

GREEN SCENE

A Guide to the Making of Nature Guide

by Elaine Golds

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Do you have a favourite local park? Is there a green space you frequently visit for a stroll?

We are fortunate in the Tri-Cities to have so many local parks to provide us with pleasant places to stretch our legs and unwind from the stresses of life. These parks also provide vital habitat for the many other species with whom we share this area.

The *Discover Nature in the Tri-Cities* booklet for children recently produced by the Burke Mountain Naturalists (available for download at www.bmn.bc.ca) highlights eight of these parks and attempts to explain the benefit each of them offers our local flora and fauna.

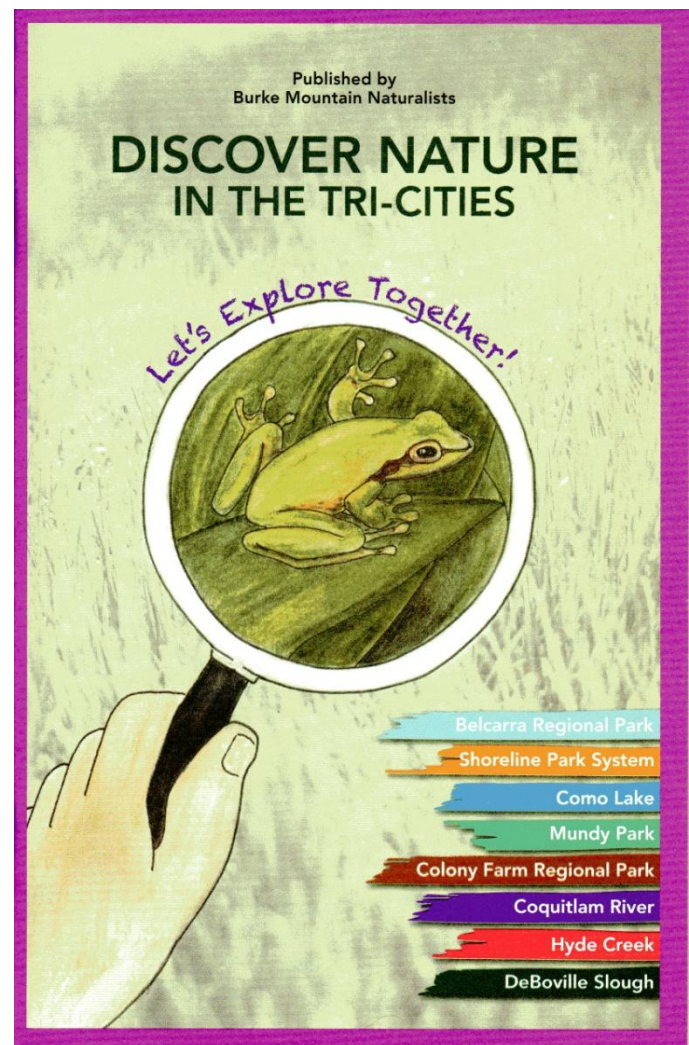
The booklet, prepared mainly by a team of BMN volunteers, is dedicated to the memory of Danny Grass, the only child of longtime BMN members, Jude and Al Grass, who sadly passed away during heart surgery.

The cover of the booklet *Discover Nature in the Tri-Cities*, which was produced by the Burke Mountain Naturalists and covers eight local areas where Tri-City residents can get up-close with nature.

Al Grass, a naturalist who worked for BC Parks for many years, was the author of many BC Parks nature guides.

While the provincial government has ceased to publish these guides, families that camped with young children in the 1990s may remember these delightful brochures that gently introduced people to some of the inhabitants of provincial parks.

It was their wonderfully whimsical but informative style that we hoped to re-create in our guide to local parks.



Members of our team chose one or two of their favourite natural areas to write about. While it was a challenge to select only eight parks, we needed to limit the number to keep the booklet to an appropriate size.

The places we selected are Belcarra and Colony Farm regional parks, Como Lake Park, Mundy Park plus trails along Hyde Creek, the Coquitlam River and DeBoville Slough. We believe these sites provided opportunities to explore a variety of habitats on trails there are mostly level and accessible for young families with strollers.

The booklet has four pages dedicated to each park, with a small trail map plus drawings of the plants and animals that may be encountered during visits.

But we did not want to produce a guide that simply named the plants and animals likely to be observed in each park.

Instead, we chose to introduce some ecological concepts. Thus, the chapter on Belcarra Regional Park explains the concept of shoreline zonation while the chapter on Colony Farm provides an overview of nesting strategies used by birds.

We also tried to hint at some of our area's fascinating history by, for example, mentioning the gravel extraction that formerly happened right in the Coquitlam River, the sawmills once found at the head of Burrard Inlet in Port Moody and the importance of Belcarra beach to the Tsleil-Waututh First Nation.

With the help of artist Chris Tunnoch, we have also provided drawings of about 45 of the most common bird species plus other animals likely to be encountered in our parks, along with about two dozen native plant species, which are illustrated by their characteristic leaf shape, blossom and fruit.

While we attempted to indicate the species most likely to be observed at each park, there is, of course, considerable overlap. Thus, the cedar waxwings illustrated in the chapter for DeBoville Slough are just as likely to be seen at Colony Farm Regional Park. The killdeer shown in the Colony Farm chapter are also likely to be observed at Port Moody's Shoreline Park. And the black-capped chickadees illustrated for Hyde Creek, plus the robins and Steller's jay shown for the Coquitlam River, are likely to be frequent visitors in most residential areas — they may even nest in your backyard.

Thus, the booklet is designed to be not merely a chapter-by-chapter account of each park but to provide a more holistic overview of all our local wildlife.

One of our biggest challenges in creating *Discover Nature* was keeping our descriptions concise and using language that could be readily understood. For this, we had the help of our editor, Dalyce Epp. As a result, we hope that our booklet will also be helpful for people learning English as a second language as well as for young readers.

The booklet includes a glossary for some of the more uncommon terminology, such as preening, midden and redd.

We have also thrown in a few fascinating facts. For instance, did you know there is no such bird as a seagull? Or when and where gray squirrels were introduced into the Lower Mainland from eastern Canada?

We are grateful for financial support from the Burke Mountain Naturalists and Wild Birds Unlimited that allowed us to obtain professional help to assist with production of the booklet. With a generous grant from TD Friends of the Environment Foundation, we have been able to print 1,500 copies, which we will distribute free of charge.

Copies have been provided to local libraries so we hope our booklet will be on their shelves soon. We also want to ensure schools have copies as well as youth groups involved with nature appreciation.