



VALDES ISLAND CONSERVANCY NEWSLETTER

President's Message

Marja de Jong Westman, Biologist



Lyackson First Nation and Mosaic Forest Management, helping all to be aware of the presence, history and value of our island, human and biological, communities. The Island Stories project has become a third signature activity, as Bruce Livingston and Bill McElhanney work to gather and document the tales and histories of the settlers on the island. Besides being enjoyable to read, these stories will form an important archive for all.

The Valdes Island Conservancy became a teenager this year - we are 13!

As a board member who was there on day one and is still here in year 13, I feel fortunate to have been witness to the energies and actions of the Conservancy's many directors and importantly, the maturation of the Conservancy. What started out, as an informal community group has become a respected charitable organization advocating for Valdes Island's human and biological communities using a now deeper knowledge base and applying a well-informed fact-based approach. The Conservancy continues to be supported by a diverse volunteer board and a robust membership. Thank you so much for your support. What would have been our 6th annual Bioblitz was cancelled this year but we are now looking ahead to spring 2021. The Bioblitz is a signature activity for the Conservancy as is this annual newsletter. Both continue to be successful communication avenues with other conservation groups, BC Parks, Ministry of the Environment, elected government officials, the

A few highlights of our year...

The board enjoyed two meetings with the Chief and Council of the Lyackson First Nation. Our yearly meetings continue to build friendship and trust and our relationship with the Lyackson First Nation is one of the most valuable and heartfelt components of being a board member of the VIC. At the most recent meeting, there was continued discussion about the process and status of the treaty negotiations and we were told that the Lyackson First Nation has reached Stage 5. The Chief strongly reiterated that there should be no fear in our island community as these negotiations evolve. We sincerely hope that the Lyackson First Nation continue to see positive outcomes and progress with their treaty negotiations. We are grateful for the opportunity to get to know each other and to develop the friendships we have. Here is a link of interest: <https://thediscourse.ca/cowichan-valley/cowichan-nation-alliance-lawsuit-duncan>

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Mission Statement

To conserve and protect the existing biological and cultural communities of Valdes Island and its environs.

Vision Statement

That Valdes Island be recognized for its globally-significant and locally-rare biological diversity.

Board Members

Executive

- Marja de Jong Westman - President
- Warren Warttig - Vice President
- Doug Cochran - Treasurer
- Bruce Livingston - Secretary

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- Jason Camp
- Doug Campbell
- Allan Doolittle
- Sarah Elliott
- Bill McElhanney
- Dan White

Newsletter Layout

- Mark and Jane Bateman

As a SCUBA diving resident of Thetis Island with a passion for marine natural history, I have been following Sea Star Wasting Syndrome (SSWS) impacts on our local species.

While composing this update, I was amazed to recall that it all began seven years ago! Here is a brief synopsis of my observations (somewhat Thetis-Island centric) since the start and after a few recent dives and beach walks.



Andy assesses affected (*Pisaster ochraceus*) at the “Cut” between Thetis and Penelakut Islands, 2014. This sea star is a keystone species. As such it determines both species abundance and diversity in the intertidal zone. Photo: Neil McDaniel

The coastline of the northeast Pacific, from Washington to Alaska, is the epicenter for the planet’s temperate marine sea star diversity and abundance. Close to fifty species have been documented from these waters.

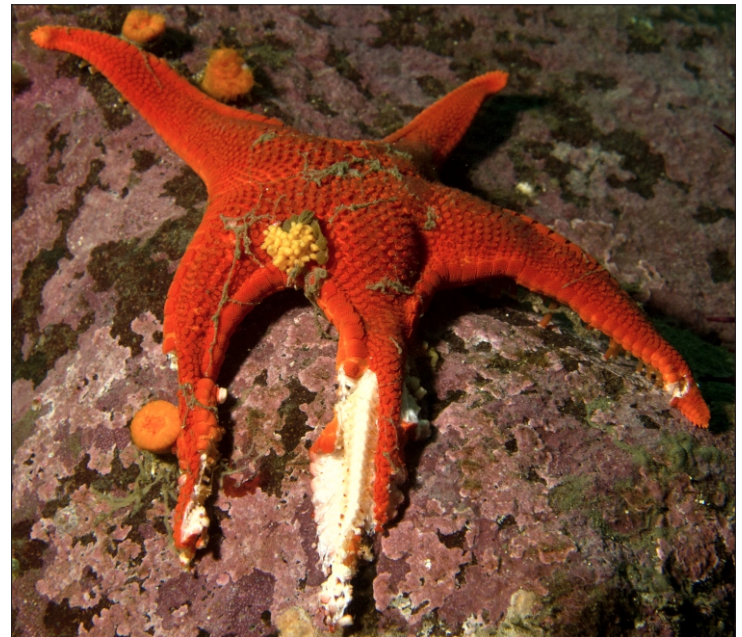
The sea star wasting carnage started in spring 2013 and rapidly spread from California to Alaska. In British Columbia, it affected several species dramatically, particularly the sunflower star (*Pycnopodia helianthoides*) with entire populations of this large and obvious sea star being lost. The purple or ochre star (*Pisaster ochraceus*), the giant pink star (*Pisaster brevispinus*) and the mottled star (*Evasterias troschelii*) - all obvious and common shallow water species, suffered large mortalities as well. As 2013 progressed, divers reported the decline of many deeper dwelling sea stars as well.

Scientists at various universities, with assistance of divers and others, continue to investigate this disaster today. It has been determined that at least one virus was central to the outbreak. Higher temperatures now present during spring/summer appear to be an important contributing factor for what remains a continuing epidemic.

While SSWS continues all along the Pacific coast, its effects are variable geographically. Significant variation can even occur between close neighbouring locales. For example, the sunflower star is now almost non-existent around the Gulf Islands and the Sunshine Coast, but are still observed in Whidbey Island waters, just south of the U.S.-Canada border and in the colder waters of Port Hardy in BC.

Here I will provide you with a brief species by species summary for Thetis Island. According to communications with several Valdes Island residents there appears to be a relatively close match between the islands.

The sunflower star has suffered greatly. Thus far, only the occasional tiny juvenile has been observed and it is likely these may perish in upcoming years. The giant pink star has also suffered greatly and now are rarely



Vermilion star (*Mediaster aequalis*) a local species affected by SSWS, Porlier Pass, 2019. Photo: Peter Luckham

seen intertidally. Before 2013, very large specimens were routinely observed in the shallows, particularly in “The Cut” between Thetis and Penelakut Islands. Somewhat encouragingly, the pink star has been observed during recent SCUBA dives – although not in great numbers. Intertidal populations of the mottled star languish at low levels. Those sea stars observed tend to be small to medium sized – large adults have not been found. Intriguingly though, this species still persists in large numbers subtidally -- but no large adults are seen in this location either with the wasting appearing to attack the larger individuals of this species. For some reason, the leather star

(*Dermasterias imbricata*) continues to thrive despite the presence of the virus. Only a few affected specimens have been documented. This resilient species remains common and abundant – if anything, its numbers are at all-time highs.



Purple or ochre star (*Pisaster ochraceus*) with SSWS, the “Cut” 2019. When this species declines in number, individual numbers of competitive species, e.g. mussels, increase and triggers a decline in the variety of other species living in the intertidal zone. Photo: Peter Luckham

The purple or ochre star is always the “star of the show” as it represents what a sea star (or starfish) is to even the most casual observer. And its acquaintance with SSWS is one of the most complicated. It was and continues to be a severely impacted species. Coast wide decimation of the species has occurred and recent studies indicate populations continue to exhibit significant numbers of wasting individuals. Oddly, a steady population of large adults has been present on the shores around Thetis

Island during the last seven years. Perhaps, there is some natural immunity present among these groups? These survivors were noticed early on and so, based upon size, it is extremely unlikely they were newly recruited to the population. Rather, I surmise that these large adults may have “hunkered down” under rocks during the early and primary events. Sound familiar amid COVID-19? In addition, juveniles of varying sizes are found under rocks indicating several year classes of young have successfully survived.

In 2018 and 2019 I was able to SCUBA dive locally and unfettered by global pandemics! Routine and new sites were visited and provided opportunity to assess subtidal sea star species over a range of depths and habitats. With the notable exceptions of the leather star and the sand star (*Luidia foliolata*), all other species (about twenty) showed major population declines. The colours provided by the morning sun star (*Solaster dawsoni*) and the striped sun star (*Solaster stimpsoni*) were a particular visual loss to the subtidal realm.

2020’s spring dives are yielding encouraging observations. Only two mottled stars were observed with SSWS. Other shallow/intertidal species appear to be holding their own. Sunrise Point produced the largest number of leather stars I have ever encountered and at our usual dive sites, the purple stars are abundant and healthy looking. I hope that a low tide stroll on Valdes Island yields the same positive findings for you. Why not consider adding sea star watching to your bird and botanical walks, tides permitting? Let’s compare notes - andylamb@telus.net

Andy Lamb is a marine naturalist, educator and author. Bery Hanby and A.Lamb’s book *Marine Life of the Pacific Northwest* is a must for any coastal resident.



Nature Notes...

Marja de Jong Westman, Biologist

During the 2018 Valdes Island Bioblitz and again in 2019, members of the Valdes Island Conservancy built and mounted several nest boxes for the Purple Martin (*Progne subis arboricola*).

These were placed in Porlier Pass on Yamanaka’s dock, at the South Bay beaver pond and mid-island at Long Lake. The catalyst for this project was the knowledge that this obligate aerial insect-eating large swallow teetered on full extirpation from BC. In the 1980s populations of western Purple Martins were reduced to fewer than 10 breeding pairs. Because of focused efforts of Purple Martin Stewardship and Recovery Program (PUMA) and many local conservation groups, 1200 breeding pairs were recorded in 2018...a remarkable bounce back.

On Valdes, we have had the greatest success with the boxes in Porlier Pass. Last year this colony, fueled by the efforts of just 3 breeding pairs, successfully fledged 24 young (pers.comm Pete Revelley and Ian Bryce). The first breeding pair arrived on April 16th this year.

The VIC will be monitoring all the boxes in May and hopes to work with the Provincial Government and PUMA to see boxes set in place at Wakes Cove and Kendrick Island at the north end of Valdes over the next couple of years.

With effort, Valdes Island is in a good spot to support a large population of this noisy and entertaining colony-nesting species.

To find out more...check out - www.georgiabasin.ca/puma.htm



Valdes Island's Bioblitz Bats...

Mandy Kellner, Community Bat Program of BC

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Evening falls, and as the darkness creeps over the islands and the ocean, a Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*) stretches its wings, drops out from behind a tree bark flake, and takes flight.

With BC-wide distribution, high tolerance for human development, and an abundant population (at present), the Little Brown Myotis is perhaps the most well-known of the nine bat species that may live on Valdes. Well-known, however, does not mean much in the bat world! We know they are insectivores – but WHAT insects are they eating in coastal BC? They hibernate – but WHERE? Do they leave the island? How far do they go? And why do we get reports of bat activity on and off all winter from the Gulf Islands? The Valdes Island Bioblitz 2019 helped gather a wee bit of data to answer some of these questions.



Little Brown Myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*)
Photo: B. Paterson (not taken on Valdes)

Bats are usually quite active from mid-March through October. However, even in summer, there are basic unknowns about bats, such as where each species can actually be found. Last spring in the 2019 Bioblitz we used bat detectors to record echolocation calls for analysis, and identified calls from five species of the potential nine bat species on Valdes. Not bad for two nights of sampling! Acoustic monitors were set up on the west side of Valdes above the cliffs, in the small sedge wetland behind Cochran's cabin, at Westman's cabin in Starvation Bay and at Livingston's cabin at Detwiller Point.

During the summer months, most of our bats spend the day roosting in crevices, in mature trees



Excellent roosting habitat under uneven shakes at the Livingston's cabin. One Myotis bat was observed emerging from the shakes, May 19th 2019

(under bark or in cracks or cavities), rocky outcrops, or for some species, in human-built structures ranging from sheds to houses. The species that commonly use buildings or bat boxes include Little Brown, Yuma, and California Myotis and Big Brown bats. Indeed, we confirmed bats exiting from loose cedar shakes on Livingston's cabin and out from under Westman's roof and siding. A different roosting strategy is used by Hoary bats, which we heard on the bat detectors. Hoary bats are foliage-roosting bats, and will hang amongst the leaves or needles of their favourite trees, where they look like dry vegetation. Although not heard or seen in our small survey, it is likely that Townsend's Big-eared bats are also present on the island. They prefer cavernous spaces such as caves, old barns, or sheds.

More unknowns – how many roost sites does a maternity colony of bats need? We know they move around – we do not know why, or how far, or how frequently.

Bats are faced with many threats. As a group they are often persecuted, for their real or suspected role in disease transmission. Bats do carry rabies, but at a low rate (< 1 % of bats carry the virus). Never touch a bat (or any wild mammal) with your bare hands; if a bite or scratch does occur, contact public health. Bats in BC do not carry the novel SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus.

One of the most serious threats for bats is White-nose Syndrome (WNS). WNS is a fungal disease, deadly to many bat species, but that does not affect humans or other animals. Primarily transmitted bat-bat by these social creatures, and with no widely-applicable prevention or treatment, it is still unknown what havoc it will wreak on our BC bat populations. A useful link is www.Whitenosesyndrome.org – information on WNS and the species affected as the trajectory of disease spreads. Valdes Island residents and visitors are advised to not enter any cave sites on the island as by doing so they are putting our now healthy bat populations at **high risk**.

The best approach to help BC bats is to build strong, resilient bat populations, via thorough protection and enhancing of bat habitat (think Valdes Island's wetlands, snags, bat boxes) and if your spot on the island is blessed with harbouring a colony on your property consider participating in the Annual Bat Count www.bcbats.ca/index.php/got-bats and sending in fresh guano samples for ID.

www.bcbats.ca/images/DNA-Sampling-Protocol-for-Bat-Guano_Residents_2019.pdf

This will contribute to our knowledge of bat species on Valdes and support provincial WNS monitoring efforts.

Perhaps in the future we can conduct acoustic monitoring up at Long Lake, the large cliffs at the northeast end of the island, in the dry arbutus forests and bluffs on the west side, along the older logging roads and trails and in spots near the openings of the caves.

And if you really want to be fully enthralled with these specialized little mammals, you can get a hand-held bat detector called the Echometer Touch, that plugs into a phone or tablet (iphone OR android, regular or pro). See: www.wildlifeacoustics.com/products/echo-meter-touch-2-ios

We used this after the Bioblitz dinner at the Westman's. Much excitement was generated as we could "hear" the echolocation calls of the cabin's bats in search of their evening meal. One caution - if you get one of these units, remember to take the auto-ID function with a few grains of salt! Species identification can be tricky and require more assessment to positively confirm a species. If you contact me and send me the data, I will ensure it is added to the growing data bank that will assist us all in ensuring bats and their necessary habitats are supported in the province. mandy.kellner@gmail.com

SUMMARY SPECIES LIST FOR BIOBLITZ MAY 18 AND 19, 2019:

STATUS	COMMON NAME	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Confirmed - detected acoustically	Hoary bat	<i>Lasiurus cinereus</i>
	Silver-haired bat	<i>Lasionycteris noctivagans</i>
	Little Brown Myotis	<i>Myotis lucifugus</i>
	Yuma Myotis	<i>Myotis yumanensis</i>
	California Myotis	<i>Myotis californicus</i>
	Possible species - based on acoustics	Big Brown bat
Long-legged Myotis		<i>Myotis volans</i>
Long-eared Myotis		<i>Myotis evotis</i>
Not detected acoustically but known to occur in the vicinity	Townsend's Big-eared bat	<i>Plecotus townsendii</i>



Rockfish Conservation Areas in an Era of Climate Change...

Jeff Marliave,

Senior Research Scientist, Ocean Wise Research Institute

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During the 1990s British Columbians became aware of the long-term overfishing of nearshore species of rockfish. After the turn of the millennium our federal government went to work creating Rockfish Conservation Areas, and citizens of the Valdes and Galiano conservancies have worked hard to educate visitors to the rules of RCAs. Now Fisheries and Oceans Canada has initiated review of the efficacy of RCAs and at some time may modify some of them in order to improve performance. So what has been the performance in terms of rockfish conservation? As well, how do these efforts fit into the picture of a warming ocean? The purpose of this discussion will be to stimulate thinking about what lies in store for RCAs and how we might help the situation.

The new government model for evaluating RCAs has ranked them according to their theoretical value in terms of this model. Basically, the tiniest RCAs are being deemed the least valued because of an assumption that adults might stray out of the boundaries. Detailed, long-term studies are showing that this is not the case if the highest quality habitat is included, meaning deeply piled boulders in which rockfish can hide. Think of marmots on a rocky scree slope of a mountain. They will happily remain in the same area for many years if all goes well. It turns out



Copper rockfish (*Sebastes caurinus*)

that the inshore rockfish like Copper rockfish and Tiger rockfish will not move even ten meters in a decade if they have multilayered boulders to live

among, but we have to get that information published. Time will tell, but there is a significant increase in body size of protected Copper rockfish in the West Vancouver RCA compared to the era of the 1980s when anyone could fish for rockfish anywhere, any time. Just remember, most of these rockfish species live longer than we do, so results will be very slow to come.



Juvenile Yelloweye rockfish (*Sebastes ruberrimus*)

One critical issue to consider, though, is whether climate will affect the picture with RCAs. Of the inshore species, the longest-lived are the Yelloweye rockfish and Quillback rockfish. By chance, both of these species had only three highly successful year-classes (birth years, in terms of survival rate) during the last century in BC, in completely different years for the two species. A successful year-class will dominate the catch in a commercial fishery for years, decades in terms of these species. Thus, at the Passage Island RCA at the entry into Howe Sound, a modestly successful year-class from around 1990 grew up on that area of reefs during the 1990s and then achieved sexual maturity after creation of the Passage Island RCA. Of course, the demographics look very successful since the same fish are getting bigger and more productive as they continue to thrive in that location (without any obvious depletion of numbers), but we ultimately want the chance to observe another big year-class. We may not live long enough to see that.

It is particularly significant that, in Howe Sound at least, there have been no strong year-classes of any nearshore rockfish species since the start of the 2011 climate regime. A climate regime shift in the ocean follows a close pairing of unusually strong El Nino and La Nina climate events (see <https://tinyurl.com/climateregime>). This current 2011 regime has included the first two “warm blob” events in history (2013 and 2019) and the 2013 “warm blob” was followed by the strongest El Nino in history (2014/2015/2016). Currently, we are witnessing the very gradual onset of another El Nino that may follow the same trajectory as the record event of winter 2015/2016. That is to say, we may have very modest positive anomalies for almost a year, building to record-level high anomalies in the subsequent winter of 2020/2021. If that is the case, then it would seem likely that these unprecedented warm ocean conditions may not be conducive to the ideal combination of plankton conditions that will enable extremely high survival rates for larval rockfishes. Without the rare successful year-class conditions we will not see large numbers of juvenile rockfish growing up in our RCAs, at least not during this climate regime. We can only wait patiently and be observant.

Conditions that lead to high survival of newborn rockfish relate to the pattern of diatom blooms and crustacean zooplankton abundance (copepods and such). During climate regimes like the Millennial regime of 1999-2010 when reasonably robust populations of juvenile inshore rockfish were observed in the Strait of Georgia, the spring diatom blooms lasted for many weeks, not just days at a time. A diatom bloom is when the seawater looks very brown, and that leads to high abundance of the crunchy crustacean zooplankton that rockfish larvae eat. The blooms have to overlap with the birth season for the rockfish and the conditions have to continue long enough that some rockfish larvae develop to earliest planktonic juvenile stage while subsequent birth events are also surviving at high rates. That rare circumstance enables the eldest to eat the youngest, and those lucky little rockfish (the older ones) will be the survivors that settle in real abundance on reefs. Yes, we are talking about cannibalism being a likely secret to major year-

class strength among rockfishes and other large marine fishes with vast numbers of tiny larvae. So be thankful when the water is too brown to allow good snorkeling or diving. It is what we want to see for as long as possible during the spring season if we are rooting for the rockfish. We need to root for the right climate for the right blooms.



Quillback rockfish (*Sebastes maliger*)

People have a perspective that naturally aligns with personal life experience. We do not relate well to thinking in terms of centuries. A decade seems long enough, but a decade is really nothing to a rockfish population. We must urge our friends to understand the value of the long view when promoting the success of Rockfish Conservation Areas. Sometime around 2050 we ought to be able to wisely judge our RCAs in terms of abundance and demography of Yelloweye, Quillback, Copper and Tiger rockfishes in the Strait of Georgia. While we wait, we can lobby for logical improvements to boundaries of RCAs in order to satisfy evaluation criteria. For example, slight boundary shifts will join the West Van RCA to the Passage RCA to create a bigger, supposedly better RCA. Most important is to keep the faith, defend the RCAs and encourage understanding of the intricate relation between a healthy marine ecosystem and our complicated climate.

Use this link to see the location of the RCA near Valdes...

Area 29: <http://tinyurl.com/area29>



The Dragonflies and Damselflies of Valdes Island, BC...

Rob Cannings, Royal BC Museum

Syd Cannings, Canadian Wildlife Service

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Dragonflies are large, colourful and easy to find -- a patient observer can easily identify a number of species and watch them going about their lives. There is no complete list of Valdes Island species, but of the 88 known in British Columbia, a liberal estimate suggests that about 35 kinds might live there.

The insect order Odonata (Greek for “toothed jaws”) contains about 6000 named species and consists of dragonflies and damselflies. Damselflies are slimmer, often smaller, and usually fly more slowly than dragonflies. At rest, most hold their equal-sized wings together above the body (the spreadwing family is an exception). Dragonflies are robust, often fast-flying, with the hind wings broader than the forewings. When perched they hold their wings out away from the body.

Odonates live in and around aquatic habitats. Some prefer small ponds and warm, marshy lakeshores; others live in colder lakes; still others are found only along streams or in peatlands.

The aquatic larva has an enormously enlarged, hinged labium, a sort of lower lip, which is used as an extendible grasping organ for capturing prey. The larva is voracious, eating insects, crustaceans and even small fish, all the while moulting its exoskeleton 10 to 15 times before crawling out of the water and emerging as a flying adult. Metamorphosis is striking but there is no pupal stage. Larval life can last a few months to a few years.

Adults live a shorter time, only a few weeks in our region. They are strong-flying predators with large eyes, sharp mandibles and spiny legs and devour a wide range of insects, usually captured in flight. Mature males patrol breeding habitats, aggressively searching for mates, and may, like birds, defend a territory against other males of the species.

Females coming to the water to breed quickly attract mates. With the appendages at the tip of the abdomen, a male grasps a female by the front of the thorax (damselflies) or by the top of the head (dragonflies). The male transfers sperm from the tip of his abdomen to structures at the base of his abdomen. The female then loops the end of her abdomen up to reach the sperm. Odonates are the only insects that mate in this circular formation. Competition is usually fierce, and males of many species guard their mates, continuing to hold the female or hovering protectively nearby. The female lays her fertilized eggs by the hundreds. All damselflies and darners insert their eggs in plant tissue. Other species simply drop eggs into the water, mud or moss.



Pacific forktail (*Ischnura cervula*), male (left) and female mating. Forktails are among the earliest spring species, appearing in April. The Pacific forktail is the most abundant; it's typical of cat-tail marshes but is also common at garden ponds. The related American bluets are the familiar sky blue damselflies – the common ones on Valdes are the Boreal, Northern and Tule bluets.

Photo: George Doerksen, Royal BC Museum.

On Valdes Island the most common damselflies are species of spreadwings (*Lestes*), American bluets (*Enallagma*) and forktails (*Ischnura*). Spreadwings hold their wings at a 45° angle when at rest; mature adults are usually dark green-bronze and often have blue eyes. Bluets and forktails usually have blue and black males and females that vary from blue to tan to orange.

Darners (*Aeshna*, *Anax*, *Rhionaeschna*) are large, swiftly flying species usually marked with blue, green or yellow. The Common green darner is the



Blue-eyed darner (*Rhionaeschna multicolor*) male. This, and the Paddle-tailed and Shadow darners are the most common of the family on Valdes. They fly mostly from mid-summer to fall, but look for the California darner as early as mid-April. Female darners lay eggs in water plants or floating wood above or below the water line.
Photo: George Doerksen, Royal BC Museum.



Eight-spotted skimmer (*Libellula forensis*) male, Beaver Lake. Adults in the skimmer family spend much time perching – they rest on plantstems or flat on the ground, on logs or on the floating leaves of water plants. Eight-spotteds are common and showy, with their patterned wings and darting flight.
Photo: Rob Cannings.

largest of our local dragonflies. Emeralds mostly inhabit forest wetlands farther north, but two or three species likely inhabit marshy shores on the island. Males of most have glowing green eyes. The related skimmer family is a dominant, diverse and colourful one around warm marshes. The scarlet males of meadowhawks (*Sympetrum*) are abundant, especially in late summer and fall but the Cardinal meadowhawk is common in spring before any others fly.

When you see one of these insects, take a photo and post to iNaturalist (<https://www.inaturalist.org/>).

Experts can help with identification. Try to take more than one image of each dragonfly - showing colour patterns of face, side and top (including close-up views of the tip of the abdomen); all are important identification aids.



YOUR VALDES ISLAND CONSERVANCY

This year, the Annual General Meeting is going online
via Zoom, Sunday October 18th 2020, 4:00pm
Active members will receive the required meeting information.



The VIC is participating in a transboundary initiative to document the biodiversity of the Salish Sea, by sharing the many years of data gathered via the annual Bioblitz and data provided to the Conservancy by Donna Gibbs of the Vancouver Aquarium. Although the Bioblitz was cancelled this year you can continue to participate by sharing your observations on the iNaturalist platform, adding to the historical records of species known to Valdes Island.

How does biodiversity vary from place to place within the Salish Sea? The Valdes Island community represents a node in a network of community-based biodiversity projects organizing to collectively answer this question. From Cortes Island, British Columbia, Canada, to Vashon Island, Washington USA, over ten communities are now participating in this initiative, preparing life lists documenting the natural heritage of each area. More than 6,000 species have been documented by community members to date, represented by over 80,000 observations. These records are being integrated into a database incorporating historical biodiversity data with our contemporary observations. By adding your observations to this project, you will help to confirm these historical records while at once expanding the baseline record of species known to Valdes Island and the broader bioregion.

We live in a time of shifting baselines. Without resolving a picture of the biodiversity present in our midst, we will have no way of knowing what is being lost. Together we can help overcome the

problems of individual and cultural amnesia associated with shifting baselines by making an effort together as a community to document the island biodiversity. To add your observations to the growing record of biodiversity known to Valdes Island, set up an account on iNaturalist (www.inaturalist.ca) and post your nature photographs - they will automatically be added to the Valdes Island Biodiversity project (<https://www.inaturalist.org/projects/valdes-island-biodiversity>). You can post pictures of any species, from past and present. You will be credited for your contributions to biodiversity research, and these records will contribute to a growing database of the Salish Sea bioregion.

In partnership with an international team of researchers and computer scientists, we are creating novel learning resources toward the vision of developing an atlas of Salish Sea biodiversity. For a demo visualization of a small sub set of this data, focusing on the marine species observed around Galiano Island BC, visit www.biogaliano.org/map-prototype. Based on this evolving framework, we'll soon be able to visualize our local species diversity in relation to the broader regional species pool. For more information on how you can support this initiative, contact me biodiversity.galiano@gmail.com. Many thanks to Donna Gibbs from the Vancouver Aquarium for sharing her extensive dive records - the product of marine inventory work conducted throughout the Salish Sea by Andy Lamb, Donna Gibbs, Charlie Gibbs and others from 1968 to present.

Who you are

You'll need to make an **iNaturalist account** and please only post your own personal observations



Where you saw it

Record both the coordinates of the encounter as well as their accuracy. You can obscure the location from the public



What you saw

Choose a group of organisms like **butterflies** or better yet a specific organism like the **Monarch butterfly**. If you provide evidence you can leave this blank and the **community can help**



When you saw it

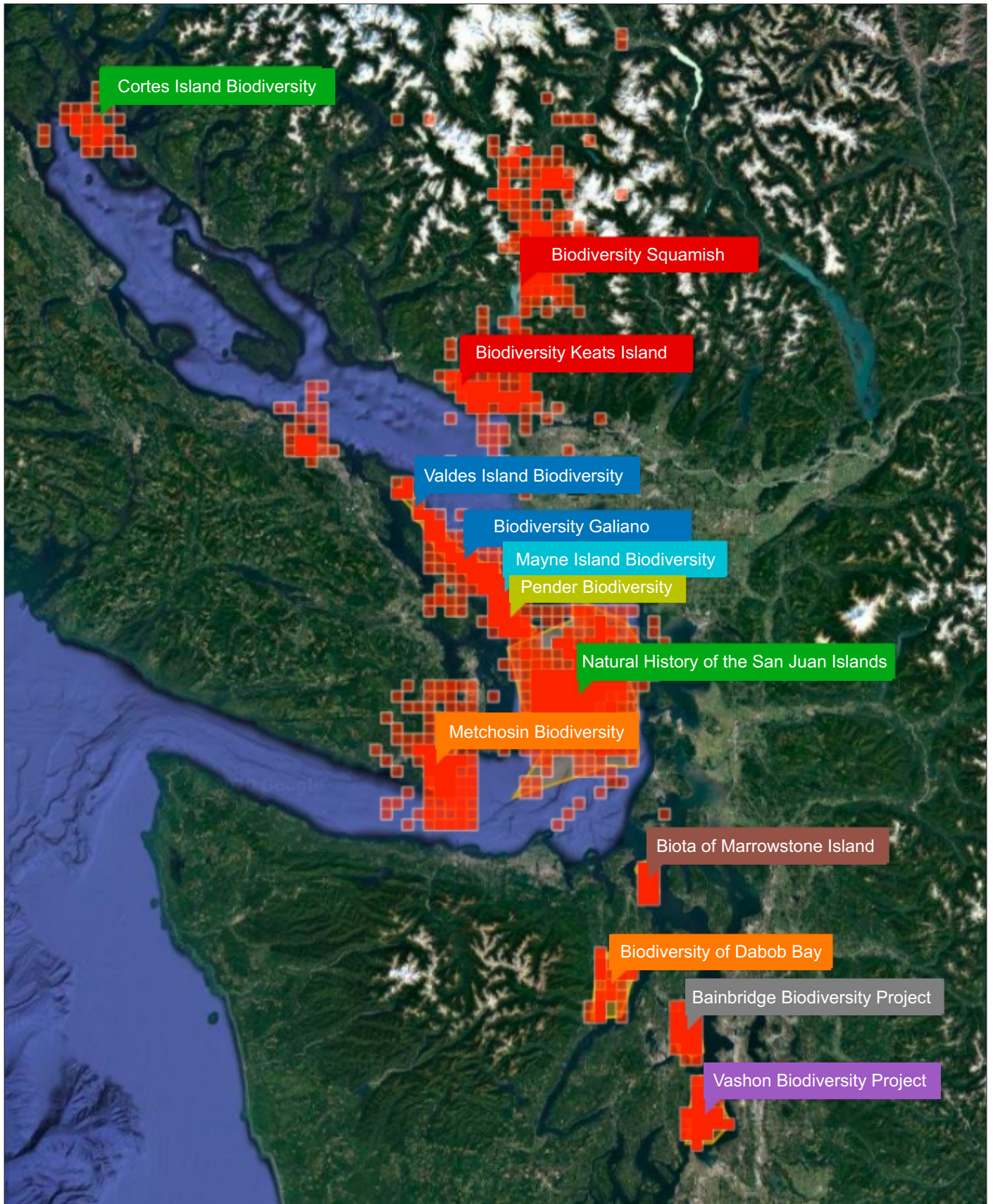
Record the date of your encounter, not the date you post it to iNaturalist



Evidence of what you saw

By including evidence like a **photo or sound**, the community can help add, improve, or confirm the identification of the organism you encountered. Help the community by taking clear well framed photos, by including multiple photos from different angles





Map of participating biodiversity projects in the region.

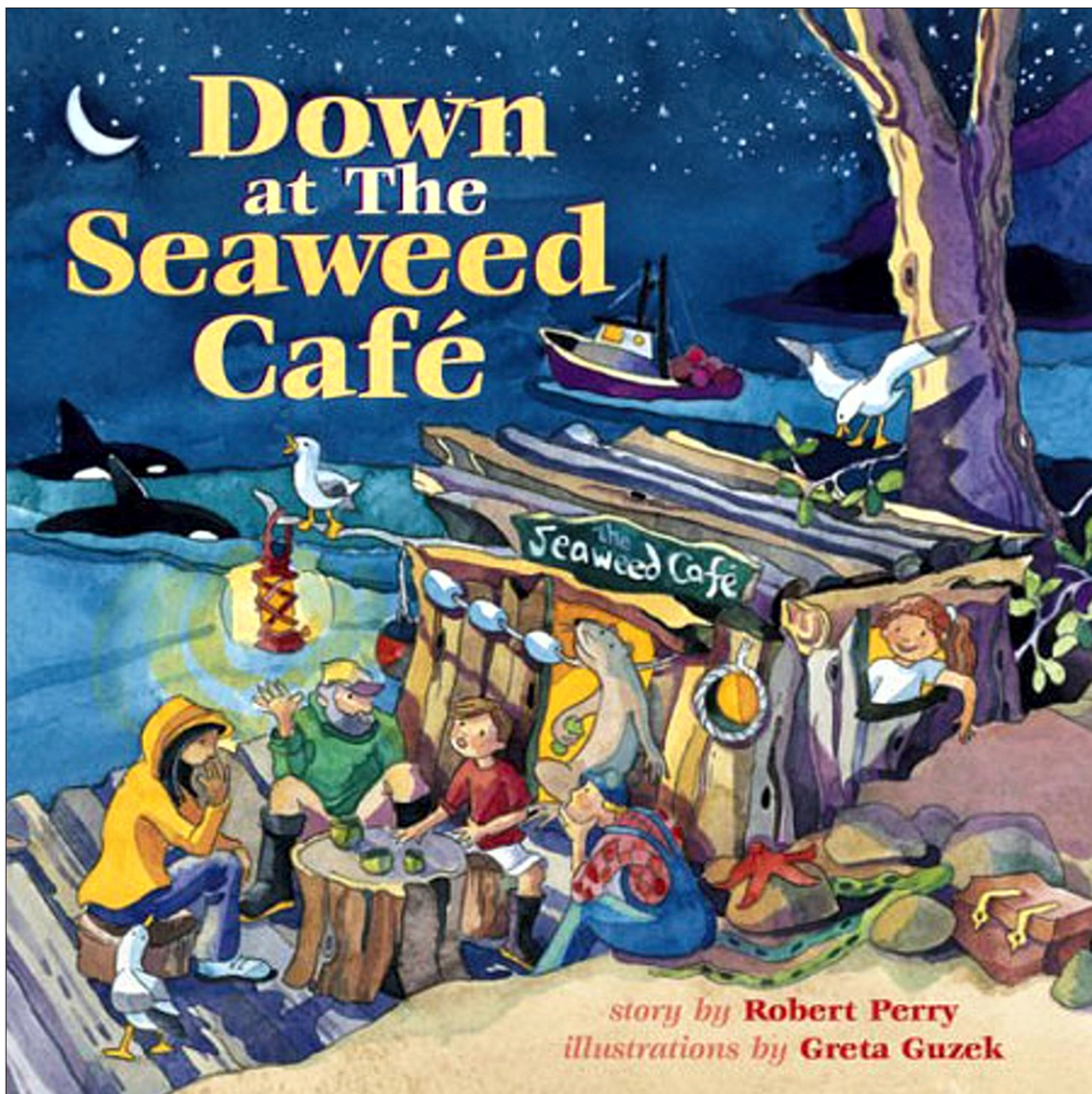


Robert Perry's *Down at the Seaweed Cafe* is a charming West Coast story that young children of all ages want to read again and again. In particular, its playful imagining of a children's oceanside community strikes a chord with Gulf Island kids, both past and current.

Through Perry's catchy rhyme and rhythm, readers are invited to peek inside a children's seaweed cafe "where seaweed tea is served all day" and tall tales are told of sea monsters and buried treasure. The book concludes with a party and a seaweed dance with friends. Your Valdes' kids will find Guzek's beautiful illustrations of the West Coast seashore, pods of orcas, otters, driftwood and arbutus trees comforting and familiar.

Not only is this book a lovely read, but it can also spark ideas for activities and pretend play for children. Valdes Island is a paradise for outdoor play, and through this book, your young ones may be inspired to make their own seaweed cafe complete with "bull kelp cups", seaweed tea and snacks, and tables and chairs from driftwood. Others might want to make up their own seaweed dances or tell their own tallest tales with friends just as in the story. On closer inspection, the detailed illustrations also offer other crafty ideas including shell necklaces, sand dollar ornaments, and seaweed and rock displays.

I've owned this book for close to 20 years and it has been a favourite among my students and now my own children!



Have you ever found yourself walking the wilds of Valdes when you come across a plant that you simply need to know, but don't? Field guides, such as "Plants of Coastal British Columbia" by Pojar and MacKinnon, are great resources when we remember to carry them. Today, most of us, however, have a phone in our pocket, no matter where we wander.

One fantastic and free app to help identify plants (insects and other animals, too!) is Seek, by iNaturalist. The way Seek works is to utilize the power of your phone camera and a database of naturalists (both professional and amateur) to help identify what you are looking at through a very clever algorithm. Seek is more child friendly than iNaturalist in that Seek accesses the database from iNaturalist but does not give location information about where the species was spotted.

How does it work? Open up the Seek app on your phone and hover your camera over the plant you want to identify. Seek will do its best to identify what you are looking at. If it doesn't get it right away, try angling your phone a little bit differently. It will move from kingdom right through to species and then give you a link to where you can find more information about the organism. Should it not be able to identify it right away, you can chose to upload your image to iNaturalist for others to chime in as to what you have seen. To help motivate kids, there are challenges and badges you can collect as you discover more and more organisms.

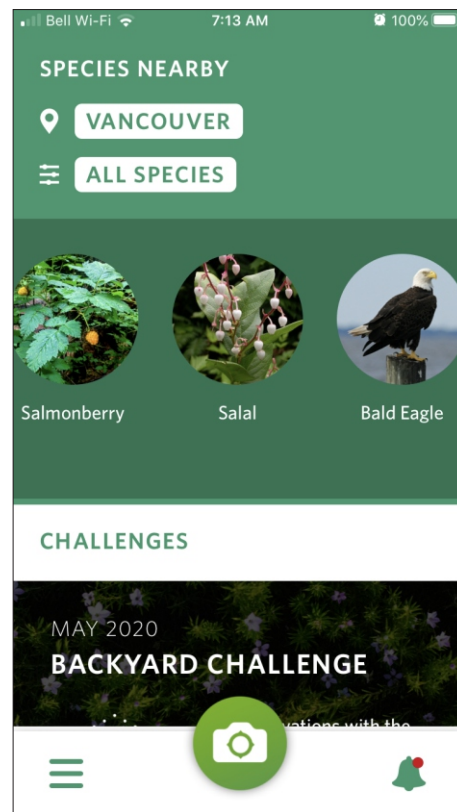
My wife and I use this app in Vancouver on our walks around town to identify plants that we might

want for our garden. I have also used it successfully to identify amphibians, insects, birds, and even mammals (but it can be hard to get them to stay still long enough for a photo with an iPhone!). It is free, it is fun, and it is a great way for kids (and adults) to feel more connected to the natural world around them!

Related Apps for the family:

iNaturalist - the parent and more adult version of Seek - free

iBird Canada - fantastic resource for identifying all birds in your locale - \$6.99.



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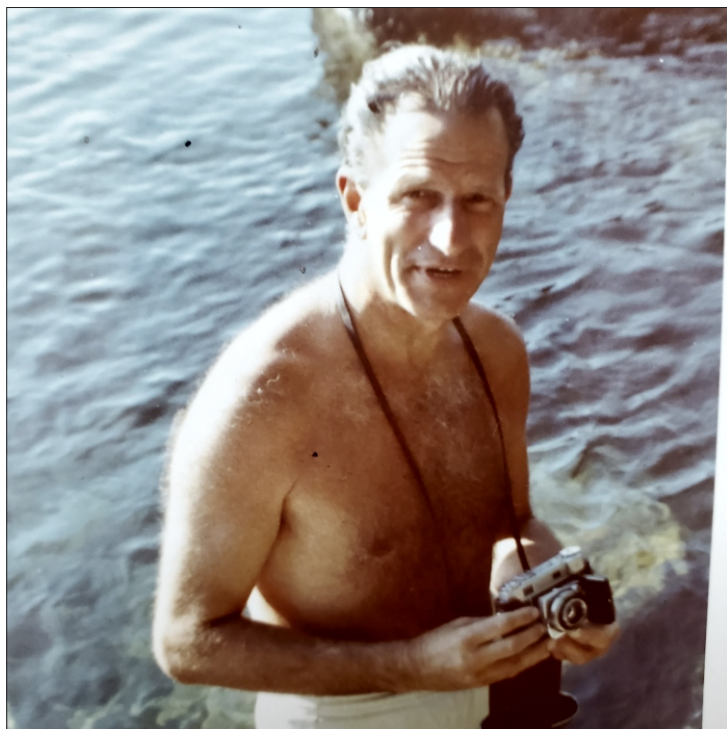
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Bruce Livingston

1971. A war raged on in SE Asia. North American cities filled with hippies preaching Peace and Love. American youth flowed north to Canada.

In the midst of this social turmoil, a small group of Canadian friends, led by the visionary Lloyd ("Det") Detwiller, had a different focus. How could they begin construction of a small community on a remote Gulf Island, where ferry access, electrical power and roads were non-existent?



Lloyd ("Det") Detwiller

Three generations later, the names of Detwiller, McElhanney, Marr, Noel and Thomas live on through their children and grandchildren. Other names are memories, having passed on their cabins - and their dreams - to newer arrivals to discover and enjoy.

1963. McElhanney Land Surveys Ltd. had completed the subdivision of approximately 250 acres of land, in two parcels, on the north shore of Valdes Island. Formerly under Timber Lease to MacMillan Bloedel, owner of forty percent or so of the Island, Det determined this land could be dedicated to recreational Crown leases. Crown policy stipulated one lot per family household. By August, copies of Applications to Lease began appearing on trees along this rough shoreline!

Visits to Valdes over the following years revealed a peaceful place, whose forests abounded with wildlife, and whose seas teemed with fish. Some of us heard these stories, but had not yet been to the Island. Yet, we created images of a magical place, and yearned for our turn to arrive.

Early builders included Fred Greening in South Bay, now owned by the Maidstones, and Tom Read in Starvation Bay, now owned by the Bells. Otherwise, not much building took place and many early lessees, no doubt, had some misgivings about committing energy and resources to such an inaccessible place!

In January and February, 1971, Bill Marr circulated hand-written letters to the lessees, and by May, plans were in place to ship materials to Valdes for the construction of five cabins. All materials packages were assembled by Bert Thomas, owner of Northern Building Supplies Ltd., on the North Arm of the Fraser River. Transportation was by tug and barge from Northern's yard to (now) Detwiller Point and to Noel Bay. The barge was beached, and the lumber, glass, nails and assorted other parts and pieces were unloaded by hand over the course of a couple of days. Total shipping cost for the tug and barge: \$450 (\$2945.50 today). Cost of construction materials for one cabin: \$352.50 (\$2115 today).

Simple cabins, more rocks than concrete, built with hand tools. Friends enjoying a shared adventure. Magnificent natural surroundings.

We have learned, in recent years, just how truly special the land and marine ecosystems of Valdes Island are, within the Gulf Islands and the Salish Sea. We have also begun to develop an understanding of the rich history of the Lyackson and other First Nations over thousands of years, sharing this special place. These are continuing stories.

Yet, as we enjoy our Valdes community today, with our cabins uniquely connected by the Island Shoreline Trail, we would be remiss not to remember the vision, energy and spirit of those whose legacy we have inherited. Theirs, and ours, are these first Island Stories.



The barge arrives with materials for Det's original cabin. Circa 1971

Det with son, Doug and a friend in front of the cabin at Detweiller Point



Photo Gallery...



Teams assemble for Valdes Days 2019 Photo: M.Bateman



Tiller's Folly concert 2019 Photo: D.Gibson



Calypso Orchids Photo: J&L Blackman



Valdes folk celebrating a new beginning

Photo: D&L Cochran

As mentioned in previous members eblasts, Mosaic Forest Management has acknowledged and supports islander's use of logging roads for recreational purposes. The Lyackson First Nation and their on-island representative, Gary Drouillard, are fully aware of this.

There are plans afoot to hold a group meeting with the Lyackson First Nation, Mosaic Forest Management and the Valdes Island Conservancy in the upcoming months. Such a meeting certainly shows the success of the Conservancy's outreach and level of understanding, trust and cooperation among these island groups. We look forward to finding projects that would allow a fusion of our energies and peoples and purposes.

The Conservancy continues to communicate with many other groups. Formal partnerships exist with the Galiano Conservancy and Mayne Island Conservancy to support a kelp monitoring study.



Bull Kelp (*Nereocystis luetkeana*) off Valdes
Photo: Warren Warttig

The VIC gave its support to Conservancy Hornby Island adding our name to their letter to the Minister of Fisheries to stop the herring fishery in the Gulf and we continue to be in the loop of the work being carried out by the Nearshore Habitat Recovery Project. We continue to receive support from the Vancouver Aquarium, Purple Martin Recovery Team, BC Community Bat Program, Capilano University, Simon Fraser University, the Royal Provincial Museum and other local scientists with their contributions to this newsletter and the Bioblitz.

So where can you fit into the Conservancy as we look forward to growing beyond teenagehood? Some groups like ours live in shared landscapes permanently together. We don't. Some groups like ours meet in person every month. We can't. BUT, time has shown that Valdes Island's residents are tightly stitched together by being drawn to a place off the grid and for most, deeply appreciating the natural landscapes of that grid and hoping that we can work toward a level of actions that will support the biological integrity of the island while being acutely aware that we are the new kids on the landscape and we have much to be thankful for.

So....We've reworked a couple of committees recently with the goals of the Lands and Trails Committee now being embraced by the **new** Conservation and Environmental Stewardship Committee and the Education and Conservation Committee expanding its reach and becoming the **new** Education, Communication and Outreach Committee. Perhaps one of these will appeal to you. Have a gander at the website to see the directions of each committee. <http://www.valdes-island-conservancy.org/>
Please consider becoming involved.

As ever, keeping our members in the loop takes communication. Watch out for Sarah Elliot and Jason Camp over the summer, as they will be walking the trails eager to provide you with a newsletter and a membership form.

Our in-person, on-island AGM is going on-line- at least for this year. Keeping with what now seems to be the norm, the board voted to host the Annual General Meeting via Zoom, Sunday October 18th 4:00. Active members will receive the required meeting information.

We hope you enjoy this rather full newsletter; it grew while the world of on-line communication grew over the last few months. Thank you to all the contributors and to Mark and Jane Bateman for putting it all together!

Looking forward to seeing you on the island's trails in the summer.

Marja

