

Vision

“The varied human uses and natural areas in the Bowker watershed are managed to minimize runoff and pollution, making Bowker Creek a healthy stream that supports native vegetation and wildlife, and provides a community greenway that connects neighbourhoods.”

— 2003 Bowker Creek Watershed Management Plan

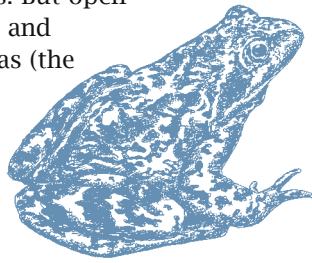
Where is Bowker Creek?

Bowker Creek is a small urban stream on Southern Vancouver Island. From its headwaters at the University of Victoria, the 8-kilometre main channel flows south through the Shelbourne Valley and meanders through neighbourhoods in Saanich, Victoria and Oak Bay before entering the ocean near the Oak Bay Marina. A small tributary drains the southern half of the Cedar Hill Park and Golf Course.

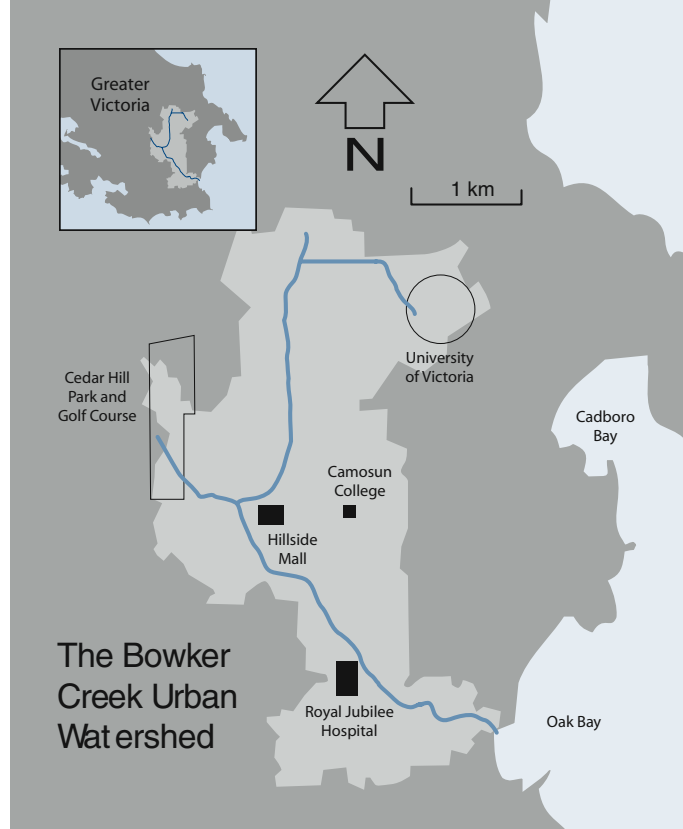


Pacific Coast stream habitat in your front yard

Most of the watershed surrounding Bowker Creek is urbanized; some of the original channel has been straightened and much has been enclosed in underground culverts. But open portions of the creek and adjacent riparian areas (the ribbon of vegetation next to the stream) continue to provide habitat for birds, small mammals, and aquatic invertebrates. Bowker Creek not only allows for stormwater runoff, it provides community,



Red-legged frogs inhabited portions of the creek until the 1980s



cultural, and recreational opportunities along its length especially at:

- University of Victoria
- Browning-Gyro Park in Saanich
- Cedar Hill Park and Golf Course
- Richmond School
- the Spirit Garden
- BC Hydro field on Kings Road
- Royal Jubilee Hospital
- Bowker Creek Park in Oak Bay

What is a Watershed?

A watershed is an area of land that drains surface and groundwater to a common river system. In an urban context, lands in a watershed are used for many different purposes including roads and commercial areas, recreation, fish and wildlife habitat, and human habitation.

Bowker Creek and the Flow of Water

In the past, Bowker Creek was fed by rainfall that ran as surface water over forests and fields, or that soaked slowly into the soil as groundwater. As the water seeped down, it was absorbed and cleansed by soil, plants, and bacteria.

Now roads, roofs, and parking areas block the passage of water into the soil and increase runoff. As water flows over these surfaces, it collects an assortment of pollutants—including oils and grease from roads and parking areas; pesticides and fertilizers from gardens; hazardous chemicals such as paints and heavy metals; as well as litter, pet waste, and other contaminants. The polluted water flows quickly via storm drains into Bowker Creek and is eventually discharged into the ocean, damaging both freshwater and marine environments.

Did you know?

- Bowker Creek is named for John Sylvester Bowker, an American who settled in the area during the 1860s.
- Prior to urbanization, Bowker Creek once supported populations of coho salmon and cutthroat trout.
- A First Nations shell midden (layers of shells, ashes, and other camp debris) adjacent to Bowker Creek is at least 2500 years old.
- Before agricultural and urban development, the watershed supported extensive Garry Oak meadows and woodlands. This unique ecosystem is now one of the most endangered in Canada.

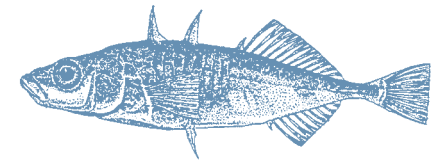


Common Camas - Camassia quamash



Cooper's Hawk

- At 117 metres, the peak of Mt. Tolmie is the highest point in the Bower Creek watershed.
- An estimated 45 percent of the Bowker Creek watershed is composed of impervious surfaces such as roads, parking areas, and roofs.



Threespine stickleback

An Urban Greenway

Community greenways are linear green corridors that connect natural areas. They link existing parks and greenspaces, provide wildlife habitat, recreation, and alternative pedestrian routes. People can experience nature even in the middle of the city.

Unprotected areas of Bowker Creek can be restored, and damaged areas rehabilitated. When culverts need repair or replacement, the creek can be daylighted instead. Community and stream stewardship groups are working with local and regional governments to ensure the Bowker Creek Watershed Management Plan is implemented.

Bowker Creek can contribute greatly to the character, liveability, and health of communities. Much is being done to make it happen. You can help!

How can you help?

We can all contribute to improving the Bowker Creek watershed for the enjoyment of present and future generations. Our individual actions all add up! You can do your part:

Around your home:

- Reduce your use of household hazardous products (e.g., solvents, harsh cleaners). Do not dispose of them in storm drains. Take them to recycling or collection centres.
- Where appropriate, redirect roof drains or downspouts over lawns instead of directly into storm drains.
- If you have oil heating, check fuel storage tanks for leaks and replace or repair where necessary.
- Pave as little of your property as possible. Use gravel or paving stones instead of concrete or asphalt, to help slow stormwater runoff.

Around your yard:

- Maintain natural areas to attract local wildlife. Discourage invasive species such as Scotch broom and English Ivy. Grow native plants in your garden – they attract local wildlife and require less water, fertilizers, and pesticides.
- Recycle yard trimmings and use composted garden and kitchen waste as an alternative to fertilizers.
- Do not wash pet deposits into the street or storm drains.



Swallowtail butterfly

Around the garage:

- Check and repair automobile fuel and fluid systems. Fix any leaks immediately.



Rachael Kahn

- Recycle used oil, antifreeze, and paints by taking them to collection facilities. Do not dump into storm drains.
- Wash your car over gravel or lawn so that the soapy water and debris soaks into the ground instead of flowing directly into storm drains and into the creek. Use mild phosphate-free soap.

Around your neighbourhood:

- Support local community and stream stewardship groups and restoration efforts.
- Encourage land protection and acquisition of community greenspace, especially in those areas adjacent to the creek.
- Involve youth and support stream stewardship programs in local schools.
- Encourage local and regional governments to implement the Bowker Creek Watershed Management Plan.
- Report spills on land or in the creek to the Provincial Emergency Program (1-800-663-3456).



Mate Green

Bowker Creek Annual Rubber Ducky Race. Community interest in local stream stewardship continues to expand.



Carol Sherwood

"The real substance of conservation lies not in the physical projects of government but in the mental processes of citizens".

Aldo Leopold, 1949

For more information

For more information on how to help protect and restore Bowker Creek, please contact:

Friends of Bowker Creek Society
2850 Queenston Street
Victoria, B.C. V8R 4P3
ph/fax: (250) 370-1271

email: bowkercreek@shaw.ca
web: www.bowkercreek.org

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- Provincial Capital Commission
- Friends of Bowker Creek Society
- Camosun Community Association
- North Jubilee Neighbourhood Association

The Bowker Creek Watershed

Community Stewardship Starts with You

Bowker Creek provides a natural greenway corridor in the heart of urban Victoria, linking neighbourhoods and people with their environment.



Bowker Creek

URBAN
WATERSHED
RENEWAL



20% post-consumer