



As you read this spring/summer issue of GO Restore! you may notice that GORP's success has a lot to do with our committed, enthusiastic volunteers. In return for their valuable time and expertise, we show our appreciation through volunteer opportunities for training and experience, field trips and social events. Volunteering for GORP is a great chance for personal/professional growth and is a lot of fun! Look on page 4 to find out more about volunteering. If you just want to keep in touch with our program, we can provide you with a free subscription to GO Restore!



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GO Restore!

Newsletter of the Garry Oak Restoration Project in Saanich

Spring/Summer 2004

ISSUE 2

GO WHAT?!

In the world of Garry oak ecosystems recovery, there are many "GO" acronyms flying around. While it is confusing to those not as intimately involved, it is good to know there are so many groups working to save this endangered ecosystem. Here is a bit of a guide to what is happening in the world of "GO"s.

If our "GO" organization - **GORP** - has brought you into the fold, we are thankful. If you've already been in the fold and we're your active outlet to restore - we are also very glad. Our restoration sites protect and restore Garry oak ecosystems in Saanich (especially our 10 main sites), and we also use these sites as demonstration/ education sites. We're working on our little corner of the world, and also support the efforts beyond Saanich as much as possible.

Following a symposium on Garry oak ecosystems in 1999, the **Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team** (GOERT) was founded. Since then, GOERT has established an office with a number of staff, and developed a Recovery Strategy. The Team coordinates the work of eight Recovery Implementation Groups (RIGs) comprised of representatives from all levels of government, First Nations, NGOs, consultants and concerned citizens. GOERT is very busy implementing the Recovery Strategy and promoting this work. Their information can be accessed on the web at www.goert.ca. The work that this recovery team does has also provided much need support for local grassroots efforts to protect and restore Garry oak ecosystems.

Easily the longest standing "GO" organization - the **Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society** (GOMPS) - was formed in 1992 out of concern from rapidly disappearing woodlands and meadows in the Capital Regional District. GOMPS is a community organization focussed on educational activities, lobbying and habitat restoration. They have two brochures available and a website at www.garryoak.bc.ca



Now, the name of the GEEK Committee was specifically chosen to get away from the "GO" acronym and because it is obviously a name that gets attention. Originally named the **Garry Oak Ecosystem Education Kit Committee**, this group will very soon have an environmental education resource available for formal and non-formal educators. Look for the launch in the early fall!

It absolutely must be said that not having a "GO" acronym doesn't mean an organization isn't working hard for Garry oak ecosystems. There are many **local land trusts** and **community organizations** working to preserve Garry oak ecosystems. If you are interested in preserving a jewel somewhere near you, a land trust is a good place to start. Many of these groups are actively involved in education, lobbying and restoration.

For more information/ updates on organizations in your area, contact GOERT at 383-3293.

[Photo: Marilyn Fuchs]



SITE PROFILE: Wetherby Park



Photo: Krista McCuish

Wetherby Park is a small, triangular neighbourhood park bounded by Cedar Hill, McRea and Wetherby Roads. As you drive north on Cedar Hill Road, beyond Cedar Hill Recreation Centre, have a look on your right at this peaceful little spot. While it is small and surrounded by roads and houses, Wetherby has a lovely frame of Garry oaks along its entire boarder, and a stretch of some 55+ oaks and rocky outcropping between McRae Road and the neighbouring houses.

The main area of Wetherby Park had fill deposited long ago and the understory mostly consists of invasive grasses and plants. Saanich Parks has, in recent years, left no-mow zones underneath the oaks. The centre of the triangle is mowed and a well used space for a game of frisbee or soccer.

This year, Wetherby Park has had a good “jump start” towards restoration. GORP volunteers and staff have been out this year planting camas bulbs and spreading leaf mulch under the oaks. On the rocky outcropping across McRae, volunteers have worked hard to remove invasives such as English ivy, daphne and Scotch Broom to allow the native plants and small oaks a chance to flourish.

One day soon, the soil at this park will be healthier, invasive plants will be under control, and the diversity of native species will once again allow this area to be an ecosystem. One day soon, we hope neighbours and visitors will be able to enjoy a beautiful native wildflower display under the oaks at Wetherby Park and watch the growth of new oaks to one day replace the old veterans.

If you live by Wetherby Park, why not take the opportunity to do some restoration under the oaks in your own yard! To find out more, contact us or visit the Garry Oak Ecosystems Recovery Team on the web at www.goert.ca.



Melissa Sztybel
Wetherby Park Site Steward

I must have driven past Wetherby Park a hundred times on my way home from work without even thinking that it was a park, let alone a GORP Site. When I finally discovered the park, I would sit with others in the grassy area amongst the oaks, enjoying the solitude they offer, without giving them much thought. It wasn't until I started to volunteer with GORP and became the Site Steward for Wetherby Park that I realized the value of these oaks and this little site.

The Park, though small, has huge potential for success as a restoration site. The restoration activities to date have already made an impression. The growth of invasive grass species has been reduced with the spread of leaf mulch around the trees, allowing native vegetation to thrive. And already, a once wildflower-less park now has beautiful blue flowering Camas beneath its mighty oaks. When I visit, inside the border of oaks, it's easy to forget that there is a busy world out there beyond the trees.

I have enjoyed working with volunteers at our many GORP work parties, and I am looking forward to meeting even more of the GORP volunteers. In the future, I hope that the surrounding community will become more involved with the activities at Wetherby Park, and begin to take pride in the site within their own backyards.



Photo: Krista McCuish



Butterflies are here!

The fall/winter seasons are good times for all the active restoration work in our restoration sites. During the spring and summer there are opportunities for monitoring, conducting inventories, planning, education and pure enjoyment! Among these activities, our staff and volunteers have been celebrating the return of the butterflies this year with some training. Site stewards will be able to use this training to conduct butterfly inventories for the different GORP sites. This information will be another indicator of how successful our restoration is. It is also great fun!

In mid-May, local butterfly expert James Miskelly led us in a great introductory session on Mt. Tolmie. We started in this park because it was the one site we knew of that supported at-risk butterflies. Our butterfly foray did not disappoint us. James skillfully led us through the basics of butterfly identification and we were able to have a first-hand look at butterflies such as the Spring Azure, Brown Elfin, Anise Swallowtail, Western Tiger Swallowtail, Cabbage White...and the blue-listed *Propertius duskywing*.

The group discovered wonderful life-details of these fascinating butterflies such as *Propertius duskywing* laying eggs on the oaks while flying and overwintering on oak leaves. We learned about "hill topping", where males congregate on hill tops and unmated females come to find a mate (especially with migratory species). All in all a wonderful sunny afternoon learning more about a creature that will definitely benefit from our restoration efforts.

Thanks to James, we had another enjoyable butterfly session in June at Chatterton Hill Park. Hope you can get out to one of our sites to see what creatures are enjoying our work!



Propertius duskywing @ Mt. Tolmie
• photo: Dave Lock



Introducing: Pat Johnston aka GORP Restoration Coordinator

This issue, we are introducing you to a very important person in our program. Pat is the person you will be in contact with if you want to do any volunteering with GORP. A multi-talented gal, Pat coordinates the volunteer promotion, events, training, and socials. She sits on our steering committee and brings great enthusiasm to our program!

Pat comes to us with a background in Adult Education and a passion for native plants and Garry oak ecosystems. She in her personal and professional life she is a member of the Native Plant Study Group, a past executive of the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society, runs the Oakland's Greenways Project and works with Holly Green Park and the Oak Bay Native Plant Garden. You may also have seen Pat's name at local centres like Swan Lake where she runs workshops on native and waterwise gardening.

Very much our ambassador of volunteers, we are very lucky to have Pat on contract with us to do her valuable work. If you are interested in volunteering and haven't yet met Pat, give her a call at 595-5600 (or by email: patj@islandnet.com).





UPCOMING EVENTS

GORP EVENTS

COMMUNITY EVENTS

Restoration Events

Look for many GORP restoration events coming up this fall! This is the time of the year when we'll be doing broom bashing, ivy pulling, mulch spreading, planting...and much more!

For all GORP Events, contact Pat Johnston, Restoration Coordinator for volunteer information at 595-5600 or patj@islandnet.com

Summer 2004

UVic GOE Restoration Project
Seed collection events TBA
(*GORP will announce any events to our volunteers)

FALL 2004

Look for the launch of Garry Oak Ecosystems of British Columbia: An Educator's Guide:

For more information contact Carolyn (below)

Sudden Oak Death Seminar

Wednesday, July 7 • 7 pm
@ Pacific Forestry Centre
This seminar, targeted for Horticulture Professionals, will include presentations from Dave Woodske, BC Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries; Dr. Eric Allen, Canadian Forest Service; and Doug Kyle, Canadian Food Inspections Agency. Registration is not required. Doors open at 6:40 pm. Sponsored by The Vancouver Island Parks and Ground Supervisor's Association (744-5341).



Society for Ecological Restoration

August 24-26, 2004
16th Annual International Conference, University of Victoria
www.ser.org



Birding at Swan Lake

Wednesdays and Sundays @ 9 am
Want to learn more about birds? These volunteer-led bird walks start in the Sanctuary parking lot and run throughout the year.

CRD Parks Programs

For more information:
www.crd.bc.ca/parks or
call 478-3344

Fire: Friend or Foe?

Thursday, August 5 • 10 am
@ Francis/King Regional Park
Did you know that many plants and animals depend on fire to survive? Find out how they protect themselves against the flames and how the Coast Salish people used fire to their advantage. Meet at the Nature Centre off Munn Road.

Hilltop High

Friday, August 13 • 10 am
@ Mill Hill Regional Park
Our native Garry oak is under attack. Experience this threatened local ecosystem and enjoy views from the top. Meet at the information kiosk in the parking lot off Atkins Road.

What's That Plant?

Saturday, August 14 • 10 am
@ Witty's Lagoon Regional Park
What's that plant? Here's your chance to find out. Learn tricks to help you identify common local plants, and hear plant legends and lore. Meet at the Nature Centre in the main parking lot off Metchosin Road.



Volunteer with the Garry Oak Restoration Project!

Gear up for fall and plan to join GORP's volunteer crew. Most of the active restoration takes place in the fall and winter. Spring and summer are good for monitoring, inventories, education and pure enjoyment! For more information contact: Pat Johnston at 595-5600 or patj@islandnet.com

Submissions and questions can be sent to the Editor:

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