

The Log

FRIENDS OF ECOLOGICAL RESERVES NEWSLETTER

VICTORIA, B.C.

SPRING 1994

The Good News This Spring

Perhaps it was just the fine spring night — the sweet scent of cottonwoods bursting their buds, the last robin's twitter, the chorus of tree frogs in the swamp, the silent flutter of a bat, the last light reflecting off the deep fiord of Saanich Inlet — but we felt a special thrill last March 30. A miracle in conservation occurred. The BC Government, local governments, conservation organizations, developers and the corporate sector somehow negotiated the Commonwealth Nature Legacy, an \$18.7 million, 1000-hectare deal by which the Province will acquire most of the Gowlland Range, Mount Finlayson, most of Tod Inlet and the Partridge Hills. The miracle? Everyone is happy with the arrangement:

- Conservationists are excited a valuable portion of the endangered Coastal Douglas Fir Zone has been saved — one with Garry oak woodland, Douglas fir forests, and rare plants
- Bought-out developers Fama and National Trust avoid impending environmental battles
- Westcoast Transmission made a generous contribution towards the purchase
- Central Saanich, the Highlands, and the Capital

Regional District are pleased to have acquired greenspace with far-reaching potential for both recreation and conservation

- The agreement was struck without prejudice to land claims undertaken by Salish First Nations. We heartily commend the Harcourt Government for its vision and initiative in protecting natural areas so close to Victoria, where little Crown land is available.

The Commonwealth Nature Legacy gives us hope for adequate protection of British Columbia's biological diversity. So does the magnificent new 233,240-hectare Ts'yl-os Provincial Park around Chilko Lake.

This compact issue of the newsletter is the result of colliding time constraints and budgetary realities. Funding permitting, we'll make a big issue in the fall. Please join us on field trips, beginning on April 30 with the spring flowers on Trial Islands, and come to the Friends' Annual General Meeting the same day.

Trudy Chatwin
Vice-President

FRIENDS' BUSINESS

Friends of Ecological Reserves 1993 Annual Report

The Friends support research projects in ecological reserves as well as in support of biodiversity generally. The biology and ecology work we help to fund is important, particularly studies that document the value of old growth forest as habitat and those focussing on the critically-depleted Garry oak ecosystem.

In 1993 both the scale and the scope of our contributions were enlarged over previous years. We provided major funding to the Marbled Murrelet Research Team, an energetic group of

tree-climbers investigating marbled murrelet population trends and factors throughout Clayoquot Sound.

The Friends continued to support Alan Burger's research on marbled murrelets. We made significant contributions to the Clayoquot Biosphere Project and to John Kelson's biodiversity work in the Kitlope Valley. We developed a newmap of the Megin Watershed.

Finally, the Friends seeded an inventory project for Victoria's special ecosystems and >>>>

re-introduced ourselves to Andrew Bryant's ongoing Vancouver Island marmot research.

Thanks to the continuing support of the Eden Conservation Trust and our loyal members, we maintain a healthy reserve of cash. Contributions intended for the Thousand Oaks purchase are being held in trust while candidate areas of Garry oak meadow are identified. We are still seeking a fund-raising strategy that will allow us to replenish the coffers and maintain a higher level of funding for research.

The Friends also put out newsletters of 12 and 20 pages in 1993 and maintained a minimal information service. Our field trip program was wide-ranging and fun-filled, although somewhat reduced in scale, owing to members' other commitments. Policy and personnel changes in the Royal BC Museum's Newcombe program office have resulted in the loss of that venue for slide shows. We have not yet found a replacement.

Between Clayoquot Sound and CORE, 1993 was a year of big losses and big gains for British Columbia ecosystems. The Friends took time from busy schedules to applaud the BC Government's commitment to protect the Megin Valley, where we have focussed much attention and hope.

Peter Grant
Office Manager

Financial Report

The Friends started 1993 with \$25,784 in the bank. During the year, we received a total of \$12,841 — \$7,532 in general donations, \$970 for special marbled murrelet and Garry oak projects, and \$3,120 in membership dues. Our expenditures totalled \$21,605, including \$14,643 for research, and \$6,608 for administration and newsletter publication. We ended the year with \$17,020.

These figures are unaudited. Copies of the Friends' audited books and auditor's report will be distributed at the Annual Meeting or on request.

Henry Bauld
Treasurer

ONLY NOTICE TO MEMBERS The Directors Request the Pleasure of Your Company at Friends of Ecological Reserves' 1994 Annual General Meeting

**3 pm Saturday, April 30
at Valerie and Henry Bauld's,
2238 Arbutus Road, Saanich
(entrance opposite Ebony Tce.)**

The meeting reviews the accomplishments of the past year, plans the current year's activities, and elects the officers for 1994. A pot luck dinner follows the meeting. Co-ordinate with Henry Bauld (721-5962).

Notice of Elections

The Friends' membership elects a board of 12 directors at the annual general meeting. The directors choose five officers — president, 1st vice-president, 2nd vice-president, secretary, and treasurer — at the first executive meeting following. The Friends typically elect fewer than 12 directors, and they typically nominate only one vice-president.

Serving as a director involves a commitment to work for the society and some pretty good pot-luck dinners. Business meetings are scheduled by telephone, often on short notice. Members who wish to attend a business meeting can pass their names to Peter Grant (595-4813).

Requests for Funding for Research

The Friends welcome biological and ecological research proposals.

Please indicate:

- title of research
- name of applicant(s)
- mailing address
- total funding required for project
- amount requested from FER
- other contributions or sources
- brief description of the research
- its relationship to ecological reserves
- any other pertinent details

Peggy Frank

THE FRIENDS' CALENDAR

Field Trips – Spring and Summer 1994

Trial Islands

Saturday April 30

Trial Islands, off Oak Bay's south coast, has the highest concentration of rare plants in B.C. As in past years Mike Sheperd will shuttle passengers to the islands, leaving — weather permitting — from McNeill (Shoal) Bay beginning at 9 am and returning by 2 pm. Given that transport is limited, registration is required — call Henry Bauld at 721-5962. Bring lunch, rubber boots and rain gear. The cost is \$10 for members, \$15 for non-members.

Gowlland Range

Sunday, May 8

Meet at the Lone Tree Hill Park lot on Millstream Road at 10 am. Bring a lunch. Information? Call Sue Carr (382-8880).

Queen Charlotte Islands

June 20 - 25

Botany BC is sponsoring this excursion to Tow Hill Ecological Reserve, sand dunes, and (by boat) in search of alpine endemic species. Trudy will be guiding. A registration fee of \$125 includes some meals and bus, but no plane or boat transportation or accommodation. Space is limited; Call Rosamund Pojar, registrar (847-9784).

Haley Lake Ecological Reserve

Sunday, July 10

Andrew Bryant will lead a morning hike through the middle of Vancouver Island marmot habitat during wildflower season, to see the young-of-the-year. Limited to 15 participants — register by calling Henry Bauld (721-5962). People with 4-wheel-drive vehicles automatically preferred. (We need two; the roads are hazardous to most autos.) Meet at 5 am at the tourist kiosk near the Cassidy Pub, south of Nanaimo. We'll congregate at a nearby campground the night before.

Lasqueti Island Summer Junket

August 5 - 7

The French Creek walk-on ferry slip is the gateway to adventure — a week-end on the roadless reaches of Lasqueti Island. Camp at Adrian Forsyth's Tucker Bay property; current island resident Irene Manley will lead a trek to the Lasqueti Island Ecological Reserve, a repository of juniper and cactus. An excursion to Jedidiah Island, a potential wildlife protection area, is included. To register and get more information, call Peter (595-4813).

Kayaking in Kyuquot Sound

West Coast Expeditions' kayaking program has taken wing, and Rupert Wong now has a toll free line (1-800-665-3040; 926-1110 if calling in the Vancouver area). Six-day kayak trips and boating adventures run throughout the summer from Rupert's Spring Island base camp in Kyuquot Sound. Kayak trips are tailored to novices, advanced kayakers, or women. Cost: \$730 for boating trips, \$699 for kayaking (+GST), including all equipment, food, boats, and transport from Fair Harbour. There's a transport service to and from Campbell River.

Fall Birding in Okanagan ERs

If interested, call Trudy (592-3559).

WAIVER OF LIABILITY

ON FIELD TRIPS SPONSORED BY

FRIENDS OF ECOLOGICAL RESERVES

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 great care to ensure that 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 a field trip.

RESEARCH REPORTS

Haley Lake Marmot Ecology

Andrew Bryant reported on his research, Dispersal and meta-population ecology of Vancouver Island marmots, in clearcut and higher-up "natural" habitats in the Nanaimo Lakes area.

"It was an excellent year for the Haley Lake colony, with 3 litters and 12 infants recorded. Notably, two litters with 5 infants each were recorded. These are only the 2nd and 3rd instances of litters of this size. It is interesting the females in both cases were old (7 and 8 years) females which have been resident in the bowl since 1987 and 1988 respectively."

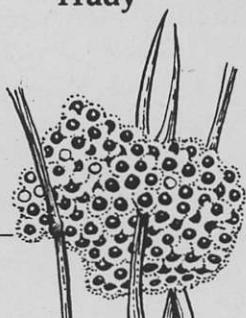
To monitor marmot dispersal Andrew now employs veterinary surgeons to implant radio transmitters. In the effort to determine factors in population change, Andrew continues to make close comparisons of vegetation and other habitat features. Thermoregulation studies are expected to supply more pieces to the puzzle of marmot population declines in cutover areas.

Victoria's Special Ecosystems

This inventory project identifying southeastern Vancouver Island's sensitive ecosystems got off to a great start. Alan Philip, our diligent cartographer, Carrina Maslovat, Hans Roemer, and Wayne Erickson finished both a report and all air photo interpretation. They identified more than 2000 special ecosystems, including Garry oak meadows and woodlands, old growth forests, wetlands, rocky outcrop communities, and sand dunes. It has been fun field checking the polygons. We hope to include volunteers in the second phase of the project.

Southeast Vancouver Island's population is expected to grow 65 per cent in the next 20 years (source: Federal - Provincial *State of the Environment Report*, 1993). Such gross pressure on the land base makes it imperative to preserve enough natural areas now that the island will retain some character.

Trudy



FIELD REPORTS

Broom Brigade hits Brackman Id

'Twas the eve before halloween, and a full moon hung in the sky as the intrepid Friends and Victoria Sea kayak Network assembled for a broom pulling party in Brackman Island Ecological Reserve, near Swartz Bay. We stayed in the lovely cabin of a member on a nearby island. Later we went back and finished the job, and the little island is now broom-free. We paddled over on April 10 and found the site covered in lilies, sedum, camas and other flowers.

Trudy

Wildlife Thrives in Oak Bay

Pen Brown, whose home looks down the Strait of Juan de Fuca, reports on recent excitement in south Oak Bay over "an eagle's nest in a 30-metre cottonwood. Plainly visible from Transit Road and St. Patrick Street, as the tree is not yet in leaf, the nest has just been enlarged and the occupants can be seen coming and going. The nest is thought to replace one in a balsam fir that was blown down in a storm last winter. It's surely unusual to see an eagle's nest in a cottonwood — and in such an urban area."

For Sale: Oak Meadow Placemats

A group of Friends adjourned to Hornby Island on a stormy weekend in February to paint the indicative wildflowers of the Woodlands ecosystem type — all part of the Victoria Special Ecosystems Inventory Project. Hans Roemer designed species modules for each sensitive ecosystem type, designed to help with field-checking. Alison Watt, Peggy Frank, Donald Gunn and Briony Penn instructed novices in the art of botanical watercolour illustration.

Raymond Racliffe, Thumbprints Art & Design, donated his computer graphics expertise to make a beautiful design of the Garry Oak Meadow for a placemat. The placemats are available from the Field Naturalist, 1241 Broad Street (388-4174), or from Evelyn Hamilton (382-1064).

We sold mats at the Royal BC Museum's Native Plant Day in April.

The Forest and Rock Outcrop modules are next. Like to help? Contact Evelyn or Peggy (537-9710).

The Mount Tuam Saga Continues

Development pressures continue on all sides of the Mount Tuam Ecological Reserve. This winter, the adjacent 100-acre northeast property was logged and subdivided. Despite a promise to the community from the local realtor, Island Heritage Realty, on behalf of its client, a San Diego development firm, to covenant a 40-acre fragment of old growth — one of the last and largest patches of old growth left on Salt Spring Island, including a tree estimated at 1000 years old — the timber rights were sold for the whole property before subdividing. Major financing for this project was provided by the local credit union, Island Savings.

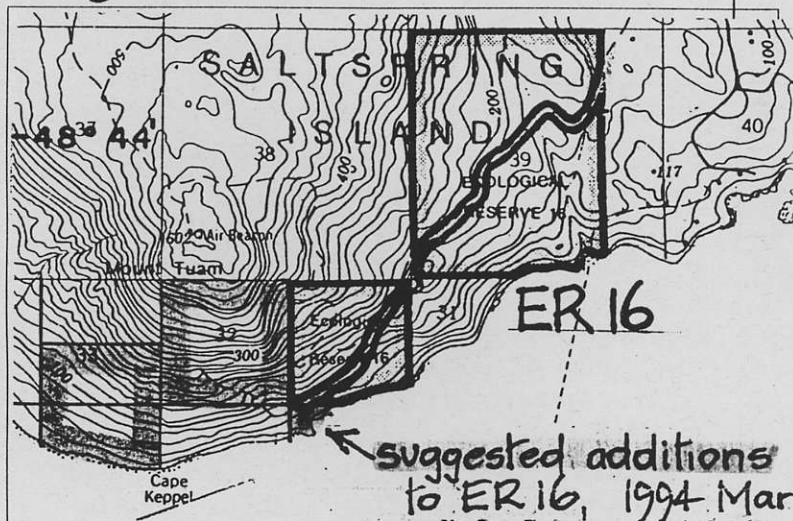
On the northwest side, the developers Spencer's Excavation Ltd, have been lobbying BC Lands to push a road through one of few remaining Crown parcels (southeast Section 43, identified in the Protected Areas Strategy as a candidate area) to provide access to develop Lot 38, which lies along the north edge of the reserve, in exchange for donating land. The Crown Land Use Coalition of local community groups has recommended that this application be opposed and that planning for the entire upland forest area be subject to a comprehensive strategy.

On the southern edge, the Cape Keppel issue continues to flare. The developer was granted a "water access only" subdivision, but is now lobbying the highways ministry to push a road through an adjacent Crown park reserve to get a legal corridor through to his property line. This reserve has been identified in the Protected Areas Strategy as a candidate for designation. Again community groups have strongly recommended rejection of this application. There is no possible benefit to opening the reserve to traffic.

In all three cases, the mechanisms for protecting buffer zones are in place, but developers are pushing agencies and the community to the limit to maximize their returns on land investments.

WANTED: SLIDES OF ECOLOGICAL RESERVES

Ecological reserve system planner Ken Morrison in Victoria (356-0536) requests the loan of landscape and other fresh images for a travelling BC Parks display and literature.



Map (1:50 000) by R.C. Harris, March 1994.

After visiting Mt. Tuam ER recently, Bob wrote in a letter to environment, lands and parks minister Moe Sihota:

"We were sorry to find that a diagonal road allowance had been deleted through both parts of the Reserve, splitting it into four lesser places.

"To compensate for this loss, and to extend the small amount of Coastal Douglas fir presently protected, I recommend that your Ministry dedicate these parcels of Crown land to the Reserve: the NW 1/4 of Sec 32, the fractional SE 1/4 of Sec 32, the south half of NE 1/4 of Sec 33, and the fractional SE 1/4 of Sec 33

The pressure is incessant, and rising land prices have made this a high-stake game.

This New Year, a group of us staggered through the mud and debris of what once had been a rich ancient forest floor and came upon the stump of a tree grown tall before Captain Vancouver ever ventured near these shores. On the stump one of the fallers had carved a huge dollar sign with his chainsaw. It was five feet from the boundary of the ecological reserve.

I am not sure how we can solve this problem. Talk in the community has ranged from starting new financial institutions that have local ethical accounts that relate directly to local land use issues to setting up a stewardship service that provides local information to developers, realtors, and landowners. The talk continues — and the forests continue to disappear.

Briony Penn

Mr. Owen's Vancouver Island Plan

Cautious approval — that's our response to CORE commissioner Stephen Owen's Vancouver Island Land Use Plan. Owen came up with a balanced plan that would protect 13 per cent of the land base (currently 10.3 per cent of the island is protected) and designate an additional 8 per cent as "regionally significant lands" (RSL).

So why the caution? When the protected area plan is broken out by ecoregion, only 7.8 per cent of the low-and-mid elevation forest will be protected. And the RSL designation does not in itself confer protection, but rather flags sensitive areas — the Saanich Peninsula among them — for careful planning.

At the level of specifics, we like the recognition Owen's plan accords fish and wildlife habitat in the lower Tsitika valley and Claude Elliot Lake, the Upper Carmanah and Walbran valleys, the Brooks-Nasparti forest, and the Nahwitti / Shushartie watershed. Given the paramount importance of the lower Tahsis-Kwois watershed for wildlife, we wonder why Silburn Creek, an important and integral tributary, was not included. Given the scarcity of unmodified watersheds on Vancouver Island, why were the Klaskish, Power and Battle rivers and East Creek not identified for protection? They'd just about make up the gap in representation of forest types.

Peter Grant

Marbled Murrelet Research Team

Irene Manley writes: "This year we hope to do some follow-up work in Clayoquot Sound. John Kelson is planning to repeat population surveys at-sea for a third consecutive year. Time and funding allowing he may be able to cover a larger area than in previous years. In August or September we will climb the two nest trees found in 1993 to look for use this breeding season."

"John Kelson is continuing work on the oolichans; this year he is working with the Haisla studying oolichan biology in the Kitamaat River. One focus of the study is to look at the tainting or contamination of the oolichans from the effluent of the Eurocan pulp mill. The Haisla now depend on the Kemano river oolichan run for making grease. This year numbers of oolichans in the Kemano were very low. This run is threatened by the Kemano completion project, which would increase the flow levels in the Kemano."

KEEPING TABS

New Ecological Reserve Proposals

Ellison Lake (ERP 403) is an important nesting and feeding area for migrating waterfowl and shorebirds, 12 kilometres north of Kamloops; with a number of rare and endangered plant species.

Wap Creek / Mabel Lake (ERP 404) is an area of fen and bog complexes 50 km north of Kamloops with highly diverse vegetation communities and plant species, including at least four red-listed species

James Grant Trinity Valley (ERP 405) is a small alkaline fen surrounded by a treed swamp 23 km north of Vernon containing two red-listed plants and a number of uncommon or specialized plants; also nesting sandhill cranes

Somenos Marsh Development

Laura Harris of the Cowichan Valley Naturalists' Timbercrest committee (748-7071) passed on a report on the controversy swirling around Somenos Marsh, east of the Duncan Forest Museum. Housing development threatens a grove of Garry oaks growing in deep soil as well as significant waterfowl habitat and outstanding wildflower sites. An estimated 60,000 Nuttal's violets grow in the 9.4-hectare Somenos Marsh. This "ecological gem" is owned by timber baron Herb Doman and other forest industry people in the Duncan area. The candidacy of the area for ecological reserve status was lost when topsoil was scooped off and sold.

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