The Log
www.ecoreserves.bc.ca
Spring/Summer 2019
FRIENDS OF ECOLOGICAL RESERVES NEWSLETTER

Friends of Ecological Reserves Annual General Meeting

This year's Annual General Meeting for the Friends of Ecological Reserves took place on the evening of May 24 at the University of Victoria. The business portion of our meeting began at 6:30 pm.

Our long-time President Mike Fenger had stepped down last year and no one came forward to take his place. It was decided at an earlier Board meeting that the current Board members would take turns at being the Co-Chair. Mary Rannie is the current Co-Chair and she led this year's AGM. The usual business of adopting last year's minutes and reviewing the agenda were carried out. Our accountant gave a short summary of the state of our finances and the Membership secretary announced our membership numbers.

The current Board members were introduced and asked if they wished to stay on for the coming year. They all agreed. Mary called for nominations for new Board members. While there were no new nominations, Bristol Foster, one of the founders of Friends of Ecological Reserves, stood up and asked if he could once again serve on the Board. We are all thrilled to have him attend meetings and provide his valuable insights as to where we are going as a non-profit society.

Mary then gave a summary of our past year's activities and highlights which included our work as Intervenors in the Kinder Morgan Pipeline Expansion project:

"Mike Fenger, Garry Fletcher and Louise Beinhauer submitted a 30-page summary to the NEB Reconsideration hearings review. A Herculean task, it was rewarded with 15 references in the NEB's final report. The mentions were, for example, that reduced speed mitigates noise and GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions, and reduces the probability of marine mammal strikes. Another mention was of FER's

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The Log

Spring/Summer 2019

The LOG is published two 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 Autumn/Winter 2019/20 issue of *The LOG* is September 20, 2019.

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Contributors to this issue: Jenny Feick, Jacques Sirois, Stephen Ruttan, Marilyn Lambert and Fred Beinhauer.

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suggestion of a lateral displacement of shipping to the south, i.e. farther from Race Rocks and Victoria. This would reduce risk to local killer whale populations. FER's concern over the adequacy of baseline data along shipping lanes was also mentioned, and FER's recommendation that Trans Mountain's marine public outreach program include risks to public health in the event of a marine spill."

Mary went on to report on a housekeeping duty we undertook in the fall of 2018. Under the *Societies Act of British Columbia* which came into effect November 28, 2016, every pre-existing BC Society was required to file with the Registrar of Companies a transition application that contains the constitution, bylaws, statement of directors, and registered office. To comply with this, our Board member Rick Page undertook all the work required to research and write up the application. A General Meeting of the members of Friends of Ecological Reserves was held on October 26, 2018 to consider a Special Resolution of the Members to authorize the directors to file the transition application. This action was approved by all members in attendance.

The business portion of the meeting concluded with the introduction of our guest Speaker, Dr. John K. B. Ford, who has been involved in field studies of marine mammals off Canada's west coast since the mid 1970s. The highlights of his talk are presented below.

Highlights from the AGM presentation "Orcas in Peril? Culture and Conservation of West Coast Killer Whales"

By Fred Beinhauer

At the end of the business portion of the FER Annual General Meeting (AGM) held May 24, 2019, as is the usual custom, a guest speaker was invited. This year the speaker was Dr. John K. B. Ford and the topic of his presentation was "Orcas in Peril? Culture and Conservation of West Coast Killer Whales."

Dr. John Ford has been involved in field studies of marine mammals off Canada's west coast since the mid 1970s. He is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Zoology and the Institute for the Oceans and Fisheries, University of British Columbia. He is also marine mammal research scientist (emeritus) at the Pacific Biological Station, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Nanaimo, BC, where he headed up the cetacean research program for 16 years. He has studied cetaceans in BC waters since 1977, especially killer whales, and has published widely on the subject. His recent focus has been on the conservation status of cetacean species at risk in BC. He is a

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member of COSEWIC's Marine Mammal Species Specialist Committee and the IUCN's Cetacean Specialist Group.

Garry Fletcher, a FER director and warden of the Race Rocks Ecological Reserve, introduced John. Interestingly, Garry mentioned he first met John way back in the '70s. Garry was teaching at Pearson College and saw John by Race Rocks in a beat-up outboard motorboat while John was doing early acoustic surveys of Orca calls. What follows is a summary of John's presentation from my notes. I took lots of them!

The killer whale's scientific name is *Orcinus orca*, but Orca and Blackfish are other common names. It is the largest member of the dolphin family. It is an apex predator. John mentioned the killer whale was long feared as noted on maps from the 1500s and in a whaler's log from 1874. Europeans saw it as dangerous and often shot it on sight. But generally it was revered by First Nations and not hunted. There are no known killer whale attacks on humans in the wild.

The *Victoria Times Colonist* reported in 1960 that a .50-calibre machine gun was mounted by Seymour Narrows located near Campbell River to shoot killer whales on sight. But it was abandoned that summer. However, one whale was harpooned near Saturna Island and survived. It was named Moby Doll, taken to Vancouver and put on public display. Unfortunately, the whale only survived a few months, but it did start to change public attitudes toward killer whales. Some 62 whales were taken for public display in Seattle, Oak Bay and Vancouver, from BC waters over a 13-year period starting in the early 1960s until 1977. These aquaria, and more people living on the coast close to these animals, began to change attitudes, which resulted in the public outcry that led to a ban on capturing whales.

Dr. John Ford

While whales were in aquaria and being trained and viewed by more and more people, interest by the public and government grew and research in the field increased. Michael Bigg, who was John's mentor, is recognized as the founder of modern killer whale research and in the late 1970s, Michael invited John to study killer whale acoustics. Research led to the understanding that killer whales had individual markings, a social structure, and specific diets. Techniques to discover their diets involved direct sightings and interestingly, crumbs. After viewing an apparent feeding, researchers would go over in a boat and collect samples from the water. Scales or tissue of prey fish could be identified. Since whales share food (see below) rather than swallow the fish whole, debris could be expected. Another method was fecal sampling – scoop some poop and one could analyze stomach contents and diet.

Killer whales occur globally and populations span the oceans from the Artic to Antarctica, mostly in cold waters. They are highly social, group-living animals. Although they have a variety of diets, killer whales live in small specialized populations and the diets become specific to the small group or pod. For example, Southern Resident Killer Whales (SRKW) are fish eaters whereas Transient Killer Whales are mammal eaters. The pods also have slightly different physical characteristics, social structure, traditions and vocalizations. For example, the dialects of the SRKW pod are quite different from the Northern Resident Killer Whale (NRKW) pod. John has an audio of each that he played for us.

It was once thought that the males, with the tall dorsal fin,

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were the leaders and had a harem of females and their young like a pride of lions. However, the pod is matrilineal and the adult males are typically the older sons. They do not breed within their pod but pods mix, breed and then go their separate ways. Food sharing among family members is common. Mothers will share the catch with adult sons and others.

Killer whales can live from 50 to 70 years of age although the average for males is 30 years, and females average about 50 years. Females mate at the age of 13. Males may need to be 20 years or older to breed successfully.

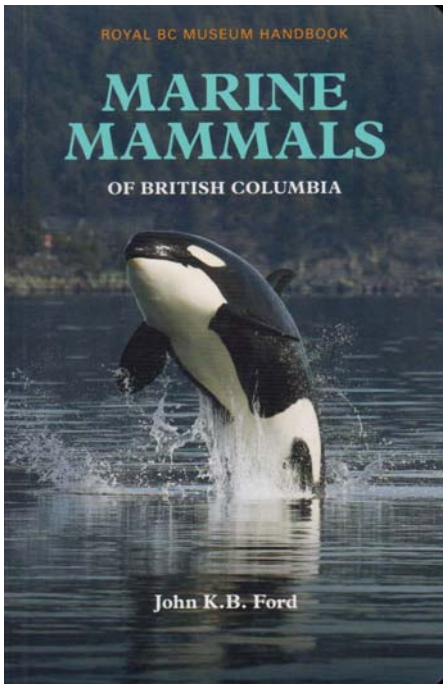
The killer whales living in BC waters are: the Southern Resident Killer Whale (SRKW), population of about 74, the Northern Resident Killer Whale (NRKW), population of about 300, the Transients, or Bigg's Killer Whale (named after Michael Bigg), population, 180, and the Offshore Killer Whale who number somewhere around 500. John also mentioned the groups in Alaska – the North Gulf of Alaska Killer Whales, population 750, and the West Gulf Killer Whales, population 1,000.

The SRKW and the NRKW both share the same diet – they are primarily salmon eaters, mostly Chinook (Spring) salmon with diminishing percentages of Chum and hardly any Coho or Pink. One reason they prefer Chinook may be that they are large, (well, they used to be, especially as seen in early 1910 photos that John showed), fat, oily, and they are year round (well, again they use to be). These pods do not eat any other prey. John explained that they specialize in prey as well as having unique vocalizations and behaviours. Although their ranges overlap, SRKW and NRKW are not known to associate. The SRKWs are a small fraction of the global population of killer whales.

The Transients, or Bigg's, Killer Whales are mostly mammal eaters with seals as their main diet. They travel the coast from Alaska to California. Since the killing of seals was halted some years ago, the population of seals has increased.

The Offshore Killer Whales have a diet of sharks. That's right, sharks! They are shark specialists. John had photos of Offshore Killer Whale teeth that are worn to the gumline from the rough skin of sharks. Sharks' bodies are 30% liver which contains a lot of oil. Prey may consist of Pacific sleeper sharks which are deep water, blue sharks, and dogfish.

Interestingly, John mentioned that all the killer whale groups have increased their populations especially since the bad years when they were hunted, and so have their prey, such as seals. Many of the Orca groups have doubled such as the groups in Alaska and the NRKW, the later growing from 100 to 200 to 300 (2015). However, the SRKW population has not increased and continues at about 75. John had several speculations for this. For example, the seal population has increased which may have helped the Transients. However, the NRKW have increased and NRKW and SRKW have the same diet (Chinook).



We now have the poorest Chinook returns. The Chinook population is down to 20% of historic levels. However, one possible reason could be that the Northern Residents get first crack at the Chinook salmon being they are up north and intercept them first. Other reasons may have to do with noise from ships (tankers, whale watching), or pollution in the southern coast. The main threats to killer whales are lack of food, noise, and contaminants such as PCBs or PBDEs.

For more information, see John's excellent book, *Marine Mammals of British Columbia*, available from The Royal BC Museum, Amazon and other places. Or do an internet search and find, for example, his Bio at DFO, https://www.pac.dfo-mpo.gc.ca/science/news-nouvelles/ford-research-recherche-eng.html and other interesting things about him and killer whales. Thanks John!!

Field Trip to Mount Maxwell ER

By Jenny Feick

On Easter Sunday, April 21, 2019, several FER Directors and members, took the 9 am ferry from Vancouver Island over to Salt Spring Island to meet up with Paul Linton, the volunteer warden for the Mount Maxwell Ecological Reserve (ER#37). Salt Spring Island is the largest, most populous, and the most visited of the Southern Gulf Islands in the Strait of Georgia between mainland British Columbia and Vancouver Island.

Paul led the way in his vehicle on the steep, bumpy, dirt roads and Louise did her best to keep up in her van. Eventually, the group reached a small parking area. Paul provided a lively informative orientation before escorting the group throughout the 418-hectare reserve. We travelled through Douglas fir forests, open rocky, grassy slopes and an impressive and extensive Garry oak woodland where the group had lunch. From there. everyone made their way down to stunning viewpoint of Sansum Narrows before it was time to start wending their way back uphill to the parking lot.

Back in January when the field trip was first proposed, Paul invited FER to be part of his annual rare plant counting project of the red-listed Yellow Montane Violet (*Viola praemorsa ssp. praemorsa*). He wanted to inspire ALL ER Wardens to set up and monitor a small plot of an important plant species in their reserves.

Paul Linton leads the way down the trail through the Douglas fir forest to the grassy slopes and Garry oak woodland.

He felt that having a longitudinal data set like this would give everyone a better picture of what's happening over time. The FER folks looked forward to helping out with this. However, with the snow on Salt Spring Island this past winter, combined with cool, dry weather in early spring, the usual spring wildflowers were slow to emerge. In fact, many of the field trip participants expressed surprise at how few wildflowers were blooming that day compared with other park locations on southern Vancouver Island. Some of the species that had appeared included Small-flowered blue-eyed Mary (*Collinsia parviflora*), Calypso orchids (*Calypso bulbosa*), Small-flowered Woodland Star (*Lithophragma parviflorum*), and Chickweed Monkey-flower (*Mimulus alsinoides*). There was also a species of sedge that might have been Zika's sedge (*Carex zikae*).

The group was especially pleased to see the Propertius Duskywing (*Erynnis propertius*), the one red-listed butterfly that is entirely dependent on Garry oak for the survival of its larvae. We also searched unsuccessfully for the miniscule and secretive sharp-tailed snake (*Contia tenuis*), designated as threatened under the federal *Species at Risk Act* and red-listed by the BC Conservation Data Centre. Although suitable habitat exists in the Mount Maxwell ER, researchers are attempting to

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Trip to Mt. Maxwell ER cont'd. from p. 5

find them using special covers designed to mimic their habitat. Populations of this species at risk have been confirmed on the north side of Salt Spring Island.

Mount Maxwell Ecological Reserve contiguous with Mount Maxwell and Burgoyne Bay provincial parks, combine to create over 1,100 ha of protected area stretching from hill top to shoreline and across Burgoyne Bay to the slopes of Mount Bruce. Walking through the ER gave one a sense of what much of the southern Gulf Islands and southern Vancouver Island used to be like before so many people moved to the region and converted the Garry Oak ecosystem to urban sprawl and rural countryside.

Established in 1972 to protect outstanding Garry oak stands and associated vegetation, Mount Maxwell Ecological Reserve faces enormous challenges from several interrelated sources: feral domestic animals, invasive alien plant species, increased visitor use and abuse, neglect by BC Parks and deteriorating site protection measures. Fences

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Small flowered Woodland Star (*Lithophragma parviflorum*)

View point looking down the steep slope of the Garry Oak meadow with Sansum Narrows in the background.

Trip to Mt. Maxwell ER cont'd. from p. 6

originally installed by BC Parks have fallen down in places, allowing feral domestic sheep and goats to enter the area, eating the Garry oak seedlings, mowing down the Garry oak saplings, and spreading invasive alien grasses and forbs that now dominate much of the area at the expense of the native flora.

Feral dogs chase black-tailed deer, red squirrels, and blue grouse. While we explored the area, other groups of visitors participated in Easter egg hunts and hiked through the site, treating it more as a park recreation site than an area set aside to preserve its representative and special natural ecosystems, plant and animal species, features and phenomena.

Despite numerous pleas to BC Parks, they have invested no funds in protecting this enchanting gem of an ER for well over a decade. Repairing and improving the fencing would solve most of the problems that threaten this site. If BC Parks cannot afford this, could they seek sponsorships? There could be private sector philanthropists interested in a project like this that would make a huge, tangible and immediate difference.

Paul has steadfastly attempted to do what he can to protect the Mount Maxwell ER, chasing feral sheep and goats out of the reserve, alerting the irresponsible owners when their dogs run at large there, and meeting with local First Nations and island residents to raise awareness about the area's significance. Now in his 60s, Paul hopes to interest others in taking on stewardship responsibilities at the site. He

Small-flowered blue-eyed Mary *(Collinsia parviflora).*

Fallen fencing needs repair.

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Trip to Mt. Maxwell ER cont'd. from p. 7

wonders if other ER wardens also need to be thinking about succession planning and hopes to talk with other ER wardens about this and other topics when another ER warden meeting is held.

Chickweed Monkey-flower *(Mimulus alsinoides)*.

Above: Paul Linton gives us an update on Mount Maxwell ER and explains the origins of the small labyrinth that he's standing in..

Below: Inside the Garry oak meadow with a view across Burgoyne Bay to Mt. Bruce.

The Extraordinary Life of Rex Pendril "Pen" Brown

Introduction by Stephen Ruttan

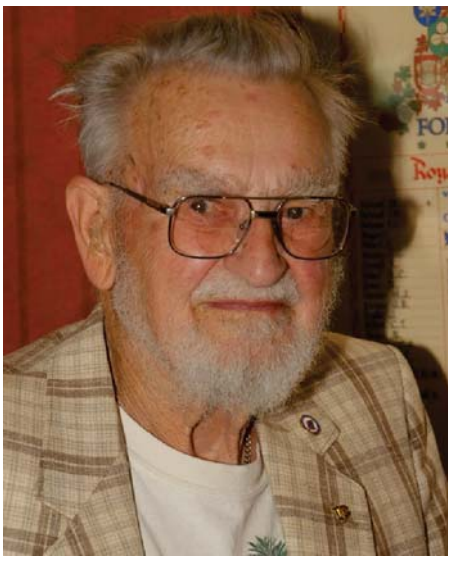
Last year our former Membership Secretary, Pen Brown, died. He was 94 years old. Pen served as our Membership Secretary from 1992 to 1997. Previous to this, though, he had lived an extraordinary life.

For many years he had been a lighthouse keeper, often in remote and stormy locations. One that he served at in the mid-1950s, though, was not quite so remote. Back then there was a lighthouse on Fiddle Reef, which is just off Willows Beach in Oak Bay (Municipality of Victoria, BC). It was well known as the smallest lighthouse in B.C. Not so small, though, that Pen couldn't find someone to share it with him. He advertised in the local paper for a bride, and his wife-to-be, Betty Kovalcik, responded. They honeymooned in tiny quarters in the Fiddle Reef lighthouse, but soon moved to a bigger lighthouse on Pine Island.

The Victoria Historical Society, in its Fall/Winter 2018/19 Newsletter, published a very full account of Pen's life. Here are some excerpts:

"Pen Brown recalled his service for the lights fondly. I had the pleasure of first meeting him in 1993 to interview him during research for an exhibition of lighthouse stations on the British Columbia coast.

Pen Brown worked for the Canadian Coast Guard for 34 years. He worked a number of



light stations during his career eventually ending up at the Victoria Coast Guard base on Dallas Road in Victoria, British Columbia in the Lighthouse Supply Department.

Pen was born in Vancouver in 1922. He first worked in the Kootenay District building trails and working in the mills before moving to Ontario to work in a clerical position for the Imperial Bank of Canada. This work did not particularly suit him so when his sister sent him a newspaper ad for a position as an assistant light keeper at Cape Mudge Light Station, located at the southern tip of Quadra Island, he quit the bank and travelled west. It was a brief interview that landed him as assistant keeper at Cape Mudge Light in 1955. Assistants were not eligible in those days for any civil service benefits; so he worked directly for the senior light keeper who paid his salary and set out his work routine.

As his seniority increased, Pen was appointed to the single stand light station at Fiddle Reef situated one mile east of Oak Bay near Victoria. He decided that he would advertise in the local paper for a bride. He and his new bride, Elizabeth (Betty) honeymooned at the tiny station. Pen and Betty lived for six months in the lighthouse which had a single bedroom upstairs large enough only for a mattress. The living area downstairs was only 12' x 12' and the only place to walk was the exposed rocky shore when the tide went out – the island practically disappeared at high tide and during storms.

Safety concerns were not as prominent in those days. In the engine room, fully exposed drive belts twenty feet in length powered air compressors with red hot exhaust pipes on Fairbanks Morse engines were all dangerously wide-open to keepers and their families. The first time the light went out, he was shocked to have to restart the engine by standing directly on the spokes of the flywheel which were larger than him! As the wheel turned he had to jump off to keep from spinning with the wheel. This was a normal situation in those days; long since changed to reflect modern safety standards we take for granted today.

Pen and Betty moved to Pine Island in 1957 which brought more enjoyable living conditions. They stayed there for ten years raising their two children.

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This station, situated in Queen Charlotte Sound at the northern end of Vancouver Island is a vital seamark for ships transiting the treacherous waters of Gordon Channel and is the calling-in point for the British Columbia Marine Pilots station for large vessels including cruise ships.

Despite the busy shipping lane nearby, transportation to and from the station was left to the keeper to arrange. Sickness, death or toothache, it was all up to the keeper to find a way off the island and back. Hiring a water taxi from Port Hardy could be a perilous and expensive undertaking.

For the birth of their daughter, Betty Brown travelled to Vancouver in a lighthouse tender six weeks before the event to take advantage of the passing Coast Guard ship. However, they had to arrange their own return trip to the station at the end of Pen's leave. At Port Hardy his brother-in-law took them over to the light in his gillnet boat. The voyage was in flat calm conditions but when they arrived it was low tide and they had to crawl, with the newborn baby, more than 60 feet up the steep slippery seaweed-covered rocks. By the time their son was born two year later, they were able to travel via the CCGS *Camsell* (the Coast Guard light tender) though the landing at Pine Island was still a difficult one and not soon forgotten by the anxious parents!

In 1967, during a severe storm, Pine Island Light Station was partially demolished by a giant episodic wave that smashed the engine house, including the fog horn – but spared the Principal and Assistant Keepers' houses and light tower. The event was so terrifying that the two families fled to higher ground on the island in case another wave caused further damage.

Pen and Betty Brown

At the time, because communications were poor, it was not known to the families whether this event had been generated by a seismic incident, storm action, or an enormous freak wave. All communications were knocked out for a few days and it was only when they were once again connected to the world that they realized they had witnessed the work of a giant rogue wave. The destroyed engine room clock from Pine Island is displayed in Pen's living room and bears silent testimony to the awesome force of nature – its twisted remains are stopped at the time of the early morning destruction.

The family moved off the lights shortly after this episode and settled in Victoria where Pen went to work in Lighthouse Supply and remained there until retirement.

Pen Brown was honoured by the Victoria Historical Society in 2012 for his many years of service and dedication to the organization. He was a staunch supporter of their scholarship fund, contributing significant sums annually for the benefit of history students at the University of Victoria.

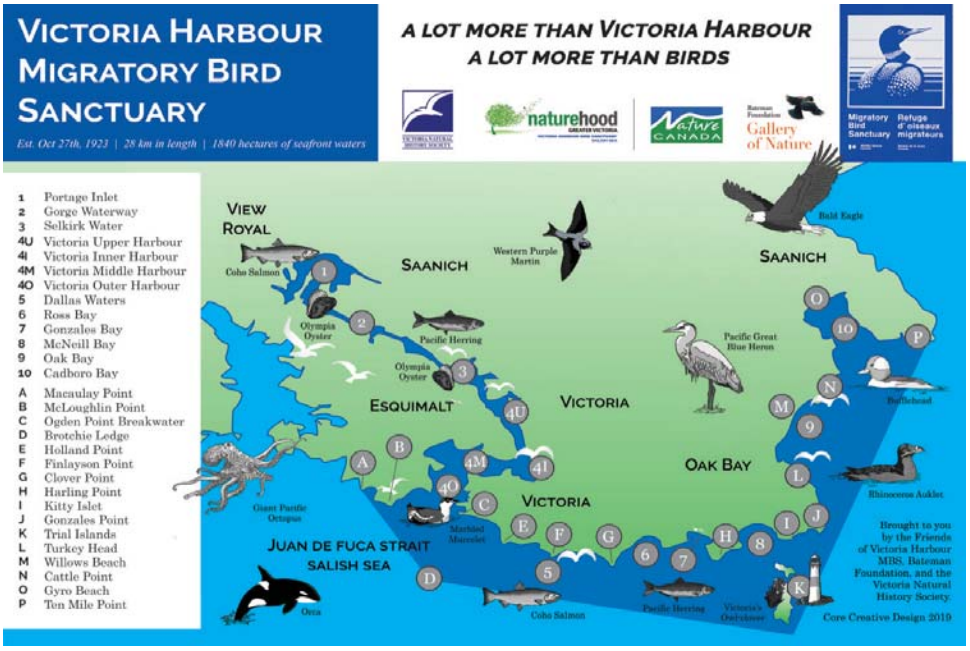
Postscript: Pen Brown filled the role of light station Santa Claus for many years beginning in 1978 when the original Santa, George Thomas retired. Pen would travel with the supply vessel during the week-long supply trip in December. Dressed in a Santa suit, he would deliver wrapped presents and treats to children living in the various lighthouses along the supply route. When necessary, he would also travel by helicopter. Even after his retirement, Pen visited lighthouses as the 'Santa Claus of the Lights'.

From Salmon, Lynn (2012) Pen Brown – Santa Claus on the British Columbia Light Stations. Nauticapedia.ca 2012.

Fiddle Reef Lighthouse

Victoria's Migratory Bird Sanctuary

By Jacques Sirois, co-warden, Trial Islands ER, caretaker, Victoria Harbour MBS



Interestingly, three B.C. Ecological Reserves within the Victoria capital region of British Columbia are closely associated with the historic, federal Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary (MBS) comprising 1,840 hectares and established in 1923. While Ten Mile Point ER (1975, 11 ha) and Trial Islands ER (1990, 23 ha) lie entirely in the MBS, Oak Bay Islands ER (1979, 205 ha) lies partly in it and largely next to its eastern flank. The MBS is 28 km long from west to east, from Portage Creek (Portage Inlet) to Gyro Beach (Cadboro Bay), through Victoria Harbour.

This oldest Migratory Bird Sanctuary in Pacific Canada, it was established in light of declining bird numbers to control hunting in an urban area. The MBS was apparently meant to rein in recreational, subsistence and market hunting, particularly of waterfowl like Brant, a favourite Christmas meal 100 years ago. Hunting and fishing in Greater Victoria apparently "took off" during the gold rush of 1858 when 30,000 "hungry" folks, gold miners and settlers showed up "overnight".

Much of the actual border of the MBS makes no particular ecological sense. It appears to have been drawn just to keep hunters away from the city. However, the federal Order-in-Council of October 27, 1923 recognizes the area as "the resort of many valuable and interesting species of migratory birds". It mentions that this federal MBS will replace a Bird Sanctuary previously created by the Province of British Columbia, in light of the new (1917) *Migratory Bird Convention Act* which recognized federal jurisdiction over migratory birds and the questionable legality of provincial jurisdiction over tidal waters.

Largely forgotten for decades, Victoria Harbour MBS is still with us today. It is now the object of renewed interest for various reasons in the context of urban renewal. The fact is that it is home to remarkable "urban" wildlife, birds, rare plants, fishes, whales etc. Arguably, we have some of the best coastal and marine wildlife in urban Canada. The MBS is also benefiting from decades of costly and serious restorations, cleanups and deindustrialization at numerous sites. As a result, water quality has not been this good in many areas in more than half a century and is still improving.

The restoration of the Gorge Waterway, Selkirk Water, Rock Bay and Laurel Point (still unfolding) are cases in point. Like it or not, the unfolding construction of an expensive ($800M+), controversial, regional wastewater treatment plant in the Victoria Outer Harbour, at McLoughlin Point, which will divert sewage from the Clover Point and Macaulay Point outfalls in and next to the MBS, to be completed in late 2020, is also part of this renewal.

This year, the restoration of the Trial Islands, initiated by co-warden and rare-plant botanist Matt Fairbarns in the early 2000s, has continued in earnest. It has been a Herculean task, but the large maritime meadow and

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Victoria's MBS cont'd. from p. 11

its rare plants look very good. The restoration of Griffin Island (Oak Bay Islands ER), also undertaken by Matt and his team of contractors and volunteers (see article on page 13), has also gained tremendous momentum. The year 2019 may also be the year when Rhinoceros Auklets are confirmed nesters on one of our precious islands.

So, Victoria Harbour MBS and its three associated ERs are home to valuable biodiversity, including 270 species of birds, 28 species of mammals and 95+ species-at-risk, mostly rare plants. Concretely, this includes vast beds of clams and eelgrass, large patches of surfgrass and kelp forests, maritime meadows and other Garry Oak associated ecosystems. Marbled Murrelets, Rhinoceros Auklets, Western Purple Martins, Brant, Golden Paintbrush, Victoria's Owl-clover, Macouns' Meadowfoam, Vancouver Island Ringlet, Coho Salmon, Pacific Herring, Olympia Oyster, Northern Abalone, Pacific Giant Octopus, Killer Whale (transient and sourthern resident), Humpback Whale and many others are all inhabitants of the MBS.

Victoria's Owl-clover, endangered species, 90% + of the global population on Greater Trial Island, Trial Islands ER, in Victoria Harbour MBS (*Photo: Jacques Sirois, June 4, 2014*)

Marbled Murrelet, threatened species fairly common in Victoria Harbour Migratory Bird Sanctuary, July 15, 2018, next to Trial Islands ER, (*Photo: Jacques Sirois*)

Numerous challenges, many not under our control, remain including for example, the recovery of overfished Pacific Herring, which alone would bring back and sustain a lot more birds and other wildlife in Lekwungen (Songhees & Esquimalt) traditional territory. After all, the name Lukwungen means, "the place to smoke herring".

These areas are part of Victoria's glorious marine front yard. They sustain nature in the city and form a remarkable "naturehood", as recognized by Nature Canada (formerly Audubon Society of Canada) on July 12, 2017, in the presence of the former Lt. Gov. of BC, Her Honour Judith Guichon, at Government House. They bring the Salish Sea into our capital city, something worth celebrating as we prepare for the 100th anniversary of Victoria Harbour MBS on October 27, 2023.

Rhinoceros Auklet, in breeding plumage, just outside Victoria Harbour, Victoria Harbour MBS, (*Photo: Manuel Martel, April 19, 2015.*)

Very common in VHMBS in summer, this bird may nest on Protection Island National Wildlife Refuge, near Port Townsend, Wash., about 25 nautical miles to the SE.

naturehood
GREATER VICTORIA
VICTORIA HARBOUR BIRD SANCTUARY
SALISH SEA

Nature CANADA

Broom Bashers on Griffin Island

By Marilyn Lambert, Warden for Oak Bay Islands ER

On Thursday, June 27, a group of 11 eager broom bashers boarded the new BCParks boat and set off for Griffin Island. Part of the Oak Bay Islands Ecological Reserve, Griffin Island has been invaded by Scotch broom, blackberry and ivy. During the past five years, we have visited the island and worked at beating back the broom. We had removed most of the flowering broom so we were back this year to continue the never-ending task of removing new plants.

Peggy, Cheryl, Joanne, Paddy, Bristol and Sue, tackling the small stuff. (June 2019)

Last year, Matt Fairbarns, volunteer warden for Trial Island Ecological Reserve received funding to hire a crew to focus on Griffin Island. Matt has done a tremendous job removing invasives on Trial Island so it is a wonderful thing that he brought his crew to Griffin. The work they have done on the blackberry and ivy is mind blowing.

This year Matt's crew was able to remove the largest broom plants, too. My crew of 11 worked in the west meadow and we were down on our hands and knees picking out the small broom plants that were a year or two old. There were a lot of them, but they were easy to pull. Broom seeds are viable in the soil for a very long time, so we will continue to visit this beautiful little island for many years to come.

Former ivy festooned Oak with blackberry and ivy removed thanks to Matt's crew. (June 2019)

Jax, Linda, Sue, Colleen and Paddy attacking invasives. Note ivy festooned Garry Oak in the background (Oct. 2016)

Community Connections

By Louise Beinhauer

Every year I try to get out into the community and promote Ecological Reserves at various events. I believe that it is important for people to learn about Ecological Reserves in British Columbia. I am happy to report that more and more folks who stopped by at our display did have some knowledge of BC's ERs.

This year I attended two different events. On April 28th, my husband Fred and I set up the FER display at the Friends of Uplands Park Camas Day Celebration. This was the first year that FER has attended this event. We had a beautiful sunny day and the camas lilies didn't disappoint. The friendly people who stopped by were very happy to engage in conversations ranging from topics such as invasive species and shore birds to climate change. We answered quite a few questions about Ecological Reserves in general and handed out many of our ER map/brochures as well as our laminated flower placemats. The Garry oak meadow and Douglas fir forest were the most popular which makes sense!

The second event on May 11th was the International Migratory Bird Day sponsored by the Rocky Point Bird Observatory. This event is usually held annually and we have attended it on a fairly regular basis. Our Board member Stephen Ruttan and I spent the day at Beaver Lake. We were fortunate to have the closest spot to the walking path and so were visited by people who came by. We talked to quite a few people and again I was pleased to find out that many knew of the Ecological Reserves in the province. I was very impressed by a group of young people who were taking part in a Robert Bateman nature program. These kids asked a lot of very thoughtful and intelligent questions.

Board member Stephen Ruttan holding down the fort at the Migratory Bird Day event.

The event participants all thought that this year's Migratory Bird Day wasn't as well attended as it had been in past years, but there were a lot of different things going on in Victoria that weekend. Still we enjoyed our day in the sunshine and hope to be back again next year.

Beautiful display of Camas lilies at the Friends of Uplands Park Camas Day celebration.

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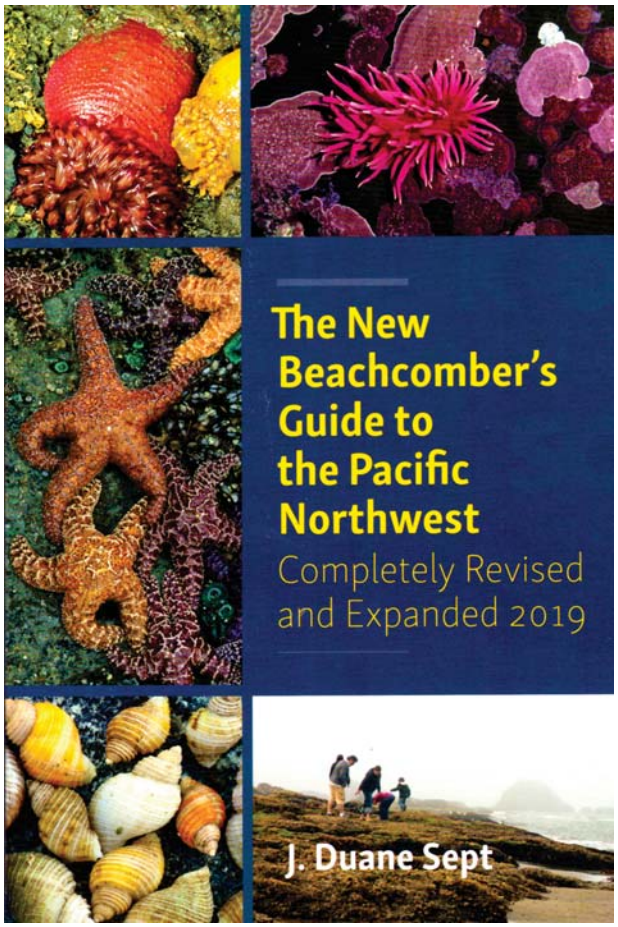

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The New Beachcomber's Guide to the Pacific Northwest is the perfect companion for any avid naturalist, amateur beachcomber or adventurous family. In addition to new species, this new edition of the bestselling beachcomber's companion also feature an expanded range, covering intertidal marine life from Southeast Alaska all the way through Bc's many beaches and south of the border down to Northern California.

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The Log

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