

Music in the Forest: The Fourth Annual “Walkalong for Learning”

On Saturday afternoon, August 27, people will again have the rare opportunity to listen to classically-trained musicians playing in the forest and by the shore of the Mid-Island Protected Network. The purpose of the “Walkalong”—beyond the sheer enjoyment of experiencing the places and the music—is to raise money for the Conservancy’s education programs, providing bursaries to bring children to the island to learn more about the natural world and their place in it.

First held in 2013, the Walkalong has been a very successful event in the money it has raised for children’s programs. Music in the forest was added in 2014, and has since brought delight both to the walkers and the musicians. Musicians and locations vary from year to year. In the past walkers have been enchanted by violinists, horn-players, a harpist, a cellist, a flautist, singers, Paul Gregory playing the harmonica (from the top of a tall-stump!)—and, beckoning them forward up a steep part of the trail, Jack Garton playing the flugelhorn. This year’s program will be equally varied. The music itself draws on folk, classical and jazz traditions.

The walk begins with registration in the Learning Centre parking lot (10825 Porlier Pass Road). Walkers will be bussed to the actual starting point, off Vineyard Way, opposite Laughlin Lake. The route will go through the Conservancy’s forest restoration project, down to Cable Bay, along the path to Pebble Beach, then up to “The Great Beaver Swamp”. The musicians will be located along this first and shorter (and easiest) part of the walk. The Walkalong route continues along the beaver swamp, and enters “Vanilla Leaf Land”. (The name was given to this cross-island link, through a little-known valley, by the winner of a competition among local school children). The Walk continues up, over the spine of the island, descends, crosses Porlier Pass road, goes through the rapidly re-greening mill site to the kiosk in the Learning Centre parking lot where registration began. From there those with energy left can hike back down to the water at Crystal Cove (at the mid-point of the Learning Center’s mile-long cliffy, old-growth shoreline) and back up on a forest trail to the Learning Centre building. Or they can go down directly to the building—where there will be drinks, cake, hand-churned ice-cream, and food, (for purchase). When everyone is back, there will be more live music, and a draw for prizes.

For those who want to take that shorter walk only (4.7 km), there will be transportation back to the Learning Center. The whole walk is 8.3 km, about 5 miles.

Walkers will be asked to make a \$10 contribution when they register. They also are encouraged to find sponsors who will commit to contributing, on behalf of their chosen walker, more money to the education fund which is, along with the music, the purpose of the Walkalong.

More information is available under “Walkalong for Learning” on the Conservancy’s website (galianoconservancy.ca/walkalong).