

Volunteers in Parks



CRD's Large Carnivore Project

by Rob Shoemaker

Large carnivores are keystone species that play a critical role in ecosystem health by regulating prey populations and maintaining biodiversity. Their presence in regional parks underscores the ecological value of these areas and highlights opportunities to address visitor experience and human-wildlife coexistence.

In 2025, the Capital Regional District's (CRD) Regional Parks Division launched its own carnivore monitoring program with the purpose of establishing a baseline of activity and identifying key wildlife habitat features to help inform park planning, management and conservation priorities. The project builds on CRD's collaboration with the University of Victoria and the Coexisting with Carnivores Alliance, which began in 2021 to monitor large wildlife in Sooke Hills Wilderness Regional Park.

Three parks were chosen for the monitoring project: East Sooke, Matheson Lake and Roche Cove regional parks. Several non-intrusive methods were used, including track and sign surveys, community and staff observations and wildlife cameras set up in 23 highly suitable habitats in remote, off-trail locations. *...continued on page 2*

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Preliminary Findings by Regional Park (Jan-Dec 2025):

- East Sooke Regional Park—five cameras detected 30 observations (24 bear, two cougar and four wolf observations).
- Matheson Lake Regional Park—three cameras detected 29 observations (six bear, 14 cougar and nine wolf observations)
- Roche Cove Regional Park—15 cameras detected 100 observations (73 bear, 20 cougar and seven wolf observations).

Preliminary Findings by Species (Jan-Dec 2025):

- Black Bears—103 observations; active year-round, including daytime; frequent observations near popular trails.
- Cougars—36 observations; less frequent observations but consistently present; travel corridors intersect with trails.
- Grey Wolves—20 observations; least frequent observations but consistently present, use undisturbed park areas.

The data confirms the presence of all three species in each park and highlights key habitat features critical for large carnivores. However, due to biases in camera placement, duration, and distribution across the regional parks, the results do not provide reliable insights into species abundance or spatial distribution.

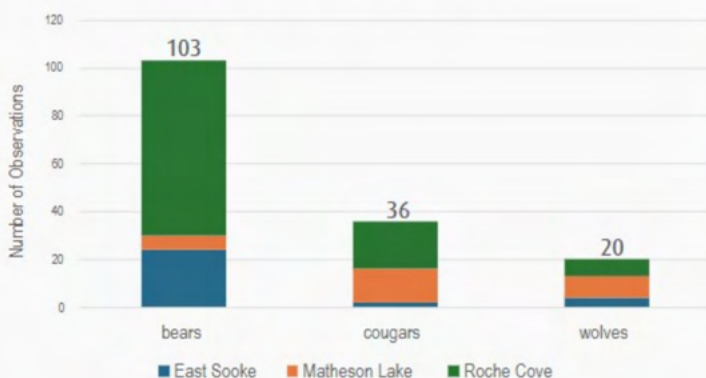
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Stills from trail cam footage captured by the CRD's Large Carnivore Project.

Key Findings

Number of observations by species



Key Findings

Observations by species

	Black Bears	Cougars	Grey Wolves
Habitat Use	Relatively active year-round in forests and riparian habitat		
Overlap with recreation	High overlap with trails	Occasional overlap with trails	Little overlap with trails
Habitat Features Identified	5 bear dens observed	3 potential travel corridors observed	1 travel corridor observed

Findings reveal carnivore habitat overlap with recreational trails. Staff mitigate potential human-wildlife conflict through park signage, public communications, interpretive programming and ranger patrols to ensure that park visitors:

- Secure food attractants
- Stay on trail
- Keep dogs on leash in designated areas

The pilot project has confirmed consistent presence of black bears, cougars, and coastal wolves in East Sooke, Matheson Lake and Roche Cove regional parks and identified key wildlife features. Findings emphasize the importance of integrating wildlife considerations into park planning and visitor management, especially where habitats overlap with regional park trails. The next steps are to continue and expand the monitoring program and collaboration with partners to strengthen conservation efforts, support biodiversity and ensure compatibility with recreation use.



Stills from trail cam footage captured by the CRD's Large Carnivore Project.



Black bear tracks beside shoe prints. Photos: R. Shoemaker

All About the East Sooke Partners in Parks

by Sandy McAndrews

East Sooke Regional Park encompasses more than 1,400 hectares in the western part of the capital region. With over 50 kilometers of trails, it is an exquisite place to visit. East Sooke Regional Park is unceded Sci'ánew territory and the Aylard Farm portion was a historic settler farmstead prior to being acquired by the Capital Regional District (CRD) in 1970.

In spring of 2021, if you looked west from the Aylard parking lot, you would have seen a blaze of yellow. The farm fields and adjacent forest edges had become home to large stands of Scotch broom, which became the original focus of East Sooke Partners in Parks.

In spring 2021, five East Sooke residents who had joined a CRD Regional Parks volunteer work party at Aylard, approached the CRD about removing Scotch Broom. By early 2022, armed with an agreement with the CRD and tools donated by the Metchosin Invasive Species Cooperative and the CRD, the team went to work.

The goal was to improve the health of the park by removing all the standing Scotch Broom from the west fields of Aylard, following up with annual maintenance to reduce the prolific seed banks and halt the spread of broom further into the park. Four years later you can see a major difference!

Currently, there is an active, enthusiastic group of nine weeders from throughout the region. The volunteers all love the park and are committed to improving the health of our natural environment. Over the past four years, the standing broom in the west Aylard fields was removed and the range of species targeted for removal has expanded. Volunteers have also planted native plants, designed and run test plots to assess the efficacy of two removal methods for Scotch Broom, and run trials on creating native grass refugia.

They can always use more help! The group meets at 9:30am on the first and third Wednesdays and fourth Saturdays of each month. If you'd like more information about joining an outstanding group of habitat conservationists, please contact Sandy at s.mcandrews@shaw.ca.



Volunteers removing Scotch broom.
Photo: C. Parker



Volunteers removing even more Scotch broom.
Photo: C. Parker



Volunteers and CRD staff
preparing for a replanting event.
Photo: C. Parker

Species Spotlight: Yellow Archangel

by Emily Ryan



If you have had the chance to work in some of our damper restoration sites, such as the former Pistol Range behind Thetis Lake, you may have removed yellow archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon*). It is important to highlight this plant, as detection in late winter may help prevent flowering and seeding in spring months.

Archangel is a perennial thought to have arrived from Europe or Central Asia and is, astonishingly, still sold in garden shops as an ornamental ground cover. It can also be found in decorative hanging baskets. However, its incredibly aggressive nature allows it to quickly spread into moist forested woodland or riparian areas, creating densely matted carpets that smother native plants in the same site. The species has been identified as a noxious and invasive weed in BC and occurs on Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, parts of the lower mainland, and, in the United States, Washington and Oregon.

Yellow archangel, also known as golden death nettle, is a member of the mint family. Its sharp-toothed, opposite oval leaves resemble those of a nettle. Leaves are variegated, meaning they have multiple colours, with a mix of green and silvery-white patches on the upper side of the leaves. Blooming springtime flowers are yellow and tubular. Seeds are spread mostly through human, animal, and even insect traffic. Ants are known to transport seeds of this archangel species over vast distances. Illegal dumping of ornamental garden waste has further led to its spread in local areas.

Should you see yellow archangel, take great care in removing it, as even a stem remnant can resprout. Small patches of these plants must be removed with great care to ensure all root tissue is taken from the soil. Once removed, plant material should be disposed of entirely in bags and not composted. For more widespread infestations, smothering with a material such as ram board has been recommended, but no guarantees of complete removal success can be given.

Most importantly, however, if you see this plant being sold in a local nursery or grown residentially by friends, share your knowledge of its invasive nature. Due to its lovely-coloured flowers, good-natured gardeners and nurseries may not be aware of its dangerous properties.

Restoration sessions in regional parks will continue to tackle identified infestations of this plant in future sessions, but until then, should you see yellow archangel in a regional park, please alert us to its presence.

Staff Profile: Jeanette Mollin, Administrative Clerk

Tell us a bit about yourself!

I was born and raised on Vancouver Island and I can't image living anywhere else. I have two cats, Willow and Casper (who is an absolute menace) and am the proud owner of four beautiful grandbabies ranging from four months to 15-years-old, with the 15-year-old currently living with us to finish his schooling.

Nothing means more to me than putting my all into my family, so lending a helping hand to pick up the little ones from school, attending a last-minute cross-country event or filling in at parent night for dance class is always a yes for me! Because what are we here for but to make life less difficult for one another, and it's a motto I try to live by.

Since hanging up my baseball glove three years ago, I have taken up gardening and have spent a lot of time and money in the garden centres, which I'm sure a lot of you can relate to. On March 3, I have a date with my 93-year-old Auntie who will be accompanying me to celebrate my 20th year with the Capital Regional District with 19 of those years spent at Regional Parks.



Jeanette Mollin and Mike MacIntyre at CRD Career Service Recognition Event - both receiving recognition for 20 years with the CRD.
Photo: N. Cann

What do you enjoy most about working at Regional Parks?

I enjoy everything about working at Regional Parks. My role provides me with so much variety, from working with volunteers, event organizers, filming crews, teachers and the general public, there is never a dull day.

The best thing about working here so long is that I get to see the great improvements made to the regional parks system, from the restoration efforts made by the volunteers and staff, to the improvements on making the system more accessible to all ages and abilities.

If you haven't taken in a free nature outing delivered by one of our Interpreters or our Indigenous Cultural programmer, I highly recommend it and you might see me and my grandbabies tagging along.



Jeanette with two of her grandbabies.
Photo: J. Mollin

**Thank you Jeanette for your
20 Years of service to the CRD!
We are lucky to have you!**

Park Updates

As many of you know, over the winter, a land slip occurred on a section of the Beach Trail at Witty's Lagoon Regional Park. Because of this, the section of trail has been closed since early December. The good news is that CRD Regional Parks Trail Crew started up again in February and for the next while their work will be focused on rerouting over 300m of the trail. They will also be decommissioning and re-naturalizing the old section of trail.

The Galloping Goose Regional Trail near Charters Trestle (km 45) reopened on February 18 after also being closed due to a landslide since December 17, 2025. Cleanup and remediation work started in the new year and the trail is now open again for all users.

Upcoming Events

STÁUTW Earth Day Restoration

Wednesday, April 22 | 9:30am to 12:30pm

Celebrate Earth Day by joining us on a coastal sand dune ecosystem restoration in partnership with STÁUTW Tsawout First Nation to remove invasive species! Over the past year we have removed over 5,000 pounds of Scotch broom from the site, allowing for the return of many native species. Come be a part of the effort!

Sign up in the volunteer software or email Nadine: ncollison@crd.bc.ca

Public Drop-In Volunteer Restoration

Saturday, April 25 | 10am - 2pm | Island View Beach Regional Park

Come celebrate Earth Week and National Volunteer Week by trying restoration volunteering with the CRD! Drop in any time from 10am - 2pm and stay as long as you like. Tools and training will be provided, as well as snacks and drinks. All you need to do is wear sturdy footwear and dress for the weather. All ages and abilities welcome!



Making a difference...together



Chance Finds

Wednesday, April 29 | 9:30 to 11:30am | Devonian Regional Park

Come on a walk with CRD's archaeologist and learn about the laws surrounding indigenous artifacts and how to identify cultural factors while in regional parks doing restoration work - including cairns, shell middens and other items that may have significance.

**Sign up in the volunteer software or
email Nadine: ncollison@crd.bc.ca**



Spring Volunteer Hike

Saturday, May 2 | 9 to 11am | Uplands Park

Join us at Uplands Park for a guided walk with Wylie Thomas. We'll appreciate all the gorgeous spring flowers in this restored Garry Oak ecosystem and learn about past and current restoration projects there. If you have never seen Uplands Park in its full camas glory, you won't want to miss this!

**Sign up in the volunteer software or
email Nadine: ncollison@crd.bc.ca**