tour, or lend a hand June 15 or 16, please contact Katarina at katarina.a.meglic@gmail.com or give her a call at 1-778-557-7429.

Katarina is hoping to develop a pool of volunteers to help with this year's tour and with those in the future. If you're looking for a preview of the homes and gardens on the 2019 tour, check out the Denman Island Home and Garden Tour Facebook page, or visit homeandgardentour.blogspot.com. Early bird tickets are now on sale at a reduced price until May 15.

Spring Bird Walk with George Sirk Friday May 10, 8 am. Railway Grade Marsh. Meet at junction of Northwest Rd & Danes Rd.

Jennifer Ellenton and Mike Morrell, for DCA
We on Denman Island will soon have the exciting opportunity to go on a bird walk with George Sirk. George is a long-time resident of Cortes Island with a passion for natural history interpretation. He has been an avid birder for 50 years and has worked as a park naturalist in many BC parks. More recently, he has worked as a natural history interpreter in many birding hotspots including the Central American tropics, the Canadian high arctic and Greenland.

George has a special interest in sound recording and the walk will emphasize bird identification by song including a focus on identifying bird songs to particular families. This time of year is near the peak of birdsong on Denman and George will describe techniques for how to isolate a particular song from all the others.

→ →



George Sirk

For more information about the Spring Bird Walk please contact Erika (dcalandmanager@gmail.com | 250-702-7773).

On the Land - Help Control the Spread of Invasive Plants This Spring

Erika Bland

Late winter and early spring are good times to work on the manual control of invasive plants. The ground is still moist (in theory), the garden hasn't gotten out of control yet (in theory), and the weather is mild and pleasant for this kind of work (in theory). Below, I describe three aggressive plant species (English Holly, Scotch Broom, and Daphne/Spurge Laurel) that are increasingly abundant in woodlands and open disturbed sites on our Island. They are relatively straightforward to control manually with the right approaches, consistent attention and some simple (sharp) tools. Please also encourage your neighbours to take note of these species and make efforts to remove them and control their spread. If allowed to persist, they create monocultures by outcompeting native vegetation that is important for wildlife (for instance, the many beautiful spring forbs and flowering shrubs that are blooming now and feeding hungry bees and early butterflies).

English Holly (*Ilex Aquifolium*)

Evergreen perennial shrub/tree. Clonal (rhizome), spreads aggressively through lateral runners and shoots. Seeds are toxic to humans. Bright red berries spread by birds in winter. Thrives in shade. **Suggested Manual Control Methods:** Dig plants or cut with loppers or a pruning saw below ground level. I have had success removing larger trees with a reciprocating saw and 9inch pruning blade, but a chainsaw is necessary for the really large trees. Wherever possible, remove the entire root. A broom puller may be helpful for this, though laborious. (DCA has one of these to loan out on request.) To deal with cut plants/trees, remove long branches from the



trunk and then buck it up into smaller lengths. Pile the branches densely, in parallel, in a shady area, using heavy trunk parts to weigh down the pile. We have found that this helps speed up composting and discourages re-rooting of the branches by preventing

light from entering the pile. Do not cover up the cut trunk with the pile of branches, and be sure to look all around the trunk and remove lateral runners that may be attached underground to the roots of your cut tree. Monitoring the cut stumps, and breaking off any new shoots in subsequent years, is a must if roots are not removed. Holly wood is exceptionally hard, and I hear it can be carved to make excellent tool handles and wooden spoons.

Scotch Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*)

Evergreen perennial/shrub with tap root thrives in sunny, disturbed sites. Does not tolerate shade, so may eventually be outcompeted by trees, but if allowed to persist before that, limits the overall diversity of a plant community. Bright yellow, pea-like flowers bloom in early summer. Large and prolific seeds in explosive pods spread by vehicles, footwear, contaminated soil, and can last up to 40 years in dormancy. **Suggested Manual Control Methods:** Don't let the plants produce seeds! Pull smaller plants from moist soil, minimizing disturbance. Cut large plants with loppers or a saw, just before or during blooming (~June), ensuring you cut the trunk below ground level on root tissue. If you can't cut the whole plant, use secateurs or shears to cut off the blossoms before they set seed. Pulling out the roots of broom plants is controversial because it causes disturbance to surrounding soil, encouraging germination of dormant seeds. Because the plants cannot re-sprout from root tissue, if you cut it low enough, it should, in theory, die. If seeds had developed on the cut plants, minimize transporting this material from the area. Instead, if possible, pile densely to compost in a shady area. Once the larger plants have been removed from an area, pulling or cutting smaller seedlings is easy if done consistently. Re-vegetation with native species such as Oregon Grape and Salal help prevent Broom from reclaiming a cleared area by creating shady ground cover.

Daphne/Spurge Laurel (*Daphne laureola*)

Evergreen perennial with tap root. All parts poisonous. Flowers in spring and black berries are readily spread by wildlife. Thrives in shade. **Suggested Manual Control Methods:** Pull plants from moist soil, or cut stems as low as possible to ground, and check for re-sprouting. Use caution when cutting, as plant sap may cause skin irritation. Remove material from the site, or leave to compost in small shaded piles. Monitor to ensure pulled plants do not re-root and continue to remove small seedlings in subsequent years. Discourage regeneration by planting native shade-loving shrubs such as red huckleberry, Salal and ferns from areas where Daphne is cleared.



Other invasive species known or reported to exist on

Denman Island include: English Ivy, English Hawthorne, Reed Canary Grass, Ornamental St. John's Wort, Everlasting Pea, Tansy Ragwort and Giant Hogweed. Please consider doing some research about manual removal of these species, if you think you have them on the land where you live. **Ctd.** → →

Fun Bat Facts:

- We have at least 8 species of bats on Denman and Hornby.
- Some species of bats can live up to 40 years.
- Our bats all eat insects and arachnids. None eat fruit.
- The US agricultural industry reports bats provide their farmers over 3 billion dollars/yr of organic pest control.
- Denman's Old School has a maternal bat colony of over 700 mum bats that can be seen leaving to hunt for insects at dusk on summer nights.
- Bats are the only mammal naturally capable of true, sustained flight.
- Bats can see in the dark and also use their ability to echolocate to find food.
- Bats are clean animals, grooming themselves almost constantly.
- Bats do not chew or scratch wood or wires like rodents do. Their tiny, sharp teeth are used to crunch hard bodied insects.
- Almost 40% of BC bat species are in trouble, with some already listed as endangered or threatened.

**Bats are important. Bats are in trouble.
You can help bats.**

Help to detect the dreaded white-nose syndrome in B.C. Please report any dead bats Nov to May 31st and we will send them in for testing. Find a dead bat, please call 335-2151 or email dhbatproject@gmail.com.

To learn more about our bats visit <https://www.denman-conservancy.org/denman-nature/denman-bats/>

→ → **On The land ctd.** by Erika

A note on burning: I do not like to see burning of any vegetation. Please chip or bury or compost your biomass wherever possible. Or, make biochar! That said, if you absolutely do not have a shady site to effectively compost cut invasive plant material (and you can't find a friend who will accept your compostables), burning—when the venting index and weather are appropriate—may be the safest option for dealing with large quantities of cut invasive plants, to prevent fire hazards.

More info available from BC Invasive Species Council: <https://bcinvasives.ca/>. (Photos from BCISC website.)

Please note I am trying to schedule my work days for DCA to be on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays.
Thanks, Erika.

DCA Calendar

School Nature Guide Showcase

Weds. May 29th 1:30 pm at the School
(see Page 1.)

Bird Walk with George Sirk

Friday May 10, 8 am.
Railway Grade Marsh. (see Page 1)

The Whales in our Waters

Thursday May 30th
2 pm Community Hall D.I. (see Page 4)
Sponsored by Comox Valley Nature

Home & Garden Tour

Saturday June 15th – Sunday June 16th



Note: this is a negative of a photo of a bat.

Landkeepers

On Wednesday 17th April a dozen or so DCA supporters met to consider rejuvenating the former Landkeepers program. Landkeepers will assist the DCA to achieve its land stewardship responsibilities, while helping to reduce the DCA Land Manager's workload. The program offers opportunities for committed volunteers to support local conservation activities while learning about and enjoying nature here on Denman Island.

Activities are proposed to include:

- Photo-points – monitoring and photos, re-establish ground points as needed.
- Water – monitoring of streams, wetlands, riparian areas
- Trails /Signage – monitoring of trails
- Bats (Jenny) – monitoring of bats
- Invasive Species – monitoring and identification of invasive species

For more information, and/or to join in Landkeepers activities Contact Erika, Jackie Hipwell or Juan Barker.

Contributors to this Newsletter:

Jenny Balke, Erika Bland, DD Fuchs, Luise Hermanutz, Katarina Meglic, John Millen.

DCA Divests from Fossil Fuels

Several years ago some Conservancy members suggested that the Board should divest DCA from Fossil Fuel investments. DCA keeps some of its funds in Guaranteed Investment Certificates with our Bank at Union Bay. These funds are not invested in Fossil Fuels. Our Endowment Fund has been held by the Vancouver Foundation in their Consolidated Trust Fund (CTF) which is invested in a full spectrum of Canadian stocks and bonds. The purpose of our Endowment Fund is to ensure that DCA always has enough resources to maintain our promise that the lands we own and protect will be preserved for Nature in perpetuity.

When the Board was first asked to take up the issue of Fossil Fuel divestment we could find no suitable investment that was as secure and well managed as the Vancouver Foundation CTF. At that time the Vancouver Foundation's Socially Responsible Fund (SRF) also held shares in Fossil Fuel stocks. (We asked them to divest that fund of Fossil Fuels but at that time they would not.) In addition the SRF provided a lower rate of return than the CTF where our Endowment Fund was held.

In March this year the Vancouver Foundation advised DCA that their Socially Responsible Fund now excludes companies predominately involved in fossil fuel activities. The Board promptly decided to ask for our Endowment Fund to be transferred to the Socially Responsible Fund (SRF) and so free it from Fossil Fuel investments.

The SRF fund has historically provided a rate of return slightly lower than the CTF. [the CTF 5 year return was 7.29% and the SRF was 6.39%]. The Board considers the small reduction in rate-of-return is well compensated by the SRF's better alignment with DCA's purposes.

The Board acknowledges that this move has taken rather a long time, due mainly to the Boards considerable caution in managing its financial responsibilities.

The Whales in our Waters

Thursday May 30th 2 pm Community Hall
Sponsored by *Comox Valley Nature*
Presented by Sarah Patton Coastal Ocean Research Institute. Learn about the threats facing whales in our waters, what's being done to protect them, and how you can contribute to their conservation by reporting your sightings to the BC Cetacean Sightings Network.



Spring Frog Chorus Louder than ever in Wetlands Year!

Erika Bland

A huge thank you to all the fantastic folks who made the spring frog chorus a resounding success! We shared a silly and inspiring evening welcoming back the beloved spring frog song in true Denman Style, and raised nearly \$4000 for DCA in the process. I am truly humbled by the generosity of everyone who dedicated so much time and effort to work on putting this event together. Thank you!

Spring Frog Chorus Event Saturday Mar. 16th

