

Bowker Creek flows through an urban watershed from its headwaters at the University of Victoria, along Shelbourne Street in Saanich, past Jubilee Hospital in Victoria, to the ocean at Oak Bay.

# The Spirit Garden – A Greenway for All



Historic development in the Bowker Creek watershed has led to vegetation removal, construction near the creek and directing the creek channel into underground pipes. Along with the high proportion of impervious surfaces (roads, parking lots, roofs) these impacts resulted in a loss of riparian vegetation, decreased floodplain storage and increased downstream flooding and erosion. This has fragmented the creek corridor, causing habitat loss for fish, birds and other wildlife and lost opportunities for pedestrians and cyclists along this corridor.



Bowker Creek flows beneath your feet here, in a concrete culvert.

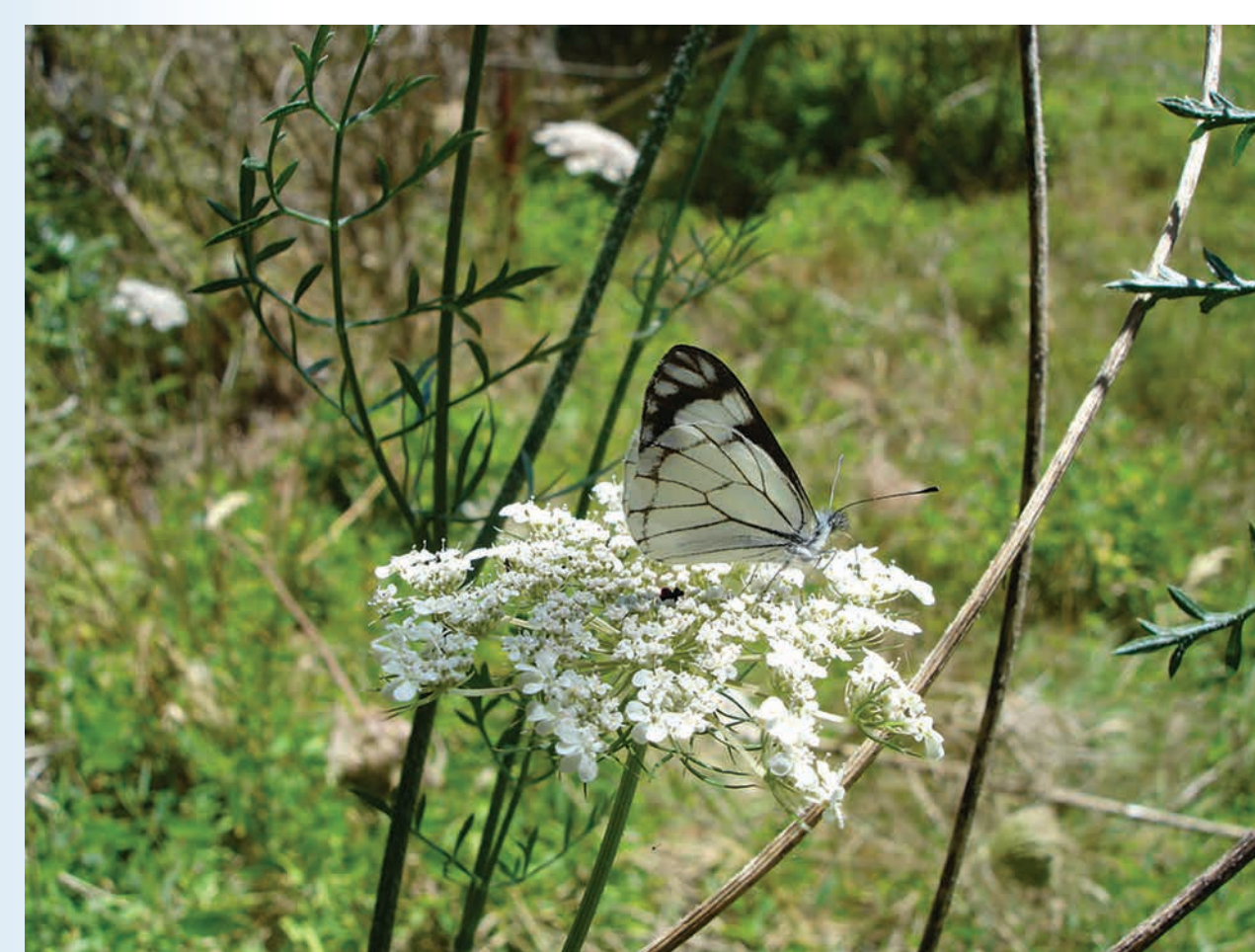


Image: Sandi Walmsley

## Bowker Creek Watershed

- 1,028 hectares in area
- Home to approximately 30,000 people
- 56% of the watershed is impervious
- Bowker Creek is 9.4 kilometres long, with a 1.4 kilometres tributary at Cedar Hill Park
- 60% of the original creek is piped underground

A watershed is the land that drains surface and groundwater to a common waterway such as a creek, lake or ocean. In an urban watershed, impervious surfaces such as buildings, roads and parking lots block water from soaking into the soil. When it rains, the water collects pollutants as it quickly flows into underground stormdrains leading to creeks or shorelines. This can cause flooding, streambank erosion, water pollution and habitat loss.



The Spirit Garden provides critical habitat for native insects, part of a "pollinator pathway" connecting pockets of native vegetation in the urban landscape.

### For more information

- Bowker Creek Initiative: [info@bowkercreekinitiative.ca](mailto:info@bowkercreekinitiative.ca)
- City of Victoria Parks: [parks@victoria.ca](mailto:parks@victoria.ca)
- North Jubilee Neighbourhood Association: [njnacommunity@gmail.com](mailto:njnacommunity@gmail.com)

## Spirit Garden Today

The Spirit Garden is an example of community connections and stewardship in the Bowker Creek watershed. In 1994, residents began transforming a derelict space into a community garden available for all to enjoy, including a greenway connecting neighbourhoods. Today it is an oasis of beautiful gardens along the Bowker Creek Greenway. The creek itself is underground here.

## What Can You Do?

- Keep your property well vegetated with native plants and trees to attract wildlife, absorb rainwater, slow runoff and reduce erosion
- Remove invasive species (e.g., Scotch broom, English ivy, Daphne, Himalayan blackberry)
- Use watershed-friendly garden and household products and use them sparingly
- Compost garden waste away from riparian areas
- Replace impervious pavement with grass, paving stones or gravel to allow rainwater to infiltrate
- Install rain gardens or bioswales to decrease and filter roof and driveway runoff
- Reduce runoff from your property: wash your car on lawn or gravel; sweep sidewalks and driveways instead of hosing them off
- Collect rainwater in cisterns or holding tanks to use for irrigation
- Join a local stewardship group
- If you live along the creek, consult an expert to help you create habitat for wildlife

## What is the BCI?

The Bowker Creek Initiative (BCI) is a partnership among the Capital Regional District, the District of Saanich, the City of Victoria, the District of Oak Bay, institutions, businesses and community groups.

To restore Bowker Creek, the BCI is working to reduce pollution and flooding, connect greenways and restore natural areas in the watershed.

The watershed management goals of the BCI are:

- 1 Take responsibility for actions that affect the watershed
- 2 Manage creek flows effectively
- 3 Improve and expand public areas, natural areas, and biodiversity in the watershed
- 4 Achieve and maintain acceptable water quality in the watershed

Actions outlined in the 100-year Bowker Creek Blueprint include re-establishing greenway and recreational connections through planning and re-development opportunities, and undertaking a daylighting feasibility study to bring the creek back up from underground.

## The Bowker Creek Blueprint

Improving the watershed will take time. The Blueprint is the 100-year action plan that guides this work.

Find out more about Bowker Creek at: [bowkercreekinitiative.ca](http://bowkercreekinitiative.ca)

