



Gigantic Howe Sound quarry project put on hold for present

by members of the Future of Howe Sound Society

A large-scale gravel mining and crushing facility proposed for the McNab Creek area may soon proceed to the next stage of environmental review.

If approved, the Burnco project would represent a major new industrial development for Howe Sound. The original project description filed by Burnco Rock Products Ltd in February 2010 indicated that annual aggregate extraction from the site would be in the range of 1 to 1.6 million tonnes per annum, with possible production spikes to 4 million tonnes per annum.

The development at McNab Creek would also include a continued on page 3

Surprisingly high number of sockeye return to Sakinaw Lake

by Margot Grant

After years of fewer than 100 adult sockeye returning to Sakinaw Lake—or sometimes none at all—554 came back in 2011. Even Fisheries and Oceans Canada (FOC) is surprised. “We expected fewer than 71 this year,” spokeswoman Carrie Mishima says in an email.

Sakinaw sockeye have unique genetic and biological characteristics. Compared to other sockeye, they enter freshwater early and stay in the lake longer before spawning. They are small in size (average two kilograms) and the females lay fewer eggs than other sockeye. Sakinaw sockeye are lakeshore spawners, making them more susceptible to lakeside activity and run-off.

FOC has maintained escapement records since 1957. Until 1990 the average was about 4,600 per year. But in 1993 the numbers started to decline, with only 250 returning. In 2001 87 were counted, followed by 78 in 2002, then three in 2003. In 2004 the total jumped up to 99, but in 2005 it was down again to 24, and just one was recorded in 2006. In both 2007 and 2008 not a single sockeye was seen. In 2009 there was one and by 2010 there were 29.

In 2002 Fisheries and Oceans Canada developed a draft recovery plan and formed a recovery team. The effort was threefold: to clean up the shorelines, improve the channel to the ocean at the mouth of Sakinaw Creek and release offspring of captive Sakinaw sockeye into the lake.

The Sakinaw Lake Community Association enthusiastically participated in the cleanup. “We really enjoyed it,” says SLCA member Rob Stewart. “Three or four years ago, we started with

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The mouth of McNab Creek on the western shore of Howe Sound. A major quarrying operation is proposed for the area.

Wonders of old-growth forest wait to be discovered on Sunshine Coast Trail

by David Moore

Imagine the pulse-quickenning excitement of entering the undisturbed tomb of a pharaoh or discovering a lost city in Peru. My day-hiking partner Lars Hawkes and I (both SCCA Powell River Committee members) had a similar surprise this summer when we headed out on the Sunshine Coast Trail.

Our unexpected discovery, while walking the section of trail that gradually continued on page 2

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Discovering the wonders of old growth

ascends Mount Troubridge, was a genuine old-growth forest—undisturbed for centuries.

The landscape first grabbed our attention where the trail follows the shoreline of Elephant Lake. We stopped and stared at a huge old yellow cedar tree. This mid-elevation (sub-alpine) species is slow growing, and this veteran was several feet in diameter, with a healthy crown of foliage piercing the sky above the forest canopy.

We then saw a forest environment unlike anything we're accustomed to at the lower elevations, where second growth is common. In old growth, the forest floor is basically a lush moss carpet; the footpath had a spongy feel which was pleasant to walk on. Curiously absent were the typical shrubs and ferns of the second-growth stands.

Also missing were the big old stumps we see at lower levels, where first-growth firs and cedars were felled up to a century ago. Here, there are old stumps and old windfalls all around, but the moss-covered mounds, humps and lumps are the decaying remnants of past generations. They have accumulated gradually over the centuries rather than forming suddenly as a result of human impact.

The tree species of the sub-alpine are a different cast of characters than the typical sea-level line-up. Prominent in the Elephant Lake area are yellow cedar (*Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*), mountain hemlock (*Tsuga mertensiana*) and amabilis fir (*Abies amabilis*).

Yellow cedar resembles red cedar in overall form but has a more weeping character to the foliage. The mountain hemlock looks similar to the familiar western hemlock but sports a bushier, thicker foliage and drops attractive, sausage-sized cones, whereas its sea-level cousin has tiny cones. The amabilis fir (aka pacific silver fir) is a close relative of the grand fir (or balsam fir) but is upright, tall and narrow.

The differences represent adaptations to the heavy load of snow these mountain dwellers must endure and shake off every winter.

Another contrast is the colour palette of the tree bark in this zone: it's all gray. Accents are provided by ephemeral wildflowers and blue huckleberries.

Among the wildflowers we noticed were a few treasures as beautiful as any gem found by a tomb raider. Of special note are the plants of the coniferous forest floor that have no chlorophyll at all, such as pinesap and coralroot.

Plants without chlorophyll are not all members of one genus or family; rather they are examples of a growth condition called

micoheterotrophy, which occurs within several unrelated plant family lines. Previously defined as parasites or saprophytes, the plants have recently been reclassified. Today's botanists have a better understanding of the complex relationships between the plants, tree-root systems and networks of fungal growth—all biologically linked in the subterranean forest environment but also mutually interdependent.

We left the old-growth forest and did achieve what we set out for—the grand vistas from the mountain outlook. We have the Sun-



Sub-alpine old-growth forest near Elephant Lake.

photo David Moore

shine Coast Trail to thank for that. And we will return to go deeper into the mysteries among the ancient trees of Elephant Lake.

(Editor's note: the old-growth forest is located along the southern end of the Sunshine Coast Trail. See the map on the website at www.sunshinecoast-trail.com.)

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Quarry project on hold for present

crushing plant and marine berthing facility to accommodate heavy barge traffic. Loading capacity on the barge facility is projected at 1,000 tonnes per hour and is expected to run 300 days a year.

During the first phase of the project, a 77-hectare pit would be mined. The pit is expected to reach depths of up to 55 metres below surface grade with excavation up to 45 metres below the water table.

In June 2010 Fisheries and Oceans Canada (FOC) determined that the project would result in harmful alteration, disruption or destruction (HADD) of fish habitat and advised Burnco that it would not issue a HADD authorization. In 2005, FOC had made the same decision regarding an earlier application. A HADD authorization is a necessary pre-condition to proceeding with the Burnco project and so the refusal would stop the development.

In November of 2010 Burnco submitted a revised application for further review by FOC. In June of 2011 FOC issued a letter stating that it “continues to have serious concerns about the extent of the impacts to fish and fish habitat that may result from this project.”

However, the letter also says that “because the full extent of those impacts cannot be assessed based on all the information currently available, [FOC] will continue its review of the project and participate in the comprehensive study process under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* should Burnco choose to pursue that process.”

Unregulated industrial activity has done massive damage to Howe Sound's marine ecology. Remediation efforts that began in the 1970s are now starting to show results; herring populations are recovering, and whales and dolphins have recently been sighted. But this environmental recovery is at a delicate stage

and could easily suffer setbacks if rehabilitation does not continue. New industrial activity should only be permitted after completion of a comprehensive long-term development strategy for Howe Sound and the Sea to Sky corridor.

The Major Projects Management Office tracker shows that Burnco has since submitted a revised project description. However, on September 23, 2011, the agency advised Burnco that the information supplied was not sufficient. The assessment review is paused pending further information from Burnco.



Aerial view looking up the McNab Creek valley.

Everyone who is concerned about the ecological recovery of Howe Sound should ensure that their views are heard through the upcoming *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* review of the McNab Creek proposal. Any further developments regarding the *Assessment Act* review process will be posted at www.futureofhowesound.org.

2011 Celebration of Conservation

Do you like to dance, shop, meet new people, socialize with friends, eat great finger food? All of this while helping to protect biodiversity on the Sunshine Coast? Then mark your calendar now for the SCCA's fun fundraiser, the Celebration of Conservation!

The date to remember is Saturday, November 26, at the Sechelt Seniors Centre, 7 pm to midnight.

Yes, there are many reasons to celebrate conservation issues on the Coast. Dan Bouman will bring you up to date on these. Sweet Cascadia's lively music with its conservation themes will again entertain celebrants, along with Michael Maser.

The Sunshine Coast community is very generous and supportive of the SCCA and donates amazing items. This is a great chance to find unique items and do some Christmas shopping.

New this year: browse auction items beforehand at www.32auctions.com/view_auction?id=thescca&pwd=thesccal.

You'll also receive future enews with more details. This is our major fundraiser to support the crucial work of the SCCA.

Please help spread the word and bring your friends.

Admission is by donation. No host bar.

See you on November 26th!



photo Tella Sametz

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Sockeye returning to Sakinaw Lake

ten adults and two children. This year, there were a dozen kids and ten adults. It's amazing how much garbage there is, and how much we manage to pull out. With the higher returns [of



Salmon smolt can be diverted to a holding tank and counted at this small dam and fishway, located on the stream connecting Sakinaw Lake to the sea.

photo Margot Grant

sockeye] this year, the kids see that they can make a difference to the environment.”

FOC started to release fry in Sakinaw Lake in 2006. That first year 97,471 were set loose—all offspring of captive Sakinaw sockeye that had been reared at Rosewall Hatchery on Vancouver Island.

The return of 554 this year was from a release of approximately 420,000 fry in 2008.

"The kids see that they can make a difference to the environment."

Last year the department let go 1.4 million fry. FOC will release fewer the coming year, but “we will also have the progeny from the natural spawners,” Mishima says.

Would the Sakinaw Lake approach be successful in other areas? At this point FOC doesn't know. “But the Cultus Lake system is under a similar stock rebuilding regime, and the recovery of its sockeye stocks has been very encouraging.”

Cleaning up the shoreline one cigarette butt at a time

by Sheenah Main

Saturday, September 10, 2011, the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association participated in the Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup. We chose to “clean” the shoreline along Davis Bay, either side of the pier. Fourteen volunteers showed up including board members Jason Herz, Tella Sametz, Marianne Larsen and Sheenah Main. Thanks to all of our volunteers. And great to see some new faces, including high schooler Alexa Conyers.

Also, thanks to the local businesses who contributed to the cause: Sechelt Home Hardware, One-O-One Office Supply and Extra Foods.

Reports came in about a burnt-out mattress and a dead baby seal further down from where we were working, but here are our own stats:

785 metres of shoreline covered
 12.5 kilograms of garbage collected
 5.5 bags of trash and 3.5 bags of recycling
 One dead pigeon
 29 paper bags, 25 plastic bags, two balloons, seven plastic beverage bottles, six glass beverage bottles, 14 beverage cans, 26 caps, nine articles of clothing, 34 cups, plates, etc, 97 food wrappers, nine pull tabs, two six-pack holders, 12 stirrers, two

bait containers, one fishing lure, two fishing nets, 15 pieces of rope and string, three strapping bands, one cigarette lighter, two cigar tips, 30 tobacco wrappers and packages, ten pieces of building materials, one car part, one tire, plenty of Styrofoam,



SCCA directors pitch in at Davis Bay.

photo Tella Sametz

Kleenex and garden fabric and of course cigarettes—a total of 593 cigarettes and filters collected! (Bette Chadwick, I hear an Earth Hour song somewhere in here.)

Most unusual piece of garbage: probably a toss-up between a pair of lace panties and an artificial flower.

Sunshine Coast a "black hole" when it comes to invasive plants

by Margot Grant

The Sunshine Coast Regional District is still considering membership on the Coastal Invasive Plant Committee.

The CIPC is a non-profit society serving Vancouver Island,



The fast-growing Japanese knotweed in all its evil glory. photo Andrew Scott

the Gulf Islands, the regional district of Powell River and some areas on the Mainland. It promotes cross-jurisdictional coordination and integrated invasive plant management. Members include six ministries and scores of organizations.

"There is a lot we could learn from the committee," says Sheane Reid, SCRDR parks planner. "Success will only come from a regional approach. The CIPC covers Squamish and Vancouver Island, but right now the Sunshine Coast is still a big black hole on the map."

Giant hogweed, in particular, worries the SCRDR parks department because it can cause caustic burns. This year, Reid says, hogweed has started to be a concern. No money has yet been allocated to fight it.

Japanese knotweed is highly aggressive and is rapidly spreading on the Coast. Even aquatic environments suffer, as stream flows are affected and fish habitat suffers.

The alien knotweed now has an

economic impact on the Coast as well, Reid says. Road signs become hidden behind the fast-growing, bamboo-like plants.

In England, some newly built houses were virtually destroyed by Japanese knotweed; the homes' property values dropped by as much as 80 per cent.

Invasive species are considered to be one of the greatest threats to biodiversity worldwide, second only to habitat loss.

Reid believes that there is a real awakening in the community about the dangers of invasive plants. More and more people are aware of knotweed, Scotch broom, giant hogweed, gorse and butterfly bush.

On June 20, the SCRDR held a public meeting with numerous experts discussing ways to handle invasive species on the Coast. The key speaker

"In England, houses were destroyed by Japanese knotweed and property values dropped by 80 percent."

was Melissa Noel, coordinator of the CIPC. One of the things she told the audience was that the seeds of Scotch broom remain viable for more than 70 years. Each plant produces more than 30,000 seeds per year.

The key elements to handling invasive plants are education, prevention and early detection, said Noel. Because it can take three to five years and a lot of work to manually eradicate Japanese knotweed, she felt that chemical treatment may be a solution. To avoid spraying, knotweed plants are injected at the stem. However, it is very difficult to inject each and every plant in a given area, and some people at the meeting felt uneasy about chemical treatment, especially in riparian zones.

In an interview with the SCCA, Gary Nohr, chair of the SCRDR, said at the end of October 2011 that the SCRDR wants to join the CIPC. He stressed that the regional district already supports groups fighting invasive species on the Coast. They can apply for grants-in-aid, and the SCRDR helps pay tipping fees when plants are disposed of at the landfill.

Local committees can apply for support from the SCRDR by calling Dion White, 604-885-6819.

Unusual plants that appear to be taking over or growing out of control can either be reported by phone, toll-free, to 1-888-WEEDSBC, or online at the "Report-A-Weed" Invasive Alien Plant Program website. The address is: www.for.gov.bc.ca/HRA/Plants/raw.htm.

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Gospel Rock waterfront housing plan still not yet a done deal

by Katie Janyk

On September 20, 2011, Gibsons council received a staff report outlining potential ways of resolving outstanding issues in the Gospel Rock Neighbourhood Plan, Draft Version 3.1. Staff recommended tabling the whole process in light of the property owners' wavering support of the plan and their consequent hesitancy in honouring their funding commitment for the planning process.

Council did not endorse the staff recommendation, and chose instead to continue their examination of the remaining outstanding issues in the plan, with an aim to resolving these before the November 19, 2011, municipal elections.

As part of this examination, the Gibsons council "committee of the whole" spent several hours on October 12 discussing the outstanding points, trying to reach consensus.

In the end, the only remaining issue on which councillors did not agree was whether or not to designate a portion of the Gospel Rock waterfront as potential "cluster housing," rather than leaving it as green space.

When the plan made its official appearance before the regular

meeting of council on November 1, the split remained, with Councillor Lee Ann Johnson and Mayor Barry Janyk opposed to any sort of development on the waterfront. However, with a 3-2 vote, council accepted Draft 3.1, which does allow for a total of ten housing units on 30 per cent of the Gospel Rock waterfront.

The plan is not yet set in stone. A number of steps are still necessary before this, or any, version of the plan can be incorporated into the Gibsons Official Community Plan by-law.

Staff will draw up a final plan and draft a by-law to amend the OCP to incorporate the plan.

Public hearings are a part of this process, as are ongoing discussions with other affected government agencies.

The final steps are the four readings by council required for final adoption. The public has been outspoken so far on the issue of waterfront development on Gospel Rock lands. Presumably, the public is not yet finished speaking.

The incoming council will not be bound by this version of the plan, and

indeed the waterfront may yet be preserved in its entirety. What this council has done reasonably well is manage a series of very lengthy processes during which virtually every member of the affected communities, myriad community groups (including the SCCA) and a host of consultants, staff people and other government agencies have had a chance to provide input.



Aerial view of Gospel Rock.

photo Tella Sametz



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Friends of Davie Bay appeal court decision

by John Dove

In their efforts to save Davie Bay on Texada Island, the Friends of Davie Bay (FODB) have filed an appeal with the BC Court of Appeal.

In his decision of May 4, 2011, Superior Court Justice Peter Voith had declined to interfere with the decision of the BC Environmental Assessment Office (EAO) to allow Lehigh Hanson Materials Ltd to go ahead with the Texada South Quarry *without* an environmental assessment.

The FODB argued before Justice Voith that a loophole in the Environmental Assessment Act makes it possible for project proponents to avoid an environmental assessment by applying for a permit under the "threshold" production level of 250,000 tonnes. If infrastructure for the project is overbuilt, proponents can then increase the production capacity beyond the threshold level at a later date without an environmental assessment.

The appeal is based on evidence from a number of relevant cases. In one case in particular, the courts concluded that the law does indeed require a full examination of the environmental impacts of such projects.

Also, earlier this year BC Auditor General John Doyle issued a damning report of the BC EAO's handling of large projects. An EAO review can determine the fate of a major project worth billions of dollars. Theoretically, a certificate of approval is only issued if the EAO is satis-

fied that the project meets all environmental standards.

However, the auditor general isn't satisfied with follow-up procedures once an approval is granted. His report states that the EAO's oversight isn't sufficient to ensure compliance and enforcement, or to avoid significant adverse impacts.

Because of these fresh developments, the FODB are going back to court confident that their chances of success will be considerably improved.

The FODB are supported by West Coast Environmental Law.



The Davie Bay area, with its endangered plant communities and karst cave system, is threatened by a huge limestone quarry. photo John Dove

Getting information about BC's species-at-risk

Suppose you want to know if a specific species on the Sunshine Coast is at risk. How do you find out?

A good place to visit is the British Columbia Conservation Data Centre (CDC). It collects and provides information on plants, animals and ecosystems at risk in British Columbia.

Go to www.env.gov.bc.ca/atrisk/toolintro.html to discover more about a particular species. For instance, you can find out if a species is at risk, what its provincial and global status are, and then link to many more reports, articles and images.

To find locations of species and ecosystems at risk, go to www.env.gov.bc.ca/atrisk/ims.htm, the website of the Conservation Data Centre Mapping Service. Here you will find a link to the map service as well as instructions for accessing "occurrence" records. You can then create maps and print off reports of the occurrences in your areas of interest.

If you have questions or need further information or help with the above tools, please contact the Conservation Data Centre at 250-356-0928, or toll-free at 1-800-663-7867, or by email at cdcddata@gov.bc.ca.

Rick O'Neill, recipient of the 2011 John Hind-Smith Award, took this photo of a flying squirrel a few years ago.

"I have several nest boxes," he writes, "originally designed for small owls, but used, until recently, by flying squirrels. The squirrels were once plentiful on my Roberts Creek property, which is well forested



and runs all the way up to the Mount Elphinstone forests. This large forested area made it possible for the squirrels to survive, despite the presence of many barred owls. The forest company that owned much of the land clearcut their forest and sold it as residential property. The flying squirrels, now confined to a small area, had no where to go, and were soon extirpated. Other species have also declined."

The Cohen Inquiry: How did the Fraser sockeye fishery collapse?

by Alexandra Morton

The Cohen Inquiry was called on November 5, 2009, by Stephen Harper after an 18-year decline in Fraser sockeye stocks culminated in an all-out crash in 2009.

One hundred people paddled in canoes for seven days to arrive at the opening of this inquiry with one message: "Justice Cohen, please tell the province of British Columbia to provide the salmon farm feedlot disease records." Cohen did this—for the first time in the history of this industry, anywhere in the



More than 100 people came out to Roberts Creek Hall on May 24, 2011, for Alexandra Morton's SCCA-sponsored presentation. photo Tella Sametz

world. Cohen also amassed more than 500,000 government emails, briefings, databases and reports.

After I got out of the canoe I began reading them, and for nine months I pored over what the different factions in govern-

"Dr Miller discovered that the sockeye entering the river too early and dying before spawning all had the same cellular pattern. She called it the 'mortality related signature.'"

ment have been reporting about our sockeye. The information was disturbing—so disturbing that I contacted Chief Bob Chamberlain of the territory I live in to ask if he was okay with me knowing this crucial information about wild salmon, information that even First Nations have not been told. He trusted me and so I continued.

The Fraser sockeye decline began in 1992. The fish began en-

tering the river too early and dying before spawning. The fishery lost \$72 million in 2008 alone to pre-spawn mortality.

While Fisheries and Oceans (FOC) was not concerned about why sockeye were dying, by 2006 it had realized it could not open a fishery without accounting for pre-spawn mortality. That year FOC tasked one of its scientists, Dr Kristi Miller, to figure out how to take a sockeye from a test set out in the ocean and predict if it were capable of living long enough to spawn.

Miller was successful. Using genomics, she read the switches that turn on/off in living cells and discovered that the sockeye entering the river too early and dying before spawning all had the same pattern. She called it the "mortality related signature."

But Miller went further. Puzzling over the pattern she realized her data suggested that the Fraser sockeye are losing their lives to a virus. Some of the cellular switches appeared specific to cancer. The list of cancer-causing viruses is short and led her to look at a disease FOC scientists had found in farmed Chinook salmon in the early 1990s. They named it "salmon leukemia virus."

Brain tumours are one of the symptoms of the virus, and Miller found what looked like brain tumours in the Fraser sockeye. In the early 1990s salmon leukemia was reported to be epidemic in salmon farms located in the narrowest passages of the Fraser sockeye migration route. This was exactly when the sockeye decline began. FOC reported that farm salmon could spread the virus to sockeye—and that it killed the sockeye—but never did anything about it.

At that moment FOC began slamming the doors and windows shut, preventing Miller from attending conferences and speaking to the media. On the stand she said she had no funding to continue this work on sockeye.

When I was called as a witness at the inquiry I handed Cohen a 60-page report that explains, in FOC's own words, why the Fraser sockeye had declined and collapsed, then returned in 2010. Lawyers for Canada and BC jumped up and objected, calling it hearsay. Justice Cohen sat quietly as the suppression applied to Miller was seamlessly applied to me.

On October 7, 2011, after the public part of the inquiry had closed, Justice Cohen ruled that the report could be entered as evidence and therefore be made public.

You can read the Cohen transcripts at www.cohencommission.ca/en/Schedule. See especially September 7 and 8. See also alexandramorton.typepad.com/alexandra_morton/2011/10/my-report-to-cohen-there-is-a-serious-issue-with-disease.html.

Alexandra Morton is a scientist, award-winning author and activist spearheading the fight to preserve wild salmon. Please follow her work at www.salmonaresacred.org.

Parting shots from the SCCA's long-time executive director

by Daniel Bouman

Hi everyone. I'm sure you've heard by now that I have stepped down as the SCCA's executive director. On this occasion I'd like to share a few comments about being an environmental advocate.

Something I learned a long time ago—and have had to re-learn from time to time—is that being angry in public rarely changes things for the better. In fact, angry expressions tend to send good people away from the realm of public discussion. There's no faster way to destroy one's credibility than by being angry and condemning in public.

Certainly, there is a whole lot out there to be angry about, and people sometimes try to provoke anger as a strategy. As advocates we cannot allow ourselves and our ideas to be limited by anger. I've often found that anger is like a wave; it rolls over me, I can't stop it, but I don't hang onto it either and it passes.

One of the most important goals in advocacy work, in my experience, is to achieve control over one's emotions—and anger, in particular—both in public and in private life.

Another thing that has become more apparent to me over the years is that the SCCA is very much like a business, albeit a not-for-profit business. Every business has a product that it wants to sell, and the product has to be credible if the business is to succeed.

The SCCA's product is information and perspective. It has taken many years to give the product credibility, and credibility is one of the most important assets that our business has. This credibility derives both from the quality of the information that the organization brings forward and also from the ways in which the information has been used.

I'm thinking of all legal and quasi-legal venues that the SCCA has engaged in over the years. Believe me, when information comes before a court of law, you find out pretty quickly how credible it actually is! You might say that the SCCA product has stood up very well under close scrutiny many times now.

Of course, the credibility of an environmental group (or of any organization) has to be protected at all times, and that's a big part of the job of the chair and the board of directors.

It's also true that an organization can't just rest on its record of credibility. The main purpose of an environmental group is to use its credibility to make urgently needed changes happen, and this is where courage comes in. Action always involves uncertainty and risk.

Looking back, I have in mind the courage of so many SCCA directors and supporters who were willing to accept risks while pursuing protection for the environment of our region.

On this occasion, which is very special to me, I would like you to know that it has been an enormously wonderful experience to work in the SCCA, and also to work directly with so many of you in so many different circumstances. Changes are happening but I am confident that we will all keep moving forward!



The 2012 SCCA "Beauty and Biodiversity" calendar, featuring the images of photographer Tella Sametz, is now available at local outlets; see page 10 for more information.


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Missives from the Chair

by Jason Herz, SCCA Chair

Changes are afoot in the workings of the SCCA. By now, many of you will know that our Executive Director of many years, Daniel Bouman, has stepped down from his position.

This was a personal choice of Dan's to allow him to pursue both personal and political interests.

We, the directors of the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association, wish him well. He has been an outstanding leader within the environmental community on the Sunshine Coast. Through his excellent research, writing and environmental advocacy skills, he has greatly contributed to the success of the SCCA, our member groups up and down the Coast and others, working to preserve the environment around the province. His shoes will be hard to fill indeed.

Fortunately, Dan will not be completely absent from the SCCA, as he will continue to work as a contractor on the Habitat Areas Nomination Project. And he has assured us that he will continue to offer his expertise and experience wherever appropriate.

If and when you cross paths with Dan, shake his hand and thank him for his dedication and time devoted to the preservation of biodiversity on the greater Sunshine Coast. It is well deserved.

One of the major aspects of the Board's activities over the last year has been to attempt to raise our profile within the community. We hope it is working. We've spent many hours at festivals and local events raising awareness of what the SCCA does.

In one successful fundraising effort, we raffled off several fine prizes, including a lovely rowing skiff donated by Nicol Warn (apologies to those who didn't win). We're looking for more high-end items for another raffle next year. If you have something nice to offer, please let us know.

Another first this fall is our (hopefully) annual Art and Biodiversity Calendar. The 12 pages of the calendar will be made available each year to one of the many wonderful artists here on the Coast, for images that reflect the mandate of the SCCA. For the great images



Nicol Warn's glorious rowboat raffle prize was won by Sam Fialkow of Roberts Ck.

in this year's calendar, we can thank Tella Sametz.

Tella's work for the calendar will be exhibited at the Sechelt Arts Centre this spring. We intend to show the winning artist's work at the Arts Centre every year as part of the Friends of the SCCA event, which will include the ceremony for the John Hind-Smith Award. So please watch for that and make sure you pick up several copies of the calendar, which is now available for \$20, including tax, at Flying Anvil in Pender Harbour; Copper Sky in Madeira Park; ReDecor, Fresh, Clayton's, the Hemp Store and Slo in Sechelt; Pier 17 in Davis Bay; Seaweeds and Gaia's Fair Trade in Gibsons; and Roberts Creek Health Food Store.

Speaking of the John Hind-Smith Award, this year's deserving recipient was Rick O'Neill. We will once again be seeking nominations from the community for the 2012 award. We would like to be able to recognize any individual who works for the protection of our environment. So if you know of people who are outstanding in this regard, send us your nominations with all the details and we will gladly consider them.

Coming up soon is our ninth annual Celebration of Conservation. It's on Saturday, November 26, at the Sechelt Seniors Centre. We are looking for volunteers: please email sheenahmain@yahoo.ca if you can help.

This year, for the first time, the items up for auction will be put online in advance so you can put a bid in early. Go to: www.32auctions.com/view_auction?id=thescca&pwd=thescca1.

We will also have our usual great food by Marianne and the rest of the directors. The music is by Michael Maser and our great friends Sweet Cascadia. Come out, support the environment and have some fun. See you there!

Rick O'Neill receives the John Hind-Smith Environmental Award

On June 14, 2011, the SCCA was very pleased to present the John Hind-Smith Award to Rick O'Neill from Roberts Creek for his untiring efforts to protect biodiversity on the Sunshine Coast. Rick is an avid nature photographer as well.

Established in 2006, the John Hind-Smith Environmental Achievement Award honours a local citizen who has demonstrated his or her commitment to the stewardship of the environment and the preservation of wildlife.

Rick O'Neill certainly fits this description. He spends countless hours sampling for forage fish along intertidal areas, identifying amphibians on Mount Elphinstone and photographing the natural world as a way of bringing forest ecosystems into focus for others.

He has taken many groups out for forest walks in order to teach people about mushrooms, amphibians, birds and trees. He also recently published a pamphlet describing the amphibians on the Sunshine Coast.

As a founder of Elphinstone Living Forest, Rick was the driving force behind the development of a comprehensive ecosystem plan. He has made formal complaints to the Forest Practices Board about clearcuts in sensitive areas and spent long days alone in the rain, flagging important riparian zones.

Rick's nomination has widespread support on the coast, with many individuals saluting his efforts and praising his selfless work.

Forest bathing is a soul soother, not just a walk in the woods

story and photography by Tella Sametz

According to Wikipedia, forest bathing involves a short, leisurely visit to a forest. Not only does one go for relaxation and recreation, but also to breathe in volatile substances called



phytoncides (wood essential oils), such as a-pinene and limonene—antimicrobial organic compounds derived from trees. Natural aroma therapy, in other words.

Incorporating forest bathing trips into a good lifestyle was first proposed in 1982 by the Forest Agency of Japan. It has now become a recognized relaxation and stress-management activity in Japan.

On the Sunshine Coast we know about forest bathing, especially in the winter. While the rest of the country is digging out from under, we still can head into the forest for a shot of green.

Forest bathing, or *shinrin-yoku* in Japanese, is the experience

of stress reduction in natural settings. Yoshifumi Miyazaki of Chiba University, Japan's leading scholar on forest medicine, has carried out studies across the country. "The results show forest bathing can significantly lower levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, along with blood pressure and heart rate. Other research points out that walking in the woods can boost the body's immune system by increasing anti-cancer proteins and enhancing the so-called natural killer activity of certain cells."

In the wake of the natural and man-made disasters that hit Japan last March, the need for stress reduction will be even greater there. Hopefully their forest sites will be places people can go to for relief.

Most of our evolutionary history has been spent in nature, so it is really like going back to the comfort and simplicity of our youth when we head into the woods. Getting away from the technology and letting the sites and sounds of our ancestors sink in is a natural form of therapy.

Soothe the soul. Save water. Take a dip in the forest air. Ask a friend if they want to go forest bathing with you.

Want to get involved?

Help preserve the biodiversity of the Sunshine Coast region. Why not become a member of the SCCA? It won't break the bank. A single annual membership is \$20, a whole family is \$30, non-profit groups are \$30, and a business membership is \$100.

Want to **advertise** in the newsletter? It's great value for your money. You get to donate to a good cause, and get advertising in return. The rates are \$50 for a business-card size ad to \$350 for a whole page. There are usually two issues per year. The circulation is 1,000 and the readership is likely at least twice that. These are all people interested in green issues!

If you feel like participating further, consider using your talents to assist with one of our **committees**. We are always in need of good help.

And if you have a background in any professional skill set that would assist in the review of environmental issues, we are very interested. We have a range of issues that we need **expertise** on.

You could even think about becoming a **director** on the SCCA board. We meet once a month and take on various responsibilities to keep the ball rolling.

Please do not hesitate to contact us:

Gayle Neilson, at membership@thescca.ca, is the membership co-ordinator.

Sheenah Main is our events co-ordinator: events@thescca.ca.

Jason Herz is our board Chair: chair@thescca.ca.

Take a look on our website: www.thescca.ca.

If you have questions, comments, or suggestions for newsletter articles, please contact Tella Sametz at directors@thescca.ca.

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For more information about the SCCA and to view this newsletter in full colour, please visit our website at:

www.thescca.ca



Jason Herz (left) and Rick O'Neill. See story on page 10.



—story and photos by Tella Sametz

Percival moves into the bathtub

After a bathroom reno in the spring we used our old bathtub to make a water feature beside our front door. No pump. Just water, a water lily and a few wetland plants. Then in June we heard a loud plop as we passed by.

Sure enough. We had created a good environment for a mighty handsome frog. We added a basking log (a piece of wood with moss stuffed in the top). Turns out Percival is a red-legged frog. Or maybe it's Percilla. We won't know until the spring when he or she calls for mates.

The red-legged frog (*Rana aurora*) is one of six species of ranid or "true" frogs (family Ranidae) native to western North America. It is designated a "species of special concern" by the federal Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada and is blue-listed (or considered vulnerable) in British Columbia.

Might want to try this at home and see who ends up living with you!

Sunshine Coast Conservation Association

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Individual name: _____

Individual membership: \$20

Other family members: _____

Family membership: \$30

Group or business name: _____

Group membership: \$30

Mailing address: _____

Business membership: \$100

Additional donation: \$ _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Website: _____

I prefer to receive newsletters by regular mail. (Unless specified, newsletters and other information will be sent by email.)

The purpose of the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA) is to preserve the natural biodiversity of the Sunshine Coast region for the present and future benefit of humanity and all life.

As a member of the SCCA, I accept its purpose as stated above.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Please mail cheque or money order with this completed application to: SCCA, Box 1969, Sechelt, BC V0N 3A0
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