



# Old Growth Conservancy Society

## Newsletter #20 – January to December 2022



### In Memorium - Katharine Steig

This year we lost a dear friend and associate Katharine Steig. She passed away peacefully on the evening of August 12th, 2022 at the age of 86. Her passion was for the natural environment and wild places. For example, she knew where every at-risk native plant community was located in Cypress Provincial Park and untirely advocated for their protection. In 1990 she became involved in the successful attempts to protect a stand of old-growth forest in West Vancouver lands which was under threat of becoming a golf course and which ultimately became the Old Growth Conservancy.

Katharine was a driving force behind the creation of the OGCS in 2007, serving as a founding director and the society's first secretary. She opened her home to host the directors' meetings, which always featured tea and cookies. Her openness helped shape the society values, striving for balance and finding common goals. She was always welcoming and willing to work with everyone.

She should also be remembered for being a founder of Friends of Cypress Provincial Park immediately to the north and sharing a border with the Old Growth Conservancy, where she was instrumental in the protection of the Mount Strachan, Hollyburn Mountain and Yew Lake ecosystems. In 1991 she became a member of the Vancouver Natural History Society (now Nature Vancouver) and served on the Board of Directors and as the chair of the Conservation Section of that society for many years.

A Celebration of Life for Katharine was held just outside the Conservancy on November 26 with around 50 people attending including family, friends and several organizations including Friends of Cypress Provincial Park, Lighthouse Park Preservation Society, Hollyburn Ridge Association (cabin owners), West Vancouver Streamkeepers Society, Cypress Ski Area, the mountain bike community, District of West Vancouver and, of course, Old Growth Conservancy Society. We were fortunate enough to be blessed with lightly falling snow, creating a serene and joyful experience as we shared our memories of Katharine.

- *David Cook and Alan Bardsley, with thanks to Joseph Steig and Nature Vancouver for source material*

## **Guided Tours**

Dry weather made for an exceptionally good tour season this year. We had 132 guests, a 20% increase from 2021 and our busiest year ever. A large part of this growth has come from youth, with a tour for West Vancouver Secondary School students and one for a group of teenagers from Science World. There were 4 tours outside the Conservancy covering Lighthouse Park, Whyte Lake and West Lake Access Road.

Once again, this spring we discovered the route into the apex was blocked by a large blowdown almost a metre in diameter. DWV Parks was kind enough to clear this for us. There's a reason we check the route early in the spring!

In addition to the usual 6 public tours in the Conservancy, extra tours were added for the staff in the DWV Parks summer ranger program and for the BC Parks Foundation.

With a restricted number of guided tours each summer, the audience we can reach is limited. To reach a broader audience we have soft-launched a self-guided tour that uses GPS-enabled smartphones and the Geotourist app. This allows people to take an abridged version of the in-person tour along the Conservancy Crossing trail at a time that fits their schedule, not ours. They learn about the characteristics of an old-growth ecosystem and see for themselves the rich biodiversity contrasted with the second growth area south of the Conservancy. The audio component has been re-written and is in the process of being professionally recorded.

- Alan Bardsley

## Monitoring Committee Report

You would think I would be used to it by now! But every year when the snow melts I am quite 'awestruck' by the clutter of new shapes, of all sizes, that litter the forest floor - and our trail(s). This year was no exception. I guess nothing lives forever & some of these trees have been 'hanging' up there for hundreds of years. 'Before & after' photos show a large tree across the Conservancy Crossing trail just before our 2nd sign. We don't know who eventually cut & moved it -- for a while, the Mt bikers were just 'jumping' over it.



Parking Lot 5 is also full of 'treasures' each Spring. This year's melting snow revealed several sheets of plywood, a small 'firepit', an arrow, and a sizeable 'bundle of garden trimmings' - besides the usual cans & coffee cups. By Summer, this parking lot will be home to familiar invasive plants - lamium, reed canary grass, orange hawkweed - perhaps even some broom.

At this point, I would like to pause & ask the existential question - why am I doing this? After more than 10 years, it has become a habit -- I blame Katharine Steig. She taught me/us to "Step lightly upon the Earth" -- sniff (& photograph!) the flowers -- & cut/pull the invasives! Obviously, Katharine was an 'influencer' before there was social media (and I'll bet she was not really much of a TikTok fan anyway). Katharine introduced me to all sorts of wonderful West Van places such as Cypress Provincial Park, Whytecliff Park & of course the weird & wonderful Old Growth Conservancy -- -- & I still carry clippers & a camera to all of them -- "but I digress".

So whether you're into forest bathing or nature study, here's to the Old Growth Conservancy! And here's to Katharine Steig, its Founder -- -- and its Keeper! - A truly remarkable West Vancouver Influencer!

- Marshall Bauman

## **Public Outreach**

The Bridge Festival returned in June and the OGCS was there to tell people about old growth in West Vancouver. It was the first in-person public event in far too long and it was wonderful to see old friends again. Some old OGCS directors stopped by and it was great to catch up with them.

The festival was a good opportunity for people to sign up for the tours. Gone are the days of sign-up sheets and deciphering illegible email addresses. It's so much easier to direct them to [ogcs.ca/tours](http://ogcs.ca/tours) and tell them to email us with their preferred date.

- Alan Bardsley

## **AGM – Save the Date!**

Mark Wednesday, February 22, 2023 in your calendars for our AGM. Once again it will be held online via Zoom. Our guest speaker is Daniel Mosquin, Research Manager at UBC Botanical Garden and his topic is "*Adaptations of Temperate Rainforest Plants*". In the meantime, you can renew your membership with a \$10 Interac e-Transfer® sent to [ogcs.wv@gmail.com](mailto:ogcs.wv@gmail.com).