

KLASKISH RIVER

ER #129

ORIGINAL PURPOSE To protect an outstanding estuary and adjacent alluvial forest in the Hypermaritime subzone of the Coastal Western Hemlock Zone

OVERVIEW

Date established:	5 July 1990	Location:	Northwest coast of Vancouver Island, 23 km SW of Port Alice
ORC #:	3129	Latitude:	50°16'N
Map number:	92 L/5	Longitude:	127°42'W

Total Area:	132 ha	Elevation:	-0.5-152 m
Land:	132 ha		

Access: Access is by boat, float-plane or helicopter.

Biogeoclimatic Zone:	Coastal Western Hemlock (CWH)
Biogeoclimatic Variant:	CWHvh1 Southern Very Wet Hypermaritime
Ecosection:	Nahwitti Lowland
Region:	Vancouver Island
Management Area:	Nootka

COMPOSITION

Physical: The reserve encloses the lower 1.5 km of the Klaskish River, the northern half of Klaskish Basin, alluvial lowlands along the river and in its estuary, and valley slopes to 30 m elevation west of Klaskish River and Basin and the 150 m level east of the river. Soils include Regosols in alluvial areas, Gleysols and Humisols in the inner estuary and Podzols on the uplands.

Biological: The main feature of the reserve is the near-pristine estuary of the Klaskish River. This has formed at the upper end of Klaskish Basin, a steep-walled lagoon connected to Klaskish Inlet by a narrow channel. Marine communities dominated by eelgrass and rockweed occur in the lower intertidal zone. Three saltmarsh communities have been described on rich flats in the upper intertidal zone. The Lingbye's sedge community is the most seaward of these, and is replaced toward the forest edge by tufted hairgrass-red fescue-silverweed-springbank clover brackish meadow.

Forest stands dominated by Sitka spruce occur on alluvial materials adjacent to the Klaskish River and estuary. Old-growth western hemlock-western redcedar and hemlock-amabilis fir associations, with blueberry, fern and moss understories, dominate the uplands.

Sitka spruce in this reserve are not of great stature as older specimens are subject to periodic blowdown. Evidence of a catastrophic blowdown that may have occurred 100 to 150 years ago is still seen in the form of large rotting logs on the ground.

At least one rare plant, the Western lilaeopsis is present. The native Olympia Oyster, of limited occurrence on the British Columbia coast, occurs in Klaskish Basin.

The estuary is important for wintering waterfowl, including Trumpeter Swans. Black-tailed Deer and Black Bears utilize the reserve and Roosevelt Elk were reported in the past. Significant runs of Chinook, Pink, Coho and Chum Salmon spawn in the Klaskish River, some of these within the reserve. The lower river and estuary provide important rearing habitat for juvenile salmonids.

Cultural: The ER is fully within the **Quatsino First Nation** territory. There may be First Nations' culturally significant sites within this reserve. The reserve may be used for subsistence hunting, fishing, food gathering, botanical harvesting etc.

MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

SIGNIFICANT SPECIES	BC LIST STATUS	COSEWIC STATUS	CF PRIORITY
Queen Charlotte avens	Red listed		1
Sea Otter	Blue listed	Special Concern (2007)	1
Grey Whale	Blue listed	Special Concern (2004)	4
smooth douglasia	Blue listed		3
three-forked mugwort	Blue listed		3
alp lily	Blue listed		2
Bald Eagle		Not At Risk (1984)	6
Black Oystercatcher			5
Calder's lovage			2
Chinook Salmon		Threatened (2006)	2
Chum Salmon			6
Coho Salmon		Endangered (2002)	2
Pink Salmon			6
Trumpeter Swan		Not At Risk (1996)	5
Great Blue Heron	No status		2
Olympia Oyster*	Blue listed	Special Concern (2000)	4

THREATS

Climate Change: Estuaries have been assessed by researchers as areas vulnerable to climate change. Decreased salination, rising water levels, possible altered water quality and warming of water may result from changing climatic conditions and lead to changes in community composition. These changes would be reflected in the species assemblages both in the estuarine areas and in terrestrial communities.

Recreation: Small marine vessels are accessing the sensitive estuary and disrupting the wildlife.

Pollution: Plastic waste is an increasing concern in coastal areas.

Oil spills are an ever present risk in coastal areas.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Studies of the Olympia oyster and its reintroduction.

*The Olympia Oyster was extirpated from this estuary due to bulldozer activity. The reserve protects suitable habitat for reintroduction, but there is no information available regarding current status.

SCIENTIFIC NAMES OF SPECIES MENTIONED IN THE KLASKISH RIVER ER ACCOUNT

Flora

avens, Queen Charlotte (*Geum schofieldii*)
blueberry (*Vaccinium* spp.)
clover, springbank (*Trifolium wormskjoldii*)
douglasia, smooth (*Douglasia laevigata* var. *ciliolata*)
fescue, red (*Festuca rubra* ssp. *rubra*)
fir, amabilis (*Abies amabilis*)
hairgrass, tufted (*Deschampsia cespitosa*)
hemlock, western (*Tsuga heterophylla*)
lilaeopsis, Western (*Lilaeopsis occidentalis*)
lily, alp (*Lloydia serotina*)
lovage, Calder's (*Ligusticum caldera*)
mugwort, three-forked (*Artemisia furcata* var. *heterophylla*)
redcedar, western (*Thuja plicata*)
sedge, Lyngbye's (*Carex lyngbyei* ssp. *cryptocarpa*)
silverweed, coast (*Potentilla egedii*)
spruce, Sitka (*Picea sitchensis*)

Fauna

Bear, American Black (*Ursus americanus*)
Deer, Black-tailed (*Odocoileus hemionus* ssp. *hemionus*)
Eagle, Bald (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)
Elk, Roosevelt (*Cervus canadensis roosevelti*)
Heron, Great Blue (*Ardea herodias*)
Otter, Sea (*Enhydra lutris*)
Oyster, Olympia (*Ostrea conchaphila*)
Oystercatcher, Black (*Haematopus bachmani*)
Salmon, Chinook (*Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*)
Salmon, Chum (*Oncorhynchus keta*)
Salmon, Coho (*Oncorhynchus kisutch*)
Salmon, Pink (*Oncorhynchus gorbuscha*)
Swan, Trumpeter (*Cygnus buccinator*)
Whale, Grey (*Eschrichtius robustus*)