

## **Congratulations to Ruth Foster – Awarded Port Moody’s 2009 Environmental Award**

*Last fall, BMN nominated Ruth Foster for the PoMo Environmental Award.*

*We’re pleased now to announce that Ruth has received this award. Below is the nomination prepared by BMN.*

Ruth is well known in this community for her many years as an outstanding teacher at Centennial High School where she started the Mossom Creek Hatchery in 1976 with fellow teacher, Rod MacVicar. This hatchery has served as a wonderful teaching model in which students have hands-on, outdoor experiences which have resulted in significant benefits to a salmon stream and left many students with life-long connection to and awareness of the environment. Ruth and Rod have received awards for their work. For example, in 2007, Ruth received a prestigious Canadian Geographic Society award for her many years of teaching, mentoring students, restoring habitat and returning salmon to Mossom Creek.



This nomination is not related to the hatchery aspect of Ruth’s environmental contributions but to her more recent volunteer efforts to remove invasive plants and restore natural habitat throughout Port Moody. When Ruth retired as a teacher in 2005, she made time to

become engaged in other worthwhile community projects as well as continuing to remain as an active volunteer at the Mossom Creek Hatchery. One issue of particular concern to Ruth has been the rapid spread of several species of non-native plants. These plants, which include Himalayan blackberry, lamium, policeman’s helmets (also called touch-me-not), English ivy, purple loosestrife, Japanese knotweed and others, are having a deleterious impact on native plant biodiversity and wildlife habitat in several areas of Port Moody.

For the past four years, Ruth has been devoting many hours of her time to remove invasive plants from the Shoreline Park, the Suter Brook riparian corridor, Mossom Creek riparian corridor and other sites in Port Moody. Ruth excels at mentoring others and has exceptional teaching skills. Some of her early efforts to remove invasive plants were conducted with others to whom she provided training and an opportunity to participate in a worthwhile project. For the past two years, as an activity to celebrate Earth Day, Ruth has worked with students from the Aquatic Conservation Team at Centennial School to remove invasive plants and plant native trees and shrubs along Suter Brook where it flows through the Onni site in Port Moody. Students who work with Ruth appreciate her engaging manner as well as the wealth of knowledge she brings to a project which she so readily shares with others.

Ruth has put many, many hours of time in each of the past four years into removing invasive plants. This summer, some BMN members who were out for a birding tour through the old Ioco town site, came upon

Ruth working all alone, quietly and patiently removing policeman's helmet from the area. They decided to join her for a while and then continued on their walk. When they retraced their steps some time later, Ruth was gone...and so were all the invasive plants from this particular area.

Removing non native plants is not always the most pleasant of jobs. Often these plants grow in areas beside paths where dog owners have allowed their pets off leash to defecate "in the bushes". Removing non-native plants from such areas can be a smelly and dirty task. Removing Himalayan blackberry with its stout sharp thorns inevitably results in torn clothing and a few skin punctures. Ruth has contributed far more than any other individual to the removal of invasive plants on Port Moody. She has recently expanded her efforts into Anmore and Belcarra and is now encouraging other volunteers from these communities to join her in this task. Ruth knows that once an area appears cleared of invasive plants, it is important to return on a regular basis to weed out re-growth. Persistence over several years is the only way to be sure of complete removal.

Ruth is always keeping her eye out for new sites where invasive plants appear for the first time – typically, this is the best time to remove such plants before they become well-established and develop an extensive root system. She recently noticed a small cluster of purple loosestrife on the railway tracks near the Reed Point Marina. She asked for and received permission to enter this area to remove the loosestrife. Similarly, some time ago, she noticed giant hogweed growing on Heritage Mountain in a site recently landscaped and planted by Parklane Homes (the soil brought in for the landscaping was presumably contaminated with hogweed). Hogweed is a particularly hazardous plant with a sap that causes caustic skin burns once exposed to sunlight. It should not be removed by volunteers so, in this case, Ruth notified staff at the City of Port Moody who arranged for removal. Staff at the City of Port Moody have been very supportive of Ruth's effort and have arranged to collect the many bags of invasive plants which Ruth removes.

In addition to her ongoing efforts to remove invasive plants from terrestrial areas, Ruth is also a very active member of the group which is working to plant and restore eel grass beds in intertidal areas of Port Moody Arm in Burrard Inlet.

For the purposes of the Port Moody Environmental Award, Ruth's achievements with regard to invasive plant removal and native plant restoration would meet the following criteria: Ecological Initiative, Habitat Enhancement, Educational Feature and Volunteer Component.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely

Elaine Golds  
Conservation Chair and Vice President  
Burke Mountain Naturalists