

Friends of Ecological Reserves 2025 AGM

By Harry Crosby, President

The Friends of Ecological Reserves held their 2025 AGM on May 7, 2025. A quorum was established, the agenda was reviewed and approved as were the minutes from the 2024 AGM. Our Treasurer Michael Brinsmead presented the Treasurer's Report. As well, the current Board members all agreed to continue on.

We looked at the 2023 FER Strategic Plan which had 5 goals. Our first goal is Stewardship (promote/advocate for effective management and oversight of ERs). We initially focused on developing and implementing a stewardship program to protect the Lasqueti Island Ecological Reserve from the destruction of the feral sheep.

BC Parks did not want to approve this project and proposed three alternatives, namely:

- Skihist ER near Lytton which is not revegetating well after the 2021 wildfire;
- Soap Lake ER near Spences Bridge where some areas were fenced off for experimental plots that were burned. This project would involve removing the fence which was still in tact, and facilitating the free movement of animals through the area; and
- Trial Island/Oak Bay Islands

ERs offshore of Victoria with a focus on coordinating major invasive species removal for many years to protect the rare plant species.

Option number three, Trial Island/Oak Bay Islands was chosen and a report will be generated. We will be sure to include it on our website.

Our second goal is to Sustain and Nurture an effective volunteer organization focused on ERs and their role in sustaining BC's biodiversity.

We are developing strategies to grow our membership base. We recently joined BC Nature and sent a delegate to attend the BC Nature AGM (see Rick Page's article on pages 11 to 14).

We have also set in motion the return to visiting Ecological Reserves and inviting others to join in these field trips.

Our third goal is to promote/advocate for a world class Ecological Reserve system for B.C. The government will add new Ecological Reserves only if a proposed site has the support of First Nations. We are exploring ways to establish a working relationship with First Nations.

Alternatively, conservation of a

sites can be established by setting up conservancies and establishing similar protection which may ultimately result in someday receiving the highest form of

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

The Log

Spring/Summer 2025

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 2025/26 issue of *The Log* is Nov. 21, 2025.

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protection by becoming an Ecological Reserve. If you are aware of a site which might benefit from protection as an Ecological Reserve, please contact any board member with information by emailing our general email address (ecoreserves22@gmail.com).

If you or someone you know may be interested in working with

us to further our goals, please consider volunteering to become a Board Member by emailing me at: harry_crosby@telus.net.

FER is now tackling our other two goals; Promoting/advocating for the monitoring and study of ecology and biodiversity in ERs; and Raising awareness, understanding and acceptance of the role of ERs for biodiversity conservation.

FER Joins BC Nature Update

As you know from our Autumn/Winter edition of the LOG, we are now an affiliate with BC Nature. As such we need to re-set our FER membership dues and the date they need to be paid. We are now requesting that our members pay their dues by the end of each calendar year, starting with 2025 (due before or on December 31, 2025).

Our fees have not changed in decades so we are hoping you will continue to support our efforts. Our new fee structure is listed on page 15 as well as within the masthead on the left-hand side of this page.

Below are some of the photos from the BC Nature AGM which was attended by our Past President, Rick Page. Please turn to page 11 to read Rick's full report of the event.



The geology field trip led by Gerry Sanford explored many local features, including a fossil bed (L) and a coal seam ®. Photos: Gary Hunt.



Two more local specialties seen during the conference: Eastern Kingbird and Yellow-headed Blackbird. Photos: Dawn Brodie (L), Alan Burger ®.

Thoughts on a Visit to Clayhurst Ecological Reserve

By Mike Fenger, past President of Friends of Ecological Reserves

I had the good fortune to be passing through Pouce Coupe in Northeastern BC while on a road trip in June, and took the opportunity to visit the Clayhurst Ecological Reserve (ER).

This reserve represents a portion of the Peace Lowland Eco section and some of the plant communities associated with aspen stands and south facing grassland communities found on the breaks above the Peace River within the Boreal White and Black Spruce Bio geoclimatic Zone. This ER received attention in an article written in the Friends of Ecological Reserves newsletter the LOG (Autumn/Winter 2024-25). The concerns raised were about the trespass and development within the reserve which I wanted to see for myself while so close and on holidays.

The Fort Saint John Parks Branch staff, together with the Conservation Officers, are currently investigating this trespass situation. As the file is open and under investigation, the staff were not at liberty to discuss the possible actions.

Earlier in our road trip Joy Kruger and I had visited two ER wardens Jenny Feick and Ian Hatter and we accompanied them on a visit to the Columbia Lake ER. There we gained appreciation for what wardens can do, the data they collect and their warden reports to BC Parks which add knowledge of ecosystems within their ER.

Friends of Ecological Reserves post warden report when these are shared with FER so they are more readily available. Jenny and Ian make frequent visits and have gained and shared insights into biological activity such as how long plants are in bloom and what wildlife they encounter. Many of the field observations and plant identifications they make are



Big Horn Sheep (*Ovis canadensis canadensis*) seen in Columbia Lake ER June 11, 2025.

recorded and stored on iNaturalist. <https://inaturalist.ca/projects/columbia-lake-ecological-reserve>.

ER wardens Ian and Jenny are mentioned in this report on the Clayhurst ER because Clayhurst ER does not have a warden and would truly benefit if a volunteer ER warden could be found.

ER wardens increase knowledge about ecosystem by adding to the number of observations on flora and fauna as well as seeing, recording, reporting and educating the local communities about ERs. They also provide extra eyes and ears for

BC Parks Branch staff. More information on which other ERs need wardens and how to become a warden are on the FER website (<https://ecoreserves.bc.ca/get-involved/become-a-warden/>).

In addition to the original flora and fauna species included with the purpose statement compiled in 1971, there are another 702 plant, animal and insect identifications listed on iNaturalists for the Clayhurst ER (<https://inaturalist.ca/projects/clayhurst-ecological-reserve>). FER is grateful for the visits that made by

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those knowledgeable with iNaturalist and their field visit observations. FER is also grateful that those who manage iNaturalists have structured their data base so that it is possible to search for monitoring data by ER reserve names.

We accessed the ER by driving north from Rolla just north of Pouce Coupe. The access into the reserves is at the first switch back north of the Peace River Bridge on 203rd road. At this location there is a service road into the ER. This access road was a blessing for us as it was an easy 20 minute walk within the reserve to the south aspects of the ER. Thankfully this service road is gated and padlocked at the ER boundary. The service road is for the use of Whitecap Resources when they access the Peace River Booster Station which is situated just west of the Alberta Border. The metal ER sign on the gate was not immediately visible as it was extremely faded but had served for target practice judging from the 3 bullet holes in it. The sign indicating use of herbicides dating to July 2024 was more readable as was the contact information for Whitecap Resources.

There were many deer tracks in the mud along the road likely mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) and on the open grassland there were also larger ungulate tracks presumed to be elk (*Cervus canadensis*). We did see a mule deer at a distance on the road.

Aspen (*Populus tremuloides*) dominates the forest on either side of the service road for about 500 meters and then the south aspects turn to open grasslands common for much of the Peace River breaks. The views of the Peace River from the ER are lovely. Much to our surprise and delight were the prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia* genus) in the south aspect



Faded Metal Ecological Reserve sign apparently used for target practice!

grassland opening. These cacti were not mentioned in the 1971 Flora list on the BC Parks website. The iNaturalist website however identified these as Brittle prickly pear cactus (*Opuntia Fragilis*).

The BC Parks site does mention there are research opportunities to study the effects of climate change by monitoring species in the ER. Perhaps the current extent of the cactus community in this ER could be quantified and in future revisited as an indicator of a drying and warming trend across the Peace and correlated to climate data trends too. Shifts in plants species (presence, absence and extent) can be good indicators of climatic change and expansion of cacti over time may verify a drying/warming in this region of BC.

Aspen forests dominate this 316 hectare ER the especially the upper and level portions of the ER. In the Autumn/Winter 2024-25) article on trespass on the Clayhurst ER, it is the flat aspen ecosystem of the ER which have been cleared and are being farmed. It is also the flat upper portion that was used as a building site likely due to the

wonderful views of the Peace River. Since we could find no access to the flatter upper elevation portion of the ER from the mid-slope road, we concluded that access to the upper elevation and flat portions of the ER must be through the privately owned agriculture lands. Given this private access control to the upper ER may be an indication that the adjacent land owners are aware of history of trespass.

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Brittle Prickly Pear (*Opuntia fragilis*).

It is unclear what a satisfactory outcome will be for the loss and damage to the natural ecosystem that has occurred. It is not clear how or whether there should be an attempt to restore the aspen forest lost to cultivation. There has been over a number of years, personal gain to those in trespass as they have presumably paid no property tax on crown land they cleared and farmed outside their private holdings. This loss of revenue to the BC government could be a consideration for the investigators who may consider the value to the farmers and the loss of revenue to the crown over a number of years as factors to include in their investigation. Taking no fiscal action against the trespasser(s) may be interpreted by others in trespass as an invitation to increase their expansion onto crown lands once it is understood there are no consequences.

Remedial action in light of aspen forest ecosystems loss could perhaps be achieved by adding more area in flat upper slope aspen ecosystems. Adding an equivalent area of aspen stands may be possible



Agricultural fields within the Clayhurst ER. Portions of the fields nearest to the aspen forest are part of the ER.

but from Landsat images there may not be a lot of intact crown aspen forest adjacent. The FER Board believes that there should be no net loss area and quality of the ecosystems protected in the ER. A closer assessment would be needed to see whether the ER can be

expanded to add similar aspen ecosystems to make up for what has been lost to agricultural activity.

In the shorter term and while this case is being considered by the Parks staff working with the Conservation Officers there appear to be a number of actions that can be taken to protect the ER values.

A first action could be to improve signage and improve public awareness at the access gate. A new and more legible Ecological Reserve sign is needed. It is unclear however that a new sign alone would help protect the value and purpose of the ER and restrictions that apply to ERs may not be very widely understood.

Additional signs such as “no discharge of fire arms within the ER and the Report all Polluters and Poachers (RAPP) and the message to contact the conservation officer 24-hour hotline to report a violation: 1-877-952-7277.

A brief review of the hunting regulations found many restrictions on discharge of fire arms but no mention of ERs where



Aspen with brushy understorey on flat upper elevations of the ER.

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Yellow Point Event Focussed on Fighting Invasive Plants

By Duck Paterson, *Ladysmith Chemainus Chronical*, June 20, 2025

What do Himalayan blackberry, English ivy, Scotch broom, Gorse and Policeman's helmet have in common? They are all invasive plants that have discovered Vancouver Island is a great place to grow.

A free public presentation in Yellow Point helped residents learn how to identify, remove, and replace invasive plant species to support ecological restoration in their own backyards.

On Thursday, June 26, the Yellow Point Ecological Society (YES) hosted "Landscapes Under Pressure: Combating Invasive Species and Reconnecting Native Habitats," a talk by ecological restoration consultant Hunter Jarratt. The event started at 7 p.m. at the North Oyster Community Hall, 13469 Cedar Rd.

An invasive plant is a non-native plant that has the potential to negatively impact the composition, structure and function of native ecosystems. Vancouver Island is home to many invasive plant species that threaten biodiversity, human health and personal livelihoods.

Just one of these invasive species, Himalayan blackberry, has a significant ecological impact. It outcompetes native species for essential resources such as water, sunlight, and nutrients, leading to reduced native plant diversity. It also limits available habitat and food sources for native wildlife, compounding the loss of biodiversity. The Himalayan blackberry forms dense thickets that can obstruct roads, walkways, and other infrastructure, creating



Known as 'the invasive species guy', Hunter Jarratt gave a workshop on combating invasive species and reconnecting native habitats at the North Oyster Community Centre. The program is sponsored by the Yellow Point Ecological Society. (Photo supplied)

hazards and requiring ongoing maintenance.

Locally, YES is working hard to raise awareness of the impact of these plants through workshops, work parties and educational sessions like the event on June 26 with Hunter Jarratt.

Known as "the invasive species guy," Jarratt is active in many aspects of invasive species control and eco-restoration. He works at KiKi Nursery in Yellow Point, which has a wide array of native plants and provided native plants for the Ladysmith Secondary School Indigenous plant gardens.

Jarratt's presentation highlighted the many species that have invaded Vancouver Island and offered practical solutions for their management. Perhaps most impor-

tantly, he talked about replanting and restoration.

According to Jarratt, knowing where to start can be challenging. His presentation provided an overview to help guide ecological restoration and stewardship efforts in your garden and community spaces.

He also leads the KiKi Nursery Garry Oak Ecosystem Restoration Project near Woodley Range Ecological Reserve and volunteers in local parks. His work includes advocacy, such as petitioning Nanaimo City Council to adopt stronger invasive species regulations in the mid-Island region, including Cable Bay.

Jarratt was chosen as the Yellow Point Ecological Society's Green Champion of the Year for 2025.

Clayhurst ER cont'd from p. 5

this is also a requirement. This may be a province-wide short coming by the Fish and Wildlife Branch when issuing hunting and fishing

licenses. We hope that Parks Branch staff will the inclusion of ERs in future Hunting and fishing regulations province-wide. A sign at the access gate to Clayhurst ER stating no discharge of fire arms is a

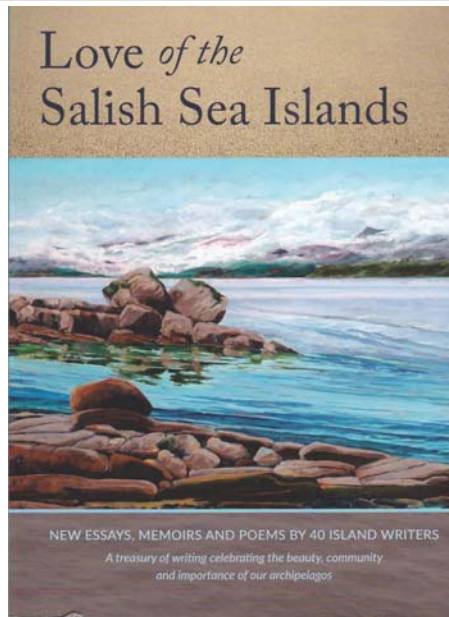
regulatory requirement in this ER. This would help protect this easy-to-access hunting area as well as making specific reference to Ecological Reserves.

Love of The Salish Sea Islands

A Whimsical Review by Emily Dent, BSc

Whether you have been to every island in the Salish Sea, one or none, you can revisit them or visit them, by immersing yourself in *Love of the Salish Sea Islands*. It is a beautiful anthology by 40 local island writers. Equally beautiful paintings by Nicola Wheston bloom from the pages. Each story, poem, memoir and image, is a footstep to each island, leading the reader through tales of being, growing, discovery, love, loss and Salish Sea shenanigans.

Travel back in time with Chris Arnett, to Salt Spring Island, and attend a funeral for Tim's dog, where you will throw dog food on the fire and take comfort in your neighbours. Go swimming at night with Maria Coffey, where you will "[witness] bioluminescence from Dag's boat..." and it will seem "like being dropped in fairyland" (p. 30). Or, learn about humility, 'The Strap,' and wisdom when Gary Geddes recounts his early years on



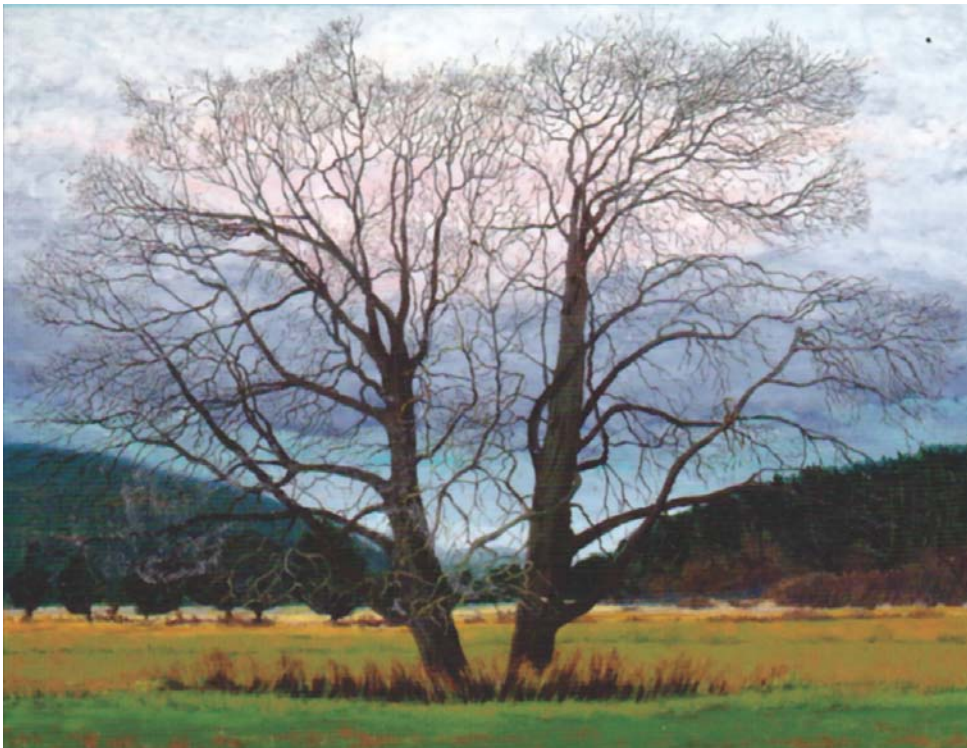
Texada Island as a new teacher.

Other authors share with us stories of unique relationships formed on the Islands: Linda Rogers writes about three inspiring mentors and shares the lessons learned from each of them, in "Three Swans from The Salish Sea."

Her beautiful mentors, representatives of Savary, Cortes, Penelakut, Galiano and Salt Spring Islands, taught her, "respect for mother tasks" (p. 159), that "ageism is just a word" (p. 160) and "to persist," (p. 161). Alison Watt shares her evolution on Mitlenatch Island, by recounting summers spent there with her friend, Nancy. You will feel as if you are right there with them when you read, "[s]ometimes at night, Nancy and I lie in the field, the summer wind shaking the dry seedpods of wildflowers, and watch blizzards of stars blowing through the pure darkness" (p. 186). Peter Levitt tells of an intimate moment from Salt Spring Island, when orcas circled in the ocean below the place where he and his wife made their vows, a wonderful reminder of how, for many of us, the relationship that we have with nature is just as important as those that we have with the people whom we love.

Many other stories in "Love of the Salish Sea Islands" are about the incredible beauty of the Islands themselves. Awe for the Islands can begin from a ferry, "intrigued by the mystery of those placid green humps gliding past..." (Deverell, p. 37), or other boats: "You're dazed with July. Calm sea, the jade whaleback of an island..." (Landale, p. 115); "I am treated to an amazing conglomeration of sea-life – sand dollars, streams of emerald-green eelgrass" (Turner, p. 177). The awe carries on onto the land: Of Mayne Island, Cathy Ford puts into prose: "Exquisite unremitting beauty leaving you breathless, fern, salal green beguiler and beguiled, rapt..." (p. 52). Christina Johnson-Dean writes of Gambier Island, "...then evening shafts of sunset glitter through the trees, and finally, the moon... slinking behind coast mountains..." (p. 98).

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Winter twin Oaks, 2002 – Salt Spring Island (back cover image).

BC Parks Foundation Spearheads Largest Terrestrial Conservation Project on Gulf Islands with Local Landowners and Partners

By BC Parks Foundation, April 22, 2025

LASQUETI ISLAND, BC – Two new properties adjacent to two recent conservation areas and a provincial park are being conserved, forming 568 acres of contiguous protected areas in one of BC's least protected and most fragile ecosystems.

"This shows the momentum that can happen when landowners, community organizations, individual donors and funders inspire each other to conserve a beautiful place," says Andy Day, CEO of BC Parks Foundation.

This Gulf Islands milestone was made possible through the Foundation's community of support, including the Wilson 5 Foundation, passionate individual donors, and



the dedicated residents of Lasqueti Island.

When Philippe Taillefer first walked the land named the Mystic Ridge by local residents, its beauty made him feel like he was in a world-class national park. "I said to myself, 'I can't believe this is not a national park! This should be

protected forever.'"

At the heart of the rugged 74 acres is a long, narrow ridge with panoramic views of Mount Arrowsmith and Vancouver Island. It's marked by dramatic rock formations and ancient old-growth trees—some 350 to 400 years old.

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Salish Sea Islands cont'd from p. 7

Maureen Moore says of "Salt Spring Island, with its abundance of beauty, wild creatures and areas of gentle quiet, I feel at home" (p. 137). Finally, Stephen Hume gives us this wonderfully accurate description:

"These islands, more than fifty of them with their stunted oaks, peeling arbutus groves, drifts of chocolate lilies and occasional stands of 800-year-old Douglas fir, all punctuated by the blinding white surprise of hidden shell beaches, shape a curious combination of austerity and richness..." (p. 90)

Alternately, for some, there is not so much love for the Islands. Writing from the brine, rather than the shore, Derek Lundy tells us, "[t]hings look different from the other side. From a boat in the Salish Sea water, gazing toward the enveloping islands, we experience a kind of field reversal, a flip of perspective" (p. 121). For him, "[t]he Salish Sea is blameless. All these difficulties originate on the land. The open-ocean sailor knows that

the greatest hazard is not the stormy sea but the shore" (p. 122). Lundy's tales of sailing through the many islands of the Salish Sea are punctuated with dramatic near-calamities and self-deprecation that gives a delightfully different perspective.

For many writers, the love they feel for the Salish Sea Islands is born from the collective desire to feel free; free to dance with nature, to fall in love, to fall apart, to work the land, to raise children, to connect with others, to create art, to re-start, and to just be. For Taiaiake Alfred, being with Temosen Island means getting to "experience being Indigenous in a place where there are no constant and overwhelming human-formed reminders of how very difficult it is to be Indigenous" (p. 16). Des Kennedy wrote that being on Denman Island is about "[f]arming, raising kids, making music and creating art" (p. 108). For Amanda Hale, Hornby Island provided a "...grounding space to dig in the compost pile of my life..." (p. 74). Galiano Island, Retreat

Island and Thetis Island were places of love and loss for Ann Eriksson. She reflects, "[I]ove took you there. Built you a home where you'd be content to die of old age, rocking in a chair on the deck watching the sun sinking scarlet behind the grey-blue mountains in the distance... Love lost took you away. You vanish from the reef without a chance to say goodbye to the calypso, the moon jelly, the sea stars..." (p. 44).

Ultimately though, *Love of the Salish Sea Islands* is all of these things. It is the past and the present. It is emotional and factual, poetic and relational. And, in the words of William Deverell:

"Maybe some repressed yearning flowered. ...I wanted this. I wanted all of this. This peace. That birdsong. That crook-backed bigleaf maple leaning over the pond. That rickety bench and rickety fence. That sense of being on an island, a moated bolthole, bridgeless, untethered to the fat, swelling city." (p. 38)

Philippe and his wife Alysha bought the property because they didn't want it to be logged or developed. From the start, their intention was to keep it in the family or work with a conservation group to have it preserved. Through a partnership with BC Parks Foundation involving a partial donation, their vision has now become reality—and then some.

Mystic Ridge will be combined with other new and recent protections to form a 568-acre conservation area—one of the largest land-based conservation areas on the Gulf Islands.

"We're thrilled to put the beautiful land of Mystic Ridge into conservation," says Philippe. "Partnering with BC Parks Foundation was the best solution for everyone. It's best for nature. It's best for the community. It's best for the people who will be here after we're gone."

Just south of Mystic Ridge lives Wayne Bright, a Lasqueti Island resident of more than three decades. His 84-acre property

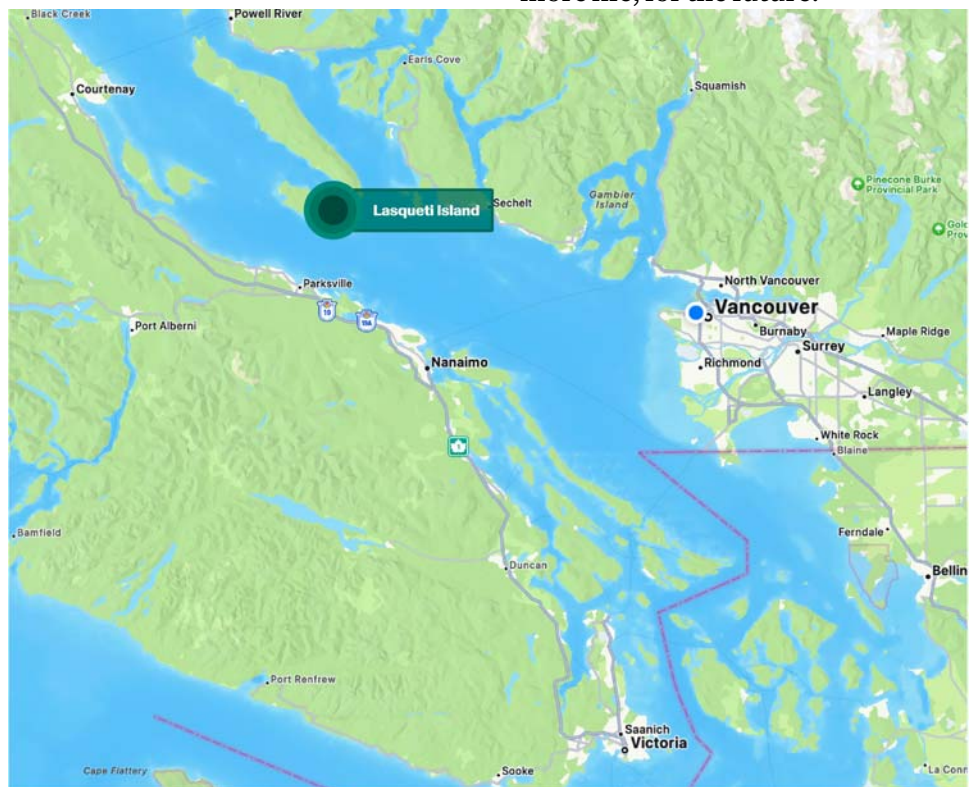


hums with life: Douglas-fir and cedar forests, camas-covered hilltops, mossy bluffs, and ponds he dug himself, now glinting with salmon fry. Over the years, Wayne has planted over 3,300 trees and raised close to a million salmon—quiet acts of restoration rooted in a deep sense of responsibility.

The property is also home to a monumental yew tree, which Wayne posits, at thirty-four inches in diameter, is just two inches

smaller than the largest recorded yew in BC. Yews are the slowest-growing tree on the Pacific coast, so a tree this large is likely to be hundreds of years old.

"The original name of this island was Xwe'etay, the Northern Coast Salish term for Yew Tree," says Wayne. "This tree has been here a long, long time. And allowing it to continue to stand means I get to leave the world a little bit better than I found it. My goal was to leave more biomass, more biodiversity, more life, for the future."



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Philippe, Alysha, and Wayne's conservation vision is adjacent to and builds on a recent partial land donation by another family, the Buttjes, called Young Point. BC Parks Foundation worked with them, and a local crowdfunding campaign, to protect 5 km of waterfront adjacent to Squitty Bay Provincial Park. That purchase built on a 2019 partial land donation by another owner and community effort to create Salish View Nature Reserve.

In total, the five areas now create a magnificent contiguous mature Coastal Douglas-fir forest and coastline, with wetlands, rocky bluffs, and other habitats. Coastal Douglas-fir is critical to protect because it is one of BC's most fragile and least protected ecosystems.

"As our region's population grows, these endangered ecosystems are increasingly important for the long-term protection of numerous species at risk," says Ken Lertzman, Professor Emeritus of Forestry at Simon Fraser University and Director of the Lasqueti Island Nature Conservancy (LINC),

a grassroots land trust supported by local residents.

With no car ferry and no connection to the power grid, Lasqueti Island is one of the least developed places in the Salish Sea. Its dark night skies add to the conservation value of the land.

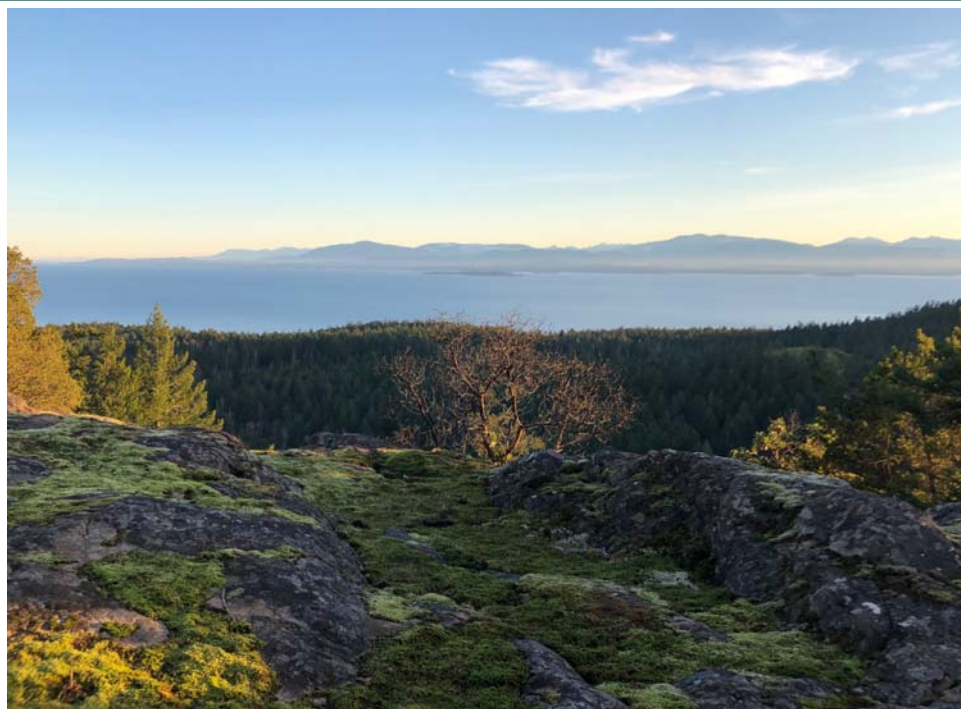
"The combination of BC Parks Foundation expertise and

resources and LINC's local knowledge is a model of collaborative conservation success," says Gordon Scott, a longtime LINC Director. BC Parks Foundation has been instrumental in bringing major funders into the mix to complement community stewardship efforts.

"Philippe, Alysha, Wayne, the Buttjes and other local community members' unwavering care shows the power of individuals who truly connect with the land," say Chip and Summer Wilson of the Wilson 5 Foundation, one of BC Parks Foundation's major supporters. "Their commitment reflects our own belief in showing up for nature and protecting it for generations to come. We're proud to help conserve this place so more people can connect with its beauty and pristine wilderness—now and forever."

"The land is part of who we are in BC and keeping it beautiful is very close to British Columbians' hearts," says Day. "This effort shows that great things can happen when we all pitch in, and I hope it inspires others to be part of similarly fantastic legacies."

Learn more and sign up for their newsletter at bcparksfoundation.ca/newsletter



Friends of Ecological Reserves and BC Nature

By Rick Page, FER Board member and past President

This year, Friends of Ecological Reserves became a BC Nature affiliated club. One of the great benefits, among many detailed in the previous edition of the Log, is that we now have liability coverage for members to participate in field trips. We have not held field trips for members for a decade so expect some interesting trips to see ER wildflowers in the spring of 2026. If you have some ideas for ER's you would like to visit, send an email to me or FER and I'll see what can be arranged.

As well, we were invited to attend the BC Federation of Naturalists AGM in Merritt hosted by the Nicola Naturalists on May 22-25. The very success meeting, titled "Nature in the Rainshadow", was attended by 185 representatives of naturalist clubs from every corner of BC. As our Club Representative, I attended on behalf of FER and manned a table with our maps, literature and placemats. Our large banner stand always attracts attention.

Dozens and dozens of homes in BC now have placemats reminding people of the importance of supporting Ers – we raised \$335 through placemats sales. Delegates took over 100 ER maps with them as well. If you are interested in placemats or maps, they are available on our website.

A highlight of the AGM is always the field trips, with 28 this year. Every morning began with birding, and owls or bats in the evening. During breaks in the day, there were trips as diverse as a log timber framing company with a CNC machine capable of dealing with an entire log, and many trips to grassland wildflowers throughout t

And of course, there were many



Liam Ragan, BC Nature's coordinator of the IBA/KBA Programs, led numerous birding and night outings. Here he points out a bird to one of his birding groups. (Photo: Liam Ragan)

presentations. Dr. Alan Burger, president of the Nicola Naturalists and host of the AGM, opened with a slide show of images contributed by club members reflecting the diversity of nature around Merritt. Frank Ritcey showed intriguing clips from the hundreds of camera trap videos he has collected over many years. Check out his YouTube channel @FFrankRitcey (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCPNGNtN43YqJBZq7bkgCqig>)

The second day was for science with talks on rattlesnakes, salmonids and turtles, plus, a keynote address from Dr. Jill Harvey of Thompson Rivers University on wildfire regimes in central BC. Working with tree rings from Churn Creek, southwest of Williams Lake, Dr. Harvey found that from 600-1900, there were 12 major fires but mature trees survived. Fire suppression began in 1896. The first major fire in a

century in 2021 destroyed every tree, including the centuries old veterans, highlighting the critical need to reintroduce natural fire regimes into our forests. Fire suppression to protect timber is now leading to its inevitable destruction under climate change. 4% of all forest in Canada burned in 2023, 3 times more than any other year in history.

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Dr. Jillian Harvey from Thompson Rivers University, Kamloops gave the keynote address on wildfires and their effect on the ecology of the BC Interior. (Photo: Liam Ragan)

There were also chances to meet with other groups. Though FER is a provincial organization, we are associated with other groups on Vancouver Island so I met with those clubs. A common theme is declining membership, even the Victoria Naturalists are having difficulty recruiting new members. But I did hear from a couple of clubs that may have potential new ERs.

The AGM ended with a banquet night opening with an original song, *Rain Shadow*, by Peter Ballin. The keynote banquet address was by Lennard Joe (Suxwsxwwels, meaning Grizzly Man): "First Nations Stewardship – a journey from the past to the present to look after our future generations" Mr. Joe is a Registered Professional Forester and member of the Nlaka'pamux First Nation, has a company called Grizzly Path Consulting, leads the BC First Nations Forestry Council as CEO and is the chair of the Nicola Valley Institute of Technology (NVIT) Council. He highlighted how diverse First Nations are in BC, of the 600 in all of Canada, 204 are in BC. They also speak 32 distinct



The wildflower meadow at Lundbloom Commons. We were past the peak of the bloom.

languages. This poses challenges for industrial consultation but substantial progress has been made. He is encouraging indigenous knowledge in forest company boardrooms to help address UNDRIP obligations and true reconciliation. As a Forester, he realizes that he won't live to see whether forests become what he envisioned when he planned the harvests. To that end, he has encouraged FN education and his own band has many post-grads. He is encouraged for the future.

The AGM was a great opportunity for Friends to increase our exposure, especially among our peers and colleagues. Let's hope we see a bump in membership.



The Sunday morning Bluebird Outing was popular, especially when the group found birds banded in previous years in this area.



The formal proceedings wrapped up on Saturday night with a banquet. Bar-keepers Vic and Susan Newton ready to serve. (Photo: Jennifer Newton).



Keynote speaker Lennard Joe (Suxwsxwwels, meaning Grizzly Man).

Warden's Report ER #76, Fraser River

By Bev and Bill Ramey

Sunshine, 12 to 19° C, wind varied from 8 to 17 km/hr. On islands from 10 am through to 8 pm. Walking distance about 18 km, which was longer than usual distance due to the higher water level which meant the inner channel was too high to wade between the upper island and the other islands. So there was additional walking distance and portaging kayaks.

Water level at Mission gauge: 1.1 to 2.1 m (tidal). Water level at Hope gauge: 4.8 m. Participants: Bev and Bill Ramey.

After landing the kayaks, we followed our usual route walking upriver to the tip of the upper islands. We startled a coyote on the accreting islands. The coyote ran to the edge of the deciduous forest where it paused and watched us for several minutes, then disappeared into the forest.

We did not see flocks of migrating Black-bellied Plovers on the upstream tip – likely due to today's date (April 26, 2025), which is a couple of weeks later than when we've previously seen them during their migration. There were gulls and Double-crested Cormorants loafing at the up-river tip.

We started down the southeast side of the island, towards the inner flowing river channel, but as the water in that inner channel was too high to wade, we turned inland on a coyote trail through the almost fulling leafed-out deciduous woods where there were several species of shrubs, some flowering. Within a short distance we were making our way through some blackberry patches, which slowed our pace. There were a few one- to four-metre tall Douglas fir and one small cedar growing amongst the alder and cottonwood.

After portaging our kayaks across the gravel/sand bars some



Killdeer (*Charadrius vociferus*).

distance, we paddled across the inner channel and then headed inland through the walkable old river swale where there are only a few blackberry canes growing amongst the Reed Canarygrass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). With ongoing succession, there are several conifers visible 15 metres tall. We looked for the egg masses of Northwestern Salamanders in the small pond along this route, but there weren't any visible. We were likely too late as we've seen the egg masses previously in late March. However, there were lots of water insects, as well as many insect species visible along the sand-silt bars, so with freshet, these will provide excellent food source for fish.

Next we walked along what used to be the quiet water of the inland cross-channel, now filled with sediments with emergent

vegetation. In one area it looked like helicopter training had been occurring, with more than twenty parallel landing skid-marks. We entered the deciduous forest of the southeastern upper island. At the circular pond we saw a very large Western Toad (*Anaxyrus boreas*).

Then we headed back to the downriver islands and the now dry former swale between those two large islands. We walked as far as the breach of the southwestern lower island where river water now ponds. Gravels and sand continue to accrete out from the lower islands, towards the main channel next to Chilliwack Mountain. We then returned the same route through the forest trail, paddled back across the inner channel, portaged boats up to where we'd first landed and paddled back to the put-in location. The put-in location

Continued on page 14

A Loss For Our Naturalists Community – Bill Merilees, June 18, 2025



Our condolences to the family of Bill Merilees.

Bill made innumerable contributions to our natural world and will be sorely missed. Bill was a life member of both Nature Nanaimo and Nature Vancouver. A few of his many accomplishments are listed on the Nature Nanaimo website – <https://naturenanaimo.ca/2020/12/nature-nanaimo-life-member-william-james-bill-merilees/>.

Bill worked for Parks Canada in 1975 and was stationed at Roger's Pass then then Waterton Lakes National Park. In 1978 he joined BC Parks and stayed with them until he 'retired' in 1996.

Bill wrote several books of interest to naturalists including: *Attracting Backyard Wildlife* (Whitecap, 1989), *Newcastle Island: A Place of Discovery* (Heritage House, 1998); *The New Gardening for Wildlife* (Whitecap, 2000), and *Trees, Shrubs and Flowers to Know in Washington and British Columbia*. (Lone Pine, 1996 with co-author C.P. Lyons.)

Bill was the Ecological Reserves Warden for ER# 137, Hudson Rock.

Among Bill's many accomplishments, he was also a recipient of Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee Medal (2002) and recently donated his mollusc collection to the Beaty biodiversity Museum – 2023 (150,000 specimens).

ER# 75 Warden's Report cont'd from p. 13

has continued to erode each year and now has a fairly steep silty bank that crumbles, which makes put-in and take-out challenging. The major shoreline repairs along this stretch of Nicomen Island river bank, which had been made about a decade ago with large rocks and fabric-sheathing, have mostly eroded away and remain only in a few locations.

Mammals

One coyote seen, many tracks especially on upper island shorelines, plus some tracks looked smaller so possibly a young coyote

Deer – none seen but many tracks throughout all islands.

Bear – very clear tracks visible in cross-directional dry channel between the upper and lower islands.

Beaver – tracks and workings visible in several locations.

Mole – evidence from raised earth mounds.

Amphibians and Reptiles

Western Toad (*Anaxyrus*

boreas), about 12.5 cm long body length (excluding hind legs).

Molluscs

One freshwater mussel shell (Wester River Pearl Mussel) near upriver tip of islands, likely had floated down from upriver, possibly from Harrison River system.

Snails, several introduced snails, likely Brown-lipped Snail (*Cepaea nemoralis*)

Insects

In the warm weather many small insects moving about on the sand/silt areas, insects with short flights close to ground (less than a metre), some spiders and beetles; also pond insects such as water striders.

Birds

Birds have been entered on eBird hotspot:

<https://ebird.org/canada/hotspot/L844938>.

We were likely two or three weeks late to view the large flocks of American Wigeon, Mallards and

Black-bellied Plover. We also missed seeing large numbers of migrating Tree Swallows and Violet-green Swallows.

Canada Goose - 4
Mallard 4 pairs of M & F
Common Merganser 7 flying over
Killdeer - 1
Short-billed Gull - 50
Ring-billed Gull - 6
California Gull - 4
Double-crested Cormorant - 18
Great-blue Heron - 3
Turkey Vulture 1 flying over
Bald Eagle 3 (adults 2 and immature 1)
Red-tailed Hawk 1 flying over
American Crow - 5
Common Raven 2 flying over
Black-capped Chickadee - 2
Tree Swallow - 1
Swallow species - 2
American Robin - 5
American Goldfinch - 4
Song Sparrow - 1
Spotted Towhee - 3
Yellow-rumped Warbler - 2
Wilson's Warbler - 1

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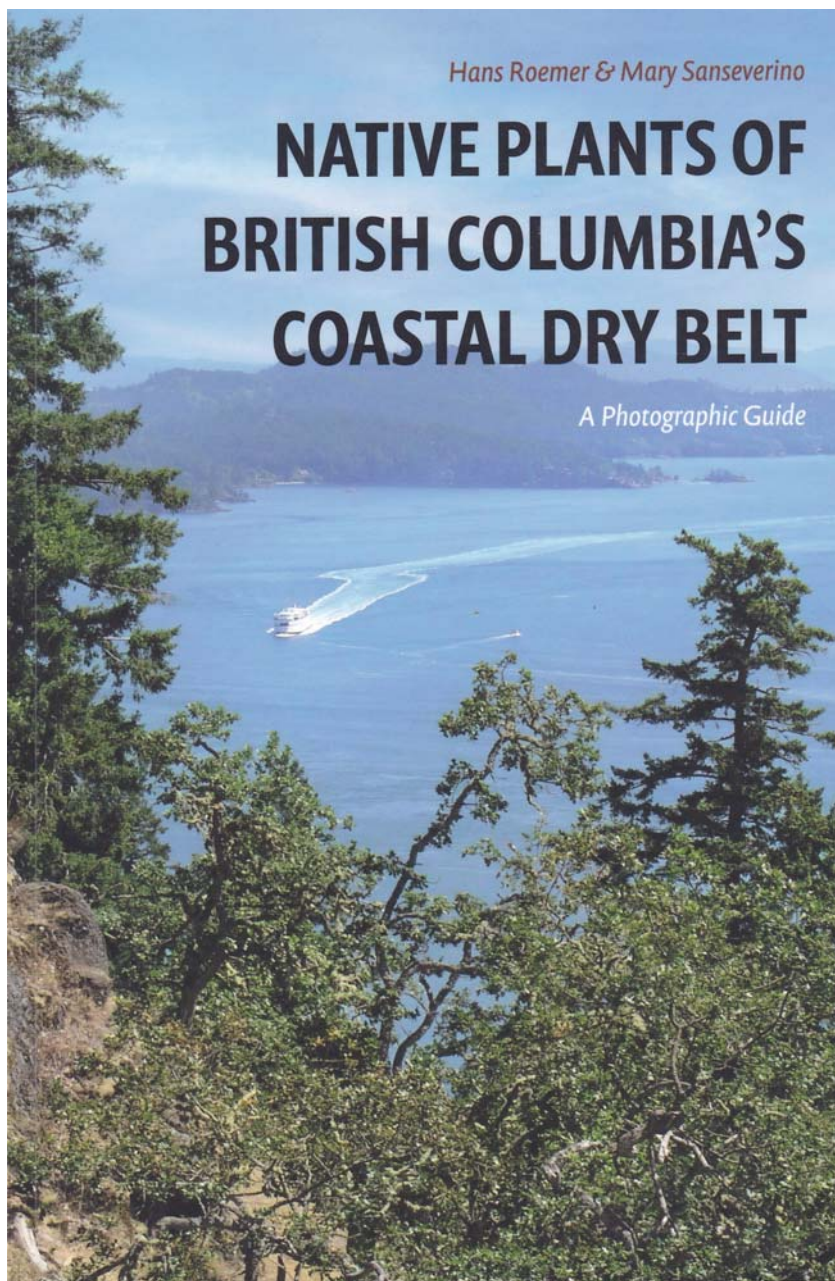
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