

2026 Newsletter

METCHOSIN FOUNDATION



Territorial Acknowledgement

The Metchosin Foundation pursues its Vision and Mission, undertaking and supporting a variety of initiatives within the territories of the Coast Salish peoples, in particular, the territories of the SC'IANEW (Beecher Bay) and T'Sou-ke First Nations.

We draw inspiration from the Coast Salish principle of Na'tsa'maht (working together in unity) and recognize its applicability to our motto, "Healthy lands and waters – the foundation for a healthy community".

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President's Message

Making Progress by Making Friends

"Friendship is born at the moment when one man says to another, 'What! You too?'"

C.S. Lewis, The Four Loves

Throughout this newsletter are examples of the Metchosin Foundation's partnerships with a myriad of organizations; some far larger than us and some much

smaller. All have amplified the work of the Metchosin Foundation and extended the reach of our modest foundation.

When looking back over the past twelve months, there is a theme emerging; that of friendship. For many years now the Metchosin Foundation has been building solid partnerships with like-minded groups but now we are crafting friendships. This year we have made much progress through making friends.

A friendship is something that is made between people. Unlike a partnership between two organizations, friendship requires no Memoranda of Understanding, no agreements on scope of work and no time constraints. For all that it lacks in structure, it gains in resiliency. It is what we fall back on when our policies are inadequate to the demands of a situation. It is there when words fail us.

These days I frequently speak with friends over the phone. On a recent exchange with someone I have known for 35 years but sadly neglected to keep up with, the recipient of my call said "How nice and special to hear from you. After all, you can't make old friends." It may be true that you can't make old friends but by your words and actions you can either keep them or lose them. If the stars are aligned, even new friends can quickly become as if we have known them forever. The Metchosin Foundation is lucky enough to have such friends.

I would like to thank each and every friend of the Foundation - old and new, near and far - we are inspired and encouraged by you. All of us together are doing good work. We live in uncertain and challenging times but we should never be discouraged if current circumstances make us feel that we are not getting anywhere. Sometimes our journey is as much about how well we can tread water as it is about how fast we can swim.

- Valerie Jaeger



Luna hands Andy McKinnon a mushroom. Erin Ronsse photo.

A Year in Conservation

Successes and Challenges

The year 2025 offered a full schedule in the realm of local conservation activity. As our late and lamented friend and colleague Chris Pratt might have said, volunteer efforts certainly "kept us out of the pool hall"!

A year ago, the Metchosin Foundation published an online article, *Establishing Conservation Corridors*, which included a map showing the rough outlines of the two multi-year initiatives on which most of our related efforts have been focused. The reference map is re-printed here, to re-orient readers to the pertinent geography. We continue to work with supportive local landowners and ally agencies, to increase the scope of protected ecosystems and biodiversity within the areas outlined in magenta.

Our most notable conservation success over the past year involved facilitating the acquisition of a 51-acre conservation reserve within the corridor between Roche Cove and Mary Hill. Over the same time period, we also supported a step-change increase in camera trap monitoring of large mammal species on both this property and the 32-acre Bilston Headwaters Nature Reserve, located

near Metchosin's northern boundary and within the heart of the Bilston Creek watershed. We are extremely grateful to BC Parks Foundation for providing the lion's share of acquisition funding and transaction expertise for both properties, and we are similarly grateful to member and volunteer Gary Schroyen for his work installing and monitoring camera traps on both properties. Through Gary's work, the Metchosin Foundation and BC Parks Foundation are learning about the critical habitat connectivity these land parcels provide and how and where different species make use of specific ecosystem features.

Further successes included opportunities to work more closely with ally organizations such as Rocky Point Bird Observatory, Bilston Watershed Habitat Protection Association and Victoria Natural History Society, and deeper engagement with local landowners. We offer our thanks to the agencies who've invited us to speak at their AGMs and to local landowners who have asked us to (briefly!) take the microphone at social gatherings.

Last but certainly not least in the roster of milestones to celebrate,

in the latter part of 2025 we were very pleased to be invited by BC Parks Foundation to enter into a longer-term, bilateral Memorandum of Agreement (MoA). Among other considerations, this MoA establishes that:

- The two agencies will communicate in identifying prospective properties suitable for conservation in the Metchosin area, particularly those suitable for establishing two conservation corridors: one between the proposed **SC'IA'NEW** Tribal Park at Mary Hill and the CRD Regional Park at Matheson Lake/Roche Cove and the other within the heart of the Bilston Creek watershed;
- BCPF will consider input and advice from the Metchosin Foundation on properties that it may wish to acquire in the Metchosin area; and
- Should both parties decide to work together on a property acquisition, they will coordinate fundraising efforts for acquisition and long-term property stewardship.

Our activities over the past year were also influenced by some challenges. Most significant among these was the unexpected decision by a slim majority of District Council to reduce permissive property tax exemptions for BC Parks Foundation by about fifty percent. As readers might imagine, any large conservation agency that invests millions of their donors' dollars to create new green-space in a small jurisdiction like Metchosin has the reasonable expectation that local governments will demonstrate reciprocal goodwill, in the form of dependable property tax exemptions. The Metchosin Foundation has since put effort into reminding Council members that BCPF has invested well over \$3 million to date, conserving green-space in our community,



Aerial view of Hummingbird Hill. Will O'Connell photo.

and that the corresponding cost to offer tax exemptions has been just five dollars per year, per average tax paying household. We remain hopeful that last year's policy decision can be reversed, thereby offering renewed encouragement to our valued partners to continue investing here.

Other challenges related to different forms of disruptive trespass. In the closing months of 2025, quick action was required to stop a contractor working with the adjacent Department of Defense from clearcutting the understory vegetation on a portion of the 51-acre property cited above. Readers who happen to walk on the Pearson College Trail will be familiar with the type of understory clear-cutting referred to here. In the latter part of the year, we were also alerted to a situation of repeated trespass by a Langford-based commercial dog-walking enterprise on the 32-acre nature reserve. Camera trap monitoring has shown not only the people involved in trespass, but

about a dozen off-leash dogs in their inferred care. In addition to damage caused to moss-covered rock outcrops (called "moss balds"), the sudden and large increase in canine urine and fecal deposits in the area has caused a notable decrease in wildlife activity. We are hopeful that this trespass can be curtailed and that wildlife usage can then recover. For a perspective on this challenge from a well-known local subject matter expert and canine aficionado, we contacted Metchosin's Pattie Whitehouse. Pattie's first observation was that the trespassers in question are clearly violating a number of Metchosin's established local bylaws. With thanks to Ms. Whitehouse, our next steps may include sending a copy of these bylaws to the offending business owner.

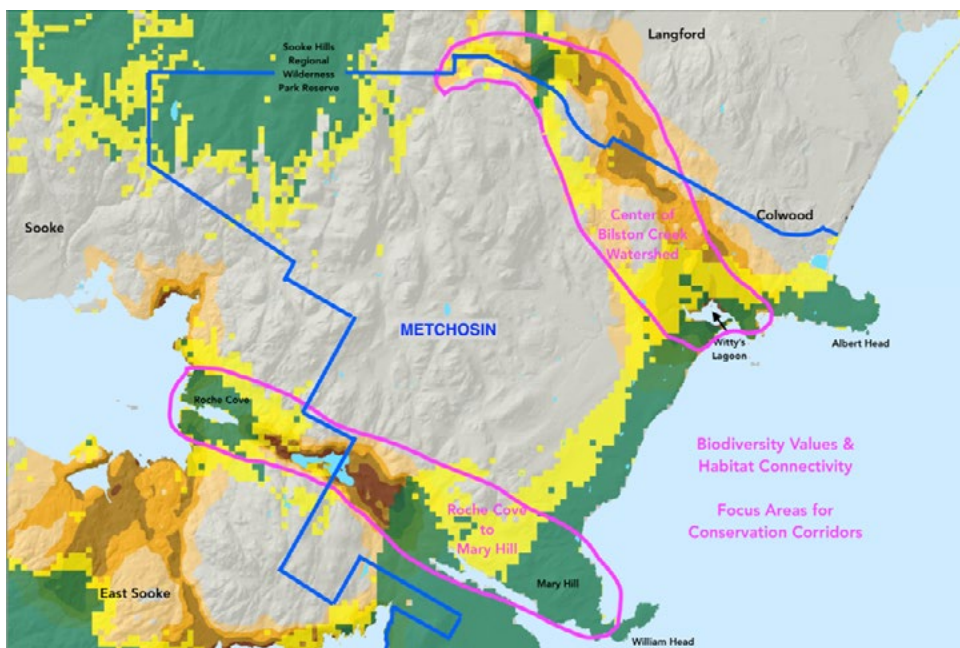
On balance, the successes of 2025 certainly outweighed the challenges encountered. The selection of photographs here demonstrates the natural beauty and habitat diversity of the properties where our main efforts have been focused. We offer

our heartfelt thanks to the donors and granting agencies that make our conservation work possible and to the hard-working volunteers who support related stewardship efforts!

- Morgan Yates



Bilston Headwaters moss bald.



Conservation Corridors are circled in pink.



Wetland in Bilston Headwaters nature reserve.

Volunteer Viewpoint

Learning from Metchosin's Conservation Efforts



Gary Schroyen's relationship with the Foundation began a few years ago, when he generously accepted an invitation to speak at our 2022 AGM. His talk was a real highlight! From there, the relationship between Gary and the Foundation has grown.

As a member of the Foundation, Gary is now providing a unique form of support, focused on expanding knowledge of the large mammal species for which Metchosin still provides important regional habitat. In early January of 2026 Gary kindly agreed to be interviewed. What follows is most of our conversation.

Q - How long have you been



Bear cubs photographed on camera trap.
Photo by Gary Schroyen.

developing your skills and knowledge in the areas of animal tracking and behaviour observation?

In 1997 I first became interested in studying animal signs such as tracks, scat, rubs, scrapes, beds, scent posts, and wildlife trees. It took me years to learn how to identify these signs, to determine what animal made them, how they were made, and the purpose and meaning behind them. My primary focus is on the signs left by elk, bear, cougar, and wolf, and how these animals communicate with one another.

Q - How long have you been involved in monitoring via camera traps?

I started using homemade still photo trail cameras in 2009 and switched over to commercial video trail cameras in 2018. Camera trapping has allowed me to view the intimate, seldom seen lives of wildlife in an unobtrusive way.

Q - This is pretty physically demanding and time consuming work. Where do you get your energy from?

My motivation comes from my love of the natural world and desire to expand my understanding of animal behavior and communication. Through this process my initial,

misplaced fear of large predators diminished and a greater appreciation and respect developed.

Q - What would you like Metchosin residents to know about the work you're doing?

For the past five years I've been documenting bears, cougars, elk and wolves in the East Sooke and Metchosin areas, to support public education and awareness programs. Out of respect for the subjects I study, I don't post online, nor do I publicly disclose the locations of animal sightings.

Q - What are the biggest highlights in your work?

Aside from ongoing learning, a real highlight has been capturing video of unique and rare activity. I once recorded a cow elk chewing on the bones of a deer carcass. Another time I recorded a female cougar carry a piece of wood and then play with it like a toy. My greatest highlights have been opportunities to observe animal behaviour that differs from common public perception and which expands our understanding of the wildlife living around us.

Q - What are the biggest challenges?

Finding the right location to set up a camera and being able to anticipate what species will pass by, from what direction, and how fast they are likely to be moving. When choosing a spot to mount a camera, I need to consider mounting angle, height, level, view composition, sun position, time of year, weather exposure, obstruction by foliage and avoiding detection. I also need to consider battery life, camera settings, how to limit bear damage and a lot more. Bears investigate my cameras by smell, sight, taste, touch, and then bite if the mood suits them.

Q - Among the things you've observed, what has come as a surprise to you?

How adaptable animals are to their environment and how tolerant they can be to human proximity. Many species of wildlife have chosen to adapt their ways to live among humans. I don't think that it's unreasonable for us to make some reciprocal effort, adapting our ways so that we can live more harmoniously with them.

Q - We understand that you are now sharing your knowledge and skills with Metchosin resident Shannon Hamilton. What's it like to have a younger colleague to work with?

Shannon and I met through a friend who had cited my name in an online article about cougars. We met over coffee to discuss our shared interest in wildlife observation and have been friends ever since. Shannon reminds me a lot of myself when I was her age. Working alongside Shannon is inspiring and a whole lot of fun.

Q - Do you have a favourite species that you monitor? If so, what makes them your favourite?

Wolves. They are highly intelligent, keenly aware, incredibly curious, and a rightfully cautious species that is extremely misunderstood. They are the embodiment of a survivor, with the ability to adapt to almost any environment. The bond between the members of a wolf family is like no other and the similarities have often been compared to the bond between members of a human family. Author Barry Lopez put it very well: "Truth is we know little about the wolf. What we know a good deal more about is what we imagine the wolf to be."

Q - Do you have, or have you had, a favourite individual animal that you've observed?

Until her disappearance or demise, my favourite animal was a matriarch



Hidden camera waits at a beaver-chewed tree, ready to film. Photo by Gary Schroyen.

elk that was born around 2018. I've watched her stand her ground and then chase off more wolves than I can remember. When it came to protecting her family, she was by far the bravest and most protective elk I've known. The old gal demonstrated behaviour that was ultimately learned by the larger herd: showing them not to run from a wolf but to chase it instead. She disappeared one day and her daughter then became the new herd matriarch.

Q - What would you like to share with our newsletter readers that we may not have questioned you about?

Over the years I've learned that most wildlife, predators included, will go to great lengths to avoid conflict. It's simply not in their best interest to risk injury or death. Most of the problems that arise due to interactions between people and wildlife are caused by people and could be avoided, with the benefit of education and greater awareness.

- Gary Schroyen and Morgan Yates



Metchosin elk herd. Photo by Gary Schroyen.

BC SPCA Wild ARC

Giving Wildlife in Need a Second Chance

Now that the new year has begun, another Metchosin-based non-profit is preparing for its busiest time of year. During the spring and summer, the birth of wild babies means these young animals and their parents are more vulnerable, resulting in an increased need for care and rehabilitation at BC SPCA's Wild Animal Rehabilitation Centre (Wild ARC).

For nearly three decades, Wild ARC has cared for injured, sick, and orphaned wildlife from across southern Vancouver Island. Under federal and provincial permits, Wild ARC treats about 140 different species of raptors, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, songbirds, and water birds each year, with the goal of releasing recovered animals back into the wild. Professional wildlife rehabilitation is complex, as each species requires specialized diets and enclosures for appropriate treatment while temporarily in care. Last year, 2,182 wild animals were cared for at the Wild ARC facility on Malloch Road, and more than 61,000 wild animals have been helped since Wild ARC opened in 1997!

The vast majority of the animals in Wild ARC's care have needed help because they've been impacted by human activity or interactions, including collisions with vehicles, windows or buildings, and capture by free-roaming cats or off-leash dogs. In addition to caring for wildlife in distress, Wild ARC and other BC SPCA teams work year-round to raise awareness about wild animals and their welfare, demonstrate how humans can respectfully coexist with wildlife, and advocate for wild animals and their habitats. Wild ARC's operations are not government funded and rely entirely on donations from compassionate community members and businesses

to save so many wild lives. It truly takes a village to make this work possible, and there are many opportunities for animal lovers to [learn about](#), [support](#) and contribute to Wild ARC's work:

[Volunteer](#) to help transport and care for animals, prepare their meals, clean and repair their enclosures, or spread awareness about this life-saving work.

Donate [online](#) or purchase supplies from the [supplies wish list](#) or [Amazon wish list](#).

Sponsor an [enclosure](#), symbolically "[adopt](#)" a wild animal to help fund their care, or purchase wildlife-related [clothing and gifts](#) at the BC SPCA shop.

Subscribe to the free, bi-monthly [WildSense e-newsletter](#) to learn about unique issues and challenges of wild and exotic animals in B.C., and how you can help.

Watch some of the animals in Wild ARC's care live on the [Critter Cam](#), and follow the [Facebook page](#).

It takes a lot of specialized training to become a professional wildlife rehabilitator. However, anyone can make a difference, and we all have a shared responsibility to ensure



Black-tailed deer fawn in care at Wild ARC.

the welfare of wild animals in our community. If you see a wild animal that you suspect needs help, please [check this Rescue a Wild Animal webpage](#) for information or call the BC SPCA Animal Helpline at 1-855-622-7722. The Helpline team will help you determine if the animal needs assistance and the best way to help them.

- Sarah Herring



Marbled murrelet in care at Wild ARC.

Moralea's Meadow

Hard Work Turns Into Blooms

It has been a year of consolidation and reflection in Moralea's Meadow. Following last year's installation of hundreds of plants, bulbs and seeds funded by BC Hydro's Community Re-Greening Program, the main focus has been on the maintenance of existing planting areas and the preparation of new areas. The elimination of invasive plants, especially grasses, is an on-going activity. It requires constant surveillance to keep invasives from choking out the native species.

We are now convinced of the necessity for deep mulching to smother unwanted species. We are applying cardboard and either wood chips or Garry Oak leaves. This gets tricky because some areas contain camas bulbs and native seeds that we want to encourage. We will be lifting the mulch periodically during the spring to check for sprouting natives and removing the cardboard around them so they can fully develop.

During 2025, the Meadow volunteers acquired a metal garden shed, a dedicated wheelbarrow, flexible hoses and other small tools. This equipment has already saved us hours of work. Before this, we were using watering cans but now we have enough hose to cover the whole area. While Garry Oak meadows can withstand summer drought, our new plants need water until they get established.

We are grateful to the Metchosin Foundation and community donors for their financial support for these purchases.

During 2026, we will be making the Meadow known to a wider audience by encouraging more visitors,

increasing our social media presence and increasing traffic to our website. As well as enhancing biodiversity in the Meadow, our goals include educating the public about the role of native plants and how they can be included in home gardens. We were very pleased to welcome 182 visitors at our 2025 Open Day coinciding with the opening day of the Metchosin Farmers Market. We will be hosting this event again on the same day in 2026.

Moralea's Meadow is a labour of love for Moralea Milne, the natural environment and the community. We invite you to visit the Meadow and find out about how you can share in this deeply satisfying work.

Our email address is info@moraleasmeadow.ca

- Merrilee Hoen



Red Columbine. Bev Hall photo.



Yellow violets. Bev Hall photo.



Moralea's Meadow in full bloom. Bev Hall photo.

Westshore NatureKids

Meaningful, Lasting Connection With the Natural World

By the time you read this, winter will be loosening its grip—and it will be many months since Westshore NatureKids was introduced at the Metchosin Foundation's 2025 AGM. Westshore NatureKids, you may recall, is part of NatureKids BC, an environmental action organization that helps children form meaningful, lasting connections with the natural world. Our local group, with strong and friendly ties to the Metchosin Foundation, launched just over a year ago and now includes about 40 families with children aged 5 to 12. From the very beginning, Westshore NatureKids has focused on discovering the seasonal abundance of the place where we live.

Together we've gone on mushroom forays, explored the Charters River salmon stream and hatchery, celebrated the winter solstice and winter birds, learned to use iNaturalist and Merlin/eBird, and discovered herring eggs and robin nests. We've met some of the region's largest "mother trees" at Francis/King Regional Park, learned about FireSmart planning for our homes, and scrambled around our neighbourhoods picking up litter. (My son Jean-Paul reminds me that food is always a big draw—he still has fond memories of early-morning bagels shared on birding walks.)

Our June visits to Fort Rodd Hill and Fisgard Lighthouse National Historic Sites brought unexpected delights: noisy baby barn swallows, tricky parent killdeer performing their distraction displays, acrobatic otters, and even mighty orcas spouting offshore. These moments—unscripted and unforgettable—are exactly the kind that anchor children's sense of wonder and belonging.

One of the standout highlights of 2025 was a wildly popular midsummer insect celebration affectionately dubbed Buzzapalooza.

Working with former Metchosin Foundation director Joan Rosenberg, we welcomed professional entomologists Claudia and Darren Copley to Bilston Creek Farm's Summer Lavender Festival. There, children and families learned how butterflies, bees, dragonflies, and other "tiny giants" knit together the living world of plants, keeping ecosystems thriving and in bloom. In honour of the pollinators, several participants arrived in full insect costume, with prizes awarded both for creative outfits and for completing a scavenger hunt featuring insect posters hidden throughout the farm.

Looking ahead to 2026, Westshore NatureKids has a full and exciting slate of activities planned.



Removing invasives sticker concept. Sticker art includes AI-assisted illustrations, developed with human creative direction.

We'll be learning about native and invasive plants with the Metchosin Invasive Species Cooperative (MISC), and exploring "nature sports" together—including a training session with the Westshore Track Club and a series of "Wander Lots" adventures

to notable hills, mountains, and high points across Greater Victoria.

We hope to deepen our spring birding with mentors from the Rocky Point Bird Observatory, explore seasonal blooms at the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific, and discover local seaweeds as the long days of summer return. We're also compiling an island-wide parks and beaches travel curriculum to help families venture further afield across Vancouver Island.

Do these things matter?

Research consistently shows that time spent in nature supports children's physical and mental health, helping them grow happier, more confident, and more resilient. Yet many children today spend less time outdoors and more time absorbed by screens. I'm no Luddite, but I believe technology is best used to enhance curiosity, learning, and responsible engagement—not merely to entertain, distract, or inflame. NatureKids offers a social counterpoint: an invitation for children to discover the worlds within the natural world they already inhabit, fostering awareness, empathy, and healthy relationships with place and community.

But the story doesn't end with children. Time spent in nature is also restorative for adults—think of "forest bathing" and other forms of ecotherapy. Recent research goes even further, suggesting that simply being around children makes adults more generous, compassionate, and empathetic, even toward one another. This "child salience effect" has been observed across parents and non-parents alike, and points to the value of breaking down age segregation in schools, workplaces, and civic life—especially where long-

term decisions, such as those related to climate and community resilience, are concerned.

Children need nature. But we also need children—to remind us how to pay attention, how to care, and how to imagine better futures.

Thank you to the Metchosin Foundation for your continued encouragement and support of Westshore NatureKids, and for helping to hold space for hope.

- Erin Ronsse



Buzzapalooza kid-insects vie to answer entomologist Darren Copley's question. Erin Ronsse photo.



Erin Ronsse came to Buzzapalooza dressed as a beautiful bug. Morgan Yates photo.



Joie experiences the lightness of friendship with a Chinese praying mantis. Erin Ronsse photo.

The Bilston Watershed Habitat Protection Association

Monitoring Aquatic Ecosystems In the Bilston Watershed

The Bilston Watershed Habitat Protection Association (BWHPA) is dedicated to safeguarding the ecological health of one of the largest watersheds in Greater Victoria. Through conservation, stewardship, and community engagement we monitor the impact of human activity, water quality and ecological diversity in the Bilston watershed. Our purpose is to protect and restore natural habitats, support biodiversity, and ensure the watershed remains resilient and thriving. The following update comprises the many projects and programs the BWHPA has undertaken in 2025-26.

Water quality monitoring

We are currently conducting monthly monitoring of 22 sites in the Bilston Watershed, looking at water temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, conductivity and turbidity. The results are posted on the [Pacific DataStream platform](#) and will soon be summarized on our website.

Until recently, we were collecting water samples for the [Tire Wear Toxins program](#) at six sites, to determine the concentration of 6PPD-quinone in creeks receiving road runoff. There were some very high readings. We will resume



Buckbrush swamp, Bilston Headwaters nature preserve. Morgan Yates photo.

participation if the [British Columbia Conservation Foundation](#) and [Vancouver Island University](#) receive funding to continue the program. Royal Roads University students will begin testing sediment samples for heavy metals in spring of 2026, and collecting water samples for BWHPA to send to independent labs to test for hydrocarbons, pesticide residues and excess nutrients.

Roadside stream identification signs

Signs were installed in 10 locations in the Bilston Watershed to identify

Hewitt, Cole, Metchosin and Bilston creeks. The BWHPA paid for the sign faces, while the District of Metchosin supplied the posts and bases, and the public works team installed them. This follows a collaboration with the City of Langford through which BWHPA and the City installed identifying signs for some of the creeks in the Bilston Watershed within Langford boundaries (Pritchard, Firehall, Lily and Bilston mainstem).

Firehall Creek restoration site

We began habitat restoration on Reach 3a of Firehall Creek in the fall of 2025. The section of creek between the Luxton Fairgrounds (Metchosin Farmers' Institute) and the new headquarters of the Mann Group was selected for restoration due to the abundance of invasive Gorse, Yellow Flag Iris, Golden Willow, Scotch Broom and European Water-plantain together with significant erosion, lack of shade cover and loss of biodiversity. So far, we've removed three dump truck loads of invasives, installed erosion



Coastal cutthroat trout are a unique sub-species in Bilston Creek. They are under threat from pollution, logging, changes in water flow, erosion, and excess sediment.



Provincial biologists and volunteers on a stream assessment day at Bilston Creek.

blankets and light-excluding tarps and revegetated the creek banks with more than 400 native plants. This highly-degraded site will require long-term monitoring and maintenance.

Native plant propagation workshops

We organize annual native plant propagation workshops, teaching

participants how to propagate native plants for their own yard, while helping the BWHPA rebuild our stock of plants for restoration projects. Check our website or sign up for our newsletter for more info.

Stream assessments and fish population surveys

We are applying for funding to carry out stream assessments and fish population surveys in Metchosin Creek and parts of the upper watershed.

Helping a RRU grad student with flood risk workshops

Royal Roads University grad student Humberto Camacho is organizing a series of workshops as part of his Major Research Project titled 'Integrating Flood Risk Models, Community Knowledge, and Systems Thinking for Watershed Planning and Management in the Bilston Creek Watershed'. The BWHPA is providing background information and helping the student connect with municipal authorities and community members for the workshops.

Community Flow Monitoring Network

The Community Flow Monitoring Network is a program delivered by BC Conservation Foundation in partnership with the BC Ministry of Environment, providing support to community stewardship groups and First Nations engaged in flow monitoring on the east coast of Vancouver Island. If we can recruit a few dedicated volunteers who enjoy hands-on work monitoring streamflow and collecting high-quality data, the Community Flow Monitoring Network could be extended to include Bilston Watershed.

Accurate information about the hydrology of a watershed is essential in the effort to preserve conditions for fish such as coastal cutthroat trout, which live in small shallow streams on the south Island and are extremely vulnerable when conditions change.



Tony Cecchetti planting riparian shrubs in Firehall Creek.

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The Bilston Watershed Habitat Protection Association

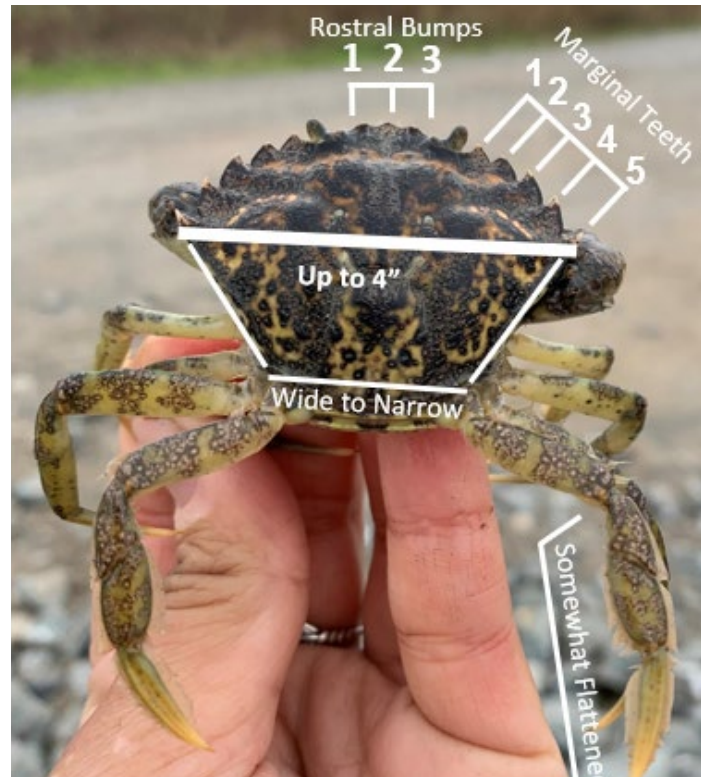
Monitoring Aquatic Ecosystems in the Bilston Watershed cont'd

Invasive European Green Crabs in Witty's Lagoon

About 50 invasive European Green Crabs (EGC) were found in Witty's Lagoon last year, but they are not considered "established" here so we plan to monitor and trap in the Lagoon this year. EGC is an exceptionally harmful invasive species that destroys shellfish beds, outcompetes native crabs and disrupts habitat for many juvenile fish species including herring and salmon.

Please email the Bilston Watershed Habitat Protection Association at info@bilstonwatershed.org for more details about any of these activities. We would love to hear from you, whether to share information or to sign you up as a volunteer!

- Alison LeDuc



European Green Crab ID. Washington Dep't of Fish and Wildlife.



Do you see garbage in the watershed?

Let us know if you see garbage or invasives in a riparian area within Bilston Watershed. We may be able to organize a work party for the site.

Canva stock photo.

Scholarships for Learning

Building Futures Together With Youth



Doe and fawn at Hummingbird Hill, 2025. Gary Schroyen photo.

Avital element of any community's future is its youth and their initiatives. Each year we at Metchosin Foundation are inspired anew by the achievements and the aspirations of youth that we read in their applications for our post-secondary scholarships. In 2025, the choice was very difficult given so many excellent candidates. The scholarships were awarded on the basis of high school

accomplishments including grade point average, volunteering and leadership, as well as commitment to community building. Each of the following young people, the winners of the 2025 scholarships, not only excelled in all of these areas but also impressed the committee with their aspirations to contribute to healthy futures.

Lauren Matthes – Academic Achievement Scholarship
Abby Card - Academic Achievement Scholarship
Marlene Charles - Moralea Milne-SC'IANEW (Beecher Bay) Community Scholarship
Justyce Campbell - Moralea Milne-SC'IANEW (Beecher Bay) Community Scholarship
Will Jackson – Community Citizen Scholarship

All five of these young people have now embarked on exciting learning journeys and careers that will benefit not only themselves, but also their families and their communities. We feel lucky to play a small part in their journeys towards building a better world, and we are very grateful to all the donors who make these scholarships possible.

- Tara Fenwick



Beecher Bay at sunset, 2026. Michel Desjardins photo.

Local Champions

Learning from Metchosin's Conservation Efforts

We have been making friends with people in this community who, often quietly and for many years, have been restoring and protecting Metchosin's lands and waters. These local champions of conservation are often feisty, formidable and unbelievably hard-working, and we are grateful for the opportunity to learn from them.

One group is the Metchosin Invasive Species Cooperative (MISC), who since 2019 have been gathering on weekends in all kinds of weather to uproot invasive plants across Metchosin. In 2021–2022 alone, MISC cleared English holly from <50 acres of Matheson Park, pulling more than 10,000 saplings, suckers, and trees. In 2025, the group signed a five-year agreement with the CRD to remove invasive species from the Matheson, Roche Cove, and Witty's Lagoon parks, as well as the Galloping Goose trail corridor.

MISC organizer Neil West toured us through Metchosin Park to show the devastation caused by holly, which over its long life can blend unnoticed in forests while spreading ferociously.

Volunteers work in teams wielding large "puller bears," among the many tools and strategies provided by MISC, to remove the holly and other invasives in our parks including Daphne, English ivy, Himalayan blackberry and Tansy Ragwort.

[The MISC website](#) offers detailed strategies for tackling each invasive species as well as recent research on holly's impact. Fresh volunteers will no doubt be welcome, and we have found this lively, knowledgeable group an energizing way to spend Sunday afternoons helping the land.

Another group are Metchosin's organic food producers such as the Umi Nami, Sea Bluff, and Wind Whipped farms, who each in their own ways have been adopting environmentally sustainable practices to increase biodiversity on their land. As we all know, small farms in Metchosin often struggle to be economically viable, let alone be expected to also pursue ecological goals. We were impressed, as each farmer toured us through their farms, with the many ways they are finding to conserve

native species and regenerate their land. Their practices include working with hedgerows that support natural pest control, finding creative ways to dramatically reduce water usage, using precision seeding, and increasing soil fertility entirely through organic means.

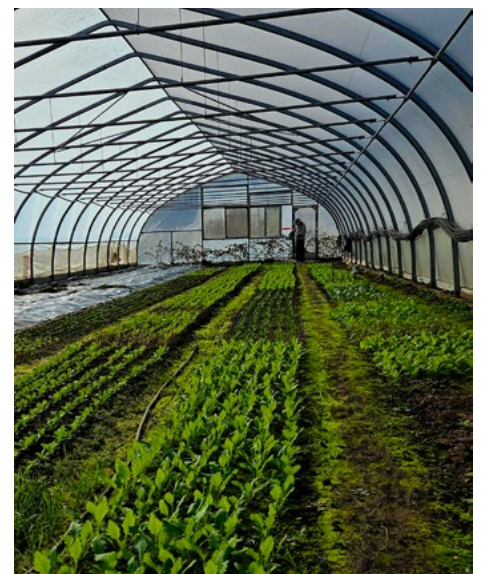
A recent cooperative initiative undertaken together by these three farms is the Metchosin Organic Food Education pilot project. This project has been contributing food and food knowledge to local vulnerable communities, while also engaging Pearson students in some of the food production. These objectives of education, community support and sustainable food production fits well with the Metchosin Foundation's purposes, and we are delighted to be able to offer some support to continue this important work.

All these local champions prove that perseverance drives real progress and change. Their examples teach and inspire us at the Metchosin Foundation to find hope for our planet among our neighbours.

- Tara Fenwick and Michel Desjardins



Invasive holly, ivy and daphne can threaten forest biodiversity. Bev Hall photo.



Spring seedlings, Umi Nami Farm. Michel Desjardins photo.

In Memoriam

Bon Voyage Chris

Chris Pratt.

A life well-lived.

May 27, 1924 - January 6, 2026

Chris Pratt was a driving force behind the creation of the Metchosin Foundation, serving as a multi-term director, including two terms as president.

In May of 2024, while still serving on the board of the Metchosin Foundation, Chris celebrated his 100th birthday surrounded by family and friends.

On his 101st birthday, in 2025, he became a director emeritus.

Chris was these things, and many more: friend, colleague, mentor, visionary, navigator, sailor, environmentalist, historian, raconteur and a passionate advocate for our rural community.

Bon voyage, Chris - May you be where the whales play!

- Bev Hall and Morgan Yates



Who We Are



The Metchosin Foundation is comprised of committed volunteers who oversee governance and projects in support of our vision and mission. Our directors are:

[Valerie Jaeger: President](#)

[Morgan Yates: Vice-President](#)

[Michel Desjardins: Treasurer](#)

[Tara Fenwick: Secretary](#)

[Jacqueline Clare: Director](#)

[Mike Fischer: Director](#)

[Heloise Nicholl: Director](#)

We gratefully acknowledge the transformational grants received from the Victoria Foundation, impacting our current work and encouraging us to dream.



Vision

Healthy lands and waters - the foundation for a healthy community.

Mission

The Metchosin Foundation undertakes and supports initiatives to improve environmental protection, stewardship, and education.



To contact us, please email:
contact@metchosinfoundation.ca



St. Mary's Metchosin fawn lilies. Bev Hall photo.