

Friends of Ecological Reserves 2023 AGM

By Louise Beinhauer, Log Editor

The 2023 Annual General Meeting was held virtually on June 7, 2023. FER President Rick Page acknowledged the First Nations unceded territory throughout BC. The agenda for this year's AGM as well as the Minutes from last years were both approved. He then reviewed FER milestones for the year 2022. A major milestone was the adoption of a new Strategic Plan brought about with the immense assistance of Ruth Beck and Colin Rankin. The main improvement was to incorporate the principles of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). (see page 3)

Rick also acknowledged and thanked the directors who are not standing for re-election – Stephen Ruttan and Megan Howse. Stephen has been on the Board for almost four decades and has been an invaluable asset.

Friends of Ecological Reserves bookkeeper Michael Brinsmead provided the financial statement for the year 2022. Louise Beinhauer gave a brief summary of our membership numbers.

Friends of Ecological Reserves has also acquired one new Board

Member. We are very pleased to welcome Adrian de Groot who is the Warden for Det San ER #154.

Rick introduced our Key Note Speaker, Ian Adams who spoke at length on Key Biodiversity Areas. Please take the time to check out his talk at this link:

<https://ecoreserves.bc.ca/2023/06/07/key-biodiversity-areas-ian-adams-fer-agm-june-2023/>

Note: From Ian Adams: *I realized that my presentations to the Friends of ER grossly under-represented the number of Key Biodiversity Areas that encompass, in whole or in part, an Ecological Reserve. As you may recall, my involvement with KBAs is all taxa except birds, which are the purview of Birds Canada. This includes the transition of existing Important Bird Areas to KBAs. In my presentation to Friends, I only looked at the KBAs that I'm involved with and not Ecological Reserves that overlap with existing Important Bird Areas. A bad mistake on my part!*

I think I stated that there are 13 KBAs covering 17 Ecological Reserves, plus probably all 4 ERs in Haida Gwaii. We all were

surprised at how low these numbers are.

When I included IBAs that currently meet KBA criteria and include at least a portion of a Provincial Park and/or Ecological Reserve, those numbers rise to 60 KBAs partially or wholly in 131

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

The Log

Spring/Summer 2023

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.

We encourage you to submit articles for publication. The deadline for submissions for the Autumn/Winter 2023/24 issue of *The Log* is Sept. 1, 2023.

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FER AGM cont'd. from p. 2

Provincial Parks and Ecological Reserves. Bit of a difference!!

I will look at this again with just ERs and get back to you with updated figures. The 60 in 131 includes Provincial Parks so is an over-representation with respect to ERs. I'll send a table with what ERs have KBAs proposed for them and what taxa are "triggers."

Ian Adams is a wildlife ecologist based near Cranbrook in the

East Kootenays. Though currently BC Coordinator for Key Biodiversity Areas with Wildlife Conservation Society, Canada, Ian has worked on a wide range of regional wildlife projects for over 25 years with species ranging from tailed frogs to urban deer. He lives outside Cranbrook and enjoys photography and has particular difficulty walking past a flower with a camera.



Nesting Puffins on Anne Vallee ER # 13 (Photo with permission from Karin Bodtker, Living Oceans).



Nesting Cormorants on Rose Islets ER # 18 (FER Photo).

Friends of Ecological Reserves Strategic Plan 2023 – 2025

Mission

'Friends of Ecological Reserves' (FER) is a group of concerned citizens/volunteers whose purpose is to advocate for and promote the Ecological Reserve System, and the role that a robust system of Ecological Reserves (ERs) can achieve for the conservation and protection of natural ecosystems and their biodiversity, particularly within the context of climate change and the cumulative effects of resource development.

Purpose of the Ecological Reserve (ER) System

The purpose of the Ecological Reserve System is to safeguard sufficient numbers of representative, unique, fragile, and/or significant elements of BC's natural biodiversity, ecosystems, and traditional features, and to mitigate the loss of BC's biodiversity by climate change and resource use.

The ER system, in concert with other aspects of BC's protected areas system and resource management regime, strengthens the protection of natural ecosystems as sites for monitoring, study, and research. Once established, ERs provide natural benchmarks for education and research; protection of cultural features; and refugia for genetic materials.

Friends of Ecological Reserves (FER) Values

Ecological Integrity – FER upholds the sustainability and stewardship of biodiversity and ecosystem integrity.

Selfless Service – FER contributes its members' time and expertise to advocate for the ER System and the benefits it provides to all British Columbians. FER supports volun-



Okanagan Region ER Wardens, staff, and guests at Skaha Bluffs, wardens resplendent in their new (at the time) official shirts and hats! (Photo from an October 12, 2010 annual Wardens' meeting and field trip.)

teers dedicated to stewardship of specific ERs.

Wardens – FER values the donation of time, energy, knowledge and passion, which wardens bring to supporting ecological conservation in ERs.

Knowledge – FER values scientific and traditional Indigenous sources of knowledge about ecosystems. We foster evidence-based, scientific research, and traditional ecological knowledge studies in ERs. We act as a knowledge repository, maintain meticulous records on ERs, and provide this as a resource on our website.

Respect – FER respects nature and the knowledge we gain from the wisdom of Indigenous and other elders.

Youth – FER values the energy, skills, academic training, and expertise of youth as well as their

perspectives and approaches to problem-solving. We strive to encourage their involvement in our organization.

Collaboration – FER takes a collaborative approach to issues and strives to work in partnership with other initiatives, organizations, and governments to accomplish our goals.

Indigenous Peoples – FER seeks the guidance of, and collaboration with, Indigenous peoples in all aspects of our work. This includes hands-on learning, conservation of traditional ecological knowledge, stewardship/guardianship of ERs, and the expansion of the ER system to protect Indigenous cultural and ecological values.

Focus – FER undertakes targeted and focused actions, based on our

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organization's resources and priorities.

Goals, Objectives and Desired Results

Background

- The BC government has committed to increase protected areas to 30 per cent of BC's lands by the year 2030. FER advocates that a significant portion of natural area protection be designated as ERs. An expanded ER system would protect the full range of natural and rare ecosystems and endemic species, including Indigenous cultural values. We support the design of an ER system that mitigates loss of species and biodiversity due to climate change and resource use.
- Ecological Reserves have the highest legal level of conservation protection.

GOAL 1. Promote/advocate for a world class Ecological Protection System for BC

Objectives

- 1.1 Support implementation of the international, national and provincial mandate to protect 30 per cent of terrestrial and inland water, and of coastal and marine areas by 2030.
- 1.2 Provide strong support for development and expansion of a resilient ER system, to protect British Columbia's natural areas.
- 1.3 Promote a transparent and clear process with established criteria and procedures to propose, assess, and establish new ERs, expand or modify existing ERs, parks, conservation areas, wildlife protection areas, etc.
- 1.4 Join with and bring together other organizations working to protect 30 per cent of BC with new ERs expanded or modified ERs, parks, conservation areas, wildlife protection areas, etc.
- 1.5 Build public understanding and support for an ER system as an



The 100 acres of ancient forest dominated by large Yellow Cedar (pictured here) and huge Pacific Yew trees on the Sechelt Peninsula would make an ideal new ER. No new ERs have been added to the protected areas system of B.C. since 2009. (Taken from the Autumn/Winter 2013 LOG, article entitled "Planning to Fail or Failing to Plan: A case for a new protected areas vision for BC") (Photo courtesy of The Ancient Forest Alliance)

integral element of a world-class protected areas system to sustain biodiversity, including a focus on priorities that avert species and ecosystem losses.

1.6 Increase Provincial and First Nations governments and local citizens awareness of gaps in the ER system, and support for the establishment of additional ERs to address ecological gaps.

1.7 Seek funding for priority projects.

Results

- A world class system to protect 30 per cent of nature by setting aside protected areas using ecological reserves and conservancies by 2030.

GOAL 2. Promote/advocate for effective management and oversight of ERs

Objectives

- 2.1 Develop a strong, vital stewardship program including Volunteer Wardens, Indigenous Guardians, and Knowledge Keepers in all ERs.

- 2.2 Support a strong Provincial government/First Nations presence in ERs, including effective compliance and enforcement, particularly where the reserves or their features are at risk.

- 2.3 Periodic public reporting on condition and risks to each ER.

Results

- A strong, vital stewardship program including Volunteer Wardens, Indigenous Guardians and Knowledge Keepers in all ERs.
- Timely and appropriate monitoring and assessment of each ER to identify trends, risks, and threats in order to inform management decisions. This would include a systematic inventory in all ERs to allow for future comparisons, and would support reporting on the state of the ER system as a whole.

GOAL 3. Promote/advocate the monitoring and study of ecology and biodiversity in ERs

Objectives

- 3.1 Develop strong connections with academic institutions,

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researchers and students to inventory ERs and seek funding for research projects in ERs which produce peer-reviewed, scientific reports.

3.2 Promote the use of knowledge, information and data to all levels of government and the community to advance the protection and conservation of 30 per cent of BC's natural areas.

3.3 Seek support for climate change monitoring, long-term vegetation and species monitoring sites as ERs.

3.4 Promote land use practices outside of ERs across the broader landscapes so that they are consistent with sustaining species outside and between protected areas.

3.5 Promote outreach to all levels of government to foster the use of knowledge, information and data from ERs to advance the protection and conservation of nature.

Results

- Full utilization of the ER system by academic institutions, researchers, students and citizen scientists.
- Credible, respected scientific documentation and peer review of research in ERs.

GOAL 4. Explain the Benefits of the ER System – Raise awareness and understanding and acceptance of the role of ERs for biodiversity conservation

Objectives

4.1 Seek First Nations support for existing ERs in their territories and clarifying that ERs are consistent with their traditional uses.

4.2 Support traditional ecological knowledge studies and hands-on learning in existing ERs, with collaborative efforts to protect Indigenous ecological and cultural values within new and expanded ER System as determined by and in consultation with Indigenous peoples.



FER board members admire spectacular view from the Tea Hut during a trip to San Juan Ridge Ecological Reserve in 2010.

4.3 Contact adjacent tenure holders to ERs to ensure they are aware of the purpose and importance of ERs and to seek their support for effective protection and stewardship to reduce risks to these reserves.

4.4 Continue to expand promotion of ecological reserves by means of the FER website, the newsletter "the Log", and by preparing articles for the press, journals and other media means.

Results

- Partnerships with environmental non-government organizations (ENGOs), Indigenous peoples and neighbours of ERs, youth, students and researchers to advance biological understanding of the purpose of ERs.

GOAL 5. Sustain a nurturing and effective volunteer organization focused on the ER system and its role in sustaining BC's biodiversity

Objectives

5.1 Promote a multi-generational membership base that includes

stewards of ERs across BC; students, researchers and traditional knowledge keepers; and others with an interest in nature and sustaining biological diversity.

5.2 Seek funding opportunities from all possible sources to better advance FER goals.

5.3 Support a diverse, skilled, knowledgeable, and growing volunteer base and when possible, paid expertise to support projects related to FER goals.

5.4 Work in conjunction with BC parks to recruit Wardens for ERs lacking guardianship by individuals or groups, in accordance with the qualifications established by BC Parks.

Results

- An energetic Board of Directors with a range of expertise related to ERs, including ecosystems science, governance, communications, fundraising, and organizational management.
- Strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations to strengthen FER capacity and advance shared goals.

Morice River Ecological Reserve #81

A Warden's Report by Kevin Tyler

Travel / Timings. I departed Smithers at 11 am, July 5, 2023. It was a 90-minute drive one way to Houston and south to the ER. I did several side stops to check out nearby BC Rec Sites / campsites, and to view from the Morice Forest Service Road (FSR) looking west across the River, at the eastern edge of the ER.

I started walking the ER at 1:30 pm, traversed it through the bush west to east and then followed a deer trail 500 metres north to south along the ridge that overlooks the Morice River, then back west.

I arrived back at the vehicle at 5:40 pm. I drove Chisholm FSR further north to a spur track that goes NE and passes thorough the NW corner of the ER. Departing the area at 6 pm I arrived back in Smithers at 7:45 pm.

Access, Connectivity. The ER was approached from the SW using the Chisholm FSR, which starts with a long single lane bridge



Bald Eagle by the Morice River on Reserve's east boundary.

crossing of the Morice River. The first spur logging road on the right just before the Chisholm 2 km mark was followed east for a little over a km where I parked in a turn-around clearing on the centre of the west side of the ER [Lat: 54.2253 Long: 126.865].

After walking the ER, I drove further north on Chisholm FSR to just before the 4 km marker, then

followed another spur logging road NE which for a time passes through the NW corner of the ER. This could be another access point for a future survey of the northern part of the ER.

I considered parking at a side road on the east side of the Morice River directly across from the NE corner of the ER, and crossing the river in a canoe; however the banks are steep and the River very powerful, so exit and entry would be challenging. One cell phone bar was available during most of the time in and near the ER.

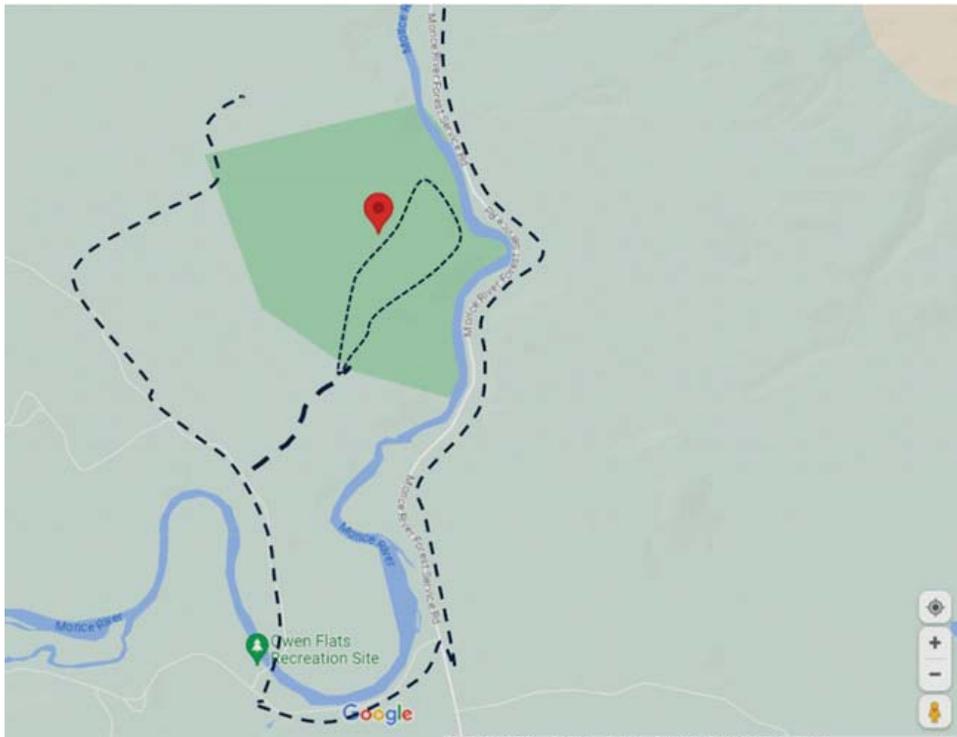
For camping the Owen Flats Rec Site is available, however very close to the road on which there is significant traffic by Coastal Gas Link vehicles and others. Camping outside the west edge of the ER at either point where the spur logging roads come near would work.

Weather / Conditions. Air temperature was ~26 Celsius; dry and sunny with occasional clouds. There seemed to be a slight wood smoke haze from fires far away. Varying winds from calm to light.

Visit.

Shortly after starting the walk I ran into a grouse with two chicks;

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the grouse froze in place and the chicks flew up into nearby branches.

My original plan was to hike the boundaries of the ER, however with the difficult going through fallen tree trunks mixed with heavy undergrowth, I switched to conducting a transect across and back.

Other than the deer path by the river, going was slow and arduous, often walking along long ago fallen trees to stay above the thick shrubbery.

After the 1983 "Swiss Fire" it seems that many of the trees killed by the fire remained standing for a few years but now almost all have fallen over. Very few of these trees are infected with fungi to the point of rotting; the few that are starting to decompose are in direct contact with the soil.

Most of the forest transected was 10 to 25 year old lodgepole pine with a sphagnum moss and shrub floor. Also encountered are few pockets post fire, aspen trees with a floor of ferns and shrubs.

On the InReach Google Earth map (above right) the lighter green areas are the Aspen and the darker green areas the pine dominated areas. The ridge paralleling the river is about 200m in from the river's edge and 150m above the river; the slope varies from 30 to 55 degrees.

Wildlife Notes. On the drive in, a Bald Eagle was seen on a tree at the river's edge, on the east side of the ER. During the walk a grouse and chicks were encountered on two separate occasions. Also seen were a large toad, a few butterflies and moths, various ants, and flies. Heard were several small songbirds. Observed scat of deer, moose and black bear.

Plant Notes.

Trees seen were Lodgepole Pine, Aspen, Alder, Saskatoon, and



InReach map with vehicle location (blue triangle). Route hiked (yellow dotted line.)

Willow. The pine areas usually had a bed of sphagnum moss, while the Aspen areas usually had a bed of ferns and dead leaves. Shrubs seen were Wild Rose, Black Twinberry, Raspberry, Lowbush Cranberry, and what seems to be a Gooseberry. Smaller plants noted were Bunchberry, a pea like vine, ferns, mosses and various lichens. At the parking area invasive Yellow Hawkweed and Oxeye Daisy were noted, but were not found in the ER itself.

Photos.

Selected photos have been inserted at the bottom of this report. Photos are presented chronologically from start to end of the visit. Additional photos are

available upon request.

Maintenance.

Parks signage was found on the forest floor not far from where I had parked for the walk; the tree to which the signs were nailed having long ago fallen over. No signage was found where the spur logging road passes through the NW corner of the ER. Both of these locations would be a good place to place or re-erect signage.

Human Activity / Public Access Issues.

There were no recent signs of human visitation. At the parking just outside the ER there was some decades old garbage (food package, beer can, crumbling nylon tarp).

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Old flagging tape on two separate trees was seen at the edge of the ER. Fallen BC Parks signs were found bent in half over themselves – possibly bent by a hunter or other visitor in the past to make them harder to see.

Future Visit Plans.

I plan to visit this ER again later in the summer with intent to locate some of the research plots – the paths to the research plots mentioned in documentation I received were no longer readily found. On a future visit I will try to hike to the lat/long of each plot.

Additionally if there is time I hope to hike some of the surrounding forests that were salvage logged after the 1983 fire, with a view to comparing the difference in going (anticipating it may be easier), and any differences in biomass (should be more in the ER). Also of value will be to canoe the river and view the eastern edge from the river.



Grouse on stump.



Large toad.



Pine canopy.



Fallen charred tree.



Typical blowdown.



Old BC Parks signs on fallen tree.



Left: bunchberry



Right: Black Twinberry



Thimbleberry.

Remembering Long-Time Lasqueti ER Warden Alfred Gaensbauer

By Louise Beinhauer

Friends of Ecological Reserves were saddened to receive word that Alfred Gaensbauer passed peacefully in Nanaimo Hospital on May 19 of this year. He was less than a month away from his 94th Birthday.

We first met Al on a FER field trip to Lasqueti Island in May, 2016. He was an outgoing, spry 87-year-old who had lived on Lasqueti for many years. Al was the Lasqueti Island ER Warden and our guide. Al was more agile and fit than some of us and every bit as quick minded!

In case you don't know, Lasqueti Island is 'off-grid' so the 400 or so residents who live there are extremely self-reliant. After our first day's trek through the ER, Al invited us back to his home which is located next to the ER. He owns a large property which he took great delight in touring us around and explained how he could survive year round without the modern-day amenities we are used to.

It was a fascinating glimpse of a by-gone era where only the hardy survive. Al baked his own bread and made his own wine. He heated in the winter with two wood stoves, and used the power from his rooftop solar panels in the summer. He even had two bathtubs!

Al told us that he belonged to the Vancouver Island Alpine Club and would arrange to get a ride from someone on the Vancouver Island side after he took the ferry from Lasqueti. He participated in many hikes as part of this group, which would explain why he was so fit.

I was hoping to find an obituary for Al that would shed a bit more light on his life, but so far I haven't been able to. I did, however find a fascinating YouTube video that was a feature on Global News, Vancouver. At about the 4:45 minute mark into the video, is a fascinating segment on Al. He was 83 years old



Al Gaensbauer, 2016. (Photo taken on FER Field Trip)

when the video was aired. I have included the rather lengthy url here: https://ca.video.search.yahoo.com/search/video; ylt=AwrO zOUUM1k GALGDxrFAX.; ylu=Y29sbwNncTEEcG9zAzEEdnRpZAMEc2VjA3Nj?p=Lasqueti&ei=UTF-8&fp=1&fr=yfp-t&turl=https%3A%2F%2Ftse1.mm.bing.net%2Fth%3Fid%3DOVP_PcZ55qJeYKZDr3nfgzpbQHgFo%26pid%3DAP

[i%26w%3D296%26h%3D156%26c%3D7%26p%3DO&rurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DprN8xW_e4Ao&tit=16x9+%7C+Lasqueti%3A+Living+off+the+grid+an+hour+from+Vancouver&pos=1&vid=fee6b30c8118387a1db7cb02f9296c7b&sig=rBmFnPsVlPCu&sig=6aTymIN5_txG&sigi=ungyUtOhZvPk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D7%26p%3DO&rurl=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DprN8xW_e4Ao&tit=16x9+%7C+Lasqueti%3A+Living+off+the+grid+an+hour+from+Vancouver&pos=1&vid=fee6b30c8118387a1db7cb02f9296c7b&sig=rBmFnPsVlPCu&sig=6aTymIN5_txG&sigi=ungyUtOhZvPk)

Rest in Peace, Al!

Province Strengthens Protection of B.C.'s Ecological Reserves

By Louise Beinhauer

News Release dated
July 18, 2023

New regulatory changes are being made to safeguard the province's ecological reserves.

The new Ecological Reserve Regulation will enable compliance and enforcement measures in ecological reserves so individuals conducting illegal activities can be prosecuted or fined. Under the previous regulation, BC Parks lacked the ability to impose penalties on individuals and companies that disobey the law in these sensitive ecosystems.

"It is important that our provincial legislation gives BC Parks the power to ensure B.C.'s protected spaces are not threatened," said George Heyman, Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. "This updated regulation will help protect B.C.'s critically important biological diversity and safeguard rare and endangered plants and animals in their natural habitat."

B.C. has approximately 158 ecological reserves. While scientific research and education are the primary purposes, most are also open to the public for viewing or photographing wildlife.

Illegal activities have occurred at some ecological reserves, such as tree theft to sell as firewood, built structures, and camping and access by vehicle without proper permits. The previous regulations did not allow BC Parks rangers and other enforcement staff to issue fines for these offences.

Regulations for the use and protection of ecological reserves were enacted in 1975, with no significant amendments since. Given they were out of date with modern drafting standards, the new regulation had to be entirely rewritten. The new regulation is easier to understand, follow and will ensure that penalties can be assessed for damage to ecological reserves.



Photo of mid-sized Hemlock cut down in the Bowser ER, 2018.

Changes include:

- enabling compliance and enforcement measures for ecological reserves;
- adding bans on present-day activities (e.g. smoking, use of drones);
- amending the violation ticket administration and fines regulation to authorize the use of violation tickets to impose financial penalties for non-compliance;
- clarifying the restrictions on the entry, use and occupancy of ecological reserves, including temporary closure for public safety reasons;
- transferring permit management responsibility from an administrator to the minister;
- the ability to set time limits, cancel or modify permits; and
- removing outdated and redundant content.

The Friends of Ecological Reserves applaud this new regulation. Over the years, we have documented egregious violations occurring in several Ecological Reserves.



2019 photo of several trees found cut in the Bowser ER.

In a 2018 Warden's Report for the Bowser ER, submitted by wardens Gerry van der Wolf and Chris James (also on behalf of Bill Image and Peter Sodzieja) the following was reported: "Bill and Gerry arrived at the ER in the mid-morning, noted a dead racoon in a plastic bag as well as more yard waste at the main gate. We checked the plantation road to the fork at 1.8 km. noting that a mid-sized Hemlock had been cut and removed along the route. We took pictures and Bill reported the activity."

In a February 2019 trip to the Bowser ER, wardens Gerry van der Wolf and Chris James arrived at the gate at 9:30 am and proceeded up the road to the fork at 1.8 km. where they noted an abandoned utility trailer with a badly worn wheel. They also had noted several trees had been cut on either side of the road. Some had been completely removed, others only partly. They took pictures of each site and Gerry

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later reported the incidents to the poacher tip line by phone

In a January 2022 Warden's Report for the Bowser ER, wardens Gerry van der Wolf, Hazel Foster and Chris James documented that illegal logging was still taking place. They noted two spots where trees had been felled and cut up along the road. In February of that same year, the wardens noted quantities of garbage dumped in the ER. Then in March 2022, the wardens encountered two people cutting up a tree along the road and loading it into a truck. The wardens noted the license plate number and the make and model of the truck and reported it to the Ministry's poacher tip line.

Yet again, in May another walk through the ER revealed another tree that had been felled and removed – its stump covered with moss to camouflage it. More tree cutting was observed in October as well.

A November 2022 wardens' report reported another shocking find! The report reads: "...we walked along the road at the south end of the ER, picked up the (wild-life) camera which contained many images; some of people including two images of someone in full



Cut tree and camouflaged stump to try to hide evidence. (Images taken from the 2022 Bowser ER Warden's Report by Wardens Gerry van der Wolf, Hazel Foster and Chris James.

camouflage including face covering and carrying a bow and arrows, as well as pickup trucks and jeeps. A tree stand was noticed a short distance into the forest. Gerry photographed it and then removed the lower three foot-pegs to discourage use of the tree stand and marked the spot on the GPS to report it to the poacher tip line."

At the close of this report, the wardens state: "And once again, we urge the proper authorities to close and lock the gate to attempt to avoid the activities that detract

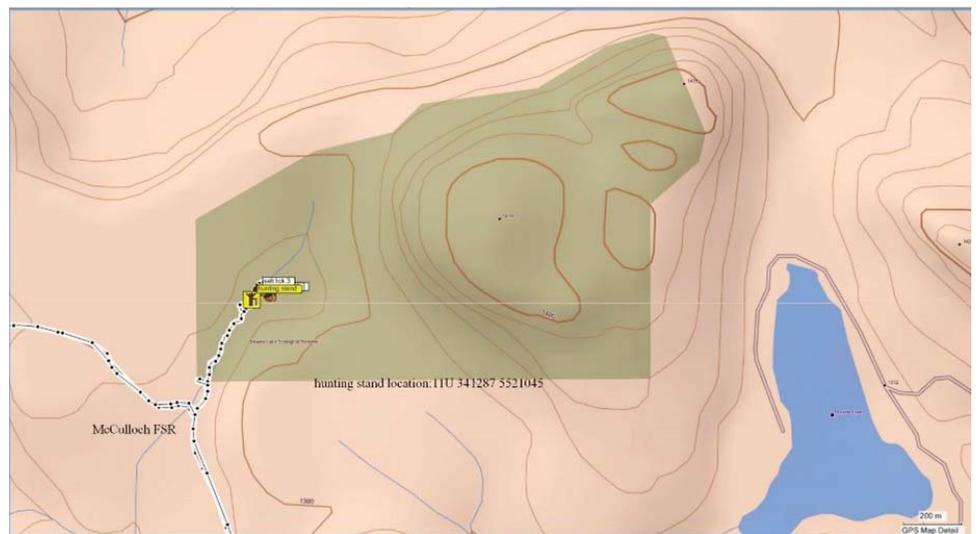
from the well being of the Bowser Ecological Reserve."

The following is a report written by FER Board member Garry Fletcher concerning his trip to Browne Lake ER in October of 2012.

"Probably the most disappointing example of abuse of an Ecological Reserve was that which we observed in October of 2012. ER Warden Don Guild had taken me to Browne Lake to see the ecological reserve and what we encountered



2022 photo of a hunting stand found in the Bowser ER.



Location of the hunting stand located in Browne Lake Ecological Reserve.

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was shocking to say the least. In the trees beside the large open meadow we found a hunting stand which had been constructed with considerable effort.

The hunter had thought of all the amenities to prepare for a relaxing shoot. A nice canopy roof for all-weather comfort. A camo-camping chair positioned for a good relaxing view. And for the tough hunter who has everything, a gun notch on the railing at the front.

To facilitate the view-scape of the hunting range, he/she/it had to



Photos: Left: canopy on hunting stand, canvas chair, gun notch on railing, and salt lick. Top: hunting stand and Right: four-wheel drive road through vegetation in the ER.

saw down a troublesome aspen which was hindering the wide view out front.

And of course there has to be a special feature to attract the game.. A salt block placed out front on the meadow at the appropriate distance for the firing range.

To get all the materials in through the bush to build this little castle, the big strong hunter had to make a four-wheel drive road

through the vegetation of the ecological reserve.

After we had discovered this scene, a report was made to the local BC Parks Office and a quick response with BC Parks staff assisting the warden soon removed the structure.

The materials filled a truck and a nice sign was posted offering the materials back to the owner. Oddly enough they were never claimed..”

Tree Hunter Finds 1,000-year-old Western redcedar

By Chad Pawson, CBC News

TJ Watt says the Western redcedar near Tofino is a 46-metre-tall leviathan of a biodiverse ecosystem.

For 20 years, Victoria's TJ Watt, 39, has trekked through the province's vast and verdant landscape seeking out giant, old trees to document them and make a case for their conservation.

Now, at a time when exceptionally large trees have dwindled due to logging, he's recorded what he calls the tree of his lifetime.

"No tree has blown me away more than this one," he said. "It literally is a wall of wood."

Watt photographed the tree, a Western red cedar, in 2022 on Flores Island in fabled Clayoquot Sound on Ahousaht First Nations territory while on a field trip as a National Geographic and Royal Canadian Geographical Society explorer. (The species is also spelled redcedar because it's not deemed to be a true cedar.)

It's estimated to be 46 metres tall and five metres wide at its base. The old-growth tree, part of forests that store carbon and support many species of plants and animals, is estimated to be at least 1,000 years old, according to Watt.

Its dimensions put it at the very top of the biggest and oldest trees in the province and across Canada.

"Unlike most other trees, it actually gets wider as it goes up," said Watt. "It's really the highlight of my life to come across something this spectacular."

Watt and the Ahousaht First Nation have now revealed images and details of the tree to the public — although keeping its location secret — to show it as an example of the importance of the province meeting commitments to overhaul forestry to balance harvesting with ecological values.



Ancient Forest Alliance photographer TJ Watt looks up at an ancient Western red cedar that is estimated to be 46 metres high and five metres wide at its base. It is located on Flores Island, in Clayoquot Sound off Vancouver Island in Ahousaht territory. (TJ Watt/Ancient Forest Alliance)

"It's representative of a healthy, intact, coastal, temperate ecosystem," said Tyson Atleo, 36, a hereditary representative of the

Ahousaht First Nation. "We don't see a lot of trees that size anymore."

Continued on page 14

The tree has been nicknamed “The Wall” or “?iiḥaq ḥumiis,” meaning “big redcedar” in the Nuu-chah-nulth language. It’s in a type of forest that’s in danger of disappearing from BC’s landscape due to a history of intense logging.

“Forests like this have just been reduced to a tiny, tiny fraction of their original extent today,” said Watt. “We need to be doing everything we can in our power to ensure that they remain standing, especially given the climate and biodiversity crisis.”

The Ahousaht First Nation, whose territory spans Clayoquot Sound, a globally recognized biosphere reserve, is at the forefront of work to keep significant trees in biodiverse forests standing while finding other ways, such as tourism, to replace lost revenues.

“It’s a wonderful opportunity to share ... who we are as the Ahousaht, what our values and principles are, but also help [visitors] experience the magic of our territories as is exemplified by this incredible tree,” said Atleo.

Ahous Adventures, an Ahousaht-owned and operated eco-cultural tour company in Tofino, won’t be taking visitors to the tree in order to keep the area protected but does other tours to show off the region’s other impressive trees.

‘An ecosystem unto itself

Nations like the Ahousaht are hoping for more conservation funding from the province to be able to develop alternative economic opportunities in their territories that will allow for trees like ?iiḥaq ḥumiis, to remain standing.

In order to raise funds on its own, the Ahousaht has established a voluntary stewardship fee for its territories, much like BC Parks’ day-use passes.

Meanwhile, others also making careers of trying to locate and



Aerial view over the ancient forests of Flores Island in Ahousaht territory in Clayoquot Sound, BC.

document massive old-growth trees that still exist, say coming across trees like ‘The Wall’ is akin to a religious experience.

“You feel so small, and you realize it is so incredibly important

what these things are. They represent so much more than just a tree. It’s an ecosystem unto itself,” said Colin Spratt, a conservation photographer who takes people on tours of Vancouver’s Stanley Park to show off old-growth trees there.

In 2019, the Province of British Columbia appointed an independent, two-person panel as part of an Old Growth Strategic Review to engage the public in a conversation about old growth. The intent of this review was to provide more clarity about old-growth management and about how economic, conservation and cultural values can be met. The panel consisted of Garry Merkel, a professional forester, natural resource expert and member of the Tahltan Nation; and Al Gorley, also a professional forester and former chair of the Forest Practices Board.

As part of this engagement, meetings and an invitation to provide written submissions was proffered. The Friends of Ecological Reserves provided their submission which highlighted the fact that ERs are a critically important conservation tool as they provide the highest level of conservation. To view our submission visit: <https://ecoreserves.bc.ca/2020/01/31/old-growth-strategic-review-fer-submission-2/>

On April 30, 2020, Merkel and Gorley submitted their report, which included 14 recommendations to inform a new approach to old-growth management in British Columbia. On September 11, 2020 the government released the panel’s report “A New Future for Old Forests”. To view the report see: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/farming-natural-resources-and-industry/forestry/stewardship/old-growth-forests/strategic-review-20200430.pdf>.

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Mara Meadows Ecological Reserves

(photos provided by Jeremy Ayotte)



Left: Jeremy Ayotte collecting water chemistry data. They are interested in the ground water source for the high ph inputs that make it such a special calcareous fen.

Below: Jeremy Ayotte with Gabriel McDiarmid looking for Sandhill cranes.



Left: Carnivorous sundews that carpet areas of the fen. One of several carnivorous plants in the meadows.

Below: Thriving yellow ladieslipper (*Cypripedium parviflorum*), and another *Liparis loeselii* (fen or wide lipped orchid) This ER was protected in part, for the rare assemblage of orchids.



The Log



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CORRECTION:

Please note in the Autumn/Winter 2023-23 edition of The Log on page 7, It was originally stated that Jenny Feick and Ian Hatter were the ER Wardens. Ian Hatter is the Warden for Columbia Lake ER and Jenny Feick is the Warden for Mount Sabine ER.



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www.ecoreserves.bc.ca