

Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society

January 2023

CRSS will be emailing member newsletters from our website beginning Oct. 28 and every six weeks after that. Prepared by members: Judy Brayden, Genevieve Singleton, Rodger Hunter, Rick Bryan, Maureen Qusted, Jim Deck, Jean Atkinson and Ken Traynor. Any questions/comments/ feedback please see [Home | Cowichan Lake & River Stewardship Society British Columbia \(cowichan-lake-stewards.ca\)](http://www.cowichan-lake-stewards.ca)

What We Are Up To:

We meet on the first Monday of each month, unless it falls on a statutory holiday, then the next Monday. Next meeting: **6:30, Monday, February 6, 2023**

Login info - same every month.

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84276438693?pwd=MDlZaW41SEhVYTNY0cxRHRsNkJTZz09>

Dial by your location

+1 778 907 2071 Canada

Meeting ID: 842 7643 8693

Passcode: 215692

All members and interested folk welcome. Contact mquested@shaw.ca to confirm.

CLRSS Swag waiting for you!
Contact Rosie at rdanaher@shaw.ca

Ball Caps - reg. & lrg. \$20.00



Bucket Hats - S M L \$20.00



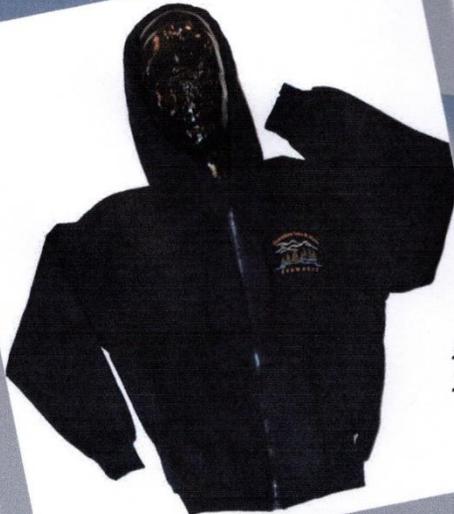
100% Cotton

T-shirts S M L - \$20.00

1X 2X 3X - \$22.00



Lightweight Work Shirts \$35.00



**Heavy Duty Cotton/spandex
Hoodies \$50.00**

President’s message: Inspirational people

Many people in the Cowichan watershed inspire me, but at the top of my list is Gerald Thom, the original leader our stewardship society. Although Gerald died tragically in the summer 2014, he had such an influential presence that he continues to inspire many of us today. Gerald’s inspirational qualities were multi-fold. His genuineness, honesty, open mindedness, judgement, selflessness, humility, empathy, wisdom, and quiet confidence inspired confidence and trust in others. He walked his own talk and pitched in as an enthusiastic, hard working team member willing to do any task, built teamwork and commitment and elicited extra effort from others. Add in his capacity for deep listening, infectious curiosity and a fun-loving, caring attitude and everyone, including young people, enjoyed being on Gerald’s team. Gerald was special. He was the fully loaded, deluxe version of an inspirational person and we are extremely fortunate that he invested so much of his energy and precious time in our watershed and us. Currently we are also blessed to have numerous people currently working on behalf of the Cowichan watershed who possess many of Gerald’s strengths. To honour Gerald CLRSS established a scholarship and garden in his name. In addition, over the past while, as I reflected on my gratitude for his achievements, I began to feel that individually another approach to honouring Gerald would be for CLRSS directors, members, and supporters to consciously attempt to call upon our own inspirational qualities and apply them to our efforts to protect, preserve and enhance this amazing watershed. If this idea appeals to you then what better time to start than in this new year.

Wishing you and yours peace, love, good health, joy and prosperity for 2023.
In conservation, Rodger Hunter

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Introducing New Board Members: Beverley Nimmo and Don Prescott



Don and Beverley, excited about their involvement in CLRSS, see it as a real privilege.

Both Don and Beverley worked in Provincial Government at the Royal Museum where they dealt with First Nations Languages, Cultural and Environmental issues. Later they worked together for two years on the Cruise Ships, witnessing first hand the environmental and cultural issues of the Caribbean and South America.

Don’s business background in Asia led to his university career in Entrepreneurship and International Business.

Beverley volunteered with the Victoria Conservatory of Music, in fundraising. As with many new CLRSS members, they met long-time CLRSS member and supporter, Maureen Qusted, at the Honeymoon Bay Farmers Market and as is said, the ‘rest is history’. Hurrah Maureen! Welcome Don and Beverley.

From the Land:

Native Plant of the Issue: P'up'q'iyas, *Symphoricarpos albus* – commonly called snowberry or waxberry

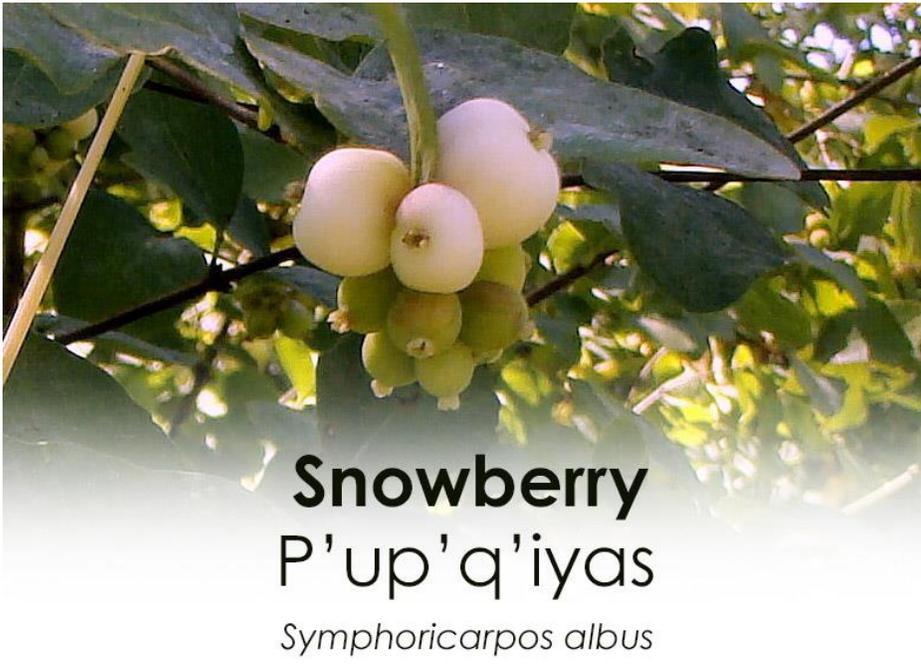


Photo by Val George

Our featured, dead of winter native plant is the snowberry. It is easy to recognize because its distinct, puffy, white berries appear in the otherwise dormant, thicketed winter vegetation. The bushy, medium-sized, deciduous shrub, often growing in dense patches, has grey-brown bark and opposite elliptical to oval leaves. Its berries are not edible and have even known to be toxic to humans because of the saponin that they contain.

From Luschiim's Plants: "The straight branches of snowberry or waxberry are called t'etsu'ulhp, after t'eets', the Hul'q'umi'num' word for fish spreader sticks or cross-sticks since they are the just

the right size and flexibility...waxberry also has many spiritual uses for Quw'utsun people."

Some local gardeners feel that the snowberry can be too aggressive for their native gardens as it tends to encroach on other species. Others say that while it is prolific, it tends to stay in a 'happy' bush at the property edge, flowers and fruit adding much needed benefits for pollinators, birds and deer.



From Jean Atkinson and Ken Traynor, the CLRSS Representatives on the Cowichan Watershed Board (CWB) Riparian Health Working Group. CLRSS continues to educate and raise awareness of the importance of natural shoreline habitats. [Riparian Video link needed here](#)



The CWB pursues five aspirational "targets" for watershed health through working groups consisting of representatives from local stewardship groups, government agencies, industry, and Cowichan Tribes. The target of the riparian health working group: "We want to protect and enjoy the benefits of healthy stream, lakefront, and estuary habitats."

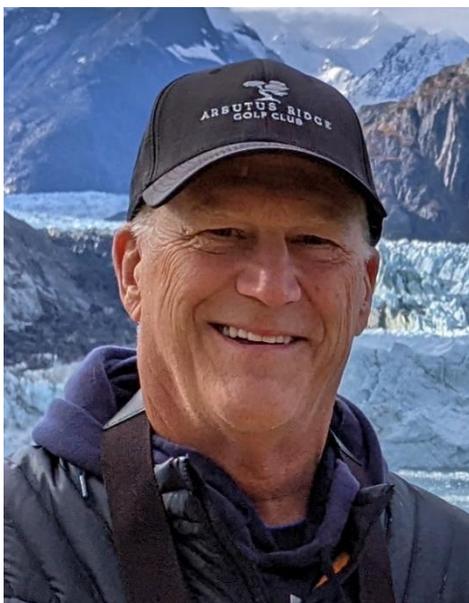
To date: Through the Cowichan Shoreline Stewardship Program, CLRSS and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF) have planted native shrubs and "live stakes" restoring over 3,000

square meters of riparian habitat along the lakeshore since 2014. From 2017 to 2021 Cowichan Tribes and BCCF led a riparian restoration initiative funded federally through the Coastal Restoration Fund - almost \$1 million has been dedicated to this work in the Cowichan and Koksilah watersheds.

Another important priority for the Riparian Working Group is to create an inventory of the watershed, identifying restored sites and those that still require restoration. A generic monitoring system has also been developed to track progress.

[CWB website link here](#)

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Introducing Leroy Van Wieren: Leroy, retired Geotechnical Engineer, Past President CLRSS and Past Project Manager for the Weir Project, enjoys grandkids, golfing, hiking, travelling, and living in the Cowichan Valley. Leroy will be regular contributor to our newsletter.

The Weir Design and Shoreline Assessment Projects officially wrapped up in December 2022. This work will now inform stakeholders, decision makers and approvers in the years to come as the 'new weir project' continues to a conclusion.

The design gives us an idea of feasibility, time to construct and approximate costs, while utilizing the latest regulations and earthquake codes. Most importantly, it will allow for more water storage to ensure adequate river flow throughout our longer, hotter and dryer summers and provide the maximum opportunity for a healthy river and habitat for all the fish and fauna that rely upon

it. Another key aspect of the new design is that it maximizes the opportunity for fish to pass to and from the river and the lake.

The shoreline assessment provides an excellent snapshot of today's conditions by looking at the natural boundary, lidar data, orthophotography, GIS, bathymetry data, etc. and by reviewing the past 70 years of data. Using this as a base coupled with understanding the impact of a raised weir and climate change projections, we are able to provide an assessment of potential impacts property by property. **One thing I have learned is that each property is truly unique and that it is difficult to generalize conclusions for the whole 110km perimeter of the lake and for the 867 properties.**

The latest news is that there has been a memorandum of understanding (MOU) which guides the ongoing collaboration of Cowichan Tribes, Cowichan Valley Regional District and the Catalyst Paper Corporation (a Paper Excellence Company) to achieve long term water supply. This MOU allows them to work collaboratively on the shared purpose of continuing to maintain the health of the Cowichan River watershed with a goal to eventually construct a new weir. A DRAFT water license application for conservation purposes has just been submitted to the Provincial Water Regulators. This will allow the province to formally begin to review the information and provide guidance to the partners regarding next steps and expectations.

See www.cowichanlakeweir.ca and Leroy's Corner

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From the Water:

Decibel Coalition update from the Safe Quiet Lakes December Newsletter outreach@safequiet.ca

CLRSS is a member of the Decibel Coalition. Society liaison Diana Gunderson reported great progress has been made limiting excessive boat noise! As a result of a four-year campaign and a round of recent meetings at the Canadian Marine Advisory Council, Transport Canada has announced they are proposing decibel limits be imposed on both boat manufacturers and operators--a key win! Legislation could be introduced by the end of next year, with implementation by 2025.

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Take a Look: What a pleasant surprise for the end of 2022. After that last atmospheric river event the main stem of the Cowichan rose enough to backfill our little creek with a bunch of coho. This is the largest return to our yard we have seen in 10 years and the fish are big and healthy. Take a look at the videos. Enjoy!

Rob Williamson
Lake Cowichan, BC

[Need video links from Rob Williamson here](#)

Pierre LaPaddelle (better known as Rick), a white-water canoer, and a passionate river steward, also CLRSS co-president.

So – I’ve stood on the bank and looked out at the river. I like the view! You too? I’m not surprised – that’s a typical way to enjoy our Heritage River. But here’s the thing – when I’m in my boat, I get to drift down the middle of the river and look at the shore. And the view from the river to the shore is different from the shore to the river. The view from the river focuses on the riparian zone! Riparian? That’s a big word, boys and girls! Here’s Wikipedia’s definition: ‘A riparian zone is the interface between land and a river or stream.’ Some riparian areas abound with natural features – rocks, mud, native vegetation, beaver lodges, bird nests, and frogs. And some riparian zones are replete with docks, cement blocks, staircases, construction debris, rusty lawn chairs, and ‘Private Property’ signs. Personally, I prefer a view which fits Criterion #1 of our Canadian Heritage River designation – “Natural Value.” But that’s just me! Note that ever-increasing population pressures have necessitated the imposition of laws, protecting riparian areas. So here’s a thought – if you don’t want government intrusion on your river-front

property, leave your riparian zone natural, or think about restoring it to its original state! Mother Nature will thank you. And so will I. SYOTW!



Next newsletter Friday, March 3, 2023