

CANOE ISLETS

ER #17

ORIGINAL PURPOSE To protect nesting cormorants and gulls

OVERVIEW

Date established:	4 May 1971	Location:	At NW entrance to Porlier Pass, adjacent to S end of Valdes Island, 15 km NE of Chemainus
ORC #:	3017		
Map number:	92 G/4	Latitude:	49°01'N
Marine chart number:	3473	Longitude:	123°35'W

Total Area:	1 ha	Elevation:	0-3 m
Land:	1 ha		

Access: Closed to the public by Order-in-Council 1920, June 16, 1977 to protect nesting seabirds, which are extremely vulnerable to disturbance at this location. A permit is required to land on the islets, and they are accessible by boat.

Biogeoclimatic Zones:	Coastal Douglas-Fir (CDF)
Biogeoclimatic Variant:	CDF mm; Moist Maritime
Ecosection:	Strait of Georgia
Region:	Vancouver Island
Management Area:	Saanich/ Southern Gulf Islands

COMPOSITION

Physical: The reserve consists of two very small, low, rounded bedrock islets, about 400m from the Valdes Island shoreline. These are composed of glacially smoothed sedimentary rocks of the Nanaimo Group, and lie at the eastern edge of Georgia Strait. Subtidally, strongly sloping bedrock substrates of irregular relief are interrupted by narrow sand-shell terraces. The channel between Canoe Islets and Valdes Island is about 20 m deep; depths increase rapidly to the northeast of the islets. Currents are often strong due to the proximity of Porlier Pass.

Biological: No vascular plants are present, but crustose lichens are common in the splash zone which includes the entire rocks.

Two species of seabirds, the Double-crested Cormorant and Glaucous-winged Gull, are known to have nested here. The rocks were not known as a cormorant nesting site until the 1960s, when 30 pairs were counted. These declined to 12 in the 1970s and none in 1981, possibly due to human disturbance. Glaucous-winged Gulls began to nest on the rocks in the 1970s and about 60 pairs were present in 1981, their nesting territories covering about 50% of the land area.

Both Steller and California sea lions began using the Porlier Pass area about 1981, coincident with a general increase in numbers of both species in the Gulf of Georgia during the winter, where they prey heavily on Pacific Herring. About 100 Steller and 400-800 California sea lions were present during 1982-1984, of which some have intermittently used Canoe Islets as a winter haul-

out, particularly when disturbed from more accessible rocks in Stuart and Trincomali channels.

MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

SIGNIFICANT SPECIES	BC LIST STATUS	COSEWIC STATUS	CF PRIORITY
Steller (northern) Sea Lion	Blue listed	Special Concern (2003)	2
California Sea Lion		Not At Risk (1987)	6
Glaucous-winged Gull			5
Harbour Seal		Not At Risk (1999)	6
Double-crested Cormorant	Blue listed	Not At Risk (1978)	2

THREATS

Climate Change: Shrinkage of the reserve area and habitat loss will result from rising sea levels, considering the extremely low elevation of the islets (0-3m).

Recreation: Marine vessels (motorized and not) disrupt wildlife in reserve.

RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

Nesting sea-bird counts are available. The reserve remains available for sea-bird or spray zone ecology studies. Warden activities could include monitoring human use, sea level raise and bird populations.

SCIENTIFIC NAMES OF SPECIES MENTIONED IN THE CANOE ISLETS ER ACCOUNT

Fauna

Cormorant, Double-crested (*Phalacrocorax auritus*)
 Gull, Glaucous-winged (*Larus glaucescens*)
 Herring, Pacific (*Clupea pallasii*)
 Sea Lion, California (*Zalophus californianus*)
 Sea Lion, Steller (*Eumetopias jubatus*)
 Seal, Harbour (*Phoca vitulina*)