

Spartina Dig & Ivy Busters

Over the summer, **Northwest Wildlife Preservation Society** had the opportunity to partner with several organizations and participate in two stewardship events which focused on the removal of two invasive species: English Ivy and English Cord Grass. Both events involved a large number of volunteers and a lot of muscle! Not only did we all feel good clearing these nasty plants, which cause a variety of problems for native species, but there is also something quite satisfying about tearing invasive species' roots out of the ground, while sinking up to your knees in mud.

English Cord-Grass

Spartina Busters



During the summer of 2003, English Cord Grass (*Spartina anglica*) was encountered along the shorelines of Roberts Bank and Boundary Bay. Spartina is non-native to the West Coast and has the ability to rapidly replace native eelgrass and algae beds that occur along our coastal mudflats. Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Vancouver Port Authority, Ducks Unlimited, the Canadian Wildlife Service, the City of Delta and the BC Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection jumped on the opportunity to battle this plant in its early stages in order to control the spread of the plant. These groups, along with the help of many other participants, were successful in clearing Spartina from the mudflats in Boundary Bay during the month of June, completing one of many steps in the struggle to control the spread of this plant. Many species of fish, shellfish and birds will be helped thanks to the huge effort put in by all the participants.

Another battle being fought is with English Ivy (*Hedera Helix*) in Stanley Park. The Stanley Park Ecological Society and the Vancouver Park Board are controlling the expansion of English Ivy within Stanley Park, as it is estimated that this invasive species currently covers 30% of the ground in the park! The nature of this plant allows it to out compete and replace many of our native species of plants in this ecosystem, creating a single species forest floor cover. By removing English Ivy from the forest floor in Stanley Park, the hope of this project is that native flora will regenerate in

these areas, once again providing an abundance of food and shelter for a variety of wildlife species in the park. If you would like to be involved with Ivy Busters, the group of volunteers working to remove English Ivy from the park, please contact info@northwestwildlife.com to find out when the next battle will take place.

Green Ribbon Campaign runs in celebration of Earth Day, April 22nd.



In an effort to educate and inform an even larger number of people about the environment, NWPS is gearing up for its fourth annual Green Ribbon Campaign. The Green Ribbon Campaign aims to raise visibility and profile of environmental issues in our community, as well as provide a means to support the environment and celebrate Earth Day! We will be asking people to show their support of the environment by proudly wearing a Green Ribbon during the month of April, Earth month. If you would like to become a sponsor, distributor or volunteer for the Green Ribbon Campaign please contact us at (604) 713-6686 or email info@greenribbon.ca to find out how you can get involved and make this campaign a success. We would like to sincerely thank Chevron Canada, IGA & IGA MarketPlace as well as all of the locations that generously helped distribute our Green Ribbons in 2004.

Northwest Wildlife Preservation Society would like to thank the following sponsors:

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Edited by Becky Phillips

Contributors: Anita Sigur, Becky Phillips & Melissa Tupper. NWPS is a registered charity and a non-profit society. Our mandate is to develop and provide educational, research, and advisory services that advance the public's awareness and knowledge of wildlife and wildlife habitat in northwest North America. In doing so, NWPS works to ensure that healthy wildlife systems throughout North America are preserved for their own intrinsic worth and for the appreciation of all. News and Views is intended to be a forum for discussion. Opinions of authors of articles contained herein are not necessarily the position of NWPS.

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News & Views

Spring 2005

Bats - Beyond the Myth

By Anita Sigur
NWPS Volunteer

Bats have long been haunted by a negative image that is based on myth and misconception. We think of them as shadowy creatures of the night that lurk in our cobweb-laced attics, eyes gleaming, just waiting to take a rabid bite out of our unsuspecting flesh. On the lovability scale, bats generally rate in the same category as rodents, snakes and cockroaches. They are associated with all that is dark and scary, so much so that they have come to symbolize the holiday that celebrates all that is mysterious and frightening--Hallowe'en.



Little wonder why concerned scientists like Merlin Tuttle, the founder of Bat Conservation International, have had a hard time convincing the world that bats need protection. While his pioneering research found that the numbers of several North American species of bats were rapidly dwindling, Tuttle soon discovered that getting people concerned and interested in doing something to help save bats would not be an easy task. When he approached endangered species organizations for help, he found them unwilling to take on a creature that was considered the least popular mammal on the planet! Before he could set to work on conservation efforts, Tuttle first had to overcome the major hurdle of convincing people that bats are actually wonderful creatures and certainly worthy of protection.

Endangered bats have a difficult time rallying public sympathy. This is due in large part to their odd appearance and their nocturnal habits. Unlike popular endangered species, like the tiger or panda, bats are neither exotic nor are they particularly cute or cuddly. In fact, some bats are quite bizarre looking, with large, oddly shaped ears or noses. The way they dangle upside down, with their leathery cape-like wings wrapped around them, can make them look quite alien and unappealing. The fact that bats are nocturnal makes it difficult to observe them firsthand, adding to their mysterious image and perpetuating false ideas about them. While we now know that the amazing precision with

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which they are able to fly at night or catch insects in mid-flight can be explained by echolocation, to the unscientific eye, these abilities give them a supernatural quality.

This may explain how bats came to be closely associated with the occult in fiction and in film, most notably in Stoker's Dracula. This unfortunate connection has promoted the misconception that all bats are bloodsucking fiends. Of the nearly 1000 species of bats worldwide, the vast majority eat fruit or insects. Only three species of bats are vampire bats and these live exclusively in South and Central America. Unlike the cruel, bloodthirsty villains of our nightmares, true vampire bats do not terrorize or suck the life from their prey, and they certainly do not seek out humans to feed on. Two species of vampire bats drink the blood of birds, the other drinks the blood of cattle or horses. Since vampire bats feed at night, the animals they feed from are usually asleep, most often unaware and unharmed by the bite.

The news media also tends to fuel our fears about bats by using words and images that provoke a strong negative response. In his early days of studying bats in the late seventies, Tuttle found that even reputable scientific



Our Wildlife Calendars are here!

NWPS Wildlife Calendars are now available. The calendars again feature the exquisite photographic artistry of world renowned wildlife photographer's Bill and Serena Keay. Calendars include interesting information on some of the incredible wildlife unique to B.C., with further reference material on each species featured on our website at www.northwestwildlife.com. The calendars are of the highest quality and design, making them perfect for gift giving. The complete layout of the calendar can be viewed by visiting www.northwestwildlife.com.



Please contact us by telephone 604-713-6686 or email info@northwestwildlife.com to place your order.

We are grateful to have so many friends who share our passion for wildlife. Thank you for supporting NWPS and our environmental education programs through your purchase of our calendar.

Get involved with wildlife preservation: volunteer!

Without the support our volunteers, Northwest Wildlife Preservation Society could not accomplish as much as we do. Each and every volunteer fills a different niche and plays a special role, helping us out with a variety of tasks. We would like to recognize Michelle Ngyuen for her support as she has lent us her helping hand for the past 8 months. Michelle has been actively involved in our Wildlife in the Schools program, the Youth Estuary Stewardship project and many of our weekend stewardship events, which often leave her covered head to toe in muck. It has been a pleasure having her out working with the children and wrestling with invasive species. Thanks Michelle and thank you to all of our volunteers. If you are interested in helping out with the environment and protecting B.C. wildlife and wildlife habitat, please contact us at (604) 713-6686 or info@northwestwildlife.com. We have a wide variety of volunteer opportunities available which range from office administration to fundraising, to wildlife research to environmental education to stewardship activities.

publications were typically using pictures of bats that showed them snarling aggressively. Although this was merely a defensive reaction to being captured, it reinforced the idea that bats were dangerous animals. Until Tuttle began photographing bats himself, little effort was being made to show bats in a more natural state, doing normal activities and looking non-threatening.

The negative way bats have traditionally been portrayed has created an underlying sense of mistrust that predisposes us to accept ideas that confirm our worst fears, however ill founded they may be. This is evident in the commonly held belief that bats are disease-ridden and a serious threat to humans. Even though a study done in the early 60's that seemed to show that bats could pass on rabies without being harmed themselves was later proven wrong, the idea that they are a vector of disease still persists and is used as rationale for killing these creatures. Like other wild mammals, a small percentage of bat populations (less than half of one percent) do contract rabies. However, unlike other mammals, they do not usually become aggressive and they quickly grow ill and die when infected with this disease.

Another common misconception that threatens bats is the idea that they are agricultural pests. While its true that some bats eat fruit, research has shown that they do not do significant damage to fruit crops since they only eat the fruit when it is fully ripe. Fruit crops are commonly harvested for market before they ever reach full ripeness. In addition to this, the bats actually perform a helpful service by eating any leftover fruit, thereby keeping down the number of fruit flies which typically feed of the rotting fruit left behind. **Bats serve as an incredibly effective form of pest control as they are a major predator of night-flying insects worldwide.** This is good news for people living in mosquito-infested areas as well as for farmers whose crops are protected without the use of expensive chemical pesticides. A single little brown bat can catch and eat up to 1200 bugs in one hour.

Research done over the last couple decades has shown that bats are beneficial to us in many other ways. They serve an important function in the ecosystem by playing a vital role in reforestation. Bats pollinate many plant species that other animals depend on or that provide valuable food crops, such as the durian fruit in Vietnam. In addition, the study of bats has contributed to a number of medical advances. These include the development of navigational aids for the blind as well as a recent breakthrough in drug treatment for stroke victims.

Unfortunately, many populations of bats have been completely destroyed, either deliberately or indirectly through habitat destruction or disturbance of their fragile life cycles. As a result, many species are now endangered, including the western red bat and B.C.'s pallid bat. It is in our interest to ensure that threatened and endangered bats are protected because of the many important functions bats serve in our ecosystem, in agriculture and in medical research. By looking beyond the myths, misinformation and our own aversion to the sometimes odd appearance of bats, we can learn to appreciate bats for the unique, harmless and valuable creatures they are.

From the desk of the Executive Director

Thanks to generous donations from VanCity Community Foundation, TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, Imperial Oil/Esso, Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General, Coast Capital Savings Foundation, BC Hydro and many others, we will be able to deliver almost 50 free wildlife presentations in 2005 and will be running our Youth Stewardship Project again this year at the Fraser River Estuary.

Becky Phillips, our Education & Communications Coordinator, has been exceptionally busy delivering presentations to classrooms all around the Lower Mainland and in other parts of B.C. Through a great deal of dedication and hard work, Becky has not only been facilitating all of our education programs, but has also been doing an outstanding job as our Volunteer Coordinator. She works with well over 60 volunteers and organizes monthly habitat restoration events, which are enormously popular and well attended. Please take a moment to read about the variety of volunteer events we've been involved with over the past months in this issue of our newsletter. We are truly fortunate to have such a skilled and enthusiastic individual working with NWPS.

We are also pleased to announce that our 2005 Wildlife Calendars are again a wonderful success! The calendars feature the stunning photography of Bill and Serena Keay, showcasing their beautiful photos of some of the incredible wildlife unique to B.C. If you have not yet picked up yours, please call us at (604) 713-6686 to order your calendar and support our wildlife education programs through your purchase.

Our annual Green Ribbon Campaign will commence April 1st, 2005. A special thanks to IGA/IGA Market Place and Chevron for their wonderful support as distributors of green ribbons. Look for green ribbons at IGA/Market Place IGA and Chevron locations, as well as various other locations throughout the Lower Mainland, during the month of April. Remember to wear your green ribbon to celebrate Earth Day April 22nd!

Our sincere appreciation to all of you who are so highly involved with Northwest Wildlife Preservation Society. With your support, we look forward to continuing our important work of behalf of wildlife and wildlife habitat.

Melissa Tupper - Executive Director

Thank you to all 2004 Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup participants. Your tremendous efforts have helped make our environment a cleaner, safer place. NWPS looks forward to participating in next year's cleanup and hope that you will join us then!



Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup a success

During the week of September 11th to 19th, volunteers from all over Canada cleaned up aquatic debris from streams, lakes, rivers, wetlands, and ocean shorelines in an effort educate and create awareness about aquatic debris, and to restore these natural areas by removing garbage and unnatural objects from sensitive ecosystems. The Vancouver Aquarium Marine Science Centre coordinates the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup (GCSC) on a national level. This cleanup contributes to International Coastal Cleanup, which is hosted by the Ocean Conservancy throughout the month of September.

On September 18th, NWPS proudly hosted a cleanup of our own for the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup at Iona Island Beach/Park in Richmond. Despite the daunting weather, our cleanup was a huge success. Many families, students, and individuals participated in this event, which seemed to be a learning experience for everyone. We were very fortunate to have the support of a very enthusiastic group from the Buddha's Light International Association. Sixty volunteers from their Vancouver Chapter joined us in cleaning up aquatic waste from the site. Throughout the day, approximately 100 participants worked on our site, all of whom were very motivated to go out and collect the biggest &/or strangest piece of trash they could find! At the end of the day, 550 pounds of garbage was collected and removed from the shoreline. Some of the debris collected was fairly common however, we did see some very smelly, very large and very odd objects as well.

The **top five** items collected were:

1. Cigarettes/ Cigarette Filters	563
2. Food Wrappers/Containers	271
3. Rope (pieces)	242
4. Plastic Bags	215
5. Caps/ Lids	185

Some of the peculiar pieces found at our site were: a garden rake, 17 cans of hairspray, 2 food coolers (which were very smelly) and a bathing suit.

