**FANNY BAY SALMONID ENHANCEMENT SOCIETY (FBSES)**

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By Dave Sands

Most of the streams we cross on our busy way to the big cities — Union Bay, Bowser — have neat little signs on the shoulder or the bridge telling us their names. Not Bob Springs Creek, because it doesn’t run under any pavement.

Bob Springs runs into Little Bay, the one to the east when you come down, or go up, the hill on Ships Point road, and then meanders, or wanders, or even percolates for an impressive 300 or so meters through property owned by the Thompson, Wood and Weinberg families.

These citizens are important to Bob Springs Creek and to the chum, coho and pink salmon that call it home because their interest and co-operation has made nearly 25 years of attention, assessment and improvement possible by the Fanny Bay Salmonid Enhancement Society. The “Enhancement’ in the name is the kind of thing that streams like Bob Springs need when they get overgrown with holly, blackberry and English Ivy or when they get choked by a small culvert or a beaver dam or filled with years of leaves and branches, and stuff usually summed up as organic matter commonly called organic matter.

Most recently in the first week of February, 120 kilograms of the “invasive species” was pulled out and got a free trip to the tip on a busy Saturday to allow some of the trees planted between 2008 and 2015 to succeed a little better. These 240 red cedar, hemlock, spruce and Douglas fir came in pots from the FBSES nursery to join all the deciduous growth that lines the creek after the tidal zone.

In 2007, Bob Springs got the whole Bachelorette makeover treatment. Its cosmeticians deftly wielded shovels, rakes, excavators and truckloads of gravel to reopen six existing pools and create two new ones, pools that returning chum were seen using in the fall. A new, larger diameter culvert under a driveway, replanting with native plants like salal, willow, red osier and salmonberry and a sprinkling of the charmingly named Large Woody Debris as a touch of colour for the pools, and Bob Springs had 178 meters of new personality.

Previous work had included projects by a brand-new society (FBSES) in September 1995 to clean up the creek and its banks, work done by its handful of founding members, all Fanny Bay locals who weren’t afraid to get their hands dirty, or wet. And even before that, live-trapped beaver which were blocking fish travel were relocated in 1993. For a shy little creek without a signpost to its name, Bob Springs has found its share of attention.

It gets found again every year when spawning runs fill Georgia Strait with returning salmonids, better known as chum and coho and pinks, which all split up to go into their natal streams. Because Bob Springs is so small, it is easy to see spawners like chum, back home for a good time and a short one. Coho and pink are shyer and leave a few redds — mounds of cleaned gravel under the water surface covering the precious eggs of the next generation — to tell us they got back and got the job done.

It wouldn’t be salmonid enhancement if there wasn’t a lot of counting and record keeping, and Bob Springs has its own file with some impressive numbers for such a small waterway. Chum hit a peak of 300 in 1998 and a more certain 254 in 2016, after years of runs working out to an average of 50. For the last 10 years, Pam Lengyel and Lise Laguë have placed smolt traps. These are small baited screen wire contraptions with cone shaped entrances that hold the fish until the trap is separated so they can be, of course, counted. When coho leave the stream for salt water as smolts their numbers give one of the best indications of the health of the system. Year 2010 was a peak year for coho at 123. Average years run at 45. There are also pink salmon occasionally in Bob Springs, but at the moment they will remain numberless. Other life forms are doing well, no doubt grateful in their own way for all the human effort they exploit; Northern red-legged frogs, salamanders, American dipper, heron, red tailed hawk, eagles, kingfishers, pileated woodpecker, bear and one controversial muskrat. Or not…

As life goes on for Bob Springs and the lives it hosts, from protozoa to protein, some of its problems also continue. Low flows in summer months drop to 5% of mean annual discharge, a number calculated with the aid of a gauge installed near the culvert and recorded, naturally. High water is in December, handy for spawners. Small creeks have problems keeping oxygen in the water, but sticklebacks like low oxygen, so Bob Springs has something for nearly everybody. Land use is where we come in and water use lowers stream levels which creates problems year-round but especially in summer months.

FBSES welcomes visitors at its Wednesday and Saturday morning work parties at the hatchery on Berray Road. Website is [**www.fbses.ca**](http://www.fbses.ca).