

Remembering Moralea Milne



A happy Moralea Milne in Wells Gray Provincial Park. Photo by Kerry Davis

The Conservation Legacy of Moralea Milne

Andy MacKinnon

Moralea Milne left Metchosin many legacies. Her conservation legacy may be among her most enduring.

Moralea loved the species and ecosystems of southeastern Vancouver Island. Along with three other Metchosin residents, she helped to start, in 2011, the ongoing Metchosin Biodiversity Project. The Project's goals are to increase the understanding of Metchosin's species and ecosystems, to share natural history information with interested people in Metchosin and adjacent jurisdictions, and to use this information and awareness to protect and restore Metchosin's species and ecosystems.

Under the auspices of the Project's annual BioBlitzes and MycoBlitzes, more than 60 species experts from around BC have visited Metchosin over the last seven years. They have documented more than 2400 species from the many species groups – birds, bats, bees, butterflies, mushrooms, and so on – that make their home in Metchosin. This is the second-longest sustained inventory of species in Canada (after Whistler). To honour Moralea's remarkable contributions, a

moss (*Schistidium moraleae*) will soon be named after her. This moss, known globally from only a few locations, has been collected on Camas Hill, Moralea's home property.

In addition to her work on the

Metchosin Biodiversity Project, Moralea has also helped to make information about Metchosin's species and ecosystems available through the Talk & Walk series. This series, which began in 2006, has been an outstanding success. Metchosin-ites and others have gathered once a month in the Council Chambers for a Friday night Talk on various aspects of the District's natural history. The Talk has often been followed by a Saturday morning Walk. This series was Moralea's creation and she invested countless hours in it over more than a decade. Earlier this year Metchosin celebrated its 100th Talk & Walk!

Moralea didn't just collect and provide information about Metchosin ecosystems – she backed it with sustained actions that have inspired many Metchosin-ites to protect and restore their properties. In the wet

seasons of the year, Moralea convened a group of volunteers to do weekly removal of invasive species in Devonian Park. In 2015, The Honourable Judith Guichon (BC's Lieutenant-Governor) presented to Moralea and

her small group of tireless warriors the Invasive Species Council of BC "Together in Action Stewardship Organization" award for their efforts. Moralea was also involved in protecting critical Metchosin greenspaces in last year's land swap with Beecher Bay and Langford. (The Biodiversity Project had conducted biological inventories on some of these parcels the year before.) Moralea's leadership as Metchosin's representative on

Westshore Parks and Recreation led to the protection of the hill immediately adjacent to our Juan de Fuca Library. The inventories of the hill that she organized showed that the land provided habitat for at least three threatened and endangered species.

Moralea, through her work in the Metchosin Foundation, was also the prime mover in several conservation covenants that Metchosin landowners have established on their properties. These covenants ensure that ecosystems located on private land have legal protection even when the ownership of the properties changes. Properties protected by land covenants include Moralea's own Camas Hill.

In 2014 Moralea said "The environment is the lens through which I view every decision." She was speaking here specifically about municipal politics, but this focus could be extended to her decisions and actions in all aspects of her life. Moralea's conservation legacy has educated, inspired, and enriched a generation of Metchosin-ites. It serves both as an enduring gift to our community and as an enduring legacy to a remarkable woman – and my good friend.

“The environment is the lens through which I view every decision.”

Moralea Milne