

Our Annual Gathering, traditionally held in June, is late this year but we have been active. What follows is a snapshot of some of our activities.

First, what we had planned but missed doing: This past March 21 was the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. We had planned to host **The Great Garden City Lands Cleanup** on the Lands in conjunction with the international *Great Global Cleanup* by *Earth Day Network*.

Instead, the earth took a much needed rest as the world quieted down.

Last year's Annual Gathering was held June 2019 at KPU's greenhouse, commonly called "The Dome," on the Garden City Lands. Mike Bomford, Department of Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, gave a fascinating talk about this mysterious structure. Afterwards, we enjoyed a guided tour of the surrounding fields. As an end piece, we walked to the north side of the Lands where we had planted trees and shrubs for Earth Day. Happily, they are all doing well and enjoying the compost that Director Bruno Vernier provided for them.

August 2019 we had a table at **Farmfest** and invited Birds Canada to join us. Brendan Toews, an avid birder, was on hand to answer bird-related questions. An increasing number of birds are being attracted to the Lands; good news for birdwatchers and our bird population! A couple of weeks later Brendan led a Bird Walk at Garden City Community Park, co-sponsored by GCCS and Birds Canada.

In September 2019 Director Sabine Eiche and I attended Richmond's Volunteer Appreciation Dinner for participants in the city's Adopt-a program. We have initiated the first **Adopt-a-Bird Habitat** sign in Richmond close to Paulik Park. The informal wild bird sanctuary (located on my property) is bursting with birds of all shapes and sizes.

February 2019 I attended a talk given by Laura Chamberlin, from the Western Hemisphere Reserve Network, founded in 1986 in response to shorebird declines. Today the WHRN stewards 106 sites in 17 countries encompassing 38 million acres, including the Fraser River Estuary. Interesting fact: 90% of Western Sandpipers use the Fraser Estuary. The Fraser Estuary is ours to protect.

Currently our society's two main areas of work are: Stewardship activities on the Garden City Lands and improving urban bird habitat throughout Richmond.

GCL:

- We've been flagging shore pines, a native species tree, on the GCL for the past two years. The trees are marked to prevent them from being cut when the city does its annual mowing of the Lands. This year, to our delight, five more shore pines were located by Gregory Harris, Biology Instructor at KPU, Langley, while doing insect research on the Lands. We've now flagged them and added them to our saved-tree list!

- We've initiated a sphagnum moss test area to be taped off on the GCL. Mike Bomford (KPU) designed the site for us and KPU has been monitoring its progress. Our goal is to learn more about the sphagnum moss – a keystone bog species – and how best to restore it.

Bird Habitat

We've been working collaboratively with Birds Canada to improve bird habitat in Richmond's urban areas. Three million birds have been lost worldwide since the 1970's, mainly back yard birds, like finches and sparrows. Number one reason is habitat loss. Second is pesticide and chemical use. These are some of the actions we are taking:

- Supporting a ban on anticoagulant rodenticides. Our birds of prey are dying a painful death by eating poisoned rodents. Letters have been sent to Mayor and Council in support of motion to ban. A Letter to the Editor has been published in the Richmond News. Many cities are banning rodenticides and hopefully Richmond will join them soon.

- Initiated Wildlife Tree signage in Paulik Park (conservation education) in collaboration with the city. Encouraging more interpretative signs in our parks.

- Proposed Polygon development at Cambie and Garden City Roads is being asked to “give back” ecologically to the wider community, which includes our birds and other wildlife, by leaving a prime habitat area on their site intact. This area could conceivably be a natural park instead of a parking garage. Eighty-year-old trees matter!

- We've recommended replacing undersized, dead and dying street trees, on Heather Street and Sills Avenue, between Paulik Park and Garden City Community Park; with bird-friendly trees. Birdsong was lost on three blocks through development: our goal is to see it brought back.

Update: the city will be replacing trees on these streets.

- Exploring the Miyawaki Forest concept as a way of installing fast growing pocket forests, high in biodiversity, in urban Richmond. Bruno Vernier is taking the lead on this project.

- Sabine Eiche writes nature-friendly articles biweekly for the Richmond News, many with a conservation education theme.

- I participated in a panel **Rights of Passage: A conversation with artists and naturalists**, for Bird Week, sponsored by Birds Canada and the Richmond Art Gallery. One interesting discovery: streams, covered up by development, run underground in Richmond.

In closing, I would like to offer our Society's sincere thanks to Diana Leung, who is stepping down as director. She has been an exemplary Treasurer and we wish her well!

Submitted by:

Sharon MacGougan

President, Garden City Conservation Society

Notes:

Constitution of the Garden City Conservation Society

The three purposes of the Society are:

1. To help steward the natural legacy of Richmond's Agricultural Land Reserve area called the Garden City Lands for agricultural, ecological and open-park uses for community wellness.
2. To research, educate and act to help steward other natural legacies of the "Garden City," Richmond, in consultation with government and community.
3. To encourage respect for the legacy name "Garden City" as a community value.