

Summary of BC's Auditor Generals Report – Conservation of Ecological Integrity in B.C. Parks and Protected Areas

By Mike Fenger

In August the Auditor General released a report on the ecological integrity in BC's Class A Parks and Ecological Reserves. Friends of Ecological Reserves are pleased that the Office of the Auditor General focused on the ecological integrity of the protected areas system, something FER assessed in our State of Ecological Reserves Report for 2005 which was released in November 2006. (See the Winter 2006 edition of the Log. This report can also be found on FER's website: www.ecoreserves.bc.ca under the tab "Current News and Issues".)

The major findings of the AG report were:

Despite its declared intentions and clear vision to conserve the ecological integrity in British Columbia's parks and protected areas, the Ministry of Environment is not successfully meeting this goal. Specifically:

- ▶ program plans are incomplete and lack adequate performance

measures;

- ▶ conservation policies are not being consistently upheld;
- ▶ the parks and protected area system has not been designed to ensure ecological integrity;
- ▶ management plans are dated and incomplete; and
- ▶ little action has been taken to ensure the conservation of ecological integrity.

The complete report and supplemental reports on integrity can be accessed at <http://www.bcauditor.com/pubs/2010/report3/conservation-ecological-integrity-bc-parks-and-protected->

Eight recommendations were made to the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry response for planned improvements are listed below followed by a brief analysis and examination of what this may mean for FER and ER wardens.

Recommendation 1: We recommend that the ministry

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The Log

Autumn/Winter 2010

The LOG is published 2 times a year by the Friends of Ecological Reserves to promote the establishment, management and maintenance of Ecological Reserves in British Columbia. *The LOG* is distributed to members, volunteer wardens, affiliates, supporters, government, friends and the enquiring public.

The views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Friends. Articles for publication are invited. The deadline for submissions for the Spring/Summer issue of *The LOG* is May 2011.

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Summary of BC's Auditor Generals Report (Cont'd.)

update its BC Parks Program Plan so that it includes clarification of ecological integrity and performance targets that adequately address the ministry's goal of pro-active stewardship of ecological integrity.

Response by MOE: The draft performance measures related to ecological integrity and conservation objectives are outlined in the Program Plan. Those measures will be reviewed and refined as necessary to a final state. The program plan performance measures will be updated by the spring of 2011.

FER Analysis: Two principles from the Park Management 2008 to 2012 Program Plan are as follows:

- ▶ Ecological integrity is maintained and conserved within a dynamic and changing environment.
- ▶ Leadership in knowledge acquisition and reporting, and the understanding of ecological processes, cultural heritage and their interaction is crucial for management and responding to environmental change.

There is support to have ecological integrity as a clear vision for Class A parks and ecological reserves. This will require a definition that uses measurable criteria and repeatable monitoring. There is concern that the stated intention and strong commitment are principles in the Program Plan but not in regulation and therefore it is possible to change the goal as a means to improve the performance.

Recommendation 2: We recommend that the ministry

complete the strategic direction and procedural guidelines for its Conservation Management Program and ensure that the Conservation Program policies are consistently upheld.

Response by MOE: BC Parks Conservation Management policy will be updated by the end of the 2011/12 fiscal year.

FER Analysis: It is assumed that this recommendation came about because there must be inconsistent application of weak or unclear policy. While FER welcomes a review, we are unclear whether this will streamline and help attract research and monitoring to ERs. In order to do research work in ERs, a permit is required. While we support this permitting process, there is a 90-day turnaround period which deters potential researchers, such as college and university students, from undertaking term projects and collecting data. The purpose of Ecological Reserves is for research, so MOE strategic direction should shift to that and appropriate procedures to attract research and monitoring should be implemented.

Recommendation 3: We recommend that government develop a plan to address current gaps in the parks and protected areas system.

Response by MOE:

1. The Ministry will maintain the land acquisition program and ensure that ecological representation continues to be a primary consideration in the prioritization of properties. The Ministry will continue to consider key

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ER Wardens' Annual Meeting and Field Trip

By Eva Durance, Mahoney Lake ER Warden

On October 12, 2010 nine of the sixteen wardens for Ecological Reserves (ERs) in the Okanagan, Similkameen, and Shuswap areas were able to attend the annual meeting and field trip organized by Sara Bunge, Senior Ranger, South Okanagan and hosted by the BC Parks staff in Penticton. This is the seventh year we have had this event which is a valuable combination of information exchange and field outing.

The meeting began with John Trehwitt, Parks & Protected Areas Section Head, presenting certificates of appreciation to wardens who have volunteered for ten or more years. Wardens then gave a brief report on their ERs. These verbal reports are very useful for keeping other wardens and Parks staff apprized of conditions and concerns in the various ERs. At times, problems arise in more than one ER and the meeting is a good place to discuss ways to deal with them.

Kevin Wilson, Area Supervisor, North Okanagan, went through a PowerPoint slide show, recently completed by ER staff in Victoria, for wardens and staff to use for public presentations. It can be revised to include material on specific ERs, so it will be very helpful for educating the public.

I was particularly pleased with this new tool, as the need for more public awareness of ERs was discussed at the provincial Wardens' Gathering in Kamloops in 2003, and a



Okanagan Region ER Wardens, staff, and guests at Skaha Bluffs, wardens resplendent in their new official shirts and hats!

generic presentation was suggested as a good way to address the issue. Two more presentations completed the morning. The first was by Wildlife Biologist Orville Dyer on Red and Blue-listed amphibians that wardens may want to look for, especially the Western Toad and Spotted Frog. This was a follow-up to his discussion last year on similarly listed plant species.

The second was Dr. Tom Northcote's overview of the history of research at Mahoney Lake, and the current state of this very unusual and world-renowned, meromictic lake. Dr. Northcote, with Dr. Ken Hall, has carried out research on the lake since the 1960s so was able

to give us a very comprehensive account of how it has changed over the past fifty years. The water levels are now lower than at any time since records have been kept, and one result is the beginning of a breakdown in the layer of purple sulphur bacteria that blankets the water a number of metres below the surface. This is having serious effects on the makeup and abundance of life forms in the lake and therefore on other creatures such as water birds whose species and abundance has declined sharply in the past few years.

After a catered lunch, the wardens, staff members able to get away for a couple of hours,

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and Tom and Heather Northcote went on a blustery, but most enjoyable hike through the newly minted Skaha Bluffs Provincial Park. As always, we had a most informative and enjoyable day.

Thanks again to Parks staff, especially Sara Bunge who makes sure this meeting happens each year.

"AG's Report"...continued from page 2

environmentally sensitive lands through the BC Parks land acquisition program as funding permits. Examples include the recent Denman Island acquisition, which will protect lands that contribute to the under-represented Coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone

2. Work will continue with other provincial resource management ministries to use a variety of land management tools to manage for ecological function across regional landscapes. This includes specific identification and protection of rare and endangered habitats.

3. Where there are approved Land Use Plans that include protected area designations, Government does not intend to reconsider recommendations or restart broad scale protected area planning.

FER Analysis: We are pleased that Parks will continue to acquire more of the high value conservation lands from the 6% privately held lands but we are concerned that without an adequate budget it will be difficult to partner with non-government organizations such as the Land Trust Conservancy as opportunities

arise.

Since the AG's report, there has been a significant reorganization within government and a new Ministry formed – the Ministry of Natural Resource Operations. At this time it is unclear how this new ministry will assess cumulative environmental effects and costs associated with additional developments and the effectiveness of current policy on ecological integrity.

Some areas of BC such as Merritt and Chilliwack have had no land use planning tables. From the government response there is some hope that Protected Areas and ERs are still being planned in these areas. Merritt for example has less than one percent designated as Protected Areas.

Climate change is a significant stress on the ecological integrity that was included within the context of Land Use Plans and zones. A recent report by Dr. Jim Pojar indicates the need for a strategic approach and a periodic assessment of the network of protected areas within the context of cumulative impacts of activities on lands between the current protected areas.

Recommendation 4: We recommend that the ministry:

- ▶ *obtain the information it needs to determine management actions for the conservation of ecological integrity; and*
- ▶ *ensure that its policy of developing a five-year conservation management activities plan (research, inventory and monitoring) is met.*

Response by MOE:

Staff training will occur on the

CALENDAR

Please check the FER website for information on our AGM to be held in the spring.

May 15, 2011

10:00 am - 1:00 pm

FER Field Trip to Race Rocks

Because of weather uncertainty in the fall, FER's Field Trip to Race Rocks will now be a spring event. Meet at the Pearson College Dock at 10:00 am
Fee: FER members, \$15.00,
Non-Members \$30.00
Seniors/Students, \$25.00
(Fee includes a one-year membership to FER)

Contact: Mary Rannie at
(250) 478-8936 to reserve a spot.

Please check FER website:
www.ecoreserves.bc.ca in early
May for any date changes.

BC Parks Celebrates its 100th Anniversary March 1, 2011.

See www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/events for information

use of the Conservation Risk Assessment (CRA) tool and annual business plans will be updated to include targets for completion of the risk assessments. BC Parks will update its policies to reflect advancements in the CRA model. The ministry will continue to develop the Citizen Science Monitoring Program for protected areas and pilot this approach in regions in 2011/12.

FER Analysis: It is unclear what percent of the current budget is spent on monitoring and research. It is also unclear if the Citizen Science means that MOE will reach out to FER and ER wardens to collect information needed to

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FER Board Field Trip to San Juan Ridge

By Louise Beinhauer

On a balmy day in June, Friends of Ecological Reserves Board members Mike Fenger, Stephen Ruttan (trip organizer), Mary Rannie and Wynne Miles along with guests; our guide, biologist Hans Roemer, MOE's Tory Stevens, Fred Beinhauer and I car pooled along Highway 14 on our way to the San Juan Ridge Ecological Reserve.

About three kilometers west of Jordan River, our two-vehicle convoy turned off the highway and began an 18-kilometer upward trek on the Jordan River Mainline, an active logging road.

We stopped briefly on the way at a beautiful marshy area. After a short walk over boggy ground, Hans stopped to point out clusters of marsh-marigold (*Caltha leptosepala*) as well as subalpine daisy (*Erigeron peregrinus*), Western bog-laurel (*Kalmia microphylla*) and a plant that I found most fascinating, Round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*) that



Members of FER Board and guests take part in field trip to San Juan Ridge ER. L to R Back Row: Hans Roemer, Mike Fenger, Stephen Ruttan, Tory Stevens. Front Row: Wynne Miles, Mary Rannie and Louise Beinhauer

exudes drops of sticky fluid which ensnares insects that not only pollinate the plant but feed it as well!

Then it was back into the vehicles to climb the rest of the

way up the dirt road to an informal parking area. We hiked our way up the narrow road for another 400 metres or so and then turned north onto a small trail that took us to the Kludahk Trail. We were at an elevation of approximately 825 meters – subalpine!

The Kludahk trail runs east to west for approximately 48 kilometers along the spine of the San Juan Ridge and passes close by the Ecological Reserve. The trail is managed by the Kludahk Outdoors Club who were instrumental in its creation. Please see their website for more information (www.kludahk.com). This trail is snow-bound for almost seven months of the year, November



Round-leaved sundew (*Drosera rotundifolia*)

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Scott Islands and The Marine Wildlife Area Designation Process

An Update by Mike Fenger

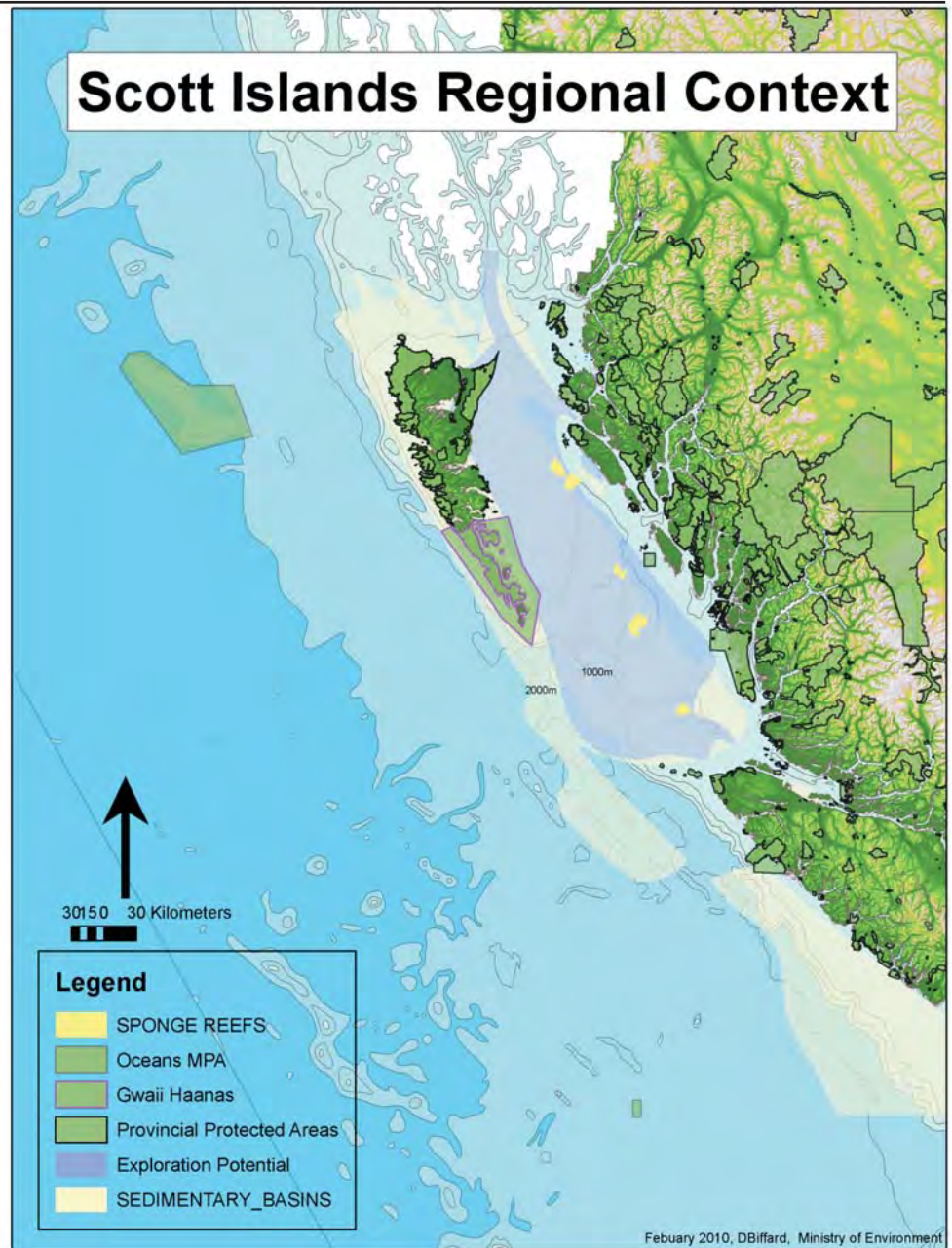
Background

There is a process lead by the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) of Environment Canada to establish a Marine Wildlife Protected Area (MWA) for the Scott Islands. This is part of the Federal Government's Health of the Oceans Initiative.

The Scott Islands refers to a group of five islands situated northwest of Vancouver Island offshore from Cape Scott. Biologically they are significant and critical for nesting of sea birds. Three of the islands and surrounding foreshore were protected as Ecological Reserves in 1971; Sartine Island ER 11, Beresford Island ER 12, and Anne Vallee ER 13 for Triangle Island. The management plans and purpose statements for these ERs are posted at http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcpar ks/eco_reserve/ecoresrv/ecoresrv.html. Lanz and Cox Islands were designated as Parks in 1995 and have a wilderness recreational focus.

The protection of the marine component under the Federal legislation will integrate management and conservation activities between Federal and Provincial levels of government and is a welcome and needed addition to provincial designations.

Public consultation and advisory sessions were lead by the Canadian Wildlife Service (CWS) in 2004 but did not conclude in a Marine Wildlife Area designation.



The process has restarted and we hope for a successful conclusion. It was decided after an NGO meeting hosted by CWS and facilitated by Bob Peart that Living Oceans (Kim Wright) and Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) Sabine Jessen would represent the environmental community and

report on progress and provide opportunity for involvement.

There are 30 established ERs that have a marine component. Therefore, Friends of Ecological Reserves has an interest in extending protection to the ocean environment. It is hoped that the Scott Island MWA is a

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"Scott Islands...." continued from page 6

starting point for a comprehensive network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) with inclusion of the water column as part of the terrestrial ecosystem.

See articles in the Autumn/Winter issue of the Friends of Ecological Reserves newsletter the LOG on expectations and experiences with the DFO-led marine protected area process underway for Race Rocks MPA.

Thanks goes to Living Oceans Society Kim Wright www.livingoceans.org and information supplied by Karin Bodtker and Jake Etzkorn for this up date.

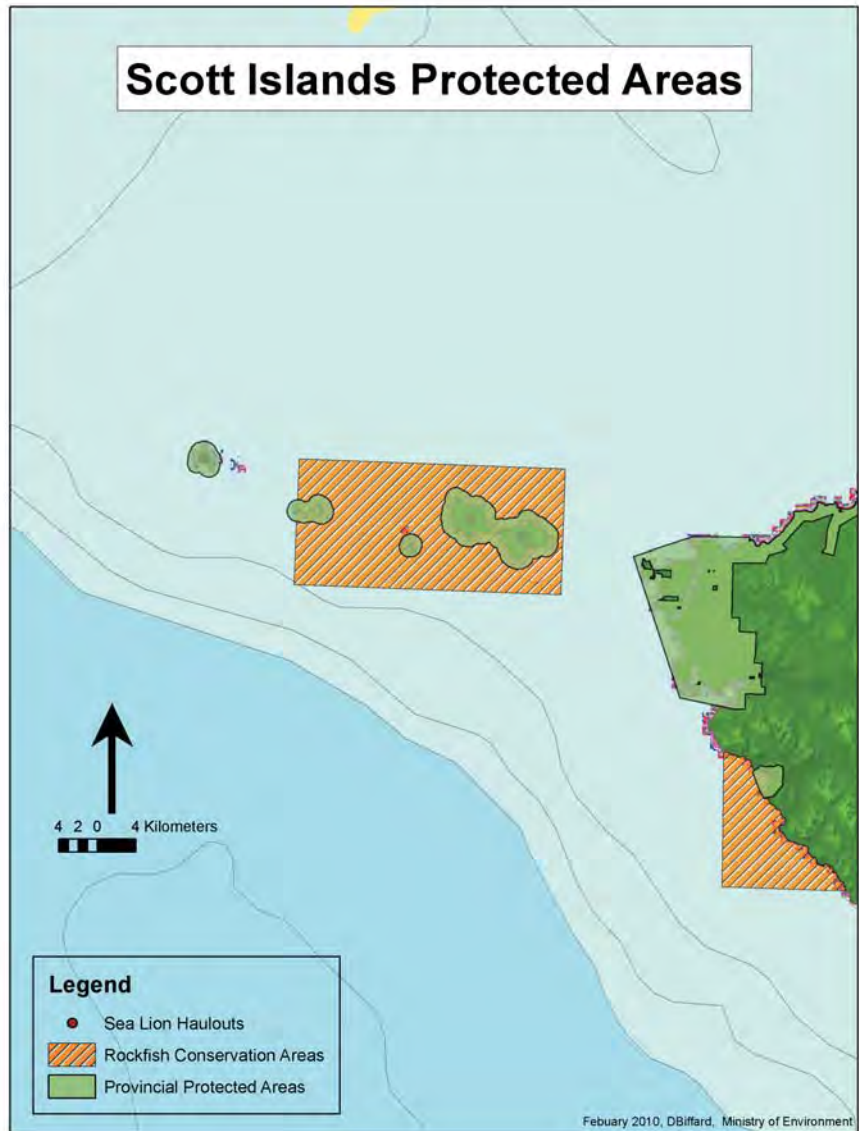
First Advisory Group meeting in September

A draft framework for Marine Protected areas was developed to guide a number of planning sessions with key experts, stakeholder and relevant authorities to generate and review spatial plans and management objectives for the proposed MWA. This framework includes guiding principles mutual respect, constructive dialogue, precautionary approach and best available information. Environment Canada will rely on currently available spatial analysis tools such as MARXAN. Draft MWA goals proposed were: 1) conserve natural habitats, ecological processes and marine resources that support seabird populations; 2) minimize adverse effects on seabirds from controllable marine activities; 3) support relevant research and monitoring and 4) establish

long term cooperative management. These goals will be translated into activities with measurable outcomes in the management plan.

The first planning session was held in November and focused on science and traditional knowledge of ecosystems values/function. Participants from academia and government and first nations were asked to clarify what is known about sea bird biology, ocean currents, other marine species and ecosystems, traditional knowledge, ocean floor topography/sonar and spatial

analysis. Subsequent sessions planned before March 2011 are: 1) cultural values and management objectives; 2) management objectives for MWA and current marine activities; and 3) commercial fishing. Other sessions planned for but not scheduled are: 1) research and monitoring; 2) surveillance; and 3) enforcement and cooperative management. We look forward to hearing how these session are going and are pleased to have the opportunity to provide input into the process through Kim and Sabine.



assess ecological integrity. FER will seek clarification of what this program means for FER.

Recommendation 5: We recommend that the ministry review and update its Master Plans Policy to clarify;

- ▶ *what type of management plan is required for each park and protected area;*
- ▶ *how ecological integrity in each area will be conserved; and*
- ▶ *when each plan should be reviewed and updated.*

Response by MOE:

By the end of 2011/12 the Management Plan policy will be updated to reflect current approaches. This will include the shift from prescriptive to outcome based direction. Management plans will be developed and reviewed on a priority basis using a risk management approach subject to available funding.

FER Analysis: It is unclear what the shift in current approaches means. It is not clear if prescriptive equates to qualitative non-numeric measure and



Subalpine daisy (*Erigeron peregrinus*) and behind it the leaves (narrow, upright), flowering stem, and last year's seed stalks of Alaska plantain (*Plantago macrocarpa*).

prescriptive means numbers. It will be difficult to report on ecological integrity if there are no quantitative measures.

Recommendation 6: We recommend that the ministry:

- ▶ *conduct annual planning for each park and protected area to determine what actions are needed to address conservation objectives, threats and stressors;*

- ▶ *determine priorities from this plan; and*

- ▶ *monitor and evaluate*

Response by MOE:

BC Parks will revise the AMPs process using best practices by the end of 2011/12. The revised process will assist the agency in identifying key priorities to undertake and include a process

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Protecting Parks on Paper Only Gets Half the Job Done

Auditor general says government has not committed necessary resources

By Jack Knox

Excerpted from the August 24, 2010 edition of the *Times Colonist*

Tourism B.C. is airing some terrific new television spots for Super, Natural British Columbia these days – homegrown Winter Olympic heroes like Scott Niedermayer and Ashleigh McIvor declaring You Gotta Be Here against a succession of stunning backdrops.

Too bad the government doesn't have more money to put

into actually protecting the natural wonders it promotes.

B.C. auditor general John Doyle released a grim report yesterday that says the province doesn't have a plan to conserve the ecological integrity of its 1,000 parks and protected areas.

"Despite its declared intentions and clear vision to conserve the ecological integrity in these areas, the Ministry of Environment is

not meeting this goal," Doyle said.

Among findings:

- Ministry plans are incomplete or out of date.
- Conservation policies are not consistently upheld.
- Little action has been taken to ensure conservation.
- The parks system has not been

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designed to ensure the conservation of ecological integrity.

- Many parks and most ecological reserves are too small to sustain the species within them.
- The implications of climate change haven't been adequately addressed.

Doyle paints a picture of deeply committed ministry staff lacking the resources and expertise to do their job, with the province increasingly relying on volunteers to do conservation work. The volunteers themselves are burning out – just in time for B.C. Parks to celebrate its 100th anniversary in 2011.

This isn't just about protecting pretty postcards, or giving us a quiet place to dip a paddle in the water. Doyle notes that protected areas regulate climate, purify water, prevent floods and erosion and provide the habitat that allows rare and endangered species to survive. They are, he writes, "integral to the quality of life in this province."

Sad stuff for a Liberal government whose Five Great Goals, unveiled in 2005, included leading the world in sustainable environmental management, says Victoria-Swan Lake MLA Rob Fleming, the NDP's environment critic.

"Given that between 2008 and 2010, the B.C. Liberals cut the budget for parks and protected areas by \$6.95 million, or 18.4 percent, it's no wonder that our parks are deteriorating," he said.

"It's clear from this report that in 10 years the B.C. Liberals haven't even done the basic scientific work necessary for informed parks planning and are failing to make and implement



Marsh-marigold (*Caltha leptosepala*)

plans to stop the decline of species at risk of extinction." There's no plan to deal with the impact of industrial activities encroaching on parks, he said. "They're unable to get a grip on invasive species as a threat."

OK, replies Environment Minister Barry Penner, where's the money supposed to come from?

Sure, Penner would like a bigger budget, but his wants must be measured against the competing demands for money for the likes of health and education, not to mention this year's projected \$1.7-billion budget deficit.

"There are virtually unlimited demands for government spending," Penner says. "The public has a limited ability, or willingness, to pay – witness the HST."

Implementing Doyle's recommendations, improving planning and adding privately owned land for protected areas could cost \$355 million over the

next 10 years.

That's roughly the cost of the Royal Jubilee Hospital project, Penner notes, adding that last week Fleming was calling for more health spending.

Penner said he was surprised by Doyle's finding that "little action has been taken to ensure the conservation of ecological integrity." When federal parks are included in the calculation, protected areas cover more than 14 percent of the province, more than the 12 percent recommended by the United Nations. B.C. has set aside more land than any other jurisdiction in Canada, perhaps North America.

Which, come to think of it, is pretty much the same stat that the New Democrats used to trot out when they were in power and catching hell for cutting environmental spending.

To which the obvious answer is that it doesn't matter how great the percentage is if the land is protected on paper, but not in reality.

Long Distance Volunteering: the Effective “Citizen Science” of Pam Birley

By Garry Fletcher, Race Rocks ER Warden

In an e-mail I received in 2004, Pam Birley told me she was a grandmother living in Leicestershire England, and that she used the remote cameras on the www.racerocks.com website to help her grandchildren learn about the environment. She included screen captures of an eagle capturing a seabird at Race Rocks which she had stored on her computer in England. Indeed she was in tune with webcams in various parts of the world and still sends comments on how the loons are doing at a nesting site in the US or how various eagle cams are reporting.

She did, however take a fancy to the remote camera at Race Rocks and started doing almost daily observations and regular screen captures, putting them in monthly albums on her Flickr website. I realized that they provided the best monthly photo summary of what was happening at Race Rocks, so I included her photo albums as a regular feature on the Daily Log link on [racerocks.com](http://www.racerocks.com): <http://www.racerocks.com/racerock/diary/>

Pam was interviewed for an article about webcams around the world in *The Province* newspaper in 2006, where she was quoted as saying “Racerocks is I think my most favourite site, mostly because I can get to control that wonderful camera and look at what I want to ...It’s live and that’s the thing, so you never know what is going to happen next.”

One time I asked her if she ever got pictures of a nictitating membrane in the eyes of eagles. By the next day she had sent me



Pam and Dennis Birley on a Pearson College trip to Race Rocks, September 2008

several images to include on a page devoted to that: <http://www.racerocks.com/racerock/seabirds/eagle/pamseagles/nictitation/nictitation.htm>

It’s now been a full six years since her first captures of the eagles and peregrine falcons from the remote cam at Race Rocks. The photo galleries from November 2004 to October 2007 are archived at <http://tinyurl.com/2adrsp> and the monthly albums from 2008 to 2010 are archived in the main diary file on [racerocks.com](http://www.racerocks.com).

We have relied on Pam to supply all kinds of useful information about the Ecological Reserve at Race Rocks, especially in the summer time as she is surveying the islands with the remote

camera well before most of us are up on this side of the world. Her sunrises are beautiful, and her storm images capture the spirit of the island so well. She also made the effort to remind us when a camera needed cleaning, and partly because of her we installed a daily automatic cleaning system for camera 5.

After one storm, she pointed out the missing shingles on the winch house, another time it was the first breeding of the elephant seals on Middle rock.

Two years ago, we heard from her about the first birth of an elephant seal at Race Rocks. Every year she is the first to point out the arrival and departure of the peregrine falcons and recently

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has captured them taking prey.

In our taxonomy gallery we have added many of Pam's pictures to the species pages. She has been able to alert us of migrant species, and rare bird occurrences, such as a snowy owl on the island: <http://www.racerocks.com/racerock/eco/taxalab/2006/bubos/bubos.htm>. With the multiple pictures she often sends, we have also been able to make time lapse movies.

In 2005 Pam made inquiries about the branded sea lions she was seeing at Race Rocks and came up with a contact at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) who was responsible for the research tagging program in the U.S. She has established a good dialogue with the researchers there, and has assisted us in identifying the dates and sources of tagging of the individuals which have been photographed by her in the reserve:

<http://www.racerocks.com/racerock/marmam/sealion/tracking/tracking.htm>

The raw material provided by her monthly albums could now form the basis for an in depth analysis of a six-year record of the monthly bird and mammal occurrences in the Ecological Reserve.

We have been fortunate to have

Pam and her husband Dennis visit us and we have been pleased to be able to provide them with a tour of Race Rocks several times in the last few years.

Pam has indicated she will be ending her service to us as monthly photo image diary keeper at the end of this year, but I know she will still continue to send us those exceptional shots when she gets them.

On reflection, I don't know of any other Ecological Reserve in the province which has had such a regular and long-term image record of events made available by a volunteer, especially one from another continent! We owe a great deal of thanks to Pam for making her pictures available to us at her own cost. This is one example of "citizen science" which transcends borders but which is invaluable for the documentation of events and creatures on our ecological reserves here in BC. Our hats off to Pam Birley for a volunteer's job done so well.

Following is a list of some of the birds and mammals which Pam has photographed with the remote cameras at Race Rocks, many being first records for Race Rocks. You may see her images in the Race Rocks taxonomy files <http://www.racerocks.com/racerock/eco/taxalab/taxonomy.htm> or by using the search button on

the home page of www.racerocks.com.

✧ Whimbrel
✧ Pigeon Guillemot
✧ Bald headed eagle
✧ Peregrine Falcon
✧ Dunlin
✧ Brown Pelican
✧ Heerman's Gull
✧ Rock Dove
✧ Snow Bunting
✧ Common Murre
✧ Great Blue heron
✧ Common Raven
✧ European Starling
✧ Savannah Sparrow
✧ Song Sparrow
✧ Brown-headed cowbird
✧ Thayer's Gull
✧ California Gull
✧ Glaucous Winged Gull chicks
✧ Black Oystercatcher chicks
✧ Brandt Goose
✧ Canada Goose Chicks
✧ White Fronted Goose
✧ Brandt's Cormorant
✧ Pelagic Cormorant
✧ Double-crested Cormorant
✧ Laysan Albatross
✧ Wandering Tattler
✧ Ruddy Turnstone
✧ Harlequin Duck
✧ River otter
✧ Dall's Porpoise
✧ Orca
✧ Humpback Whale
✧ Harbour seals
✧ Branded California and Northern Sea Lions and others.....

to evaluate and monitor progress.

FER Analysis: It is hoped that ER wardens will be included as part of the annual planning and determination of actions need to address conservation values.

Recommendation 7: We recommend that the ministry report periodically to the Legislative Assembly and public on how it is

conserving ecological integrity in the province's parks and protected areas system.

Response by MOE:

The ministry will consider options for enhanced reporting of parks program performance measures. The annual report published on the web will include more comprehensive information on all measurable

program outcomes.

FER Analysis: The need for periodic reporting on the state of Parks and ERs is welcome. Reporting to the legislature however, as was recommended does not appear to be forthcoming from MOE.

FER was invited to attend the Parks Program session held in November.

to June and we hiked over many places with some snow still on the ground.

We travelled east along the trail for a few kilometers so that we could view the ER and admire another picturesque wetland area where tree frogs were chorusing. Hans knew every plant along the way – both their common and botanical names.

We decided to turn around and head west so that we could stop at one of the various huts along the trail. We were aiming for the Tea Hut, an interpretive centre with a wonderful view of the San Juan Valley far below.

Along the way to the hut, we saw hundreds of beautiful blue-listed avalanche lilies (*Erythronium montanum*). They were the reason for our trip as they are most spectacular in mid-June. They bloom as the snow is retreating.

We also stopped at several



Avalanche lily (*Erythronium montanum*)

tranquil alpine lakes along the way. Every lake and most meadows were named; there was even one called the Hans Roemer Meadow.

At one small lake, I made a half-hearted attempt to catch a

Rough-skinned Newt in order to see the orange belly that Tory said they had which serves as a warning to would-be predators. Much to my surprise, I actually caught him and his belly was indeed bright orange. I carefully put him back into the water and we continued on our way.

We arrived at the Tea Hut and sat and ate our lunches, admiring the spectacular view and reading the information panels adorning the wall. All too soon it was time to return to our cars for the drive back to town.

The FER Board would like to thank Hans Roemer for being our guide for the day. Also thank you to Fred Beinhauer for providing the trip pictures that appear scattered throughout this newsletter.



Spectacular view from the Tea Hut

Visit our website at:
www.ecoreserve.bc.ca

Building Partnerships – The FER and MOE Experience

FER was invited by Judy Millar to attend a Partnership Workshop. We were asked to present insights based on our 30-year partnership with Ministry of Environment. Ideas were assembled at our November Board meeting and Mike Fenger prepared a presentation.

The FER presentation included FER values and five elements of our strategic plan. Goal one to protect and conserve, has its focus on the Wardens' Program which has 70 eco-wardens province-wide who act as extra eyes and ears for MOE staff to safeguard the ecological reserves. The scope and duties of an ER warden are described in the ER Wardens' Handbook. (see MOE website at: http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/eco_reserve/) There are expectations of regular dialogue, reporting and communications and field trips in this partnership.

Some MOE-supported FER successes to date have been the Provincial gathering in 2003, the completion of the Wardens' Handbook, the annual regional meetings, updating the wardens' list and input to the recently revised ER manual which now includes extended information on climate change impacts and cultural resources. (see the ER page on the MOE website at: www.env.gov.bc.ca/BCParks/eco_reserve/)

The presentation showed the links between the Auditor General's recent report on the failure of the Ministry to deliver ecological integrity and the findings that FER made in the 2004 State of Ecological Reserves Report. (see "Summary of BC's Auditor General's Report" in this



Western bog-laurel (*Kalmia microphylla*)

issues of the LOG as well as the "State of British Columbia's Ecological Reserves" Report on the FER website www.ecoreserve.bc.ca)

In 2004 FER identified opportunities to work in partnership with the Ministry to strengthen the system of ecological reserves. We provided six specific recommendations related to: improving the availability of information for each reserve; addressing the issue of deteriorating ecological conditions; and building on our partnership with the Ministry to improve the management of the program.

The six recommendations were reviewed in the presentation as follows. That:

1. MOE maintain a centralized information system for ERs that is comprehensive and accessible. FER wardens can add to this or build on the baseline.
2. MOE and FER partner to develop and implement a

baseline inventory and monitoring program for ecological reserves. (see Garry Fletcher's article in this LOG)

3. MOE and FER partner on a five-year research strategy to address key knowledge gaps, threats degradation and restoration etc. Research permits process is a problem.

4. The Ministry formalize and adequately resource the Wardens' Program.

5. The Ministry increase its presence, management and enforcement activities for ERs.

6. FER make suggestions to the Ministry on how best to support it in order to protect and maximize benefits of ERs.

FER supports the AG's findings and recommendations. FER sees a bigger potential role for partnerships as part of implementing changes needed to address, maintain and report on the integrity of ERs and the Parks

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System in BC. Increased MOE ER wardens' planning meetings (specifics were provided in the 2004 report) and more regional meetings based on Okanagan model are needed.

Increased use of ER wardens and volunteers for monitoring and establishing baselines and citizen science can help address baseline information. Taking advantage of eco-warden volunteers is smart but it means a commitment by MOE staff to lead. This is also true of meetings to address provincial issues such as the absence of research plans, the shrinking number of Ecological Reserves and absence of a process to add worthy new candidates.

Good partnerships require tending and mutual benefits for both parties (time and some funds). The AG report indicates the status quo is not adequate. FER believes that the current MOE culture undervalues benefits of partnerships,

therefore public good will and time freely given towards achieving the Parks mandate is underutilized.

We hope this current MOE planning meeting is the beginning of a new focus and may be the start of turning point for MOE. FER believes NGOs must be accepted as part of the solution and included

more fully to achieve the Ministry goals and public expectations. Let us go forward and build a system based on successes such as: Okanagan ER wardens meetings, field trips, education and planning; monitoring and reporting at Race Rocks and ER-specific inventories, baselines and reporting.



L to R: Mike Fenger, Doug Van Dine, Marilyn Lambert, Mary Rannie, Jaime Hilbert (BC Parks) and Tom Gillespie attend MOE awards ceremony

Long-serving FER Board Members Honoured at Evening Awards Dinner for MOE Partners

It was a very pleasant surprise for FER Board members to be invited to an evening with MOE staff. The longest serving board members biographies were read (see below for a shortened version) and they received framed Robert Bateman prints. Mary Rannie, Mike Fenger and friend Doug Van Dine formed a band for the occasion – Fins, Feathers, Fur and Friends and played some musically appropriate songs and fiddle tunes of BC. A good evening was had by all.

Marilyn Lambert joined the Board in 1998 and soon after became volunteer warden of Oak Bay Islands ER. Over the years she has organized fund raising field

trips, participated in the development of the "State of Ecological Reserves Report" and coordinated the Vancouver Island Regional Wardens' meeting.

Steve Ruttan's strong interest in preserving natural landscapes led him to joining FER's board in 1988. He has been particularly active in arranging tours of various ERs.

Mary Rannie, a double bassist with the Victoria Symphony, has been involved with FER almost since its inception in the Eighties. She acted as recording secretary for many years and is now solely a Board member.

Tom Gillespie's lifelong interest in the environment led

him to involvement with the Friends of Ecological Reserves in 1990. He first aided with membership data lists and mailing out the newsletters. He also engaged in the lively policy setting debates at the Annual General Meetings for more than ten years before becoming a full Board member.

Garry Fletcher was instrumental in establishing and getting Race Rocks ER functioning as the best managed ER in BC. Garry has a clear focus on monitoring, research and education and over three decades has forged the link between Pearson College and Race Rocks and Ministry of Environment. Visit the amazing Race Rocks web site, www.racerocks.com.

FRIENDS OF ECOLOGICAL RESERVES MEMBERSHIP FORM

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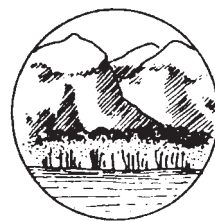
With Christmas just around the corner, why not consider giving your family members or friends a set of Friends of Ecological Reserves place mats as gifts! They are reasonably priced (\$5.00 each or if you purchase 10 or more – \$4.00 each). They are

beautifully illustrated, can be easily mailed, and more importantly the money raised helps us to foster our stewardship of Ecological Reserves and fund research.

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The Log



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