

The Log

Friends of Ecological Reserves Newsletter

FOR ECOSYSTEM PROTECTION IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

FALL 1997

EDITORIAL

How well protected are our protected areas?

Ecological reserve status is intended to protect areas for science and education. The designation excludes all destructive uses. "Regulations under the Ecological Reserve Act prohibit prospecting for minerals, cutting of timber, livestock grazing, camping, road or trail-building, trapping, hunting, use of motorized vehicles or removal of flora or fauna," the Guide to Ecological Reserves in British Columbia relates. These places are dedicated to knowledge and protected as representative samples of ecosystems or landforms or as rare and sometimes unique places, to be conserved forever for the public benefit.

The penalty for violating the law in such special, valuable places should be severe — depending on the extent of the destruction.

Picking a few wildflowers and shooting animals are both contrary to the law in an ecological reserve. But one is relatively harmless, while the other isn't.

Say a group of hunters visits an ecological reserve that's widely known to be part of the most productive wildlife habitat in the entire region. They start shooting black bears. The huge carcasses pile up. Isn't that a heinous assault on the ecosystem?

But what if that group just didn't have a clue they were in an area where hunting was prohibited? And nobody they asked knew either? Let's leave aside the question of how the group chose to hunt in that particular place. Can we really accept the defence of ignorance? After all, the B.C. Hunting Synopsis makes it clear that it is the hunter's responsibility to discover whether hunting is restricted or prohibited in the area that is their destination.

The Danish filmmakers and their hunter-guides who shot three black bears in the Tahsish River Ecological Reserve in May 1996 as part of a promotion for commercial hunting were charged under the Ecological Reserve Act. The four individuals stood trial in Port Hardy Provincial Court on Octo-

ber 28. They used the defence of due diligence. They consulted outdated maps and the first edition of the BC Recreation Atlas, which didn't list protected areas. They didn't even try to contact a BC Parks office. Putting in at the Artlish River, they approached the estuarine ecological reserve by boat from Kyuquot Sound. There are no signs to warn people away from this restricted area. How do you put a sign up in a subtidal area? According to the North Island Gazette, "they ended up in the wrong place." The four got a sympathetic hearing in court. They were judged to have exercised due diligence in trying to determine the status of the area. They were fined \$25.

The court singled out BC Parks for criticism. It's policy not to publicise the locations of ecological reserves, to make it difficult to target and use ecological reserves for recreational purposes. The agency came under fire for trying to have it both ways — placing the onus on the user to get information, but making it difficult to get.

BC Parks must rethink its policy of not publicising the whereabouts of ecological reserves. Signs seem to be posted on some reserves, but not others. ☹

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President's Message

As the year draws to a close, I would like to thank all of you for supporting the work of the Friends of Ecological Reserves in British Columbia this year. Largely due to your generous donations, we have been able to do important work towards ensuring the protection of areas of ecological significance.

In this issue of The Log you will read reports on the progress of the Grasslands Inventory and Landowner Contact project and we have reprinted an article on land covenants by board member Briony Penn. We continue to support scholarly research projects related to ecological reserves and, this spring, have asked Jane Watson to present an illustrated lecture on her sea otter research following the AGM.

We have organized what should be an exciting field trip to the ecological reserve at Baynes Island off Squamish in early January which should be of interest to birders and naturalists. As we are trying to plan more field trips on the mainland, we would welcome your suggestions for excursions which might be of interest.

Finally, a reminder that memberships are renewable on an annual basis. If you renew your member-

ship for 1998 before the end of this calendar year, you may renew at the old rate. Beginning in 1998, individual and family, and schools/library/affiliate memberships will increase by \$5; a new category-students and seniors-remains at the current fee for individuals (\$15). This small increase will assist in meeting the costs associated with your membership-the newsletter, mandatory notices, postage, and so on.

Take a moment now to renew your membership, while you are reading this. If you can possibly manage it, make a donation with your renewal — it is making a big difference to the protection of ecological reserves. While we continue to ask for support from major funders, we recognize your generous and loyal support and give you our heartfelt thanks.

With best wishes for a happy holiday season.

Cheryl Borris Gore
President

Janet Felber

The Friends would like to thank friends who recently made donations in memory of Mrs. Janet Felber of Victoria. We appreciate your thinking of us!

Rebecca Finlay

Bec went the extra mile for whatever she supported. For instance, one of our special places, Woodley Range, just north of Ladysmith, was threatened by development. Absentee owners were given permission by the CVRD to put five-acre lots in this table-land containing very rare plants, and with organic farms below. She arranged for Dr. Adolf Ceska and Dr. Hans Roemer to view this unique place, in order to

Requests for funding for research

The Friends welcomes applications for funding to support biological and ecological research projects related to ecological reserves in British Columbia.

The application should include:

- title of research project
- name of applicant(s)
- mailing address
- institutional (college or university) affiliation
- a brief description of the research and its relationship to ecological reserves in BC
- any other pertinent details
- two letters of reference supporting the project

Financial information should include:

- total budget required for project, with an indication of contributions from other sources
- amount requested from FER

Applications will be judged on the merit of the project, the financial viability of the project and the financial need of the applicant. Research grants are generally between \$500-1500. As a condition of award, applicants will be asked to submit a report on the research findings and may be required to present a public lecture on their research. Applications for funding for 1998 should be received by April 1, 1998.

The Friends noted the passing of a long-time member from the Cowichan Valley, Rebecca Finlay. We received a number of donations in her memory. For these we are grateful.

Diana Angus sent this appreciation of her friend Bec Finlay:

Bec was an avid and accomplished birder and was part of a local Bird Alert for several years. she was the ideal team member, always open to suggestions, ready with ideas and totally reliable.

have it saved as an ecological reserve, which is its designation now.

Bec was an active supporter of Friends of Ecological Reserves, and she urged others to do the same. Outings that we arranged included a trip to Botanie Mountain Ecological Reserve, near Lytton, with Dr. Ceska. All our field trips were made the more memorable by Bec's enthusiasm and gusto. ♪

CALENDAR

Annual General Meeting
6 pm, Friday, February 20, 1998
Fisher Building, Room 200
Camosun College
Lansdowne Campus
3100 Foul Bay Road, Victoria

This year's Annual General Meeting coincides with Jane Watson's fundraiser slide presentation on sea otters. The board of directors for 1998 will be elected, and the meeting will also review the financial affairs of the society and examine a proposed budget for the current year.

The community ecology of Sea Otters on the west coast of Vancouver Island
Fund-raiser for Pearson College Marine Centre
An illustrated talk by Jane Watson, PhD
7:30 pm, Friday, February 20
Fisher Building, Room 100
Camosun College

This illustrated lecture will be a fund-raiser in support of Lester B. Pearson College of the Pacific's proposed marine education centre at Race Rocks. Jane Watson has donated her time and knowledge. Read about the latest results from Jane's sea otter monitoring project, which the Friends support financially, on p.10 in this issue. Our common goal is to preserve the staffing of the Race Rocks light, a vital factor in the management of this wildlife area, which is heavily used by recreational divers, whale watchers, fishers and kayakers.

Activities to help raise money for the marine education centre:

- We're having a ticket raffle on the night of the talk. The original art for the poster will be among the prizes. Please help by buying

- and/or selling tickets.
- We're selling 150 tickets to the sea otter talk at \$5. Volunteers welcome to assist or manage the hall, Fisher Room 100, beginning at 7 pm on February 20. Please let us know at (250) 595-4813 if you can help with this worthwhile fundraiser.

Field Trips

Beginning in 1998 the Friends will levy a \$5 fee per trip to defray administrative costs. A share of transport costs will be assessed on some trips.

Squamish River Eagles

Sunday, January 11, 1998

Every winter thousands of bald eagles gather on the Squamish River to feed on salmon. They roost in the branches of surrounding trees — truly an awesome congregation. A good site is the Baynes Island Ecological Reserve, which encloses a small island in the Squamish River, 10 km. north of its mouth. With Jim Wisnia as our guide, we will take a tour of the eagle winter habitat along the river. We'll meet at 11 am at the North Vancouver Outdoor School (NVOs) in Paradise Valley, have a tour and lunch (bring your own) and climb aboard mini-buses. Jim, co-warden of the Baynes Island ER, is a teacher/hatchery manager at NVOs, a 27-year-old residential outdoor school with a mini-farm, salmon hatchery, waterfowl and invertebrate study ponds, thousand year old cedars and many amenities.

To reach NVOs, drive north on Route 99 past Squamish and Brackendale. At the turnoff to Alice Lake Provincial Park, take a left turn (going away from the park) onto Squamish Valley Road. Follow that road for about 6 km., go over a bridge and take the right fork. Drive another 2 km. to the outdoor school parking lot.

This is planned as a day excursion. However, if you wish to stay

over Saturday night, the school can accommodate up to 20 people in the dormitory-style Butterfly House at \$15 per person; bring your own bedding and food (cooking facilities on-site).

For those driving from Victoria Sunday morning, catch the 8:30 am ferry from Departure Bay, Nanaimo to Horsehoe Bay, and drive north on Highway 99.

Those wishing to stay overnight, and those wishing to arrange mini-bus transportation from Victoria, should contact Peter at 595-4813 to make reservations before Friday, December 19.

South Winchelsea Id.

Sunday, April 26

This special island near the mouth of Nanoose Harbour is "a must" for protection, and The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC) is raising the money to buy it. The island is the key to protecting three other private islands and 19 other Crown-land islands in the area.

Our trip will feature wildflowers and seabirds. For those without their own transport, we will charter a vessel from Schooner Cove Marina, leaving at 10 am. To raise money for the land, the fee for the trip is \$15, plus a share of the cost of the charter. To register call Peter at (250) 595-4813 by April 3. Note: the trip may be cancelled for bad weather or other reasons.

WAIVER OF LIABILITY

ABOUT FIELD TRIPS SPONSORED BY THE FRIENDS OF ECOLOGICAL RESERVES: WE TAKE GREAT CARE TO ENSURE OUR FIELD TRIPS ARE SAFE AND ENJOYABLE. HOWEVER, NEITHER THE SOCIETY NOR MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY WHO ASSIST, NOR THE GUIDES OR TRANSPORTORS WITH WHOM WE CONTRACT, WILL BE LIABLE FOR INJURY, MISHAP OR PRIVATION INCURRED FOR ANY REASON ON ANY FIELD TRIP WE LEAD. WE MAY ASK PARTICIPANTS TO SIGN WAIVERS OF LIABILITY BEFORE JOINING OUR FIELD TRIPS.

Race Rocks Ecological Reserve

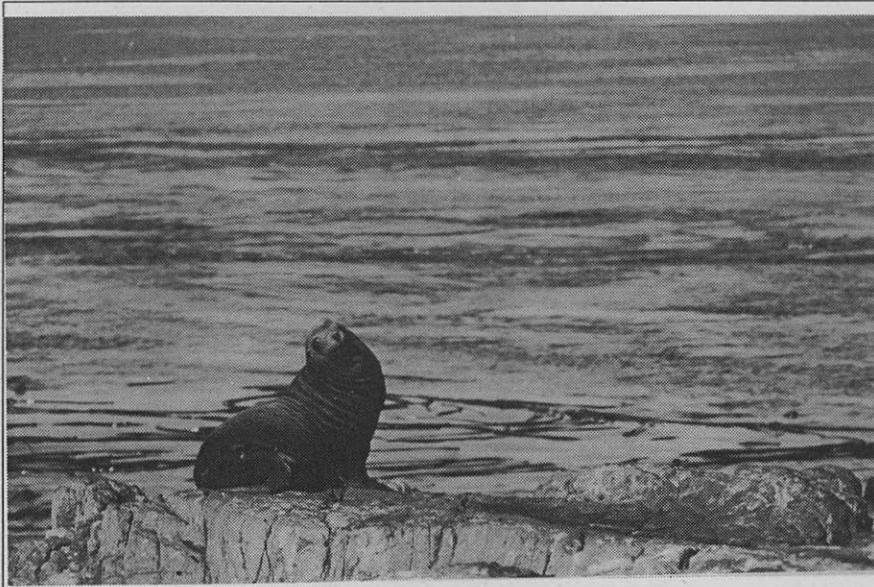
Saturday, September 20

Nearly 25 FER members set out on a gorgeous Indian summer day from the Pearson College dock, bound for Race Rocks Ecological Reserve. We were aboard the College's boat, piloted by Garry Fletcher, a biology

birders on the boat. Looking extra tiny amongst the dainty little Bonaparte's Gulls, these little swimming sandpipers spun around on the ocean surface, stirring up small morsels of invertebrate food. The auk family was

Marbled Murrelets, Ancient Murrelets, Pigeon Guillemots, and Rhinoceros Auklets.

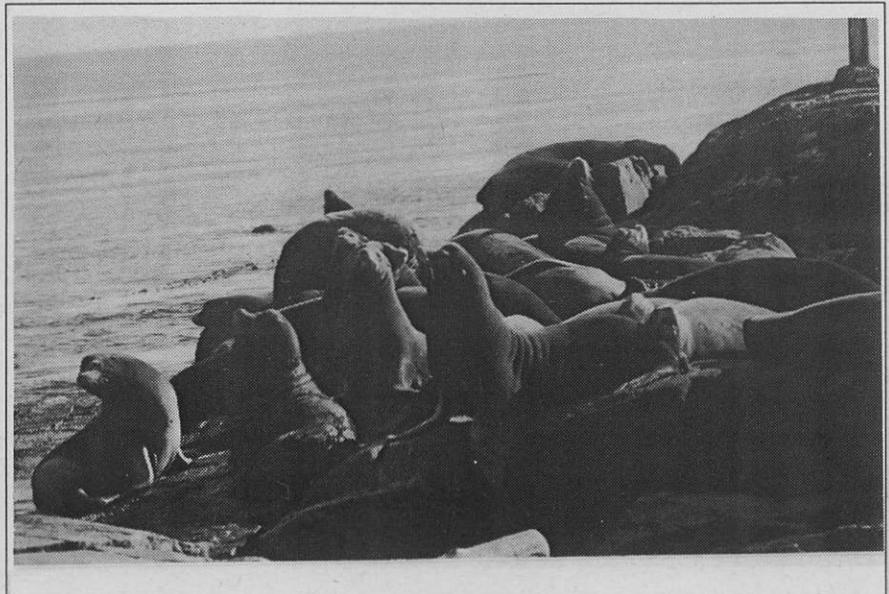
As we neared the rocks, Garry turned down the boat's engine to an idle so that we could feel and see the ebb tide that was beginning to grow in strength; the islands were rock ridges in a huge salt water river flowing out to the open Pacific. The morning air was filled with the roars of Northern Sea Lions and the circus barks of California Sea Lions. Most of the hundreds of sea lions were males, and huge bull Northern Sea Lions frolicked in the standing waves of the strong current. The air was also filled with the smell of their guano! Virtually hidden amongst the hordes of sea lions were at least two Elephant Seals—quiet, shy creatures in these circumstances, in direct contrast to their raucous cousins. Accompanying the big mammals on the rocks were congregations of Brandt's Cormorants, migrants from their nesting islands along the California and Oregon coasts. The abundance of all of these fish-eating animals is a graphic testament to the richness



instructor. Over the course of the morning, Garry not only passed along a wealth of ecological information, but brought us up to date on the present political state of the Reserve.

Leaving the narrow confines of Pedder Bay, we motored along the wild shores of Rocky Point, where scores of migrating Turkey Vultures glided unsteadily toward the tip of the point, the southernmost extent of Vancouver Island. There they soared in circular holding patterns until receiving their clearance to head south over the open waters of the Strait of Juan de Fuca. Out over the Strait, a few Northern Harriers made the watery crossing as well. On the water, a number of small flocks of migrating Red-necked Phalaropes were another highlight for the

well represented, too—a pair of Cassin's Auklets right off the starboard bow of the boat was the star attraction, but we also saw



of these waters.

A number of Glaucous-winged Gulls remained on their breeding colony on the islands, although the young had fledged. Along the shore were Surfbirds, Black Turnstones, Wandering Tattlers, Black Oystercatchers, and small flocks of Sanderlings.

Students divers from Pearson College explored the western side of the island and brought up some of the amazing diversity of underwater life for us to see: big sea urchins, chitons, sea stars, and much more. The abalones were impressive in size; Race Rocks is apparently one of the few remaining abalone breeding sites on this part of the coast.

When we landed, we were greeted by Carol and Mike Slater, who had been released from their formal light keeping duties by the Coast Guard since the light was automated, but who have remained on the island as employees of the College. Last spring, Pearson College signed an agreement with the Canadian Coast Guard to allow the College to make use of surplus light station buildings and facilities, which they will operate as an education and research centre. Research and environmental monitoring will be continued

(water temperature and salinity measurements have been made off the islands continually since the 1920s!). The Slaters are now on-site custodians of the facility and wardens of the Ecological Reserve. This reserve does need the presence of wardens, since disturbance of the sea lions and nesting sea birds by tour boats and other sightseers is an ongoing concern, as well as the need to monitor divers.

BC Parks is developing a Master Plan for the Reserve now which will formalize the relationship with Pearson College and establish priorities for future improvements to the Reserve. The latter include the addition of Great Race Rock, the expansion the outer boundaries of the Reserve to the 50m depth contour, and, with the cooperation of the Federal Government, the establishment of a corresponding marine

protected area in the water column, with a 'no take' zone. Man-



agement of disturbance by visitors is also a priority; anchoring, landing and close approach to the Reserve will be discouraged.

The trip ended with a pleasant lunch in the College's cafeteria and a meeting in the faculty lounge, where our gaze constantly wandered to the gorgeous big trees outside and the sparkling waters of Pedder Bay. If members want more information on Race Rocks, Garry Fletcher has set up a magnificent page on the Web: the URL is www.pearson-college.uwc.ca/pearson/racerock/raccksre

You can learn about the birds, fish, invertebrates, algae, and then download the sounds of hundreds of sea lions or even watch a sea lion movie!

Syd Cannings

GRASSLANDS

Landowner contact in the Cariboo-Chilcotin

The Friends of Ecological Reserves has recently initiated its Grassland Landowner Contact Project. This program is geared towards establishing stewardship agreements with landowners to ensure the continuance of B.C.'s grasslands.

The project has been initiated in the Cariboo-Chilcotin region. These grasslands are provincially significant as they form the northern distribution limit for many plant and animal species. This region supports a variety of important species. In the following, (r) denotes red-listed, defined as extirpated, endangered or threatened, and (b) denotes blue-listed species, which are considered vulnerable in the province. These include California Bighorn Sheep (b), Spotted Bat (b), Prairie Falcon (r), and Slim Larkspur (r). It is home to both the bluebunch wheatgrass-junegrass and big sage-bluebunch wheatgrass plant communities (r, r). Valley bottoms, which are almost entirely privately held for ranching, are used by more red-listed species than the rest of the grasslands in the area.

The ability to work toward protecting land in these areas can be considered pivotal to ensuring the maintainance of habitat for these plants and animals.

The ranching tradition has continued in the Cariboo for more than a century. The history of the area gives an incredible insight into the stewardship of these grasslands. It is not difficult to find a manager who is well aware of the damage that was done to the area prior to the 1950s. At this time the number of cattle grazing in many areas was well beyond the carrying capacity for maintainance of many grassland species. Members of the community will also tell you with pride about reforms that have been made to improve grazing practice. Their interests are clear: by protecting grassland conditions they are able to protect cattle ranching for generations to come.

The Friends of Ecological Reserves shares the desire to conserve these grasslands. The Grasslands Landowner Contact Project is our opportunity to further these discussions and share

knowledge on how areas can be protected for the future. Travel into the area to speak to landowners and interest groups has begun with the goal of establishing a lasting, cooperative relationship and extending conservation tools.

We would like to extend a sincere thanks to The McLean Foundation and Eden Conservation Trust for their generous support of this program. It has ensured our progress so far and for the coming year.

Once the project has been well established in the Cariboo-Chilcotin we hope to extend our efforts to the East Kootenays.

Nichola Gerts

Re: Empire Valley — Minister Responds

July 15, 1997

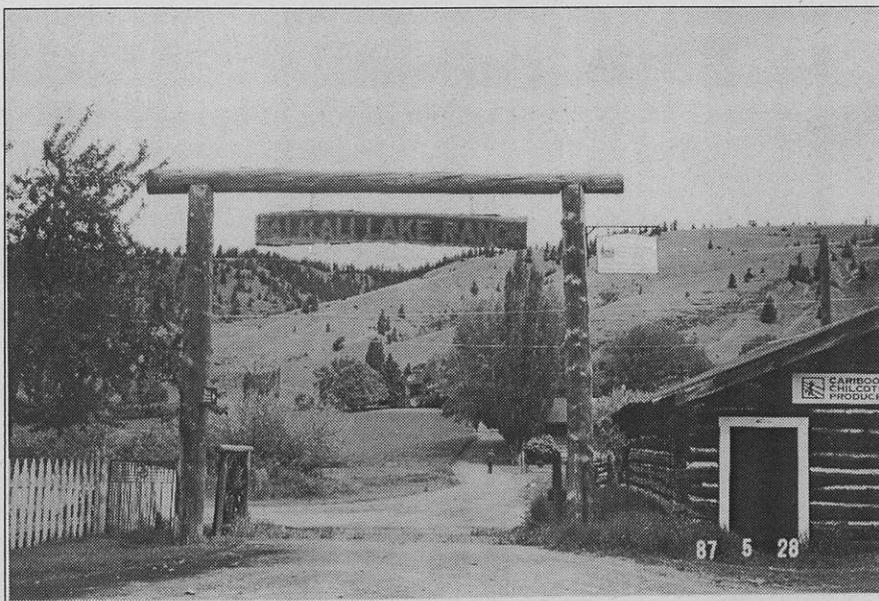
I am responding to the letter from the Friends of Ecological Reserves published in the Spring 1997 edition of The Log.

I too want the Empire Valley Ranch to be part of the Churn Creek protected area and I will do my utmost to make it so.

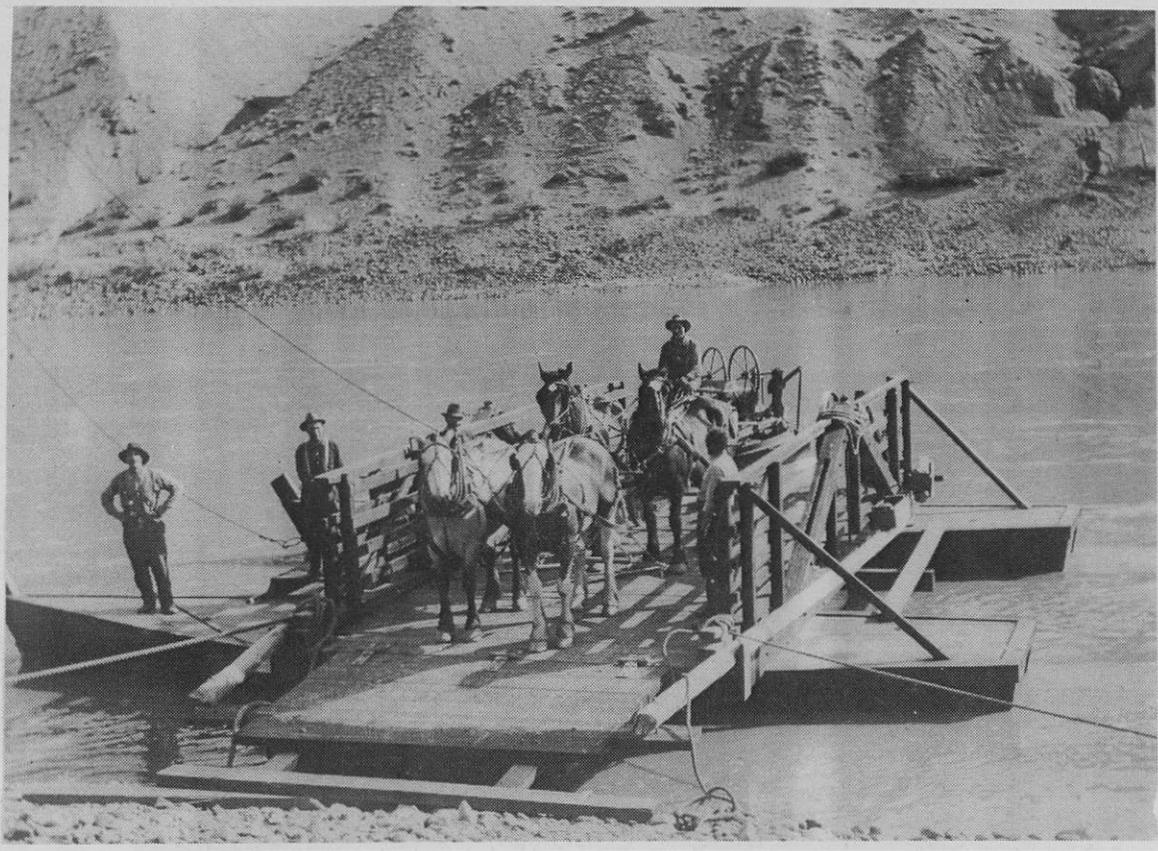
The Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks and the Ministry of Forests are working to acquire the Empire Valley Ranch for inclusion in the Churn Creek Protected Area. Negotiations have begun with the new land owners. I am optimistic that a satisfactory purchase agreement will be negotiated.

I appreciate the support expressed by the Friends of Ecological Reserves for this and other components of the Cariboo-Chilcotin Land Use Plan.

David Zirnelt
Minister of Forests



Alkali Lake Ranch is a historic spread east of the Fraser - Chilcotin junction



BC ARCHIVES HP 83063

East Kootenay Grasslands

Although the grasslands of the upper Fraser area between Lillooet and the Junction area have been the main focus of the Grasslands Landowner Contact project, we are also looking east to the very important and much threatened remnant grasslands in the East Kootenays. Some preliminary research was done in 1997 by a student working with Briony Penn and by Nichola Gerts. In July I spent several days in the area meeting with Ministry of Environment officials and local residents concerned about environmental protection.

This preliminary work has confirmed fact that grasslands in this area are under severe threat. The area suffers from development pressures centered around Cranbrook in the south and the many resort communities, such as Invermere and Fairmont Hot Springs further north. The entire

area is considered highly desirable by residents of Alberta, particularly Calgary. The developers with deep pockets have been purchasing large parcels of land both for immediate development and speculation. All of this pressure is occurring in an area where the grasslands are naturally scattered and divided into comparatively small parcels. Small parcels are being purchased for hobby farm use. The high level of development, and increased number of residences on hobby farms also leads to increased fire suppression. My first observation was that in most areas the grasslands are being taken over by the surrounding forests. Some of the largest areas of grassland are on First Nation lands near Grasmere and they will become an important component of the landowner contact program in 1998.

Bill Turner

Above: Big Bar ferry on the Fraser River, in the heart of the Cariboo grasslands, 1920. The team of horses is hitched to a road grader. The most isolated ferry in the province is 80 km west of Clinton and 64 km north of Lillooet. After 1918 a wooden pontoon ferry transported cattle and sheep for summer grazing.

Protect more of the Sub-Boreal Spruce Zone

I have been working in the Chilcotin grasslands and this is a special area of concern and interest for me. I live in the Sub-Boreal Spruce Zone and I am especially concerned at the low percentage of protected area in this zone, especially with the levels of logging in the area. Perhaps this could be the next area of interest for the Friends of Ecological Reserves.

Susan Hemphill
member in Horsefly
(250) 620-3498

Conservation Covenants

This article appeared in Briony's regular Wild Side column, in Victoria's Monday Magazine, in July.

A question came up a few years ago when I was drafting out my will. The regular bits were straight forward — original manuscripts of Wild Side to the Reform Party, my bicycle to the bank manager. Then, I raised a question with the lawyer about ensuring the continuing good health of the newts that live in the swamp by our house. He hadn't anticipated this question and was at a temporary loss for words — a unique phenomenon for a lawyer. I had to clarify my concerns. How, I asked, do I let future owners know where the other inhabitants live on this patch of earth that I have shared with them? There is nothing on the land title about their habitat and rights as co-tenants. Some fool, I declared, might come along and drain the swamp, raze the forest and mow the meadow. There seemed to be no way to protect nature.

Lawyers love challenging questions presented to them which require their considerable talents. (I knew we were on the same track when he muttered something about codicils — I think a rare species of fish). It became apparent that I had raised a question that the mainstream legal profession at the time were only just beginning to get their teeth into in B.C. We both went off and did our homework and three years later came back with the state of the art in voluntary conservation of private land for perpetuity. Today, a landowner has lots of options: there is now a swarm of land trusts to which you can donate land or interests in land; there are legal tools, such as conservation covenants that are legally binding and prevent future development that is at odds with newt development;

and there are tax breaks for those voluntarily give up rights in land to protect the natural values.

We have come a long way in three years.

The most exciting legal tool is the conservation covenant — a voluntary, written agreement between a landowner and a conservation land trust in which both parties promise to protect the land in an agreed way. The covenant is filed on the land title, it lasts forever and binds future owners of the land to protect it. The owner has the duty of care and the trust checks every year that the owner is honouring the agreement. The government introduced the legislation in 1994 enabling landowners to grant covenants to non-government organisations. As a way to encourage stewardship on private land, covenants are desirable because they are voluntary; they don't cost the public anything; the landowner retains ownership and takes on the role of steward. For some landowners that are faced with rising property taxes and ominous capital gains tax for their family when they die, the covenants might provide the mechanism for taking value out of the land so that families aren't driven to sell and subdivide cherished places.

The federal income tax act was amended in 1996 so that tax receipts could be issued from non-profit organizations for a donation of a covenant or full title on ecologically important land. This is one idea in the political arena in which even the greens and the reformers can agree. The right like it because it is cheaper to have people like me to manage land for newts into the future than hiring civil servants.

The real value of conservation covenants is that they are one tool to address the problems facing the

parts of B.C. that are under the most threat. The most ecologically important areas of B.C. are also the first areas that were put into private ownership—the valley bottoms, the Fraser delta, the grasslands on the coast and the interior. We have lots of parks of rocks and ice but virtually none of the areas where the greatest diversity of life exists have any protected status. We either protect our land voluntarily or it goes forever along with the rough-skinned newts, the phantom orchids, the great blue herons, the Garry oak, the long-eared bats, the Edith's checkerspot butterfly, the red squirrel, the alligator lizard, the burrowing owl and the badger.

Around Victoria, if you are a landowner with a swamp, a bog, a creek, a Garry oak meadow, a patch of old growth Douglas-fir, or even a patch of second growth fir then you might consider registering a conservation covenant on this land with a local nature trust. Nature/land trusts are popping up everywhere. Organisations that will take on covenants in Victoria include the newly formed The Land Conservancy of British Columbia and Victoria's HATS (Habitat Acquisition Trust). These trusts offer advice on the ecological values of the land, drafting up covenants and other stewardship options, management concerns, etc. The West Coast Environmental Law Research Foundation spear-headed the legal reform for conservation covenants and produced variety of educational booklets on how to draft and prepare these covenants, they also offer legal advice.

I went back to my lawyer this year (he told me he spotted a few codicils from his boat the other day) and told him I was ready to draw up a conservation covenant for this small corner of land. It is a

Covenants

very small fee as most of the groundwork in developing the wording of these covenants has now been done and besides, he said, it makes a change in the daily grind of human legal wrangles over money to defend a newt.

For information a new book has been published by the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks called Stewardship Options for Private Landowners in British Columbia, written and illustrated by myself and Donald Gunn, my partner, who is somewhat worried about my fixations with newts.

Briony Penn

BC GOVERNMENT

Protected area progress with Northern Rockies

The BC Government announced the Muskwa-Kechika area in the Northern Rockies on October 8. The protected area will total 1.17 million hectares, including new and existing areas, surrounded by 2.24 million ha. of special management areas. The plans were negotiated through all-user land and resources management planning (LRMP) processes in Fort St. John and Fort Nelson, although First Nations did not participate.

The Muskwa-Kechika area Internet site (www.luco.gov.bc.ca/

nrockies) has this: "The wildlife populations are unparalleled in B.C. — 4,000 caribou, 15,000 elk, 22,000 moose and 7,000 Stone's sheep. The area supports the only Plains bison population in the province and also includes 3,500 black and grizzly bears as well as coyotes, wolves, wolverines and cougars. Furbearers like squirrel, mink, weasel, marten, lynx and beaver abound. Upland game birds include the sharp-tailed, ruffled and blue grouse and several species of ptarmigan. Wetlands provide habitat for the Canada and snow goose, trumpeter swan and a variety of ducks including mallards, blue-winged teals and buffleheads. Predator species include the gyrfalcon, bald eagle, boreal owl and broad-winged hawk, while song birds like the European starling, yellow-headed blackbird and several species of waxwings also live in the region. Endangered bird species include the Connecticut warbler, the sharp-tailed sparrow and the upland sandpiper."

New protected areas include Northern Rocky Mountains (645 000 ha.), Graham-Laurier (100 780), Denetiah (97 600), the Liard River Corridor (90 450), Redfern-Keily (80 800), Wokkpush (37 300 ha. upgraded from recreation area status), Scatter River Old Growth (1140), Dall River (640), the Toad River Hot Springs (400), Horneline Creek (300) and the Prophet River Hot Springs (180).

There are 16 other LRMPs in various stages of deliberation, according to a July posting by LUCO: Dawson Creek, Prince George, Fort St. James, Mackenzie, Vanderhoof, Bulkley, Kalum, Lakes, Kispiox, Cassiar-Iskut-Stikine, Robson Valley, Lillooet, Kamloops, Okanagan-Shuswap, Central Coast and Queen Charlotte Islands. ☺

PROTECTED AREA PLANS

Spruce Lake wilderness park proposal imperilled

The Southern Chilcotin Mountains Wilderness Society (SCMWS), the long-time proponent of a park around Spruce Lake, was accepted as a member of the Lillooet Land and Resources Management Plan (LRMP) table in October. This planning process (see *The Log*, Fall 1996) is planning to have its first meetings this fall.

A recent communiqué summarizes two current issues:

1. The proposed Spruce Lake Wilderness Park was whittled down to 60 000 ha from 90 000+ ha. when the Stein Park was created in 1995. The total area proposed for protection in the Lillooet Forest District, after whittling, is 18 per cent, a full six percent over the 12 per cent ceiling on protection advanced by timber interests. The original proposal would protect 21 percent of the total area, nine percent over the cap. The SCMWS wants the process to proceed without a cap or maximum imposed on the area to be protected.

2. Among areas that have been whittled out of the wilderness proposal is Bonanza Basin. Its fate was supposed to be decided by the LRMP, but Ainsworth Lumber Ltd.

wants to start building roads that will extend across Tyaughton Creek to within five km of Spruce Lake, the heart of the wilderness area, "forever compromising this country as a wilderness." The SCMWP wants Bonanza Basin protected from roading and included in the LRMP process.

A recent alert on the Landwatch E-mail discussion group warns that "Ainsworth is attempting to pre-empt the possibility of parks protection for the South Chilcotins by roading it first. The forest industry has attempted this elsewhere in the province. We need your help to make sure that the South Chilcotins are not logged and that the public is given a fair chance to decide the future of this area through the LRMP process."

The message urges readers to write to Premier Glen Clark and David Zirnhelt, Minister of Forests, Parliament Buildings, Victoria, BC V8V 1X4, asking them to stop the road into Tyaughton Creek and let the LRMP decide the future of this area. Premier Clark's fax is (250) 387-0087; Minister Zirnhelt's is 387-1040. ☺

ECOLOGICAL RESERVES

August 24, 1997

Just a quick note to bring you up to date on this year's field season in Checleset Bay (Ecological Reserve 108). We had an excellent summer, the weather was very cooperative, and we were able to complete most of the proposed work. This year I was accompanied by three coworkers, Leah Saville, Lara Gibson and Paul Hughes.

We surveyed the sea otter population from Brooks Peninsula (Clerke Point) to Hesquiat Peninsula (Estevan Point) and counted 1793 sea otters within this range. (The numbers are preliminary; they have to be checked again.) We counted 597 sea otters within Ecological Reserve 108. This number is virtually unchanged from the previous two years (1995 & 1996) estimates, and I suspect that the sea otters in Checleset Bay are probably at (or approaching) equilibrium density. The population appears to have redistributed itself a bit. For example, there are now sea otters foraging within

Sea Otter research

Kyuquot Harbour [Walters Cove]. We were unable to survey the population above Brooks Peninsula. But we know from previous years and recent anecdotal reports that the sea otter population extends up to (and slightly beyond) Quatsino Sound.

We examined all of the permanent sites in Checleset Bay and Kyuquot Sound. These sites were all established 10 - 11 years ago. These sites, which are visited each year, have been used to document changes in community structure associated with sea otter foraging. Three of these sites, established outside the sea otter range, were originally urchin barrens. All of the sites have been occupied by sea otters and are now all kelp forests. Each site continues to change in species composition. Some of these changes may be associated with "warm water events" whereas others may represent natural successional changes.

The very "oldest" of the sites (sea otters present for >20 years) is starting to undergo dramatic

changes as the older plants in the kelp forest are starting to die, possibly from old age. It will be very interesting to see what successional processes occur next. Because the plants are mostly the same age (dating back to the arrival of sea otters), death of older plants in these kelp forests results in an abrupt thinning of the kelp forest. Over the next years (generations of kelp plants) I suspect we will see kelp forests of more mixed ages, and thus greater demographic stability. The sites that were occupied by sea otters in the last 5 years are now dominated by large *Pterogophera* (tree kelp) forests. Much like in the older forests, the kelp plants in these newer sites are mostly of the same age.

I would like to once again thank the Friends for your support. Your kind financial assistance enabled me to complete this year's research.

Jane Watson
Malaspina University College

Jane Watson will give a slide talk in Victoria in February — details on p 3.

Rare trout in the UEL Ecological Reserve: there yesterday, gone today?

The identity of the mystery animal in the University of British Columbia Endowment Lands Ecological Reserve (*The Log*, Spring 1997, page 1)? The denizen of Point Gray that can survive summers in a low-oxygen situation is a cut throat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarki*). Volunteer stream steward and advocate Terry Slack, who pointed out the rarity and vulnerability of the population on a field trip last January, isn't too concerned about recreational fishers learning the whereabouts of the trout stream any more. There don't seem to be any fish in Cutthroat Creek now. Their disappearance followed their discovery in short order. Terry thinks it's the result

both of the way water supply is controlled in the district and of management lapses in the ecological reserve. The downward trend in the group's population, and its increasing inviability, were forewarned in studies undertaken at U.B.C. See "Spatial stability of cut throat trout in a small coastal stream" by J. Heggenes, T.G. Northcote and A. Peter (*Canadian Journal of Fisheries and Agricultural Sciences*, Volume 48, 1991) and "The biological significance of stream trout populations living above and below waterfalls" by Thomas G. Northcote and Gordon F. Hartman (University of British Columbia, Department of Zoology, 1988). Management of the ecologi-

cal reserve by the Greater Vancouver Regional District leaves Terry unimpressed. There are still no signs asking dog owners to control their pets while in Pacific Spirit Park. (The reserve borders mostly on the park, partly on South West Marine Drive.) There is no official interest in the unique cut throat population. If this is an example of how ecological reserves are going to be managed under the new system, Terry is not hopeful. A bit of good news is that the David Suzuki Foundation donated \$40,000 to the Musqueam First Nation to study the fish populations in Musqueam Creek and Cutthroat Creek, a tributary. ♪

To Save a Special Forest

A Denman Islander's crusade to preserve a remnant of what was once everywhere

Mention "old growth" to Dave Fraser and he just shakes his head. "This is not about old growth," says Fraser, frustrated.

The old growth sits in a parcel of 144 acres (58.3 hectares) on the eastern shore of Denman Island. What fuels Dave's frustration is the very real possibility that it could be logged and "developed."

"I'm afraid that people don't really know the real value of this forest," a troubled Fraser says.

Events going back hundreds of years, both natural and human, have made this nugget of land known as the Lindsay-Dickson Forest an extraordinary place. Anyone coming to Denman soon becomes aware of it. It sits mid-island offering glimpses of what was once commonplace. A chunk of it untouched, with trees dating back to before Columbus. Various stages of biological development surround the old growth.

"I have people coming up to me all the time saying, 'There's lots of old growth, Dave, why are you getting so worked up?'"

"This is not about old growth," he repeats. "This is about a unique plant community that is 99 percent gone," he says, unrolling a multi-coloured map of B.C.

The energetic Denman Islander who gives his age as "nearly old" sat on the board of The Denman Conservancy Association at the time when the first attempts of preserving the Lindsay-Dickson forest began. He was there through the legal actions and the tentative beginning negotiations between the Conservancy and the Developer. Much of his work became the basis for the drive to bring the Government on board in the move toward conservation of the forest.

Fraser's map from the Ministry of Forests shows B.C.'s 14 "biogeoclimatic zones," each with its own combination of plants and

wildlife. The rainforest zone, known as the Coastal Hemlock zone, is one of the largest in the province. It covers almost all of Vancouver Island and reaches north to the Queen Charlottes and Alaska. This is the area people think of when they think of B.C.'s world-famous forests.

However, a few parts of Vancouver Island are outside this rainforest zone: mountain-top alpine areas, and a thin strip along the Island Highway reaching from Metchosin (southwest of Victoria) to just north of Bowser (near Courtenay). This thin strip of land, including most of the Gulf Islands and a small coastal area near Powell River, make up the Coastal Douglas Fir (CDF) zone. It is this area that interests Fraser.

"It's like there is an invisible border in our forests," he says, pointing to a line dividing green and yellow sections on his map. "It is no accident that travellers often leave Courtenay in the rain and arrive on Denman Island in sunshine. They have gone from a rainforest area into a rain shadow forest area. They have moved from one bio-region to another."

The CDF zone is tiny, with a total land area of only 205 225 hectares (just under 800 square miles). The typical forest in this zone has a lot of Douglas Fir, with cedar in wetter spots. The understorey is usually salal or Oregon grape. The drier climate also means that this zone is the only area in Canada where Arbutus and Garry Oak grow naturally.

Of the total area, 60 per cent (123 564 ha.) is on Vancouver Island and, according to Ministry of Forests statistics, less than one per cent (or 1056 ha.) exists intact. Less than 150 ha. of this is protected; most of it is privately owned.

Fraser recalls the 1987 Bruntland Report to the United Nations on

Environment and Development which called on governments to protect 12 percent of each bio-region in parks and ecological reserves. Meeting this goal was an NDP election promise in 1991.

Fraser wants the B.C. Government to call a halt to all cutting of old growth areas in the CDF zone. "They suggest protecting 12 per cent, and there is one per cent of the CDF zone left," he says. "The time to stop cutting old growth in this area is yesterday."

A recent report of the B.C. Conservation Data Centre (CDC) has classified Denman Island's Lindsay-Dickson Forest as "S1," the category reserved for only the rarest plant communities. The report recommends: "It should be possible to maintain the ecological integrity of the plant communities occurring here. To ensure their viability, however, a buffer zone is required. The more disturbed and younger stands on the property would provide this buffer".

Armed with the CDC report, the Denman Conservancy Association lobbied the government strenuously. When the Conservation Ecologist of the Environment Ministry's Ecological Reserve program recommended securing the Lindsay-Dickson Forest as an Ecological Reserve in 1992 the Government came on board. Negotiations with the Developer began in 1993. Negotiations have been on going since then.

The fate of the Lindsay-Dickson Forest has yet to be finalized. Many hurdles have been overcome with a few yet to go. Letters encouraging conservation of the Lindsay-Dickson Forest should be sent to Environment Minister Cathy McGregor. In the meantime, Dave Fraser is hanging on to his map.

Randy Robinson
updated by Denman Conservancy

Cummins Valley saved

Little fanfare accompanied the protection of the 15 000-hectare lower Cummins Valley last summer — just passing mention in the July 8 news release announcing the Kootenay - Boundary Land Use Plan implementation plan. Only the local press covered the announcement. The rare intact Rocky Mountain rainforest and surrounding upland were then designated a Protected Area via order-in-council, to be followed, in the next session of the legislature, by park status. The good news was celebrated in Golden, where advocates have worked for years to free the Cummins from an unsustainable demand for wood. The multi-user table in the regional land use planning process earlier urged designation of the Upper Cummins as a provincial park, and a 6100-hectare alpine park was created. The government recognized the uniqueness of the intact Lower Cummins as well. Overall the regional land-use plan will increase protected area in South-eastern B.C. to 13.9 percent. The rate of harvest will be cut back from 6.5 to 5.5 million cubic metres a year.

Special thanks are due to Ellen Zimmerman of the East Kootenay Environmental Society for pursuing the issue and to Jim Doyle, MLA for Columbia River - Revelstoke, who convinced colleagues of the value of protecting the Cummins. The Government is to be congratulated for an act of vision.

Ellen reported on a day-trip into the Cummins in *BC Environmental Report*, Sept/Oct. Ellen found the going very wet, with myriad bugs. Lichenologist Trevor Goward will publish a report for readers of *The Log*. He was able to identify species thought to be oceanic that probably grow closer to the continental divide than anywhere else. ☪

South Winchelsea Id. proposal update

On November 4th the Regional District of Nanaimo voted to reaffirm its support in principle of the Ballenas Winchelsea purchase proposal. Canadian Wildlife Service has issued a letter of support for the project, citing its national significance. A proposal for funds has been submitted to the Pacific Marine Heritage Legacy program.

The Lead agencies on the project are The Land Conservancy of British Columbia (TLC), the Nanaimo and Area Land Trust and the Islands Trust Fund. Other supporting organizations include the Friends of Ecological Reserves, the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society, and the local Conservancies on Salt Spring, Denman, and Quadra Islands. A number of individuals and businesses have made significant donations.

The partners need to raise \$10,000 by December 24 and another \$130,000 by the end of February.

A number of fundraising events are being planned, including a pledge drive. This provides the opportunity for those interested in supporting this vital project to pledge amounts as small as \$10 per month or \$25 per year over the five years.

Copies of the TLC South Winchelsea Island charitable donation and pledge form are enclosed with this issue of The Log. The Friends made a \$100 donation to TLC, and we urge members to support acquisition of this exceptional site in the Coastal Douglas Fir Zone.

For more information or pledge forms contact The Land Conservancy of British Columbia at (250) 361-7693.

Bill Turner
President, TLC

Contacting land trusts

Around Victoria, if you are a landowner with a swamp, a bog, a creek, a Garry oak meadow, a patch of old growth Douglas-fir, or even a patch of second growth fir then you might consider registering a conservation covenant on this land with a local nature trust.

Briony Penn's advice (see pages 8-9 in this issue) applies to all of B.C. To contact a land trust that registers conservation covenants:

The Land Conservancy of BC (TLC)
5793 Old West Saanich Road
Victoria, B.C. V8V 3X3
(250)361-7693

Habitat Acquisition Trust
PO Box 8552
Victoria, B.C. V8W 3S9
Ph: (250) 995-2428

Turtle Island Earth Stewards (TIES)
PO Box 3308
Salmon Arm, B.C. V1E 4S1
Ph: (250) 832-3993

Cowichan Community Land Trust
6 — 55 Station Street
Duncan, B.C. V9L 1M2
Ph: (250) 746-0227

For other trusts contact Bill Turner, director of the Land Trust Alliance of B.C., at TLC (above).

The Log

Friends of Ecological Reserves Newsletter

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We promote the establishment, management and maintenance of ecological reserves in British Columbia



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