

# SOS Elms News



Newsletter No. 22, December 2008  
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## President's Report

By Doug Mitchell

Hello to all our loyal SOS Elms Coalition Members from this year's Executive. We wish you the very best for the Holiday Season and the coming new year. SOS Elms can be truly thankful for everyone's support, without which we could not survive.

In fact, this year SOS Elms is more in need of member support and assistance than ever! We have lost two of our remaining founders and longstanding Executive members. Geoff and Judith Benson have moved to their retirement home in BC. We are very grateful for their many years of support (see page 2).

On the bright side, Cliff Speer, who joined our board last year, is our new

Treasurer (see page 6). We were delighted when two new people, Betty Millar and Michael Millar, stepped forward at our AGM in May to join our Executive. We are refocusing our efforts and our plans as we look to the future.

In 2008 SOS Elms again provided important information and assistance to the vast crowd in attendance at Gardenscape. Members are welcome to volunteer to "occupy the booth" for 2009 and will get free entry to have a look around yourself. Always an enjoyable event! As well, we assisted in another "annual" event, the SPLIT (Schools Plant Legacy in Trees) Program, which involves the students of one Saskatoon School in the planting of trees, a particularly worthy and productive endeavour!

In 2009 we will continue with these two initiatives, but also realize there is much more we could and should do, not the least of which is to persist in lobbying the City of Saskatoon in its forestry policy. SOS Elms has been instrumental in making the public aware and alert when it comes to **Dutch Elm Disease (DED)** and all things pertaining to the urban forest. We must continue to champion that cause. We will continue to support the SPLIT initiative for 2009, at W P Bate School this year. The plan

is for planting trees around the school and in the community for Habitat for Humanity homes.

Serious new biological threats loom on the horizon for our urban trees. At our November board meeting the new Superintendent of Urban Forestry for Saskatoon, Geoff McLeod, told us about new pests which could destroy our city's trees. See page 3.

Due to changing times, from the general downturn in the economy, to the change in the Provincial Government with possible reduced funding for urban forestry programs, to the adjustments in our SOS Elms Executive, we will need to be extremely careful with what little funds we have. Membership dues are the backbone of the budget, so please maintain your membership and your donations too if at all possible! Encourage your friends and acquaintances to join!

We happily invite anyone with an interest in the Urban Forest to join and contribute. Also, we welcome ideas, suggestions for fund-raising, projects, events, initiatives or other possibilities for SOS Elms to engage in.

Please feel free to contact any of the Executive (see page 6) for information regarding the Coalition, volunteer opportunities, the Urban Forest, and if you have anything you wish to suggest or to contribute.

Again, all the best and thank you!



## **A Tribute to the Bensons**

By Richard Kerbes

Geoff and Judith Benson have been the mainstay of SOS Elms for the 17 years of our history. In fact, Judith Benson was instrumental in getting our Coalition started. I first met her in April 1992 at a public lecture on DED, which I attended in response to a flyer which Judith had dropped off in our mailbox. At that meeting she, Geoff, Karen Taylor-Browne and I decided to create a citizens group to promote the care and appreciation of our urban trees, with special attention to the dangers of DED.

From that point on both Judith and Geoff were stalwart members of our Executive, originators and participants in our projects, and supporters, both with work and money, of our causes. Geoff's forté was, as he said, the "mundane" matter of financial book keeping, and he performed admirably as our Treasurer for most of our Coalition's existence, always ensuring that we stayed out of the red, at least most of the time. Judith's forté was project ideas which she spear-headed and put into action, ranging from her early "DED PI" program for elementary schools, to her latest project, the DVD on Saskatoon's Elms.

Although we were very sad to see them go, we are happy that they are happy in their beautiful retirement home near the shores of Shuswap Lake. Judith (also a writer of children's books) recently sent us a poetic message (see page 8). And so, Judith and Geoff, on behalf of all of us in SOS Elms, and on behalf of the Urban Forest, we thank you very much for your dedication to the cause, and we wish you many years of happy and peaceful retirement.

## 2008 Saskatchewan DED Report

Saskatchewan Ministry of Environment

Dutch elm disease was not found in any new communities this year. While the disease continued to spread in areas where it is already established, several communities, including the city of Regina, experienced a decline over last year in the number of infected trees.

Communities confirming the presence of infected elms include Regina (5), Lumsden (9), Regina Beach (13), Fort Qu'Appelle (33), Katepwa (39), Estevan (7), Carnduff (2), Indian Head (9), Echo Valley Provincial Park (86), Radville (5), Odessa (1), Wolseley (2), Francis (1), Grenfell (2) and Carlyle (3). The city of Moose Jaw found no infected trees this year, despite infections in previous years. The communities of Saskatoon, Swift Current, Prince Albert, North Battleford and Yorkton remain DED free.

"These results indicate that overall, the disease is holding steady in the province, which is positive," provincial DED program administrator Jeffery Gooliaff said.

For more information about disease prevention, call Saskatchewan Environment's toll-free Dutch elm disease information line at 1-800-SASK ELM (1-800-727-5356).

Read the press release:  
<http://www.gov.sk.ca/news?newsId=dbdf e6df-5a16-4239-8612-ef92e6733499>.

From: SEN Info Bulletin  
 November 27, 2008



## DED is Not the Only Threat to our Urban Forest

By Jeff Boone, Entomologist, Pest Management, Parks Branch, Urban Forestry, City of Saskatoon

Although SOS Elms is concerned with Dutch Elm Disease, there are other new insect pests that threaten the urban forest. Here is a list of some that we should be watching out for.

### 1. Gypsy Moth (*Lymantria dispar*)

*What is a gypsy moth?* The gypsy moth is one of the most serious introduced pests in North America and recently it has been found in Saskatoon. Adult females are large and white, while the males are slightly smaller and tan coloured. There are two types of gypsy moth that are of concern. The European gypsy moth was originally introduced in 1868 by a naturalist in Massachusetts for silk production. After escaping 140 years ago, this insect is now established throughout most of eastern North America. The Asian gypsy moth is not established in Canada. There have been several accidentally introduced on cargo ships from eastern Russia, but these were successfully eradicated.

*What kind of damage is caused by the gypsy moth?* Gypsy moths prefer to feed on the leaf tissue of oak, willow, poplar, elm and birch trees, however they will feed on hundreds of species of plants including conifer species. Gypsy moth caterpillars can eat up to 90cm<sup>2</sup> of leaves per day and are capable of killing trees with consecutive years of severe defoliation.

*How can I control gypsy moths?* Gypsy moth populations are actively monitored by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA). Female European gypsy moth cannot fly, therefore long distance natural dispersal is not likely. Gypsy moths lay eggs on objects such as vehicles, outdoor furniture and trailers. If vacationing or moving equipment from eastern North America please check for egg masses before moving to other locations.

## **2. Banded elm bark beetles (*Scolytus Schevyrewi*)**

*What is the banded elm bark beetle?* The banded elm bark beetle thought to have been introduced from Asia is a serious pest of North American elm trees. Similar to other adult bark beetles, this beetle is quite small, measuring only 3-4 mm in length. They are dark brown or black with a distinctive dark band across the elytra.

*What kind of damage is caused by the banded elm bark beetle?* The banded elm bark beetle is considered a primary bark beetle, meaning that they are capable of killing healthy trees. Elms are their preferred host but other shade trees such as willow, Russian olive, caragana and various cherry species are also attacked. Recent studies have shown that banded elm bark beetles can vector Dutch elm disease, a serious concern on the Prairies. By having the ability to kill otherwise healthy trees as well as act as a disease vector, the banded elm bark beetle could prove to be one of the most serious threats to urban forests in North America.

*How can I control banded elm bark beetles?* Currently, the only measure

being taken for the banded elm bark beetle is an intensive monitoring program by the province of Saskatchewan. Early results of the survey show banded elm bark beetles in communities in southern Saskatchewan. Following the provincial Dutch elm disease regulations and restricting the movement of elm firewood, are the most important control measures to prevent the movement of banded elm bark beetle around the province.

## **3. Emerald ash borer (*Agrilus planipennis*)**

*What is an emerald ash borer?* The emerald ash borer (EAB) is an exotic pest introduced to North America from Asia. First identified in the spring of 2002 in Michigan and Ontario, EAB has become the largest threat to ash trees in North America. The adults are slender, elongate beetles 0.75-1.5cm long. They are metallic coppery green. Larvae are white, flat, slender with a pair of brown pincer like appendages on the abdomen, and reside in the stem of the host tree.

*What kind of damage is caused by emerald ash borer?* EAB is a highly destructive pest to most species of ash trees in North America. This pest has killed millions of ash trees in southwestern Ontario, Michigan and surrounding states, and poses a major economic and environmental threat to urban and forested areas in Canada and the U.S.

*How do I control the emerald ash borer?* To prevent the spread of EAB do not move ash material including firewood, nursery stock or logs from quarantined areas. The Canadian Food Inspection

Agency is actively monitoring the movement EAB throughout Canada.

#### **4. Asian longhorned beetle** (*Anoplophora glabripennis*)

*What is the Asian longhorned beetle?* The Asian longhorned beetle is an exotic pest thought to have been introduced from China in wood packaging used in cargo shipments. Adult beetles are large, approximately 2-3.5cm in length. They are glossy black with up to 20 white markings on their backs. The antennae are longer than the bodies and have distinctive white to bluish white bands.

*What kind of damage is caused by the Asian longhorned beetle?* The Asian longhorned beetle feeds on a variety of hardwood species but prefers maple, poplar, willow and birch. It is very destructive, feeding on the stem tissue causing structural damage, removing the nutritive cambial layer and eventually girdling the tree. Heavy infestations of this beetle will kill healthy trees.

*How can I control Asian longhorned beetles?* Preventing the movement of wood materials from areas of infestation is the best practice to control the spread of this insect. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency is eradicating the Asian longhorned beetle from infested areas in Canada.

#### **5. Cottony ash psyllid** (*Psyllopsis discrepans*)

*What is a cottony ash psyllid?* The cottony ash psyllid is a non-native pest that was found in Saskatoon in 2006 on black and mancana ash. This insect is native to central Europe but has made

several appearances in North America including recent infestations in North Dakota, Minnesota, Alberta and Saskatchewan. To date there is limited information on the biology of cottony ash psyllids. Adult psyllids are small, 3-3.5mm mm in length, and light green to yellow-green with black markings. Because of their small size, the presence of cottony psyllids the insect is very difficult to detect.

*What kind of damage is caused by cottony ash psyllids?* Browning, yellowing and curling of the margins of ash leaflets indicate a first generation nymphal psyllid population. The curled leaflet shelters the psyllids and is lined with white cotton secreted by psyllids. White cotton along the midrib of an uncurled leaf indicates second generation nymphal psyllids.

*How do I control the cottony ash psyllid?* In collaboration with other municipalities, psyllid populations are being monitored to determine their overall impact on tree health. Preliminary results suggest that healthy trees are more resistant than stressed trees. It is important to keep trees healthy through watering and proper pruning. If you unsure how to properly care for your tree, consult a certified arborist.

#### **Report from the Urban Forest Conference - Focus on a Healthy Environment**

By Linda Moskalyk, Parks Branch, Urban Forestry, City of Saskatoon

The 8<sup>th</sup> Canadian Urban Forest Conference (CUFC) was held in Sherwood Park, Alberta in September 2008. This Conference represents the

Canadian forum for urban foresters, planners, and people all working towards developing and maintaining a healthy, sustainable urban forest. The theme of this year's conference was Healthy Trees, Healthy People.

Dr. **David Suzuki** gave the keynote address. His message spoke of sustainable development and the state of the environment. He is a dynamic speaker, with leading edge insights into a model for the world in which humanity can live well and still protect our environment. His speech forced the audience to contemplate our materialistic lifestyles and the impact it has on our environment.

Dr. Kathleen Wolf from the University of Washington spoke about the benefits of trees for providing ecosystem services, such as clean air and water. She points to the importance of having trees near where people live, work, learn, and play. Trees contribute to healthy human habitat and make cities so much more liveable. She shared the latest social science studies on this subject.

Other presentations included information on training the urban forestry workforce, healthy design principles, the psychological benefits of trees, preservation of heritage and veteran trees, linking park planning and development to healthcare planning, and initiatives to green communities and school grounds.

Michelle Chartier and Linda Moskalyk presented Saskatoon's "Schools Plant Legacy In Trees". This initiative works with schools in Saskatoon to educate young people about the benefits of trees and environmental issues. The project

includes classroom presentations, a forestry expo, and hands on learning with planting of trees on the school grounds and adjacent boulevards. Other municipalities were interested in adopting ideas from this program.

The CUFC is an ideal place for arborists, foresters and tree enthusiasts from across Canada and internationally to share ideas and experiences. The 2008 conference brought awareness to the importance of trees, and their contribution to a healthy environment in which to live.

### **Profile of SOS Elms' New Treasurer**

By Cliff Speer

A native of Manitoba, of Irish extraction and second eldest of 7, Cliff grew up on a farm close to Winnipeg. He attended the U of W and the University of Manitoba and subsequently taught high school English in northern Manitoba. He left public school teaching when he figured out that there might be more rewarding career options on roads less travelled. He moved on to working in commercial insurance in Winnipeg from where he transferred to Saskatoon. On the avocational side, Cliff pursued his recreational interests in canoeing and cross-country skiing by volunteering as trip leader and instructor and by working on the executives of both the Canoe Club and the Nordic Ski Club in Saskatoon. Eventually these pursuits took him beyond the volunteer arena and led him to form his own adventure travel company, which he named CanoeSki Discovery Company, in honour of his long-lost Polish great grandfather. If that doesn't sound plausible, then it's not hard to fathom

why the name was initially rejected by the Corporations Branch in Regina, as they probably thought he was pulling their leg too! Upon appeal, however, they relented, concluding that the name "sounded cute" and after all, did indicate what the business was totally engaged in!

Cliff describes the all-absorbing CanoeSki operation as Saskatchewan's premier eco-adventure company specializing in wilderness canoeing and cross-country skiing instruction and tours. The discovery part of the company allows Cliff to exercise his penchant for exploration and provides for creative ways of combining the adventure component of two of Saskatchewan's most popular outdoor pursuits with learning opportunities in such diverse areas as history, botany, archaeology, aboriginal culture, wildlife watching, & much more. Simply expressed, it gives him the illusion that tramping about in the bush can be a socially redeeming activity!

Cliff lives in the well forested, 50-year-old North Park area of Saskatoon. He has 3 glorious, healthy elms plus a host of other mature species overshadowing his "cabin in the woods" on 9th Ave North. Cliff had a brief acquaintance with SOS Elms in its embryonic phase, but "strayed" from the fold in later years. With some arm twisting from the Elmwood Queen, he consented to sit on the Board last fall. With more arm twisting, the treasurer's file was dumped in his lap! His only previous involvement in matters financial was re-organizing Saskatoon Canoe Club books during his stint as President. Also, during that time, he enrolled in the Business Certificate Program with the U of S Extension

Division, including an accounting course. With the Coalition's steadily dwindling bank account, Cliff's philosophy that "a penny saved is a penny earned" might be as useful right now as real accounting credentials!



### SOS Elms Coalition Inc. Board of Directors

President: Doug Mitchell	244-3082
Vice-President: Linda Moskalyk	934-7156
Treasurer: Cliff Speer	653-5693
Secretary: Rae Hearn	244-3082
Membership: Rae Hearn	244-3082
Web Site: Paddy Tutty	665-0864
Newsletter: Richard Kerbes	653-4209

Members at large:	
Gary Bortolotti	665-3457
Betty Millar	373-2533
Michael Millar	373-2533

This newsletter edited by Richard Kerbes and  
Kathy Meeres

## A BLURB FROM THE BENSONS

By Judith Benson

We miss Saskatoon friends and Elm-lined streets with whom no one anywhere else can compete. with the Shuswap Naturalists we've begun to share.

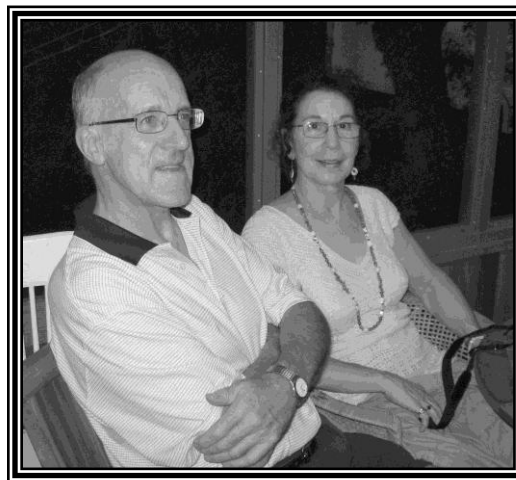
In January we're booked to show the SOS Elms Legacy video.

From birds to habitat they've cast their vote.

In Salmon Arm, we've swapped Elms for Red Cedars, Flying Squirrels, Snowberry, Wild Maple, Oregon Grape, the latter which is favoured by ring-necked pheasants who find their way across the back yard to feeders where they join the foray of common avians, plus the Pileateds and Stellar's Jay.

We'll return to Saskatoon's Elms and friends sublime,  
leave the mountains and lakes in April '09.  
Judith meets with her editor during that time, but we'll also seek out  
River Landing, the Symphony, Elms' first buds,  
River walks.  
Of course, an SOS reunion would suit us just fine.

Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for a Peaceful and Frugal New Year!  
Keep hugging those Elms. All the best from  
Geoff and Judith Benson, Salmon Arm, BC



Take note: Photo by P. Tutty

**Join SOS Elms:** \$10 per family/year  
(Charitable tax receipt issued)  
See: <http://www.soselms.org>  
Or mail us at:  
P.O. Box 1313, Saskatoon,  
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SEASON'S  
GREETINGS