



VALDES ISLAND CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

Valdes Island...May 31st...BioBlitz

Marja de Jong Westman

What is a BioBlitz?

A BioBlitz is an intense period of biological surveying, which is done in an attempt to record all the living species within a designated area.

This year Valdes Island will be on the radar of biologists Dr. Rob Butler, Dr. Jeff Marliave, Dick Cannings and local islanders and biologists, Warren Warttig, Alexandra and Marja de Jong Westman and of course our local long term naturalist, Pete Reveley...and you! Yes, you.



The idea behind these popular initiatives is to determine not only the species composition of an area, but to engage the community in an activity which helps

the locals know the biological richness and value of their landscape.

It is particularly important in the case of Valdes because the island has many biological values and ecosystem types, which are disappearing in the human populated landscape of Southwestern BC.

An ambitious project and years of data compilation resulted in the publication of a document entitled "Taking Nature's Pulse": The Status of Biodiversity in BC in 2008.

Of relevance to Valdes Islanders...are the following points taken directly from this document:

At the broad scale, four biogeoclimatic zones (BEC zones), representing approximately 5% of British Columbia's land base, are of provincial conservation concern.

Valdes island dry-forest biogeoclimatic zone – the Coastal Douglas-fir zone is

one of these four and is of conservation concern. Further, British Columbia is home to half the global range of this BEC zone.

Low-elevation grassland communities are the rarest land cover type in British Columbia and are concentrated in the biogeoclimatic zones of conservation concern. Grasslands such as those on the coastal bluffs of Valdes island occupy less than 1% of the provincial land base, and yet are home to very high numbers of species of conservation concern. Wetlands are among the most biologically diverse and productive of all ecosystems. Their contribution to biodiversity conservation is greatly disproportionate to their size. Valdes Island has seven functioning lakes and associated wetlands.



Detwiller Point

Chocolate Lily



Overall, the number of species of provincial conservation concern is increasing and a disproportionate number of these species are concentrated in southern, low-elevation areas of the province.

Valdes Island still has some untouched sections of the Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem type, functioning wetlands and boasts many rare wildflower grasslands. Join us to discover some of the island's jewels during the BioBlitz on May 31st 2014!

Email Marja de Jong Westman to participate: mdejong@telus.net



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Mission Statement

To preserve, protect and restore the lands and waters of Valdes Island, and the smaller islands in its surrounding waters, for the plants, animals and natural communities that represent diversity of life and Gulf Island ecosystems, and for the beneficial use and management of the scientific, historical, cultural, scenic and compatible outdoor values of these areas.

Executive Board Members:

President	Patrick McAlister
Vice President	John Hurd
Vice President	Warren Warttig
Secretary	Alexandra de Jong Westman
Treasurer	Bruce Livingston

Members at Large:

- Marja de Jong Westman
- Annette Hurd
- Janos Mate
- Julian Noel
- Bill Pearce
- Tim Shaddock
- Dan White

The first board meeting of the 2013-2014 was held on August 5th 2013. The board welcomed 3 new members (Julian Noel, Annette Hurd and Jonas Mate) who were elected at the general meeting at the conclusion of Valdes Days. I encourage you to review the Conservancy website for board biographies and for other information including current events and items for buy, sell or trade.
<http://www.valdes-island-conservancy.org/>
At the August 5th board meeting and September 15th conference call, several Conservancy initiatives were identified. To briefly summarize:

- Remain cognizant of a pending 30-day opportunity for public input on the issuance of Woodlot license Plan 2043
- Support the Rock Fish closure on the eastern shores of Valdes Island
- Promotion of opportunities for carbon sequestration from the Crown Lands on Valdes Island
- Develop the awareness of the Islanders to the problems of invasive species

- Peruse opportunities to formally designate a trail system within Crown Lands
- Promote the website as a major communication tool for Valdes Islanders <http://www.valdes-island-conservancy.org/>
- Develop a new membership package and encourage guests and visitors to join the Conservancy
- Understand and obtain facts about the marine dumpsite on the eastern side of Porlier Pass
- Undertake a formal inventory of fauna and flora from tidewaters to treetops.

I encourage all Conservancy members to become involved with your board on these issues and any others that you feel are important.

If you have time or expertise to offer then give me a ring at 250-595-8118, as we will put your talents to good use.



Waste Dumping At Porlier Pass

Julian Noel

Dumping of waste from barges was noticed again in the last year around Porlier, and the VIC decided we should do some fact finding about it as it's on our doorstep. This is what we've determined so far. If you have more useful information please let us know.

Dumping is a permitted activity, and can occur on any of ten sites in the Gulf of Georgia, one of which is called the Porlier Pass Ocean Disposal Site, (which is actually 10 kms East of Porlier Pass).

In British Columbia, approved material for which no beneficial use or practical land-based disposal options can be identified may be disposed of at designated disposal sites. This material includes:

- Dredged material;
- Inert, inorganic geological matter;
- Uncontaminated organic matter;
- Inert, bulky items such as concrete, steel; and Ships, aircraft, platforms, or other structures.

Permitting is regulated and handled by the federal Ministry of the Environment, (Canadian law under Part 7, Division 3 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999(CEPA 1999)). CEPA 1999 prohibits the disposal at sea of material which may be harmful to human health and the marine environment. More information is available on their website: <http://www.ec.gc.ca/iem-das/Default.asp?lang=En&n=0047B595-1>

Other stakeholders, such as the Georgia Strait Alliance, monitor dumping activities in the Gulf. They have a wealth of information on this topic on their website:

<http://www.georgiastrait.org/?q=search/node/dumping>.

So long as dumpers follow the permitting process, there should be some control and transparency of dumping in our area. Our greatest risk may be un-permitted dumping. If you observe any dumping in the area please document and forward the time and place, (GPS coordinates are ideal), and the vessel name(s). Pictures might be useful also. In this way we can help monitor and protect the sanctity of our local waters.



Several times a year for the last six years, I have been participating in Coastal Waterbird Surveys along the east coast of Valdes Island. Birds along the shore and at sea are identified and counted and the data sent into Bird Studies Canada.

This citizen-science initiative has proven to be a grand success...over 20,000 birders, novice and experienced, have contributed to a bank of information which adds light to the status and habits of bird populations and helps direct conservation planning.

As Valdes Islanders, we are lucky to be in the path of birds migrating from northern breeding grounds to southern overwintering sites. In fact, we are a part of the great Pacific flyway, one of four North American migratory corridors. Like us, some birds prefer to be residents of coastal waters over winter and year round.



Harlequin Drake *Histrionicus histrionicus*

Highlights of my several years of birding along the Valdes shoreline are the discovery of a Harlequin "hotspot". Harlequin ducks prefer wave-washed rocky shorelines and the north end of Valdes Island, as one rides the surge out of Gabriola Pass, is an ideal site for these sea ducks. On one count day I observed over 82. Harlequins are handsome ducks and seeing only one or two is a treat....seeing the

shore's edge with such a bounty was tremendously exciting. In the summer, we spot Pigeon Guillemots, Rhinoceros Auklets, Marbled Murrelets and lots of Thayer's Gulls as well as Kingfishers nesting in the clay cliffs of Starvation Bay and Black Oystercatchers warning others of our comings down on the reef off Oyster/Noel Bay. Seeing the islands several pairs of resident eagles, each occupying their own nest and roosting trees, I always translate as things being right with the world.

In fall, we are on the watch for the first phase of migrating shorebirds such as Black Turnstones and perhaps a single Wandering Tattler or two!

And by winter, the island's eastern bays boast small flocks of Buffleheads, Barrow's Goldeneyes, Surf Scoters, and mergansers. Cormorants are back in force on the reefs (along with an ever growing population of Steller sea lions) and solitary eared grebes are more commonly seen. Spectacular days of birding include one December 29th, 2012 when I heard and saw some 520 surfbirds on Detwiller Point.



Surf Birds *Aphriza virgata*

Valdes Island Conservancy Aims to Protect Fish Population

Janos Maté

Of the more than 7.2 billion people in the world we are among the select few to have retreats on Valdes Island, a relatively isolated haven, where the beauty and many gifts of nature nurtures us in so many ways. How privileged, how blessed are we.

With this privilege comes responsibility. Responsibility to never take our good fortune for granted. Responsibility to help protect as much as we can the lands and surrounding waters and ecosystems.

The Valdes Island Conservancy aims to do just that through several initiatives. One initiative is to cooperate with Fisheries and Oceans Canada in informing the public, including our Valdes community, about current closures in rockfish conservation areas.

Need for closures to protect the rockfish population

Fisheries and Oceans Canada's publication "Rockfish Conservation Areas: Protecting British Columbia's Rockfish" explains in detail the need to protect the rockfish population of BC's inshore waters, and what type of fishing activity is permitted and not permitted. Please see: (http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/maps-cartes/rca-acs/booklet-livret/RCA_booklet_2007.pdf)

The simple fact is that many areas in BC, including off of Valdes Island, have been over fished. Rockfish are territorial and do not swim far from their home reef. Consequently, once their population is severely reduced it takes many years for the rockfish population to replenish itself to safe levels.

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The Fisheries booklet offers interesting facts, including: Many species of rockfish live to be over 100 years of age. Rockfish give birth to live young, after a one to two month gestation period. The majority of fish hooked and released do not survive. There are 102 species of rockfish worldwide; about 38 of these live in B.C.'s waters.

What is permitted and not permitted in the conservation areas

Basically, all forms of fishing (including rockfish, lingcod, salmon, sole) in the rockfish conservancy areas is NOT permitted. Permitted activity includes: trapping crabs, shrimp, prawns; hand picking invertebrates; and smelt fishing by gillnet. Inexplicably, commercial fishers are allowed to mid-water trawl for ground fish. For detailed information, see (<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/maps-cartes/rca-accs/index-eng.html>)

Boundaries of the Valdes Rockfish Conservancy

Fisheries Canada provides detailed maps of the closed areas in the province. (<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/maps-cartes/rca-accs/index-eng.html>)

Valdes Island is part of Area 29. The detailed map (below) of the closed area is provided on-line at: (<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/maps-cartes/rca-accs/rca-accs/south-sud/ValdesIslandEastChart3463-eng.html>)

The closure is from Shah Point to the small bay just north of Starvation Bay. It extends approximately one mile into the Straight from the shores of Valdes .

What we can all do to protect the fish population.

* **Educate:** Educate ourselves and our own community about the biological importance of the closure, and make sure none of us, or our friends, fish inadvertently in the protected area.

Rockfish Conservation Areas - Pacific Region Area 29 - Valdes Island East - Chart 3463

Those waters of subareas 29-5 that lie inside a line that:

begins at	49°04.067'N	123°37.867'W	Valdes Island
then to	49°04.700'N	123°36.500'W	in water
then to	49°02.400'N	123°34.400'W	in water
then to	49°01.700'N	123°35.717'W	Shah Point

then northerly following the shoreline to the beginning point.

* **Communicate:** Respectfully communicate to people fishing in the protected zone that in cooperation with Fisheries Canada we are informing them that they are in fact fishing in a closed, rockfish conservation area. At the same time we can inform them of the boundaries of the closure.

The Valdes Island Conservancy will distribute, electronically, an information sheet that explains the closure and directs people to the right websites. We'll be able to copy this sheet, and hand it to the public as we inform them about the closure.

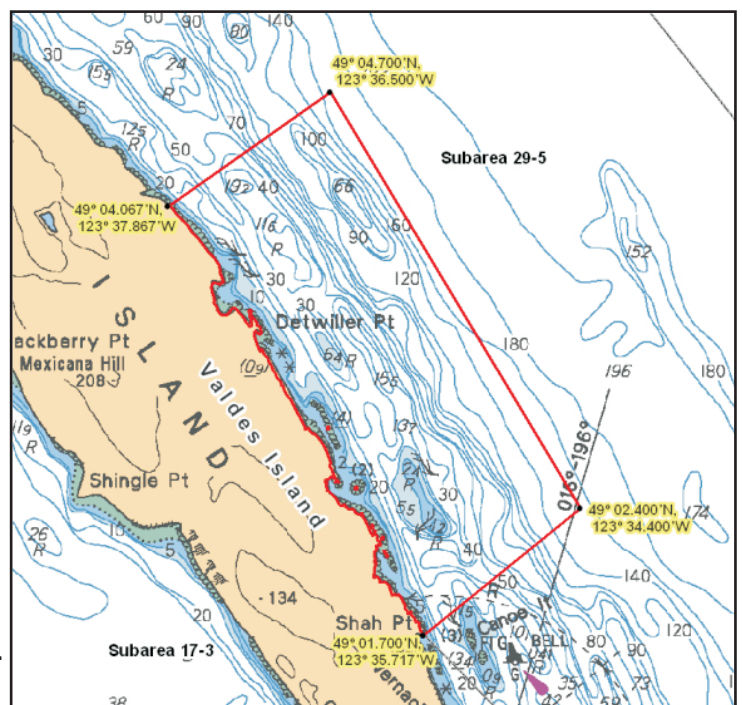
The Conservancy also plans to demarcate the beginning and the end of the closed area by placing two visible triangles on shore: one at Shah Point and the other past the small bay north of Starvation Bay.

* **Report:** If people continue to fish, after they are informed, we can report them to Fisheries. Fisheries is asking for help to protect the fish and provide phone numbers for reporting violators: 1-800-465-4336 or in Greater Vancouver: 604-607-4186 .

Fisheries asks for the time, date and location of the violation, as well as description (perhaps a photo) of the boat and the people on board. Please see: (<http://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/fm-gp/rec/points/ORR-ONS-eng.html>)

As Fisheries writes: "An important goal of enforcement is the prevention of violations before damage is done. The watchful eyes of everyone can provide a strong deterrent to potential violators and stop offences before they happen."

We are in the process of communicating with Fisheries to further explore other creative ways to ensure that the closure is honoured by everyone, so that everyone can participate in the protection of the fish population.



1.The name of the society is “Valdes Island Conservancy” (hereinafter referred to “the Society”).

2.The purposes of the Society are:

a.To promote and encourage the protection, preservation, restoration, beneficial use and management of primarily:

i.plants, animals and natural communities that represent diversity of life and Gulf Island ecosystems by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive; and

ii.areas of scientific, historical, cultural, scenic and compatible outdoor recreational value;

b.To promote such charitable activities or endeavors, including the acquisition, management and disposal of land and interests in land, as may in the opinion of the Society Board of Directors appear to contribute to the above objectives;

c.To plan, promote and develop a network of trails that provide routes for non-motorized users to connect Valdes Island neighbourhoods, parks, beach accesses and areas of historical, cultural and scenic interest;

d.To raise money, acquire funds, accept bequests and other assistance and to own, by purchase, donation or otherwise, real or personal property, and to maintain and manage such property and to sell, exchange, let, lease or develop the same for the purposes of the society;

e.To work with the Valdes Island community, First Nations, Cowichan Regional District, The Islands Trust, and other land trusts and conservation groups to meet the purposes of the Society.

3.The operations of the Society will be conducted on, or dedicated to Valdes Island and smaller islands in its surrounding waters. This paragraph is unalterable.

4.The operations of the Society shall be conducted without purpose of gain for its members, and any profits or other accretions of the Society shall be used for promoting its purposes. This paragraph is unalterable.

5.In the event of dissolution of the Society, the assets remaining after the payment of all costs, charges and expenses properly incurred in the wind-up or dissolution, and after payment to employees of the Society or arrears of salaries or wages, and after payment of any debts of the Society, shall be distributed to one or more charitable institutions with purposes similar to those of the Society or, if this cannot be done, to one or more qualified donees as defined under the provisions of the Income Tax Act (Canada) from time to time defined. This paragraph is unalterable.





**VALDES ISLAND
CONSERVANCY**
Membership Application

Our Mission is to preserve, protect and restore the lands and waters of Valdes Island, and the smaller islands in its surrounding waters, for the plants, animals and natural communities that represent diversity of life and Gulf Island ecosystems, and for the beneficial use and management of the scientific, historical, cultural, scenic and compatible outdoor values of these areas.

<http://www.valdes-island-conservancy.org>

I (we) support the Mission of the Valdes Island Conservancy, and agree to uphold its Constitution and comply with its Bylaws.

• Name(s): _____

• Address: _____

• Postal Code: _____

• Phone: (day) _____ ; (night) _____

• Email: _____

Please select type and number of annual memberships*

Individual (voting).....\$25.00 x = \$ _____

Family (2 voting adults + any children under 19). \$50.00 x = \$ _____

Youth (ages 19-25, voting).....\$10.00 x = \$ _____

+

Yes, I (we) would like to further help
the conservancy with a donation \$ _____

Total enclosed \$ _____

Please make payments (cheque, money order, bank draft) payable to “Valdes Island Conservancy,” and mail or deliver:
c/o Bruce Livingston, #301-6451 Princess Lane, Richmond, B.C. V7E 6R7

*Annual memberships expire at the commencement of the Valdes Island Conservancy Annual General Meeting held on Valdes Island in August on the Sunday of each BC Day weekend. Members in good standing have voting privileges at General and Special meetings called by the Board.