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Media Contact: Maureen Verkaar
T: 604 731 2428 Cell: 604 328 5714
E: mvallstar@telus.net



the
unnatural
history of
stanley park

“The Unnatural History of Stanley Park” at the Vancouver Museum

We interfered with, altered, and rearranged Stanley Park’s forests, creatures and people to make nature more ‘natural’. With “The Unnatural History of Stanley Park” exhibit, the Vancouver Museum sheds some light on puzzling blind spots in our romance with this national treasure, which turns 120 this year.

The Vancouver Museum in partnership with the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation presents a unique exhibit in English and Chinese, ***The Unnatural History of Stanley Park***, running at the Vancouver Museum (1100 Chestnut St.) from **September 25/08** to February 15/09. Information 604 736 4431 or www.vanmuseum.bc.ca

The Park Board’s 1911 annual report enthused, “Surely this is one of the finest natural parks in the world, with monster trees of the Pacific slope rising to dizzy heights and boasting extraordinary diameter measurements.”

“In reality, the forests of Stanley Park, its iconic signature, have been drastically altered over time at the hands of loggers and park staff and through natural events. The land itself has been re-shaped, filled in, and dredged out to create Lost Lagoon, refine Beaver Lake, and lay the seawall. The creatures that live in the park have been imported, exterminated, and managed to conform to popular notions about appropriate wildlife for an urban park,” says Joan Seidl, curator of the exhibit.

“We speak of our love for Stanley Park, but we are reluctant to comprehend the degree of human intervention in the park. We insist on finding “pristine”, “primeval” nature in a park that clearly is not. This 7,500 foot exhibit, explores several puzzling blind spots in our romance with Stanley Park,” adds Seidl.

Aside from human interference, ***The Unnatural History of Stanley Park*** emphasizes the Park’s cosmopolitan nature, the people who played sports in it, and the historic conflict between those who want clamorous games in the park and those who wish the park’s silence unbroken.

The exhibit showcases souvenirs collected by park visitors over 120 years, behind-the-scenes stories of the park’s plants, animals, people and landmarks, and a selection of proposals to “improve” Stanley Park – a list that includes the bizarre, amazing, and scary, as well as the sublime.

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