



BCWF Wetlands Education Program: 2010 Wetlands Institute: Restoring Wetlands, Connecting Communities & Empowering People

By Neil Fletcher and Natasha Cox

Wetlands are uniquely tied to our environmental, economical and social well-being. They can reduce flooding, clean water, provide habitat for wildlife, offer us recreational opportunities and create visually appealing landscapes. Over the last 15 years, BC Wildlife Federations' Wetland Education Program has been empowering people to become wetland stewards in their own communities ensuring the protection of these wetlands persevere into the future. So, it's no wonder that the BC Wildlife Federation's Wetlands Education Program (WEP) is still actively engaging with communities to reconstruct, restore and monitor wetlands throughout the province.

The 2010 Wetlands Institute, held in Kamloops, proved to again inspire individuals to not only train in wetland classification, construction and restoration, but to continue monitoring and restoring wetlands beyond the institute! This grass-root community approach to valuing and protecting wetlands exemplifies the idea that wetlands are connected to our spiritual, economical and environmental wellbeing; and reminds us that we are connected to this dynamic ecosystem.



Restoring Wetlands & Rescuing Amphibians

Edith Tobe, Executive Director of the Squamish River Watershed Society, attended the Wetlands Institute to learn how to restore wetlands with her goal to return to Squamish, BC and start restoring wetlands to provide habitat for amphibians. With her new skillset she is now equipped to restore 5 to 6 wetlands in fall of 2011 near Squamish through funds obtained from the Ministry of Transportation. In collaboration with the BCWF, she is also helping to coordinate a Wetlandkeepers workshop scheduled for April 1-3, 2011.

Logan Lake: Design to Restoration

Thanks to working alongside wetland construction specialists, and environmental professionals, Marge Sidney, with the BC Ministry of Environment, and the Logan Lake Enhancement Working Group (LLEWG), obtained \$50,000 in funding from Teck Resources Ltd, Highland Valley Copper to put towards the restoration of an Inlet Wetland at Logan Lake. LLEWG group was formed in 2007 at the request of the Mayor and Council and tasked with restoring Logan Lake's ecosystem, protecting the lake for the future, improving social benefits and creating an educational component. It was in-part, the surveying and wetland designs created during the institute that helped the LLEWG obtain the necessary baseline information to move restoration opportunities forward and provided the group with the with the necessary skills to manage the project.



Champions of Wetland Monitoring

When Wetland Institute participants Sue Huddart and Diane James completed the program they had become motivated to continue monitoring the restored wetland and champion continued collaboration within their community and BCWF. When asked about the most valuable part of the course, "The whole thing- it opened up a new world. Most valuable was the knowledge that now lets me contribute/get involved with future wetland projects in my community."





Creating Backyard and Community Wetlands

Heather Toles has taken a keen interest in wetland conservation, from attending the Wetlandkeepers Workshop in 2007, to attending the 2010 Wetlands Institute and providing her own backyard to construct a wetland! She now sits on a committee as an advisor for the DB Nature Park Wetland Restoration Project and is collaborating with the BCWF to continue to monitor the changes in her backyard wetland. She has already seen an increase in its use from birds, deer, small mammals, and amphibians.

The success stories described above highlight the off-shooting of stewardship initiatives that resulted from the participation in the 2010 Wetlands Institute. These watershed visionaries are applying training from the Wetland Education Program and are championing stewardship initiatives in their communities. Due to their ongoing dedication, wetland stewardship and conservation is gaining momentum from the bottom-up!

2011 Marks the BCWF Wetlands Education Programs 15TH Anniversary. It also marks the Sea-to-Sky Series for Wetland Education. The next Wetlands Institute is scheduled for 2012 along this corridor. In terms of population growth, the Sea-to-Sky region is the fastest growing region of the province. The region is projected to grow by over 90% between 2001 and 2031 (Government of BC 2004), well over the 35% average of the province. Historic dyking within the Squamish and Pemberton area has already removed or altered wetlands, and the widening of the Sea to Sky Corridor has also negatively impacted local wetlands. Wetlands on the North Shore of Vancouver suffer from encroaching development and intense recreational use. By training community members to appreciate, identify, map and steward ecologically important habitats, individuals and groups can actively participate in protecting, enhancing and restoring wetlands in their community.

If you would like to get involved with upcoming training opportunities for 2011 please contact Neil Fletcher, Wetlands Education Program Coordinator at wetlands@bcwf.bc.ca or call 604.291.9990. ext. 232.

Upcoming Training Opportunities:

Wetlandkeepers Workshop Cost -\$150.00

1. Squamish (April 1-3, 2011)
2. Pemberton (May 13-15, 2011)

Puddle Project – Cost \$30.00

1. North Vancouver (June 5, 2011)

Thank You to Wetland Education Program Supporters:

