

# The Log

## Friends of Ecological Reserves Newsletter

Victoria, B.C.

Spring 1993

### EDITORIAL

## Our Campaign to Save a Bit of Backyard Biodiversity

Spring! — Much of the town is carpeted with bright blue camas flowers, birds are singing, nature awakens — and new ideas begin to sprout. Here's a new-old idea for conservation.

I grew up in Victoria, surrounded by Garry oak meadow. Our property was surrounded on three sides by oaks and Douglas firs. In spring there were myriad Easter lilies, camas, shooting stars and buttercups, and we made bouquets (I have trouble admitting that now!) I grew up climbing trees, smelling flowers, picking up gentle garter snakes and waking up to native bird song.

Now that I have children of my own I take them to their grandparents' same back yard. But it is not the same. It is surrounded on all sides by houses with manicured lawns. There are no fields of camas. I haven't seen a garter snake in years. The Easter lilies still, fortunately, thrive amidst the strawberry patch, and the old oaks in the yard have survived being surrounded by lawn.

What happened to my back yard is happening all over southeast Vancouver Island. Scientists say that *the Garry oak meadow ecosystem is the most endangered ecosystem in B.C.* and estimate that there is less than one per cent of the ecosystem left in an intact state — whatever *that* means, with all the introduced species that proliferate in our cities. Urbanization has literally overtaken this ecosystem, with all its beauty and diversity — one of southeastern Vancouver Island's most distinctive and characteristic natural features — in our very back yards, and we've hardly been aware of it.

Some do care about the loss and are doing something about it! Friends director Briony Penn and long-time member Joyce Lee are championing protection of the Garry oak in numerous ways — founding the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society, writing articles, giving talks, lobbying politicians, planting seedlings and any other way they can make islanders aware that we can still avoid the fate of watching a key element of our local natural heritage pass away.

This spring the Friends' theme is conserving the local ecosystem. We've chosen to focus on Garry oaks. In our busy spring field trip season, we've slated spring visits to four sites in the Garry oak ecotype: Mt Tzuhalem, Trial Islands, Mt. Tuam and, further afield, to the Thousand Oaks of Hornby Island, to see one of just three remaining unprotected intact Garry oak groves, one that is slated for immediate subdivision.

The Friends are working on a way to help maintain the biodiversity of these rare and endangered sites that are right in our back yards.

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### **Saving Backyard Biodiversity**

Remember World Wildlife Fund's successful campaign to purchase Costa Rican rain forest by selling shares to the public? That sparked an idea to save critical bits of our own natural heritage. No waiting for the Protected Areas Strategy, CORE and other government initiatives to solve our land use problems, while more and more of B.C. is logged, developed and altered. Our May 2nd field trip to the Hornby oaks will be the start of a campaign to purchase six pieces of key oak meadow, totalling about 18 hectares. From rough estimates of current land values, one square metre of land costs about \$4. Contributions will go to a land trust fund managed by the Friends, the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society and Conservancy Hornby Island. We are going to buy bits of Garry oak meadow from the developers. Eventually we hope to purchase and protect the Thousand Oaks of Hornby Island.

This year the Friends will also be contributing

to the understanding of the biodiversity of Clayoquot Sound. John Kelson, Irene Manley, Stephanie Hughes and Kevin Jordan, whose activities we reported in the last issue of *The Log*, are teaming up to do an extensive land and sea Marbled Murrelet study in the Megin River. They need logistical and financial support. We hope to help fund their efforts and other researchers', and I would like to encourage members to support their projects with tax-deductible donations.

I hope many members will be able to attend the Friends' Annual General Meeting, May 15 on Salt Spring Island. Members who wish to participate more actively in the Friends' work may put their names forward for election as directors of the society. Our business meetings are pleasant and sociable, and we believe our work is important.

Hope everyone takes time this spring to enjoy the biodiversity of our own back yards.

**Trudy**

### **BUSINESS**

## **The Friends' Annual Report for 1992**

### **Our Activities and Accomplishments**

**I**n 1992 the B.C. Government declared that the Khutzeymateen Valley would be protected. This announcement was the culmination of research and lobbying by many people and groups, and Friends of Ecological Reserves can be proud of the pivotal role we played both in bringing the Khutzeymateen issue into the political arena and in alerting people to the threat the valley faced. We have since participated in the designation study for the Khutzeymateen.

Our activities in 1992 included

1. Support of field researchers in their quest to understand and conserve the natural world. Research projects financially supported by Friends of Ecological Reserves in 1992 included:
  - Megin River biodiversity studies (Jim Darling)
  - Kitlope River eulachon study (John Kelson)
  - Clayoquot Sound at-sea surveys of Marbled Murrelets (John Kelson)
  - Marbled Murrelet forest habitat surveys (Alan Burger and assistants)
  - Sea otter surveys in Checleset Bay Ecological Reserve (Jane Watson)
  - Transient Orca studies (Robin Baird and Marine Mammal Research Group)
  - Vancouver Island Marmots (Andrew Bryant)
  - Endemic stickleback on the Queen Charlotte Islands (Tom Reimchen)

2. Fund-raising activities to support research, notably the Raffle for Research.
3. Playing host to interesting and informative natural history slide programs at the Royal B.C. Museum's Newcombe Theatre, including Grizzlies of the Khutzeymateen by Grant MacHutchon, The Kitlope Valley with Adrian Forsyth and Haisla elders, and Vancouver Island Marmots with Andrew Bryant
4. Raising public awareness about various issues related to ecological reserves, and advising government through its Commission on Resources and Environment's (CORE) land-use negotiations and the Protected Areas Strategy planning process.
5. Communicating with our members (some 180 at year-end) and nearly 100 volunteer wardens through our newsletter; in 1992 we published two issues of 36 and 28 pages.
6. Sponsoring terrific field trips, including Woodley Ridge, Oak Bay Islets Ecological Reserve, Haley Lake Ecological Reserve, the Walbran Valley and Todd Inlet.

Considering how busy we all are, and how limited our budget is, it has been a most satisfying year for the Friends!

**Trudy Chatwin**  
**Vice-President**



## Financial Report

The Friends started 1992 with a bank balance of \$22,931. We received generous donations of \$12,145 during the year, and membership fees contributed \$2,925. Research grants totalled \$6,260. Production and mailing of our newsletter and administration cost \$8,942, and we ended the year with a surplus of \$1,551. These figures are preliminary, unaudited totals, and they do not add up. Our hardworking bookkeeper, Diana Wootton, identified a miscellaneous surplus of \$921. The Friends have managed small operating surpluses for the past two years after running deficits in 1989 and '90. We have a comfortable cash reserve and look forward to receiving new funding proposals for the coming research season.

**Henry Bauld**  
Treasurer

## Notice of Election

Under Friends of Ecological Reserves' constitution, the society elects a board of 12 directors from the membership. The Friends' board operated with ten directors in 1992: Henry Bauld (treasurer), Sue Carr, Trudy Chatwin (vice-president), Bristol Foster (president), Peggy Frank, Vicky Husband, Briony Penn, Mary Rannie (secretary), Pam Stacey and Cameron Young.

At least ten per cent of the membership is required at the annual meeting to elect the directors. Honorary members and volunteer wardens may not vote.

At the first board meeting following, the directors elect the society's officers — President, 1st Vice-President, 2nd Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer. The Friends are in the habit of electing only one vice-president.

This election will be held at the Friends' annual general meeting, at 11 a.m. on May 15, 1993, on Salt Spring Island (information in the Calendar section.)

## Our Seasonal Newsletter

With this issue of the newsletter we begin to use a seasonal identifier, to reflect more accurately the semi-annual reality of publishing *The Log*. Readers will no longer wonder whether they missed four issues between October and March and blame Canada Post.

We hope you continue to enjoy reading *The Log*.

## Membership Renewal Time

This will be your only reminder to renew membership with Friends of Ecological Reserves for 1993. Please use the handy form included with this issue. You may wish to enroll a friend with a gift membership. And please remember us when making your charitable donations. Friends of Ecological Reserves is a registered charity, and donations in support of our research and information programs are tax-deductible.

## To Our Supporters Thanks!

It's that time of year — time to express our appreciation to all the people who help keep "the little society that could" going!

First, thanks to our volunteers for all their efforts on The Friends' behalf. Of special note was the telephoning of **Eleanor Smith**, the map-making of **Briony Penn**, the computer work of **Josette Wier**, and **Pen Brown's** record-keeping.

We were once again sustained by the generosity of our donors, who included the **Valley Outdoor Association**, White Rock (a \$300 donation), **The Nature Trust of British Columbia** (\$500), an anonymous donor of \$500, **Melda Buchanan**, who donated \$550, **Geoffrey Sachs of Montréal** (donations totalling \$680) and the **Eden Conservation Trust**, whose \$5,000 donation made all the difference. **Environment Canada** also made us a class grant of \$560.

Thanks to all!



## The Hammond Report on the Khutzeymateen

Silva Ecosystem Consultants Ltd. submitted its report, *Economic and Ecological Feasibility of Timber Management in the Khutzeymateen Valley*, in September, completing a project the Friends began in 1986, when we hired forester **Herb Hammond** to analyse a proposal to log the Khutzeymateen. Herb and associates undertook field work in the valley for the Friends in 1987, 1988 and 1989. Silva filed a summary report in March 1988 which demonstrated that timber extraction in the Khutzeymateen Valley was an uneconomic proposition and likely to cause ecological degradation. The report was a key element in our effort to make a strong case, based on sound, timely research, for protecting the Khutzeymateen. This final report, in two volumes, incorporates information from an extensive review of current scientific literature and presents the study's findings in light of the principles of landscape ecology.

The approach we took in studying timber values in the Khutzeymateen is generally applicable to forest planning in the province, Herb believes, and the report recommends some simple changes to the planning process. (The following quotes are edited for this publication.)

"Current timber management plans for old-growth forests in British Columbia still make few or no effective allowances for maintaining biological diversity.

"We suggest that all timber management plans be subjected to landscape ecology analysis, stand ecology analysis and total cost accounting.

"*Total cost accounting* is a wholistic cost-benefit analysis that considers traditional timber economics and accounts for the costs of damages from timber management to the whole forest ecosystem and to non-timber values.

"*Stand and landscape ecology analyses* are intended to control any modification of natural systems to ensure the maintenance of fully-functioning forests at all scales, in the short and long term. If obvious ecological limits are respected, and current science explaining forest functioning is applied, these analyses can be performed in a very cost-effective manner.

"These steps should be taken before timber is allocated through long-term tenure agreements. Such analyses will encourage the authorization only of timber extraction plans that can be justified both ecologically and economically.

"While society has often required such thorough analyses by non-timber forest users, seldom have the same standards been applied to the timber industry. This has resulted in an imbalance in forest use, skewed to timber extraction, across the landscape, and to the logging of many forests that are ecologically and economically inappropriate to log."

Herb's report is on file and available for loan.

### CALENDAR

#### Spring Field Trips

##### **Mt. Tzuhalem Garry Oak Woodland**

**Saturday, March 28**

Syd Watts, warden of the Mt. Tzuhalem Ecological Reserve, will lead this field trip, near the beginning of flower season. Bring a lunch and meet Syd at 9:30 a.m. in the Safeway parking lot in Duncan.

##### **Bowen Island Ecological Reserve**

**Saturday, April 17**

Warden **Bob Harris** leads an expedition to this unlogged upland reserve (ER #48). Pack a lunch; bring boots and rain gear. Meet Bob at 0800 in front of the Brunswick Bowling Lanes in the Park Royal South shopping centre, Marine Drive, West Vancouver, or walk onto the 0855 ferry for Bowen Island. For more information call Bob at 922-7453.

##### **Race Rocks Ecological Reserve**

**Sunday, April 25th**

Marine Science students of Pearson College, the wardens of this subtidal reserve, will show us through the lab, then pilot us to the tide-swept rocks. Weather and tide permitting, divers will show some of the incredibly diverse undersea life. We may see Pigeon Guillemots and Black Oystercatchers among other sea-birds returning to nest. California and northern sea-lions may be present, too. Bring a lunch, warm clothes, raingear, binoculars and camera. Meet at 9:30 a.m. in the visitor parking lot at Pearson College. Cost to members, \$7; \$15 for non-members, proceeds to support the wardens' activities. For more information and to register contact Trudy Chatwin at 592-3559.



## Hornby Island's One Thousand Oaks Sunday, May 2

The Friends and the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society co-host an excursion to a fabulous remnant Garry oak grove at the northern extremity of the species' range. Botanist **Richard Martin** will show us rare flowers, and camas should be in bloom. We'll meet members of Conservancy Hornby Island and discuss plans to raise money to buy this valuable natural area.

Catch a ferry to Hornby Island via Denman Island on Friday or Saturday and camp at Brad's Dad's Campground. Hornby Island also has bed-and-breakfast accommodation. Meet at the Helliwell Provincial Park parking lot on Sunday at 8:30 a.m. for the hike to the oaks.

Please phone Henry Bauld at 721-5962 to arrange car-pooling and finalize arrangements. (And see the article following.)

## Trial Islands Ecological Reserve Sunday, May 9

This group of small islands off Vancouver Island's southeast tip has the highest concentration of rare plant species in B.C. Warden **Mike Shepard** will guide. As in previous years, we will shuttle passengers to the islands, leaving (weather permitting) from McNeill (Shoal) Bay, near Beach Drive, beginning at 0900, with boats returning at around 1400. Transport is limited and reservations required — please call Henry Bauld. Bring lunch, rubber boots and rain gear. Cost: \$7 for members, \$15 non-members.

### ONLY NOTICE TO MEMBERS Friends of Ecological Reserves 1993 General Meeting 11 am, Saturday, May 15

**Briony Penn's, Mountain Road, Salt Spring Id.** We will review the past year's work, update members on activities, discuss research proposals, elect the officers, and plan the upcoming year. Bring a pot-luck contribution for lunch.

The meeting will be followed by a hike through the **Mount Tuam Ecological Reserve** to see the proposed new sections of the reserve and the controversial planned sub-division.

For more information call Henry Bauld at 721-5962 or Briony Penn at 653-4880.

## Skagit River Rhododendrons June

Reserve #106, 40 km SE of Hope, is one of three ERs in the Skagit Valley of the B.C. Cascades, with stands of showy, rare Pacific rhododendron. Our visit, timed to coincide with their blooming, will be on the second or third week-end in June. Phone Henry Bauld at 721-5962 for details.

## Carmanah Valley Murrelet Research June 25-27

Dr. **Alan Burger** will guide us through old-growth nesting habitat of Marbled Murrelets in the upper Carmanah Valley, beginning, as last year, at the upper Carmanah research station. We're invited to dinner with Alan and his group on Friday evening and to camp near the station; on Saturday we'll make a strenuous hike to camp at beautiful August Creek, where murrelets are very active. Please register for the trip and car-pool by calling Peter Grant at 595-4813. Pack for self-sufficient hiking and camping; bring water purification equipment. If you're not familiar with the logging road approaches to upper Carmanah Valley, be sure to get Western Canada Wilderness Committee's maps of Carmanah and Walbran. We'll leave a vehicle at the Carmanah Pacific Provincial Park headquarters Friday.

## Summer Field Trips

Subject to members' interest. Please contact Henry Bauld (721-5962) for information about possible trips to:

- the Megin River, for field research
- Jack Creek ERP, near Williams Lake
- Tsitika Valley ecological reserves and Johnstone Strait killer whales
- Chelcset Bay ER and Kyuquot Sound

### RE: FIELD TRIPS SPONSORED BY FRIENDS OF ECOLOGICAL RESERVES WAIVER OF LIABILITY

Your participation in any of our field trips means that you share responsibility for decisions about where and how to travel. Trips to wilderness areas are inherently risky, and you assume full responsibility for your own safety. While we take care to ensure our excursions are safe and highly involving, neither Friends of Ecological Reserves nor any member of, nor guide for, the society will be liable for any injury, mishap or privation encountered on one of our field trips.

FIELD REPORTS

## Hornby Island's Threatened Garry Oak Grove

"We walked west, across a grassy field and up a gentle incline. Garry oaks were dotted at the edge of the Douglas-fir forest. We topped the hill and were frozen in our tracks as we tried to absorb a sight we had come to believe impossible. A grove of Garry oaks stretched as far as our eyes could see, over the peak of the next small hill. No shrubs were visible; drying grasses and late flowering herbs formed a delicate carpet beneath the canopy of oaks. As we watched, a small deer bounded into the grove, stopped behind a large oak, then stared back..."

The legendary five-hectare Thousand Oaks site on Hornby Island is "by far the largest contiguous stand of the Garry Oak - Brome community located to date."<sup>1</sup> Also the most northerly identified such community, Thousand Oaks is "in pristine condition, with no broom, [and] no damage to site," according to the British Columbia Conservation Data Centre. Of fewer than 20 Garry Oak communities the centre has located and mapped, "none approach the high quality, condition, size and ecological integrity of the site at High Salal Ranch," says ecologist Carmen Cadrin.<sup>2</sup>

The Garry Oak - Brome community — a type that goes by several names in the scientific community — is dominated by a tree "of unique form: a sturdy bole which may curve leisurely or stretch upward with the grace of a Greek column. The limbs and branches stretch and bend in unexpected contortions, yet manage to create an almost perfect convex outline when viewed against the sky... In its undisturbed state, this Garry Oak community includes no shrubs, while attractive flowering forbs dominate the herb layer in early spring, gradually replaced by a number of grass species and late flowering herbs as the summer progresses."<sup>3</sup>

Rocky exposed sites across southeastern Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands are the niche of the Garry Oak community. Isolated groves grow in the Fraser Valley, and individual trees grow as far north as Quatsino Sound. Urbanization around Victoria has, however, removed most Garry oak groves from the heart of its range. Even where remnant groves remain, the understorey is changed. Introduced domestic plants — *Bromus sterilis*, *B. rigidus*, *B. hordeus*, *Geranium molle*, *Cytisus scoparius*, *Galium aparine*, *Poa pratensis*, *Stellaria media*, *Vicia sativa*, *V.*

*hirsuta*, *Cynosurus echinatus*, *Vulpia bromoides* — comprise half the species listed as dominant and characteristic. This insidious modification forces botanists to speculate on the original composition of the ecosystem's understorey. Among native species listed as dominant and characteristic are these: *Camassia leichtlinii*, *Elymus glauca*, *Sanicula crassicaulis*, *Achillea millefolium*, *Bromus carinatus*, *Cerastium arvense*, *Ranunculus occidentalis*, *Claytonia perfoliata*, *Triteleia hyacinthina*, *Collinsia parviflora*, *Nemophila parviflora*, *Fritillaria lanceolata* and *Delphinium menziesii*.<sup>4</sup> Other native species, not presently dominant in the ecosystem, flourish in undeveloped sites — such as in Trial Islands Ecological Reserve, where the plant community lacks the Garry oak canopy but "is well represented at the herb layer." Remnant Garry oak meadows in such places as Victoria's Uplands and Beacon Hill parks nurture more rare species than typical disturbed sites.<sup>5</sup>

As for wildlife species associated with the Garry Oak - Brome community, Trudy Chatwin comments: "Recently, preparing a talk about wildlife in the Garry oak community for the Garry Oak Colloquium, held at the University of Victoria, I enquired of the experts on such matters — ornithologist Wayne Campbell, principal author of *The Birds of B.C.*, mammalogist Dave Nagorsen at the Royal B.C. Museum, Bill Harper, the Wildlife Branch's endangered species specialist, and Syd Cannings, B.C. Conservation Data Centre zoologist. I soon realized that there is no specific research on the subject and very limited information on past and present distributions of wildlife in the Garry oak ecosystem."

High Salal Ranch is a 370-acre property on the north shore of Tribune Bay, Hornby Island, that has been developed as strata-title lots since 1979. At its east end, near Helliwell Provincial Park, grow the Thousand Oaks.

Covenants attached to the 1979 preliminary layout approval for the subdivision prohibited the removal of any vegetation or trees within a to-be-designated oak grove area and stipulating that layouts of lots at the east end of High Salal Ranch not conflict with the grove. At a public meeting at the time B.C. Government officials gave the impression that the oak grove would be preserved intact. The updated 1991 prospectus, indeed, shows the oak area as common ground for the strata lot owners. The required covenants



were, however, never put in place. Why not? Because the development is proceeding in phases, and the vicinity of the oak grove is under development only in phases 4 and 5. It was not designated at the preliminary layout stage, and has never been designated since.<sup>6</sup>

As plans for the latest set of six houses are up for approval, it's down to the crunch, says resident Friend Richard Martin. The developer has a proposal before the Ministry of Highways that would designate for conservation only about the lower half of the oak grove. Upslope, to the north, would be six houses, all with sea views, in an "oak grove tree preservation area," protecting the oaks around the houses from felling or damage.

Conservancy Hornby Island opposes this proposal as contrary to earlier commitments to

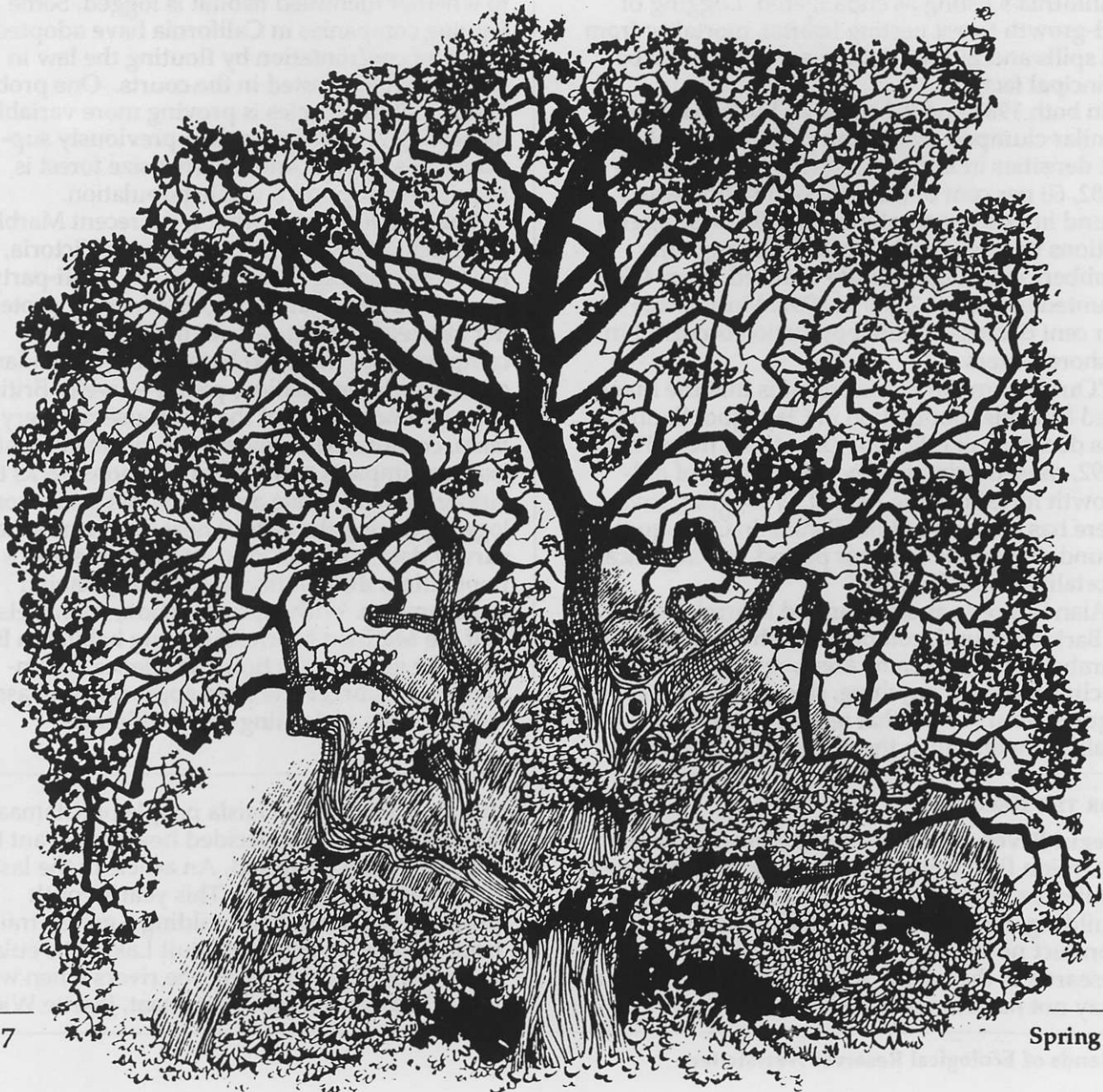
preserve the oak grove and the individual oaks.

For more information about Conservancy Hornby Island's work, call Richard Martin at 335-2419. To contact the Garry Oak Meadow Preservation Society, call 386-3785. The B.C. Conservation Data Centre is at 356-0928/9.

Peter Grant

#### NOTES

- 1 "An Endangered Plant Community in British Columbia," *British Columbia Conservation Data Centre Newsletter*, September 1992, p. 4
- 2 From a statement by J. Bevan, Conservation Hornby Island, to the Victoria Garry Oak Symposium
- 3 "An Endangered Plant Community...", p. 3
- 4 Ibid
- 5 Ibid, p. 4
- 6 From a statement by J. Bevan



## RESEARCH REPORTS

### Marbled Murrelet Surveys in Clayoquot Sound, Elsewhere Show Declines

Researcher John Kelson reopened a suggestive line of biological inquiry in 1992, taking to a boat to repeat intensive at-sea surveys for Marbled Murrelets (*Brachyramphus marmoratus*) first undertaken in 1982 by Harry Carter. The project (funded in part by the Friends) determined murrelet numbers and distribution in southeast Clayoquot Sound using standardized methodology — counting birds in 341 quadrats of 1 km<sup>2</sup> in fiord, channel and inshore habitats.

At-sea surveys have been underused in the effort to document suspected declines in populations. Low numbers led to federal authorities listing the species as threatened in British Columbia, Washington, Oregon and California, and for California's listing as endangered. Logging of old-growth forest nesting habitat, mortality from oil spills and gill-net fishing are believed to be principal factors.

In both 1982 and '92 surveys, birds exhibited similar clumped dispersion patterns, with highest densities in inshore and channel waters. In 1982, 60 per cent of the total population was found in two aggregations. In 1992 these aggregations were similarly located, although the numbers were significantly reduced, from 4,500 counted in 1982 to 2,700 in 1992. Most of this 40 per cent decrease in the population occurred in inshore waters.

"Our preliminary assessment is that the Marbled Murrelet population in Clayoquot Sound has declined significantly (20 - 40 %) from 1982 to 1992, caused primarily by the removal of old-growth forest nesting habitat by logging, since there has been no gill-net fishing in Clayoquot Sound during the ten-year period, nor significant mortality from oil spills."

Alan Burger's at-sea Marbled Murrelet surveys in Barkley Sound, compared with Carter's 1982 numbers from the same areas, reveal a pattern of decline that is, if anything, steeper. Alan cites figures from Alaska that tell the same story — the reality is worse than the guesstimates on which

the threatened listings were based. The Alaska population range used to be pegged at 250,000 to one million; it's now considered to be between 150,000 and 250,000.

On a recent consulting visit to the United States, Alan participated in a U.S. Forest Service assessment exercise that is drawing together range-wide data and will publish a handbook. Alan remarked on the planning requirements imposed by the U.S. *Endangered Species Act* on companies logging in Marbled Murrelet habitat, including hiring full-time researchers with tested, certified hearing ability, who conduct eight murrelet surveys over a two year period. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has a strong say as to whether identified habitat is logged. Some logging companies in California have adopted a policy of confrontation by flouting the law in order to have it tested in the courts. One problem is that the species is proving more variable in its nesting requirements than previously supposed. It's still not known what size forest is required to support a viable population.

Alan and John both attended a recent Marbled Murrelet Recovery Team meeting in Victoria, John representing the Friends. The multi-party committee reviewed new guidelines for protecting murrelet habitat — ones that B.C. forest companies are more likely to follow (no endangered species legislation, please — we're British.) Alan is concerned that the multi-use recovery team, constituted to review the murrelet's status, examine impacts and look at solutions, lacks the authority to advocate areas to be set aside from logging during the critical next five years when survey data is expected to establish the bird's population, distribution and nesting habitat requirements. Without such action, Alan feels, half the Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat in B.C. could be gone by the time the science is completed. Dr. Burger has been approached to assist with the task of drafting new guidelines.

## FOR THE RECORD

**Megin River** A Tofino resident brought to our attention firm community feeling that the Megin Valley be left a pristine natural area — no trail-building, no more cabins. The Friends will conduct no-impact field work in proposed research in the valley. An article in the last issue may not have made this clear.

**Kitlope Valley** The Haisla people of Kitamaat Village have not yet decided how they want the Kitlope Valley protected. An article in the last issue claimed otherwise. This year's youth program will include rebuilding a grease trail from Kitlope Lake to Kimsquit Lake. The eulachon were just running up the rivers when we last called our Friend in Kitamaat, Josette Wier.



ECOLOGICAL RESERVES & PROPOSED RESERVES

## Mount Tuam On the Road to Development

(Third in a series)

Sail away from Swartz Bay, near Victoria, on a B.C. Ferry, and you gaze upon the slopes of Mt Tuam, at the south end of Salt Spring Island. The ecological reserve ranges across the lower portion of its southeast aspect — probably the largest sea-to-sky sample of this forest type remaining relatively undisturbed on the island. The sparsely-populated vicinity seems to confirm the myth that the Gulf Islands are quiet, lazy places where you watch butterflies in meadows. The quiet is about to be shattered by the roar of the bulldozer, as subdivision developments loom for private properties west of the reserve.

Last August The Islands Trust granted a development variance permit (DVP) to the landowner next to the reserve, to allow development of the property into five lots without access to a public highway. The property is officially "water access only," and previous development applications were refused because a by-law prohibits subdivisions that don't front a public highway. The road, which used to be part of the ecological reserve, is apparently not approvable by the Ministry of Highways because it hasn't been fully "gazetted" as a public highway.

What's so different about this development proposal that the Trust expedited it? Salt Spring trustee Bob Andrew, also the reserve's volunteer warden, cites improved density (reduced 50 per cent), a 20 per cent donation of parkland, covenants against tree cutting, a 20-year ban on upgrading the road through the reserve, the Trust's involvement in the layout of lots.

Andrew says he had concerns about traffic impacts on the ecological reserve, but outsiders on dirt bikes or in ATVs are, he believes, more likely to cause damage to the ecosystem. To effectively restrict outside access, a locked gate is needed, says Andrew, although B.C.'s regional land administration manager has apparently ruled out a gate — because it's a public road. And, says Andrew, a full-fig upgrade of the road is highly unlikely because the Ministry of Highways doesn't want the expense, especially if the island, as is bruited, incorporates as a municipality and becomes responsible for roads.

Residents of Mount Tuam formed a group to investigate the issue. Briony Penn reports that some members feel the status of the road wasn't adequately addressed by the Trustees; the title

research was done by the developer. If the track that winds in and out of the reserve and ends up at the foot of the slope at Cape Keppel is, indeed, not really a public highway — or why did Highways reject the subdivision application? — then the Trust, in granting the DVP, buying into the fiction that the road won't be used, may be compounding an error originally made by taking the right-of-way out of the ecological reserve, with no public review and no compensatory addition, to become part B.C. Hydro right-of-way, partly under the jurisdiction of Crown Lands, part under the Department of Transport (that's the gazetted part). By accident or design?

On February 9 the Friends of Mount Tuam met with the Islands Trustees and the developer of the Cape Keppel subdivision. "Status of the road aside," Briony writes, "We hoped that conservation covenants would be attached to the lots to restrict vehicle use, especially heavy machinery, through the reserve, control land use on these properties, and create a buffer strip around the reserve. Imagine our shock to learn that the covenant would provide for a 50-metre buffer, no restrictions on vehicle use, a vague tree-cutting restriction applicable to the backs of the lots, with no penalties [since extended to the upper halves of the lots], and no monitoring of adherence to the covenant." The suggestion that the Friends of Mount Tuam could assist the Trust in a monitoring role was "met with horror." The possibility of a covenant restricting upgrading of the road forever was bruited, but the ability to enforce this covenant is questionable.

"We believe the handling of the reserve demonstrates bias against the public right to a say in the use of public lands, and a bias in favour of private — that is to say, developers' — rights of access to those lands.

"Now that a subdivision application is pending, there is no basis for more public input. The way is paved for two other properties to be developed. In future the slopes of Mount Tuam could be girdled with a public highway and subdivisions leading to further incremental erosion of fast-disappearing Gulf Island ecosystems.

"This is an issue worth pursuing," Briony concludes. "The slopes of Mount Tuam include a large area of endangered Gulf Islands forest ecosystems."

## ECOLOGICAL RESERVES & PROPOSED RESERVES

### Mara Meadows Update

Last issue *The Log* published correspondence about the District of Salmon Arm's proposal to store water in a marshy upland area at the head of Violet Creek, which drains through Mara Meadows Ecological Reserve. Warden Peter Legg followed up with a letter reporting efforts to educate officials of the reserve's existence and function, and of the order-in-council that "in effect forbade the construction of and works which would deprive the reserve of water required to maintain levels necessary to the plant life the reserve was created to protect."

At an on-site meeting in 1989 the district engineer "said that he would not proceed any further with diversion plans."

Funny... Our corresponding member Tilman Nahm called recently to point out that the district again advertised its storage plan in the local paper.

The Friends wrote to the provincial water management authority in Kamloops and got a brief reply, promising to apprise us of developments.

We also contacted BC Parks' Thompson River District in Kamloops to inquire whether staff are ready to go to bat for the reserve. Yes indeed, said area supervisor Bob Enns, underlining that the reserve is a "very important," with "some plant species found only there." The reserve harbours an extraordinarily diverse marsh plant community, with one of the largest number of

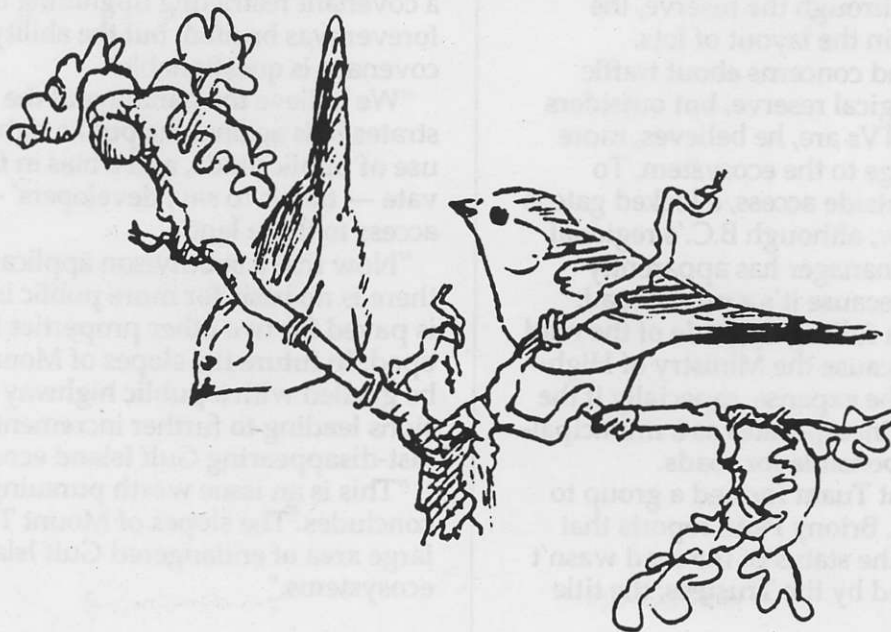
rare plants of any site in B.C., including four rare orchid species. BC Parks wants to ensure that water storage not impinge on the water supply to the reserve.

### Jack Creek Update

We received a letter from Janet Cotgrave of Friends of Jack Creek, in Quesnel, with an update on their proposal for a 1200-hectare ecological reserve in the interior Douglas fir zone northwest of Williams Lake. On a field trip last September, BC Parks and BC Forest Service regional staff became enthused about the proposal. The Quesnel Forest District, however, was opposed to protection. The office, says Janet, "is frequently referred to as a dinosaur."

Since then, the area has been given official status as an ecological reserve proposal. Séan Sharpe of BC Parks Northern Region says that even rudimentary gap analysis shows how little of interior Douglas fir ecosystems remains undisturbed. Still, Jack Creek is far from in the bag. It's not an ideal candidate for the purposes of the Protected Area Strategy because it doesn't fit any particular type of ecosystem, being transitional between sub-boreal spruce and Douglas fir types, notably in its understorey vegetation. Under the Protected Area Strategy, the primary criterion for selection is not rarity but representativeness.

The Friends hope to make a summer field trip to Jack Creek; see the Calendar.





BC GOVERNMENT NEWS

## Protection of the Khutzeymateen is Imminent

The B.C. Government is moving quickly to protect the Khutzeymateen Valley and its grizzlies. The plan is to have a protective designation and an interim protection plan in place when the bears come out of hibernation. Mid-April is Cabinet's current target for orders-in-council designating the area.

The government's commitment to protect the grizzlies and their habitat in the 44,000-hectare valley is clearly voiced in the interim protection plan that BC Parks' northern offices drafted and circulated in January. The government's intends:

- to license only two charter tour operators
- only water-based transport and accommodation — no land-based facilities
- no unescorted visits
- severe restrictions on use of the estuary
- no visitors at all above the estuary, and no motor vehicles to be used by fisheries officers and others visiting in the line of duty
- no sport hunting or fishing
- buy-out of existing traplines

Scenic overflights will, however, be allowed in the short term, according to the first draft plan. To protect the character of the sanctuary, we would prefer airplanes not be permitted below the surrounding ridges. The difficulty lies in processing the restriction through the federal Department of Transport.

Provisions for long-term management of Khutzeymateen Inlet — the common approach to the valley — are missing from the plan, as well.

The most unusual element of the protection proposal, though, is the Gitsee people's parallel authority, evidenced in the draft plan's second goal, to protect traditional cultural activities.

The Gitsees will regulate their own

- subsistence hunting
- gathering of food plants
- fishing
- logging for traditional cultural use

Wardens of the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Sanctuary will be recruited from the Gitsees, and the protecting authority has a verbal commitment to consult with the hereditary chief on management matters. Lone hunters could, hypothetically, shoot animals under the noses of visitors sworn

and enjoined from unescorted travel or hunting.

The Friends' consulting bear biologist, Wayne McCrory, enjoys good working relations with the hereditary chief and several elders of the Gitsees, a Tsimshian tribe based in Port Simpson. Wayne says the Gitsees would not hunt bears. They would take cedar trees from the inlet only. Given their claim to own the land — the Gitsees have three small reserves in the valley and participate in the Tsimshian land claim — the band would not tolerate any restriction on their traditional use of the valley. They would walk, and the process would falter.

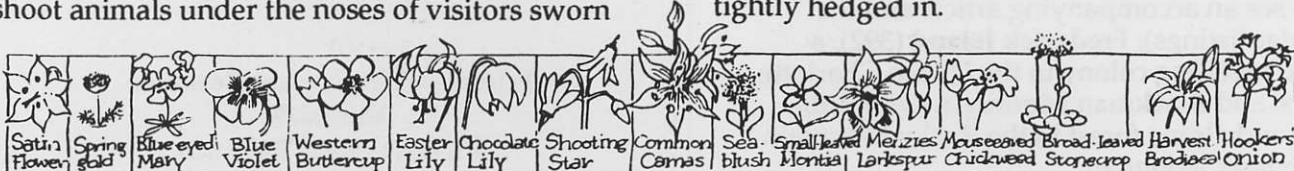
Designation options for the Khutzeymateen include ecological reserve, although in private officials say it isn't an option, because to the Gitsees the prohibition on hunting or gathering makes it "occupied Crown land," which may prejudice their claim to aboriginal title.

At this time the options include:

- Class A Provincial Park under the *Park Act* and regs, administered by BC Parks
- Recreation Area under the *Park Act* and regs, under BC Parks
- Wilderness Area under the *Forest Act*, section 5.1, administered by the BC Forest Service
- Wildlife Management Area under section 12 of the *Land Act*, administered by the Ministry of Environment.

The Friends corresponded with the study team, making our case for the strongest possible protection, which is Class A Park, with all the clout and control the *Park Act* allows.

Other troubling aspects of the process relate, first, to the lack of information about the Gitsees' intended level of use and, second, to the limited opportunity for public intervention. The process is supposed to be local, and the usual displays and public meetings were staged in three places, all on the north coast. Study team organizers have, however, proven candid and responsive to our queries and concerns. Negotiations with the Gitsees for this unusual management regime have been difficult, they admit. The natives want to make agreements in principle, while the conservation community wants the terms of use tightly hedged in.



## BC GOVERNMENT NEWS

### Ecological Reserves Act, Regulations To Be Revamped

The Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks is reviewing the 1971 *Ecological Reserves Act* and companion 1975 regulations with a view to strengthening the Crown's power to enforce its restrictions on use of ecological reserves. The regulations are intended to be a management tool for those responsible for administering the act. All aspects of reserve management, including permitted uses, enforcement and penalties, are being examined. Major additions and modifications are required to the regulations, which are quite limited in scope, do not address significant areas of management concern and require more specific language to prevent misinterpretation. The regulations' intention, for example, is to prohibit consumptive recreational activities, such as hunting and fishing, in ecological reserves, but the existing regulations do not state this clearly enough. There are no provisions for penalties, nor, indeed, any specification of what activities constitute an offence. A new set of regulations will strengthen BC Parks' ability to protect and properly manage ecological reserves. Reserves where enforcement problems have arisen include Rose Spit Ecological Reserve, remarkable sand dunes with fragile plant communities on the northeastern tip of Graham Island, QCI — overrun by dune buggies. Another example is Baynes Island, the only floodplain site in the lower Squamish River remaining with pristine vegetation, where a native fishery operates. Charges could be laid under the *Offence Act*, but aren't, since a lengthy and difficult court process is involved. Conservation technician Mona Holley says the review team is working on a first draft of the act and regulations, which could be presented to the Legislative Assembly as early as 1994. The team is seeking legal opinions on several issues.

### Keeping Tabs

#### No New Reserves, Three New ERPs

For the third semi-annual report in a row, no new ecological reserves have been created.

Three ecological reserve proposals (ERPs) have been added to the official list: **Jack Creek** (ERP 391 — see an accompanying article and the Calendar listings); **Frederick Island** (392), a seabird breeding colony in the Queen Charlotte Islands; and **Blackman Mountain** (393), sub-alpine and alpine forest in the Rocky Mountain Trench near Valemont.

### Royal B.C. Museum Functions Under Review

World-famous for interpreting the world of nature and the area's pre-history and history in pleasing public displays, the Royal British Columbia Museum appears poised to pare its less visible, but no less valuable, research and collections programs.

Friends director Peggy Frank wrote a letter to B.C.'s minister responsible for culture, Darlene Marzari, in support of the Victoria museum's programs, including collections and "the continued involvement of curatorial staff in research and public education." The museum's ornithological, marine and other natural history collections are celebrated and have been used, Peggy pointed out, to verify species collected in ecological reserves and areas proposed for protection. "The global collections represent years of investment in collection and identification and are invaluable in biological research. The museum is the appropriate place to house these collections and care for them as they should be cared for. They could be made more accessible to the public and other governments."

Minister Marzari's response, in part, reads thus:

"The Museum is evaluating its current functions and programming under the Futures Project," led by its executive director, Bill Barkley, and involving "extensive consultation with interested public groups."

"I look forward to your participation in the Futures Project."

### The Log

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