



Kanaka KEEPS Watch

December, 2011

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Comments from teachers:

- "You obviously love your job"
- "I can't get them to leave"
- "This supports our desire to pursue outdoor learning"

Comments from students:

- "We look forward to this so much"
- "This is fun, and important"
- "Nature rocks!"



KEEPS Education Programs

It's hard to believe that another year is behind us, but it is, with 155 programs that involved 4,140 participants coming our way for 2011. The fall program was of course heavily centered around the salmon, but we did get out often into places such as Albion Park, where students from Samuel Robertson School continued to keep an eye on Spencer Creek as well as whatever else was going on in nature's outdoor classroom. Elsewhere, the program we teach entitled Bear Necessities continues to be in demand, and rightly so. For example, during recent visits to urban Golden Ears Elementary and Maple Ridge Secondary, we found that almost half the students had had bears in their neighborhood within the past year, and a good portion of those bears were getting into garbage.

Thanks to all the teachers, parents and especially the students that made our year so rewarding!



Deb shows the students bear markings, November 2011.



This student stands in awe at the aftermath of a wind-storm in Albion Park, November 2011.

Walnut Grove visit

A really neat tradition we have made is the annual October visit by students from Walnut Grove Secondary in Langley. They have never come in a school bus; they don't need one. Instead, they paddle across the Fraser to meet us at Riverfront, where we talk about salmon and share common stories about nature.

Right: canoes arrive at Riverfront, October 11, 2011. 86 students made the trip this year.



Hatchery Happenings

Did you know?

There are at least a dozen roadside ditches in Maple Ridge that support coho salmon throughout the year.



Coho salmon at the Kanaka Creek fish fence, December 8, 2011

The fall salmon season, weather wise, can best be described as uneventful. This has meant, at least so far, that spawning and egg incubation conditions have been favorable. Returns of pink, chum and coho salmon were fairly pleasing, and in fact chum salmon continued to arrive right up until early December. At the time of this writing, approximately 400,000 pink salmon eggs reside at Bell-Irving Hatchery, along with 180,000 chum eggs and 160,000 coho eggs. Outside in the ponds are another 34,000 yearling coho juveniles that will be with us until their release as smolts in May 2012.



Return of the Salmon 2011

Another successful Maple Ridge fall classic, co-hosted by KEEPS, Metro Vancouver and Bell-Irving Hatchery, occurred before over 500 visitors on October 16th. Our volunteers deserve a huge pat on the back for making this event possible, and Metro Vancouver once again delivered with tents, coffee, snacks, water...and smiles! Panago was also on hand with pizza for the volunteers. What a wonderful way to spend a fall day!



Left to right: Brandon, Cortney and Sarah pulling up a fish; a silver bright chum salmon; Jonathan and Ioana at the dissection table station.

World Rivers Day 2011

Riverfront at Kanaka Creek Regional Park was the site of this annual celebration on September 25th.

Left to right: visitors board the canoe; paddling back from the Fraser; an intense thunderstorm struck the area in the afternoon.



Kanaka Weedbusters and friends

Fall 2011 consisted of two activities of note. The World Rivers Day event at Riverfront included a periwinkle removal effort by a group of District of Maple Ridge employees, who attacked the invasive plants along a section of trail near the Fraser foreshore. On October 6th, the Vancouver based Take a Hike youth foundation worked with Metro Vancouver and KEEPS on a riparian planting project at the restored site adjacent to Kanaka Creek on 112th Avenue.



District of Maple Ridge staff and their families attacking periwinkle at Riverfront September 25th (left); replanting at 112th Avenue, October 6th.

Northwestern

Did you know?

This salamander occasionally exhibits "neoteny" which means certain individuals can become mature without ever leaving the larval stage.

This issue's feature creature is the northwestern salamander. Since they spend much of their time subsurface in places such as mammal burrows or under logs, they are relatively rarely seen. They are one of our largest salamanders, with adults reaching a length of 24 centimeters. Breeding occurs in the spring, when 200-250 eggs are deposited in small ponds. The larvae usually mature in one to two years, and the average life span of these amphibians is approximately 5 years. They can secrete a mild defensive toxin, which may help enable them to withstand invasive species such as bullfrogs.



Northwestern salamander.

Chasing coho with Mike

The fall return of the salmon attracts a variety of wildlife to local streams; it also attracts KEEPS photographer Mike Stefiuk. Here we catch up with him as he photographs coho salmon both at the Kanaka Creek fish fence as well as at Kanaka tributary Dunlop Creek. Dunlop, like many other coho streams, is one that no one notices; it parallels 112th Avenue for a time before entering Kanaka near 110th Avenue.

Clockwise, from top left: the faster swimming coho easily overtakes a chum salmon at the fish fence; coho pairing off in Dunlop Creek; testing the gravel prior to nest building; courtship ritual.



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CHECK OUT OUR WEBSITE!
WWW.KEEPS.ORG



Upcoming Events!

Goodbye Chums:
April 29, 2012

*Also: check our website
for other events!*

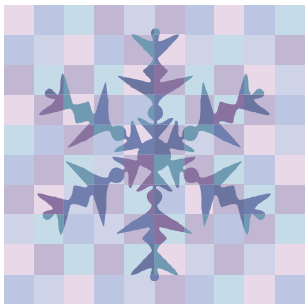


Photo: one of our many black bears (Mike Stefiuk).



About our organization: KEEPS was formally incorporated as a Society in December of 1998. Since then, we have been involved with a wide variety of activities including habitat monitoring and restoration, GPS mapping, and of course public education and awareness. We have long outgrown the cozy but dated confines of aging Bell-Irving Hatchery and are consequently pursuing the construction of a new Kanaka Watershed Stewardship Center.

Today, KEEPS consists of our Board of Directors and general membership, as well as a part time Coordinator and Administrator. We also retain two Program Interpreters to implement our education programs. The General Membership meetings are open to the public, and occur on the second Wednesday of every second month at 7:00PM at Maple Ridge Library.

Think pink

Kanaka Creek had always historically had pink salmon, but in the middle part of the 20th century things went very wrong. A combination of habitat loss and overfishing resulted in the species essentially disappearing from the creek. When that happens, sometimes eggs from a neighboring stream can be transplanted to the stream of need in an effort to re-establish the species. For Kanaka, this "surrogate stock" has been Weaver Creek and the Chilliwack River. As any biologist will tell you, returning a species to an area where it has been removed is one of the hardest things to do, but continuing efforts directed at pink salmon in Kanaka finally resulted in a pleasing return in 2009, and the salmon were also present in good numbers this year (pinks return every odd year in southern British Columbia.) However, the work is not done, and with this in mind, approximately 400,000 pink salmon eggs were collected from Weaver Creek Spawning Channel this October for continuation of the Kanaka Creek project. The fry from these eggs will be released to the creek in April 2012.

Thanks so much to staff from Weaver Creek Channel, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and of course our volunteers!

