



Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

Newsletter

Autumn 2017

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Murrelet Odyssey Continues to Unfold

by Dan Bouman

The Marbled Murrelet is a small sea bird that depends on ancient coastal forests. A mere forty years ago murrelets were common everywhere around the Strait of Georgia. Today, their official status is *Threatened* due to a loss of nesting habitat. Murrelets need tall trees with large mossy limbs on the northern aspects of open stands of forest. Little of this remains in this conservation region except at higher elevations where logging opportunities are often marginal.

In the past, the SCCA used the courts, quasi-judicial venues and direct negotiations to spur on formal protection of murrelet nesting habitat. We also made complaints to the BC Forest Practices Board (FPB). These actions were successful but not to the degree that is necessary.



The Caren Range viewed from Ruby Lake. In 1996, BC's first active Marbled Murrelet nest was found in ancient forest here. The area is now Spipiyus Provincial Park. Spipiyus means Marbled Murrelet in the shísháhlh language. Dan Bouman photo

In 2012, the SCCA nominated 51 specific areas for Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA) status. Each was required to meet two criteria: a high degree of documentation of use by murrelets plus a lack of protection by any other land use designation.

Nominations were submitted to a senior wildlife biologist in the Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO) in January 2014. A year later, 50 of our 51 nominations were recognized as ecologically correct and were forwarded to all Sunshine Coast logging licensees for their input. *Cont'd page 5*

Reed Road Forest a Treasure Worth Protecting

by Gayle Neilson

For thirty-five years I have lived in Elphinstone (Area E) near the town of Gibsons. Although it is rural we do not have access to much green space other than in our yards. Chaster Park is tiny. There are a few pocket parks but no real natural spaces. Except for a lovely 30.5 hectare woodland (District Lot 1313) at the top of Reed Road, crown land which BC Timber Sales intends to log.

The forest is not old growth but is impressive. Many of the Douglas Fir trees have been there for 110 years, some of them much longer. There are also Western Red Cedar, Western Hemlock and various deciduous species. I have been impressed by the natural beauty and wildlife. There are many birds, interesting fungi and even red-legged frogs. Naturalist Rick O'Neill believes the tall trees may support flying squirrels. The forest has real educational, research and recreational value. *Cont'd page 9*

BURNCO Environmental Review Extended

by Richard Carton

As many Sunshine Coast residents are aware, BURNCO Rock Products hopes to build a gravel mine at McNab Creek in Howe Sound. The 30-hectare pit with an onsite crusher would produce an estimated 20 million tonnes of aggregate over 16 years creating 12 direct operational jobs. It is one of several large scale projects that have been proposed for Howe Sound in recent years. *Cont'd page 8*

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Double Trouble: The Impact of Naturally Occurring and Human Generated Wildfires

by Sandamini Bandara and Chazel Solamo

Since the 1970s there has been an upward trend in wildfire outbreaks in British Columbia. A state of emergency was declared this summer during the worst fire season on record. Lightning strikes, climate change and human activity are all responsible for the colossal damage that has occurred.

The fires result in the destruction of the environment and wildlife, the loss of revenue to the forest industry and the expense of fighting the fires. During the past decade the BC government averaged approximately \$182 million per year combating wildfires. As of August 16 the cost in 2017 was a staggering \$309 million. More importantly, the threat to public health and the firefighters themselves is significant.

According to the BC Wildfire Service, 30-60% of wildfires are caused by people. Humans were responsible for almost half the fires in 2017 despite education campaigns, bans on campfires and other open flames, and increased fines for people who start fires. Most of the fires are not deliberate but simply the result of careless behaviour. Campfires are unattended or improperly extinguished and cigarettes are discarded, especially from cars. Sparks or contact with very hot surfaces such as an ATV in dry grass can also start a fire.

By August of 2017, smoke from the interior of BC had led to air quality advisory warnings as far away as Victoria. Dense smoke contains high levels of air pollution which exceed the normal Air Quality Health Index. Fine particulate matter can penetrate the lungs posing serious health risks, especially to small children, pregnant women and the elderly.

A study in the Journal of Forestry Research (2003) showed that wildfires significantly impact subsurface hydrology and soil stability. Due to the loss of forest canopy more snow can accumulate on the ground. The remnants of fires are black matter so there will be an increase in longwave radiation absorption by the soil which will increase soil temperatures resulting in a higher rate of snowmelt. This will increase surface water runoff and the probability of flooding. Less canopy will also lead to elevated groundwater infiltration causing soil to become saturated much faster. As fires cause trees to die out, the roots will gradually rot due to a lack of nutrients. Riparian areas will be unstable, further increasing the chances of flooding.



Remnants of a Fire in the BC Interior Chazel Solamo photo

Wildfires also cause a decrease in the transmissivity in the atmosphere due to smoke build up. An increase in shortwave radiation causes temperatures to rise. Due to this and the severity of the fire impacts within the soil, severely burned areas could take quite some time to regenerate native vegetation. This in turn could allow invasive species that thrive in nutrient poor environments to benefit from the lack of competition.

Wildfires account for the loss of habitat for plant and animal species all over BC. The decline in the Garry oak ecosystem is one example of this adversity. Wildfires have likely had a huge impact on the biodiversity of the area and put threatened or endangered species at risk.

As human population continues to increase and climate change drastically alters our natural ecosystems, it is crucial to be aware of the risk of forest fires and to educate the public about their impact and prevention. Let's hope that the unforgettable fire seasons in recent years will not become the new norm.



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The Future of Our Wild Salmon

by Cindy Harlow and Dianne Sanford

Salmon are an icon on Canada's Pacific coast. They play a critical role in the lives of First Nations, are a major element of the economy and an integral part of river and forest ecosystems. Salmon are a food source for many organisms in every phase of their life cycle. They are indicators of the health of both our marine and fresh water environments.

The public is alarmed by the overall decline of our salmonid populations. Factors that could be affecting the numbers of wild salmon are being studied. These include the effects of climate change, open net pen aquaculture (fish farming) and changes to the carrying capacity of the ocean.

The federal government has the power to provide the protection the salmon deserve. In 2011 an independent review of the Wild Salmon Policy (WSP) was conducted by Gardner Pinfold. In 2012 the Cohen Commission inquired into the decline of sockeye salmon in the Fraser River. These reports supported the WSP and encouraged the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) to open the WSP for consultation and to develop an implementation plan. This process is now underway in these three phases:

- Fall/Spring, 2016/17 - The DFO met with First Nations, partners and stakeholders in order to develop a detailed implementation plan. A representative of the SCCA attended the meeting. The public vehemently expressed their frustration over the length of time to implement the WSP. Their voices were heard and documented.
- Spring/Summer, 2017: The first draft of a five-year implementation plan was to be developed in consultation with First Nations and other key partners.
- Fall, 2017: More consultation with Indigenous groups, stakeholders and other interested parties across BC and Yukon on the draft implementation plan.

Reviews will be ongoing in order to ensure that the implementation plan remains current and in order to report its progress. Stay tuned for upcoming information on our website and enews. Ultimately the management of the Pacific salmon falls to the federal government but the public can lobby or get involved in campaigns which encourage the government to do the right thing so that this keystone species is conserved indefinitely.

Confirming Good Trail Building Practice

by Bob D'Arcy, President, Sechelt Groves Society

There is a consensus that the public supports trail building in order to provide an educational and heart warming walk in our beautiful woods. Sechelt Groves (Hidden Grove and the nearby Sechelt Heritage Forest) is a prime example.

The development of a trail system always has some impact on the surrounding ecosystem. In Sechelt Groves, construction has evolved over the years. It now implements practices that reduce maintenance as well as potential long term effects upon the environment.

All the work has been done by our wonderful volunteer trail builders. They are noted for the care they take in building the trails. Occasionally, a visitor criticizes the volunteers for upsetting the environment or damaging the trees while a trail is being re-routed or up-graded. The complaints are often ill-informed and can be frustrating.



Volunteer Trail Builders (Left to Right): Michael Davidson, Ken Hall, Mike Lane and Mike Sutcliffe. Photo by Bob D'Arcy

Our trail builders have adopted an education practice that might be of interest to other organizations doing similar work. They have written a very comprehensive two-page narrative to describe their methods. Trail builders and other volunteers are now carrying print outs they can provide to anyone who is interested. The first edition of the "Trail Builders Tale" may be viewed in full on line at <http://secheltgroves.com/docs/TBTweb.pdf>

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Notable Trees of the Sunshine Coast

by Bob Sitter

The Sunshine Coast Natural History Society (SCNHS) has started an initiative to locate, measure and record "Notable Native Trees" on the Lower Sunshine Coast. The objectives are to ensure the trees are conserved and to provide added interest for naturalists and outdoor enthusiasts. This initiative is aligned with Nature B.C.'s motto, "To know nature and to keep it worth knowing".

A tree may not be the largest of its kind but still be notable for various reasons. It can simply be large for that species, be very old, or have extraordinary features, history, location or rarity. A 30 cm diameter Pacific Yew located on a well-used trail would be notable for its rarity and location. Or a Western White Pine located on Porpoise Bay Road is notable for its closeness to downtown Sechelt. Of course we have some enormous (but not world record) Douglas Firs. The oldest one is likely on the Sky High hiking trail in Halfmoon Bay.



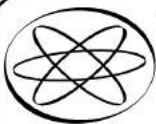
Tony Greenfield and Dave Lasser measure a large Grand Fir in Madeira Park
Bob Sitter photo

On the SCNHS website there is a tab which you can click on to get the input data card for recording a tree. Data sought includes species, location, diameter, height and why it is a candidate for notability. Fill out the card (or as much as you can) and mail it to John Hodges at SCNHS, Box 543, Sechelt, B.C., V0N 3A0.

After you fill out and send in a data card a member of the SCNHS will visit the tree to appraise its "notability" and gather any missing information. Measuring heights are tricky; those of you who remember high school trigonometry can give it a try.

The SCNHS is trying to make everyone more aware of our native trees, to conserve those notable ones, and to make the outdoor experience on the Sunshine Coast even more fulfilling. Here are some species of interest:

- Large Grand Fir - two in Madeira Park largest so far
- Amabilis fir - higher elevation, e.g. Tetrahedron Plateau
- Giant Douglas Fir - we have many, for example at Big Tree Park, Hidden Grove, McNair Creek
- Giant Western Red Cedar - the largest trees yet to be found on the Sunshine Coast
- Yellow Cedar - above 800m in Sunshine Coast mountains
- Mountain Hemlock - also above 800 metres
- Western Hemlock - everywhere but none recorded
- Pacific Yew - located at lower elevations, but rare
- Sitka Spruce - lots at Sechelt Marsh, East Porpoise Bay and other lowlands
- Western White Pine - infrequent, but very beautiful
- Shore Pine - rocky sites
- Red Alder and Sitka Alder at higher elevations
- Arbutus - could be extraordinarily contorted, or tall, or in groves like on the Francis Peninsula
- Pacific Crabapple - like the specimen north of the public campsite on Porpoise Bay
- Juniper - a huge example is in the northern portion of Smugglers Cove Provincial Park
- Big leaf Maple - good examples covered in burls and moss
- Bitter cherry, Black Cottonwood, Pacific Dogwood
- Gary Oak (there are some on Merry Island, may they have been introduced)
- Vine Maple - so far none found on the Sunshine Coast



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Murrelet Odyssey Continues to Unfold

continued from page 1

In December 2015, the Province initiated the Marbled Murrelet Implementation Plan. There was a public consultation in Powell River in February 2016, which we attended. FLNRO resource professionals described their approach to complying with the federal Species At Risk Act. They focused on protecting habitat that is in the already constrained Timber Harvesting Land Base (THLB) and the Non-Timber Harvesting Land Base (N-THLB). It's important to note that there is a Ministerial Order under Section 7 of the Forest and Range Practices Act (FRPA) that prohibits logging of murrelet nesting habitat in the N-THLB. Most of the SCCA's WHA proposals are in the N-THLB.



Juvenile Marbled Murrelet Photo courtesy of Rich MacIntosh, US Fish and Wildlife Service

At the February meeting, a Freedom of Information (FOI) request was filed with FLNRO for records of logging 'site plans' and Declared Area Notices in or adjacent to the SCCA's WHA nominations. By law, these two documents must be made available on request. (A Declared Area is where a logging company has made an investment in development for logging). The FLNRO-FOI team wanted \$1800 to fill the FOI request. The SCCA appealed to the FOI

Commissioner for a fee waiver, which was granted. In December 2016 some records were released to us but none included site plans or Declared Areas notices within the time frame of the request (after 2012). A complaint of Inadequate Search was sent to the FLNRO-FOI team. It came back negative.

In September of this year the SCCA received an email from a senior wildlife biologist in FLNRO explaining what had happened to our 50 WHA proposals and the 16 new proposals that he had added to ours (making 66 in total). Logging companies had rejected 20 of the 66 WHA proposals, some of which have been recently logged, are being logged now or will be logged in the near future. Logging companies had also rearranged the boundaries of many of the WHA proposals to overlap areas already protected for other purposes. The original 66 WHA proposals contained about 6000 hectares of high quality unprotected nesting habitat. Logging companies vetoed more than 4500 hectares. It turns out that there is a Memorandum of Understanding between the Coast Forest Products Association and FLNRO that, in effect, allows logging companies to veto any of our proposed WHAs.

One might ask, "What about the FRPA, Section 7 Ministerial Order to protect murrelet nesting habitat in the N-THLB?" The answer is that the Order, like so much of the environmental regulation in FRPA, is vague and unenforceable in a court of law. And FLNRO officials don't monitor or enforce compliance with FRPA or Ministerial Orders. In essence, logging companies can do whatever they like to murrelet habitat without consequence (yet).

By now readers may be feeling nauseous but there is good reason for increased optimism. We have significant documentation of how law related to species at risk is circumvented in BC. The new governments in Ottawa and Victoria have committed to dealing more effectively with the problems of at-risk species. While charities like the SCCA are prohibited from proposing legislation, we still have every right to draw attention to legislation that does not work and policies that obstruct law. Things are going to change and we are going to help make it happen! Updates will be posted to our website (www.thesc.ca). Stay tuned!



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Humpback Comeback!

by Jackie Hildering, Marine Education and Research Society (MERS)

North Pacific Humpbacks are recognized as being a threatened population in Canada. They were intensely whaled in British Columbia until just 52 years ago, only receiving legal protection in 1965. For many years it was a rarity to see them. But, as many of us who are fortunate enough to live on BC's coast know, they're back! Back from the brink of extinction giving us a second chance with these awe-inspiring, acrobatic, winged giants.



KC the Humpback Whale breaching. Born in 2002 ©Jackie Hildering

As an indication of how sudden their return has been, in 2004 we documented just seven individuals in our core study area around NE Vancouver Island. In 2016, we documented ninety individuals. Similar trends have been observed in many other areas off our coast, with the province-wide estimate being that well over 2,000 Humpbacks feed here.

As the number of whales increases so does their overlap with human activities. It is therefore essential that coastal British Columbians are aware of the risks Humpbacks face, for the sake of the whales AND boater safety.

Humpbacks come to these waters each year to feed on krill and small schooling fish like herring. They have migrated great distances from areas that have little to no food for them so feeding is crucial when they get here.

Avoiding Collision Many coastal British Columbians do not realize that baleen whales like Humpbacks do not have biosonar like toothed whales (e.g. Orca) do. They can be extremely oblivious of boats. Boaters should thus be extremely vigilant. Humpbacks can surface very unexpectedly and often do not go in a predictable direction. It is therefore a focus of our work to increase boater awareness with our "See A Blow? Go Slow!" campaign. Key points to increase safety for both boaters and marine wildlife are summarized in the following list:

- Be vigilant - whales can surface quite suddenly and be very unaware of boats.
- Be on the lookout for blows at all times.
- See a Blow? Go Slow! Reduce speed to 7 knots if find yourself 100 to 400m from a whale.
- Be alert and reduce speed in areas of known whale density.

- Give whales space, at least 100m, but consider species size and behaviour when determining a safe distance. Stay clear of the whales' path.
- Be alert for large aggregations of birds and "bait balls" as these are indicators that whales may be feeding in the area.
- If a whale surfaces within 100m, shut off the boat engine until the animal is beyond 100m.
- Report incidents such as disturbance, collision and entanglement to the Incident Reporting Line: 1-800-465-4336 (or Coast Guard VHF 16).
- See www.SeeABlowGoSlow.org for further details including the "Be Whale Wise Guidelines".

Entanglement Preliminary research conducted jointly with Fisheries and Oceans Canada indicates that at least half the Humpback Whales off the coast of BC have survived at least one entanglement. We do not know how many get entangled and do not survive. It is vital that coastal British Columbians know what to do, and what NOT to do, if entanglement is witnessed.

If you see an entangled whale, please report it immediately (including the location) to the Incident Reporting Line: 1-800-465-4336 (or Coast Guard VHF 16).

If possible, **remain with the whale at a distance** until trained help arrives or another boat takes over tracking.

Never attempt to remove the rope or net. Not only is this dangerous but it most often does not help the whale. Removing gear trailing at the surface makes the whale more difficult to relocate and reduces the chance of successful disentanglement.

The Marine Education and Research Society is a registered Canadian charity dedicated to promoting conservation and understanding of marine ecosystems through scientific research, environmental education, and marine wildlife response. www.mersociety.org



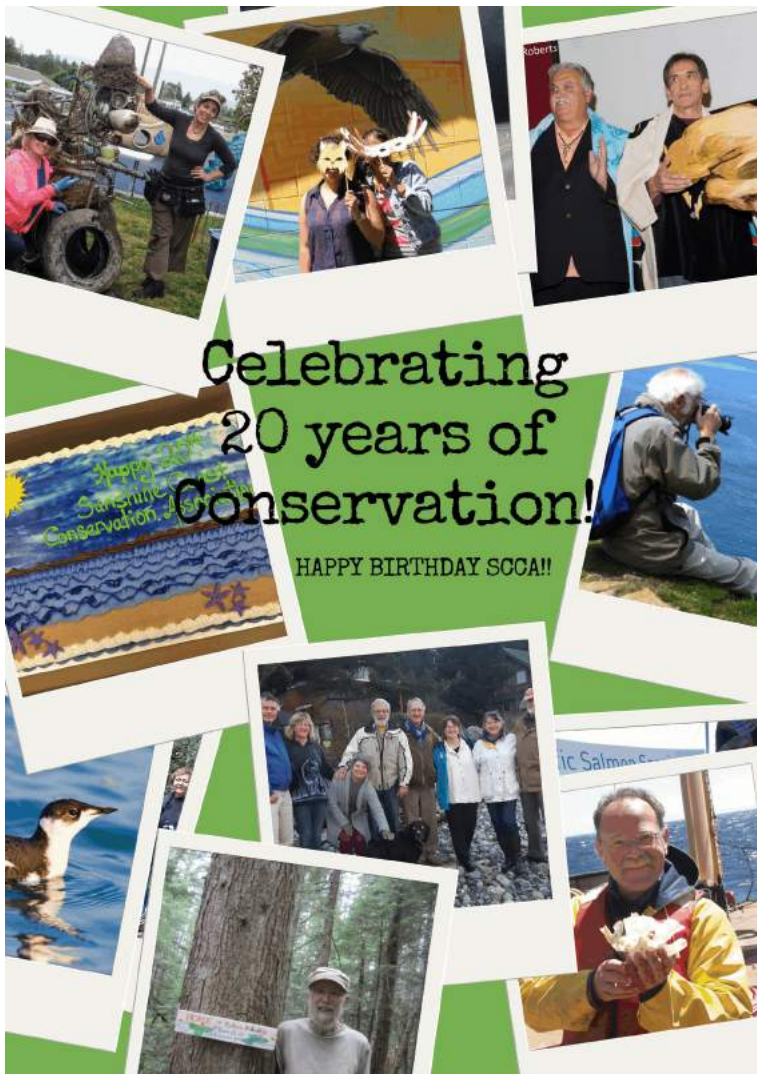


SCCA Recognizes Its 20th Anniversary

by Naomi Fleschhut

Twenty years ago, some local environmental activists were celebrating their successful efforts to protect the Tetrahedron. Looking toward the future, they recognized the need for a unified regional conservation organization that could address the broad and multiplying threats to biodiversity on the Sunshine Coast. At the time, small environmental groups focused on specific issues but no organization looked at the big conservation picture and responded to emerging community needs. So, around a kitchen table back in December 1996, the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association was born. We've been going strong ever since, advocating, educating and mobilizing to protect our beautiful and crucial natural biodiversity.

We couldn't have accomplished so much without the incredible community of people who have supported and worked with the SCCA as members, volunteers, advisors, directors, staff members, donors, funders, environmental advocacy colleagues, government and agency representatives, and industry professionals. Over the next year we will look back on our history, share stories from our 'conservation elders', celebrate our results and look ahead to our next campaigns and strategies to protect our coastal home for the benefit of humanity and all life.



A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE

SUNSHINE COAST CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION

OCTOBER 14, 1997
First SCCA meeting!

MARCH 2000
Complaint filed with the Forest Practices Board, leading to protection of rare old-growth stands, marbled murrelet, and mountain goat habitats.

NOVEMBER 2003
SCCA with Pender Harbour Wildlife Society temporarily prevent logging near Ambrose Lake Ecological Reserve.

2006
Environmental Award given to John Hind-Smith and renamed in his honour.

2008
The Community Forest is removed from the watershed.

MARCH 20-21, 2010
Hosted Environmental Advocacy Summit at Camp Byng.

AND THE STORY CONTINUES ... see part 2 in our next newsletter.

Come to our special 20th anniversary Celebration of Conservation Party this Spring, 2018 to learn more about SCCA history!

DECEMBER 16, 1997
SCCA becomes a society.

2001
SCCA challenges logging of marbled murrelet habitat before the BC Supreme Court.

2004
Map of ecologically significant private land in SCRCD produced. SCCA Environmental Award is established, given to Joop Burgerjon and Paul Jones.

2007
Public health complaint filed against the logging in Chapman Creek Watershed, leading to ground-breaking legal actions.

APRIL 2009
The People's Water: The Fight for the Sunshine Coast's Drinking Watersheds published.

2011
Rainwater Harvesting Study published

Help Us Celebrate

We hope you will join us for a very special 20th Anniversary Celebration of Conservation party this coming spring to learn about and celebrate our rich history! And if you haven't already, please subscribe to our email list to stay tuned for our 20th Anniversary events and offerings throughout the year. Thank you for your support, and happy SCCA 20th!

Oceans Day

Inaugural Sechelt Oceans Day a Great Success

by Naomi Fleschhut

Our collaboration with the District of Sechelt began with a casual conversation about the extent to which the ocean environment contributes to our natural and cultural landscape. We agreed on the need to cultivate a sense of appreciation and stewardship for this valuable asset and started brainstorming ways to accomplish this goal. On that day the concept of an annual Sechelt Oceans Day was born. June 10th, 2016 was selected as its inaugural date – the closest Saturday to **World Oceans Day**, held on June 8th each year.

The purpose of the event was to celebrate our coastal marine environment, raise awareness about ocean ecology and conservation and engage the public in a fun afternoon of learning about the benefits that oceans provide. At our first meeting ideas were flying and the sky was the limit! We envisioned a paddle derby to beach access points where contestants would test their knowledge and perform ocean cleanup activities. In the end we simply chose to recruit other environmental groups, educators and ocean-ecology related local businesses to offer a jam-packed four hours of interactive educational booths and family-friendly ocean activities.

Thanks to this group effort and our fantastic team of volunteers and sponsors the day was a great success. Over 300 participants used an Oceans Day passport as their guide to the festivities and their chance to win locally donated prizes. Highlights included Candace Campo's Talaysay Spoken Treasures walking tour and an uplifting musical performance by the Knotty Dotters Marimba band. The creation of 'Dredge – the Creature from the Deep' from marine-debris, facilitated by Sandy Buck of Deer Crossing the Art Farm, was also a hit.

We've already started planning for a bigger and better event in 2018 continuing our partnership with the District of Sechelt.



Sandy Buck selects 'art supplies' from the marine debris reclaimed from Porpoise Bay
Naomi Fleschhut photo

If you'd like to be a volunteer, sponsor, or educational presenter, please contact us at office@thescca.ca or phone 604.865.1633. See you on June 9th next year!

BURNCO Review Extended *cont'd from page 1*

Howe Sound has long been valued for its wildlife and beauty. For more than a century, however, industrial mismanagement contaminated the waters and devastated wildlife. The past decade has witnessed a significant recovery. Large marine mammals are returning and staying. This shouldn't be taken for granted. A detailed report by Vancouver Aquarium's Coastal Ocean Research Institute states that Howe Sound remains vulnerable.

Last summer, a public comment period showed widespread opposition to the BURNCO proposal. Thousands of submissions expressed the concerns of local citizens and governments. The SCCA received public funding to report on BURNCO's environmental impact statement. Our response was based on local and professional knowledge of the McNab watershed and its surrounding environment. The SCCA disagrees with the current environmental impact assessment that the proposed project will have negligible effects on salmonidae and their habitats. Our marine committee also recommends research to ensure there are no glass sponge reefs in the area that could be adversely affected.

The BC Environmental Assessment Office (BCEAO) is currently assessing all of the information along with mitigations in the form of legally binding conditions. On October 4 it extended the review process until December 8, 2017 in order to further its consultations with First Nations and the Technical Working Group. The draft Decision Materials are now posted on the EAO website. The public is again invited to comment, October 27-November 27. EAO will then have until December 8 to submit the Decision Materials to the government ministers who are required by law to make their decision on the project within 45 days. The SCCA is currently in the process of reviewing the second BURNCO report.



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Reed Road Forest a Treasure Worth Protecting

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Reed Road forest lies within an area that for the purpose of resource management planning is referred to as the Chapman Landscape Unit. It is classified as Coastal Western Hemlock Dry Maritime (CWHdm). Most preserved parts are low productivity sites that are inaccessible or not economical for logging. The percentage of land being conserved is inadequate to ensure that biodiversity persists over time. Ecological communities that thrive on the more productive sites are mostly unrepresented.

Reed Road Forest is only a few minutes drive for Area E residents and for many people is accessible by foot. Its location on Mount Elphinstone makes it hydrologically important to downstream creeks and residents who depend on well water.

The Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) has met with the Squamish Nation to discuss protecting DL 1313. The SCCA strongly supports this initiative. The recent logging of an adjacent block to the west makes it even more important to save in order to limit further disruption and displacement of wildlife.

In this age of global warming, the carbon absorbed by a concentration of older trees in a mature forest is valuable. Reed Road forest may be small but it represents a type of forest that once covered the landscape and an ecosystem that is underprotected in BC. Here is an opportunity to preserve a valuable piece of our forest heritage. The SCCA has established a Forestry working group. If you are interested in being a part of it please contact Gayle Neilson at glnilson8@gmail.com



Sandamini Bandara and Chazel Solamo Embrace a Fir Tree in the Reed Road Forest
Gayle Neilson photo

Mount Elphinstone Provincial Park Expansion: Hope Springs Eternal

by Richard Carton

Approximately 20 years have passed since the creation of Mount Elphinstone Provincial Park. Disappointed that their goal of a 1500 hectare park was reduced to a mere 139 hectares, environmentalists have been lobbying for an expansion of the park ever since. BC Timber Sales remains equally entrenched in its position and one wonders if there will ever be an end to this conflict which periodically tears our community apart.

In 2015, biologist Wayne McCrory reported that the biodiversity values of this forest are high, including old-growth Douglas-fir trees, Roosevelt elk winter habitat, uncommon plants and about 165 species of mushrooms including the rare *Tricholoma apium*. Some of the eight amphibian species may be at risk locally if too much habitat is destroyed, particularly western red black and ensatina salamanders.

The park seems particularly vulnerable because it's uniquely divided into three small parcels. According to BC Parks, all three of the sites "are relatively small and could be impacted by adjacent development or forestry activities."

For many years the SCCA has supported the creation of a contiguous mid-elevation park on the western slopes of the mountain. This subzone is critically under-represented locally, regionally and provincially in BC's protected areas system. Our rationale was fully explained in a letter sent to the Minister of the Environment in 2012. The Sunshine Coast Regional District,

MLA Nicholas Simons, the *Sierra Club of BC* and *The Wilderness Committee* have also expressed their desire to see Mount Elphinstone Provincial Park expanded.

The Sunshine Coast remains one of the few regions in BC that does not have a strategic land use plan or a regional growth management strategy. The Province has initiated such a process before but has never followed through. Until an agreement is reached that adequately protects our native habitat as well as the interests of other stakeholders (including First Nations) the confrontation over various cutblocks will continue to pit neighbour against neighbour potentially leading to more arrests.

In 2016, the SCRCD stated its support for the protection of Reed Road Forest (District Lot 1313). However, the SCRCD has recognized that this increases the pressure to harvest timber in other areas within the 1500 hectare proposed Mt. Elphinstone park. As a result the Province has advised the SCRCD that the proposed provincial Mt. Elphinstone park expansion is "no longer an option."

Fortunately, a change in government brings renewed hope. Habitat and wildlife protection are now being identified as a priority. The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, George Heyman, has expressed support for the creation of an updated plan for the Sunshine Coast that takes into consideration Mount Elphinstone. This is a great time to provide your input on this important issue by writing to the Minister at George.Heyman@gov.bc.ca

Please Join the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

The fact that you are reading this newsletter suggests that you are interested in conservation. Please consider joining us or renewing your membership with our organization. The annual cost is just \$20 for an individual, \$30 for a family, \$40 for a group and \$100 for a business. You can pay online or send in a form. It's easy - just go to www.thescca.ca. If you would like to make a donation, receipts for income tax purposes are issued for amounts of \$25 or more. Thanks!

Land Covenants: Another SCCA Pursuit

One of the ways in which the SCCA serves our local communities is through partnerships that help to preserve designated lands. A conservation covenant is a written agreement in which a landowner promises to protect their property in specific ways. The agreement is between a land owner and either a local trust committee or conservation group such as the SCCA. Our Covenant Committee, headed by Jason Herz, has a mandate to help manage three different covenants in our region.

Gambier Island Conservancy

The SCCA holds three covenants jointly with Gambier Island Conservancy (GLC) on properties owned by the Islands Trust Fund (ITF). These are Long Bay Wet Lands, Brigade Bay Bluffs and Mt Artiban. The GLC has been very active on the properties. This includes monitoring the sites, eradicating invasive plants, installing signs and paths, and replanting native species in a small gravel pit in the Long Bay Wetlands Reserve. The first planting in 2012 seems to have had about an 80% survival rate to date. The SCCA strives to have a presence at these events. Restoration work is ongoing as funding becomes available from the ITF.

Roberts Creek Cooperative Housing To date the SCCA and The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC), our partners in this covenant, have been interacting with the board of the RC Co-Housing (RCCH) in an effort to fund a baseline study of the area under covenant. Fully identifying the covenant area boundaries will be the first step. So far the RCCH Board has not been successful in setting aside money to complete this study. We will continue to work with them in an effort to locate funds to ensure the property is maturing in its natural state.

Keats Island Covenant We are still in the paperwork stage of this covenant located on the Northwest corner of Keats Island. Several drafts of the document have been created and we are now working on what we hope is the final version. Completion of the covenant is imminent but has taken longer than expected due to complex zoning and land transfer issues.

Each of the covenants requires ongoing volunteer input. If you enjoy hiking, trail maintenance work, invasive plant removal or replanting, we could use your help. This is especially true if you live on either Keats or Gambier Island. Please contact the SCCA at office@thescca.ca

Introducing Our Volunteer Co-Ordinator



In 2015, after 20 years on Vancouver Island, Mary Louise Hendry retired and moved back to the Sunshine Coast, joining the SCCA as a Board member and volunteer coordinator. While on the Island Mary Louise lived in Elizabeth May's federal riding and volunteered on her election campaigns. She also drafted

correspondence and helped to track donations. Mary Louise brings decades of office experience and worked closely with volunteers in her last job at a residence for adults with disabilities in Victoria.

Since becoming the volunteer coordinator Mary Louise has reached out to over a hundred previous and current volunteers, matching their interests and skills to how they would like to be involved with the SCCA. Volunteers make our many community events possible, with jobs as diverse as baking for the Annual General Meeting to serving as timekeeper at an environmental forum. They plan our Celebration of Conservation and do shifts in our Outreach Booth.

Our Board of Directors are all volunteers as are our newsletter writers and editor. Interested people may also work on our Forest, Marine or Covenants committees to protect our ocean, streams and forests.

There's a place for everyone in the Sunshine Coast community to volunteer with the SCCA. Without our volunteers we wouldn't exist. Thanks so much to each and every one of you. And for those who aren't yet involved, if you would like to help us in our work, please send a note to volunteer@thescca.ca

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For more information about the SCCA and to view this newsletter online (in full colour) please visit our website at www.thescca.ca.

Newsletter opinions are not necessarily those of the SCCA

A Call to Battle Against Global Warming

By Gayle Neilson

There is an overwhelming consensus in the scientific community that humans are warming the earth through the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation and the use of fertilizers. Global warming deniers, who represent a tiny minority of scientists, have unfortunately cast inordinate doubt in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

Hundreds of millions of dollars have been pumped into the denier movement by people such as the Koch Brothers and groups like the Heartland and Cato Institutes. Those who claim global warming is a hoax are being influenced by the fossil fuel lobby. The result has been a dire lack of action given the critical nature of the issue. In her book "Merchants of Doubt" Harvard science historian Naomi Oreskes refers to this as "climate change denial disorder".

The five major hurricanes of 2017 were the most in the Atlantic Ocean since 2010. The wildfire season in BC this summer was the worst in recorded history. The media has failed to adequately connect such extreme and increasingly frequent climate events to man-made global warming.

The cost of inaction is pegged in the trillions of dollars yet many countries lag behind their climate goals. Canada signed the Paris Treaty but our response has been weak. On October 3, Environment and Sustainable Development Commissioner Julie Gelfand reported that the Trudeau government had failed to implement emissions-reduction plans and is not prepared to adapt to the life-threatening, economically devastating impacts of a changing climate. It is "crucial" that the government acts now, she said.

Environmental groups play a key role in fostering an awareness of how the natural world is being affected by global warming and habitat destruction which exacerbates the problem. The *Wilderness Committee* suggests that to adequately preserve biodiversity BC should expand its protected land base to 50% from the current 14%.

Earth is home to more than 8 million different types of living organisms. Conserving habitat will sequester huge amounts of carbon helping to slow down global warming. Wetlands and forests filter water, absorb pollution, help control floods and regulate temperature while making a significant contribution to our lives and well-being.

World leaders such as the Pope have warned us that we must address global warming and called on governments to act. Ban Ki-moon (former UN Secretary-General) said, "Instead of asking if we can afford to act, we should be asking what is stopping us, who is stopping us, and why?"

Those who go along with the deniers need to be more skeptical and look into the links offered by the so-called experts. Are they actually climate scientists or simply employees paid by the fossil fuel industry? Is the evidence they point to peer reviewed? If not, they should stand back and let the world develop solutions before it is too late.

Scientists now say that global warming is occurring on a faster and more unprecedented scale than was previously thought, that we must leave most of the remaining fossil fuels in the ground and pursue energy alternatives. This concept needs to be embraced. Let's get on with it!



A heron at Egmont surveys the smoky seascape attributed to the fires amplified by global warming
Gayle Neilson photo

Websites such as *desmogblog* and *skepticalscience* are good sources of information on global warming. Other important references include the following publications:

- Hansen, James. *Storms of my Grandchildren: The Truth About the Coming Climate Catastrophe and Our Last Chance to Save Humanity*. New York: Bloomsbury, 2010.
- Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate*. Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2014.
- McKibben, Bill. *Eaarth: Making a Life on a Tough New Planet*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2011.
- <http://www.ipcc.ch/> - International Panel on Climate Change

Islands Trust Fund Developing 10 Year Plan

The Islands Trust Fund is dedicated to the preservation of biodiversity in island habitats within the Salish Sea. Locally, this includes the islands in Howe Sound but not Texada Island. Efforts are underway to create a new Regional Conservation Plan that will apply for 2018-2027.

On May 1 the SCCA participated in a consultation workshop held in Nanaimo. The session started with an overview of First Nations in the Islands Trust area. The remainder of the day was used to set priorities and develop strategies. In addition to building relationships with First Nations the focus was on the value of partnering with other organizations, mapping and inventory, signage and other forms of public awareness of sensitive areas. Allowing eco-tourism in designated locations while conserving areas for nature was also discussed. For more information go to <http://www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/>

Rockfish Signs to Appear on Sunshine Coast

by Jenna Falk, Development Coordinator, Galiano Conservancy Association

The rockfish in British Columbia's coastal waters are rather unique. They may not be as celebrated as iconic killer whales or salmon but are just as critical to our marine ecosystems and food webs. Many of the thirty species can live to be well over 100-years-old!

If you live near the water your family could have had the same rockfish living offshore for four generations. This makes these fish sound hardy but they are not. Most reside in one small area for their adult lives and don't begin to reproduce for twenty years. They are easy to catch and do not survive catch and release fishing practices. These characteristics make them vulnerable to fishing pressure. Rockfish are federally listed as Threatened or as a Species of Special Concern by Canadian protection agencies.

On BC's Southern Gulf Islands, rockfish have been making waves through the hard work of local scientists and conservation groups. The Galiano Conservancy Association, in partnership with the Valdes Island Conservancy and the University of Victoria School of Environmental Studies, are working to raise the profile of our imperiled rockfish. It's an effort that started out small in 2011 and has been growing thanks to financial support from the federal government .



Rockfish conservation signs similar to the one on Mayne Island will soon be posted on the Sunshine Coast Jenna Falk Photo

The project has focussed on education and outreach to get the word out about Rockfish Conservation Areas, as well as underwater dive surveys to monitor rockfish populations in the Southern Gulf Islands. This year it has expanded geographically in a significant way – thanks to the enthusiasm and shared goals of conservation organizations, marinas and government docks on BC's lower mainland and on Vancouver Island.

The SCCA is working with the Galiano Conservancy to post a number of signs in the Howe Sound region to raise public awareness about Rockfish Conservation Areas and the importance of protecting these at risk species. Get in touch if you'd like to learn more, get free educational materials or volunteer! The signs will be posted at Madeira Park, Secret Cove Marina, Coopers Green, Sechelt Inlet and Gibsons Marina. For more information about rockfish or to play an interactive rockfish identification game visit <https://tinyurl.com/y8ppqcc3>

What's a Tasini? Not What You Might Think!

by Richard Carton

While paddling on Sechelt Inlet this summer I was awed by the scope and beauty of a jellyfish bloom. The worldwide population explosion of this rather intriguing creature, however, is a sure sign that something is out of balance.

Increasingly frequent blooms are linked to the rising water temperatures caused by global warming. Other factors include overfishing, the widespread use of fertilizers and other chemicals, habitat destruction and garbage.

Jellyfish eat a variety of things. This can deplete the food sources for large mammals such as whales. But what preys on jellyfish? Other jellyfish, mostly, and large fish including some salmon. Sea turtles too! They can mistake plastic bags for jellyfish and consume them, which can be fatal.

The problem of plastics in the oceans is well established. Nevertheless, many people remain uninformed or simply don't care enough to try to reduce their plastic footprint. The very short career of plastic bags and containers in virtually all fast food restaurants is a serious dilemma.

Fortunately, some governments are beginning to take action. In order to protect marine life from contamination, the tiny bits of plastic found in personal care products (microbeads) will be banned in Canada as of July 1, 2018. In 2016 voters in California passed Proposition 67, a ban on carry-out plastic bags. Stores can no longer provide single-use plastic bags. Customers can bring their own bag or pay for a recycled paper bag or reusable alternative. If it can happen there, why not here?

Even more inspiring is a campaign started in Indonesia, a country that uses approximately 10 million plastic bags per day. *Bye Bye Plastic Bags*, an initiative aimed at eliminating plastic bags on Bali, began in 2013. It is a youth movement now led by Melati and Isabel Wijsen. They are successfully promoting the use of the *Tasini*, an item created by a team at *Making Oceans Plastic Free*. It's a small, eco-friendly, animal-motif sack which holds a reusable shopping bag that connects to a key chain - the "key" to breaking the plastic bag habit. To find out more watch a video at <https://makingoceansplasticfree.com>

