

WILD ISLE
Vancouver Island's Adventure Magazine
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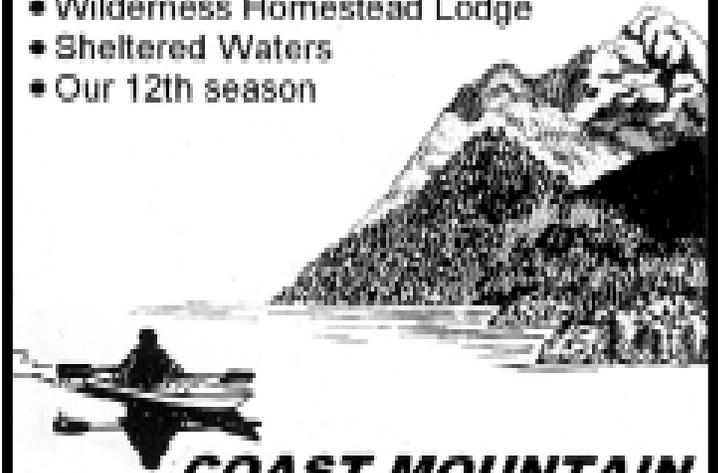
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Winter Aid Climbing
Kayak-Surf Comp. Report
Golden Hinde Winter Climb
Kayaking Nootka To Clayoquot

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A warm welcome indeed to the inaugural issue of 'Wild Isle' a magazine dedicated to Vancouver Island adventure. Locally the adventure 'industry' is taking on a life of its own and becoming one of the fastest growing sectors of our tourism economy. But it seems that most of what makes it into print is aimed at attracting visitors to the islands,



or full of things to do while they are here. Very little is printed for those of us who are residents, and who love the land and the recreation it affords us more than anyone.

With this in mind, 'Wild Isle' was created. We aim to provide a forum for the outdoor community on Vancouver Island and become an intrinsic part of that community's culture. Please take advantage of this publication and send us stories, news, letters, event listings, art, photos or anything else that will be of interest to outdoors people across the Island.

Here's hoping that we have a record snowfall this winter and no one has any time to send us a thing!

Philip Stone

Submission Guidelines

We will be publishing four times in the first year: a winter, spring, summer, and fall issue. Submissions are very welcome but should follow a few guidelines. As far as themes go, no mechanized recreation please. An aircraft drop-off for a 4 week Coast Range ski tour is fine but a jet-ski expedition to Buttle Lake is out. Written articles can be e-mailed, sent on disk in RTF or Word for Mac (please include a paper copy with all disks), by fax or letter is fine too. Photos can be sent in order of preference as: colour slides, b&w prints, colour prints, colour or b&w negatives. Please fully caption all photos with subject and photographers name and don't forget a stamped, self-addressed envelope for their prompt return. For a complete set of submission guidelines contact us at 250 285-2234 or wildisle@island.net

Next deadline for Spring issue,
Feb. 27th 1998.

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Cover: Corrie Wright on the Victoria Peak Glacier.
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Inserts: Philip Stone on "the Chuck" Rugged Mountain
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Shane Mawhinney off the knoll at Mt. Cain
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Sheahan Wilson & Robyn Mawhinney kayaking wintery waters of Quadra Island.
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This Page: Avalanche off Flower Ridge. © API

Kayak Surf Competition

Liam Edwards

Whether you are in a kayak or on a board, surfing is an incredible sensation. There is a precious stillness as you sit in the ocean beyond the break, waiting for a wave, repeatedly looking to the horizon for a bulge of water to creep towards you. Realizing you're in too close, you move toward the swell. As the swell jacks up into a big green wave, you pivot quickly landward. Your stomach rises to your throat as the wave picks you up. Intentionally, you paddle forward with the direction of the wave. Immediately you are careening down the face of the wave faster than the wave itself, slowing down as you reach the bottom of the wave. Time now to either carve a turn or brace as the full might of the wave comes crashing down on you. For most its when you make that bottom turn and keep making turns, riding the glassy green carpet of water: pure exhilaration!

Exhilaration must have been the feeling that Jeff Bishop and Kirsty Nicol had as they realized that the surf kayak competition they had worked so hard to hold had become reality. The competition came about as they schemed ways to raise money for a ten week trip to Costa Rica with Canada Youth Challenge (CYC). CYC is an altruistic organization that enables youths between the ages of 18 - 25 to work on environmental and social projects in foreign countries.

We woke the next morning at Jordan River to find the river mouth parking lot rapidly filling with kayak-laden cars. This event, along with the beautiful weather, pulled paddlers from the back eddies of Vancouver Island, the lower mainland and as far as Oregon State for the three categories: beginner, intermediate and advanced. Each category had a mens and womens component.

The beginner category was held at Jordan Rivers river mouth break. The combined instructional session and "give it all you got, we're looking for enthusiasm" contest was tough to judge because everyone had a lot more than just enthusiasm. Tris Winfield came out on top for the mens component and Tara Heath for the womens.

The intermediate and advanced categories were moved north to Sombrio Beach where the waves are usually bigger and more consistent. I don't think Sombrio's parking lot has ever seen that many cars, let alone kayaks. The scene down at the beach was incredibly colourful and exciting. Sombrios beautiful stones and driftwood made perfect bleachers for the plethora of supporters.

The intermediate category was the most structured and the largest of the three, with over twenty six entries. Over the course of five heats, each 15 minutes long, competitors were judged on their best two rides. There was some impressive and bold surfing on the only wave rolling in at 'firsts'. Competitors were marked on their ability to perform specific moves with five marks for style and an additional five for originality, giving a total of 40 marks to be had. Kirsta McFayden placed first for the womens and Ron McLentoc for

the mens.

When it came time for the advanced category the tide dropped and the swell had picked up, making the waves steeper. Two rocks reared their ugly heads smack in the middle of the break. There was only one heat: 40 minutes to strut your stuff. There were twenty-four competitors and over a dozen non-competing kayakers and board surfers all jockeying for position to catch a quick ride to the beach past two truck stoppin' sized rocks. It was a little congested out there causing some crashes and a lot of near misses.

As far as tricks go, there were a couple slaps, an excellent ender by Michelle Hosstee and continuous 360° spins by Rob Cartwright, awing the crowd and winning him first place in the Advanced Mens. Charlene Stark was also spinning like a Dradle and with her consistent form she placed first in the Advanced Womens.

After the contest there was an awards ceremony at Caddys Restaurant on the U-Vic campus, where prizes from the many sponsors were given out. Competitor Piper Harris said, "Even though the organizers were in the midst of university mid-terms, the event was a huge success and it just goes to show that more good things are coming in the future."



© Greg Shea

Horne Lake Makes Waves

Vancouver Island is now home to Canada's second only 5.14 rock route. As reported in *Climbing Magazine* No. 172, French climber Jean Minh Trinh-Thieu created *Dinosaur Highway* (5.14a), a fierce line that overhangs 50 ft. in its 100 ft. length! Trinh-Thieu also added *Save the Pushers* (5.13a) and *Globetrotters* (5.13d), firmly planting Horne Lake on the coastal sport climbing circuit.

Local and visiting climbers should be aware that the crags at Horne Lake are on private property and should conduct themselves accordingly to ensure good relations with the property owners. The long-term access situation remains uncertain.

New Victoria Peak Route



Curtis Lyon & Phillip Stone climbed the striking couloir on Victoria Peaks Northwest face August 14th, 1997, calling the route "*The Sceptre*". There were 10 moderate pitches of up to 5.8 on flawless rock with a hundred metres of broken blocks at the top. The climbing was fun, varied, and destined to become an Island must-do alpine route. After starting just left of the couloir base, for a fantastic first pitch, the bulk of the line sticks to the back of the huge gully with steep climbing broken by partysize belays. Near the top the gully narrows to a dirty-looking chimney. Better climbing was found by breaking off to the left and taking a steep headwall alongside a branch gully, to finish up the last loose steps of the West Ridge and right onto the summit.



Vancouver Outdoor Adventure Sports Show:
Vancouver, February 27-March 1

Campbell River Sprocket Rockets Slug Slam: May 17-18
For more info 286-6340

Trail Run for Cancer: 15km run or 30 km walk: April 26
For more info 286-6340

Campbell River Outdoor Adventure Trade Show: April
For more info: 1-800-463-4386

Mt. Washington Snow to Surf Race: April 19th

Hammerfest Mt. Bike Race: Parksville, May 9 & 10

Basil Parker Cross Country Race: Saanich, March 1

LETTERS

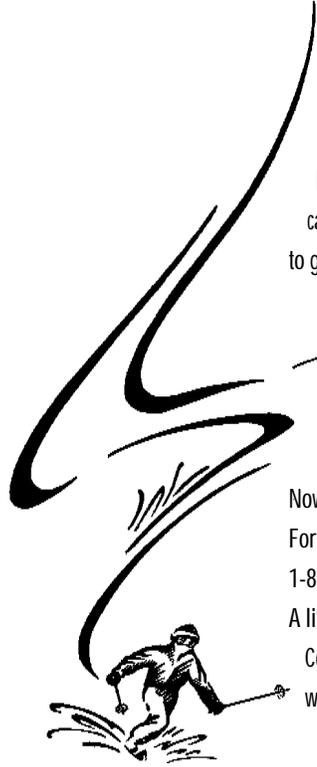
We don't have any letters yet but please drop us a line and tell us what y'er thinkin': PO Box 482, Heriot Bay, BC, V0P 1H0
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Canadian Women's Coastal Kayak Adventure

In May 1998, five Canadian women will embark on a 4 month kayaking adventure along the exposed Outside Passage of Canada's West Coast and into the history books! The turbulent 3000 km. route from the southern tip of Alaska to the city of Vancouver has never been completed by a team of women. Expedition projects will include: Beach Restoration and Leave No Trace Education.

For more info., t-shirts etc. contact Jody Simmons (250) 354-4025.

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VIEW POINT

Andrew Smith

When asked to prepare an article for the inaugural launch of the Wild Isle magazine, I wasn't quite sure what to focus on. As Wild Isle is a magazine focusing on outdoor adventure, my first thought was to write about an exciting destination which may appeal to readers. However, this brought up a common conservation vs. recreation question - should we be promoting some of our more wild areas? The problem arises from promotion leading to



Enroute to Cape Scott

increased use, resulting in unacceptable impacts, necessitating management measures and eventually changing the entire experience which people originally sought. The topic dilemma appears to have solved itself.

A case in point. Cape Scott Provincial Park, located on the northern tip of Vancouver Island, is known for its history, spectacular coastal scenery, beaches and relative solitude. It is also known for its mud and tough hiking conditions. The park's attractiveness has started to catch on, resulting in more visits and an impact on access trails. The mud holes have expanded so much from hikers continuously skirting around the perimeters, that district staff finally felt forced to construct boardwalk over a large portion of the trail. The new boardwalk will certainly lessen the impacts on the trail and keep peoples boots dry, but the fact is, the whole experience will be changed. Is this for the better? I guess it would depend on who you ask. Certainly, as the trail becomes easier to traverse, it will become more accessible to those, who in the past, were not able to experience the uniqueness of Cape Scott. On the other hand, those who have revelled in the challenge of the journey, to test ones self against the elements and reap the rewards at the other end, will not come away with the same feelings. As use increases and user type changes, impacts on the surrounding environment will probably require the implementation of additional controls and perhaps more facilities. The cycle and evolvment continues.

BC Parks is in a tough position and must weigh resource impacts against user wants and needs. Should boardwalk be constructed the entire length of the Cape Scott trail system and others in similar condition? Do we have a choice? Perhaps parks should be more accessible - more visits may result in more support for our park system, both financially and protectively. What are the answers? There probably are no totally clear solutions. In most cases the right management strategy will be site or park specific and require careful assessment and user input. The connection then between adventure recreation and parks is obvious and I would like to stress two messages. First, consider the impacts the next time you venture off trails and around mud holes and second, become involved in park planning through Management Plan processes and the recently launched BC's Park Legacy Project. Hopefully you can help BC Parks answer some of these tough questions.

There are many other issues facing parks which may have impacts on outdoor adventure. Future articles may touch on guiding, backcountry user permits, volunteering, kayaking, cave management, mountain biking and ski touring. I look forward to presenting them.

If you have an opinion concerning the boardwalk issue (particularly Cape Scott), we would like to hear it. Send your opinion entitled Boardwalk to: *Andy Smith, BC Parks, 1812 Miracle Beach Drive, Black Creek BC, V9J 1K1. Fax 250 337-5695 email: asmith@galaxy.gov.bc.ca*

ONE TRACK MIND

Dan Clements

Ahh, more rain! As we move into winter it is sometimes difficult to sustain that summer enthusiasm. The novelty of wet muddy rides wears thin quickly as temperatures drop. Those winter slopfests can be some of the most rewarding though, with a simple change in attitude. Set aside the aggressive nature of summer, and mellow out. All too often I ride with someone stressed out over not clearing an obstacle that "I always make" (this person is often me). What we need to realize is that things are more difficult when wet. Usually it takes me until early December before I come to grips with the change of season and begin really enjoying my rides again. My focus changes from speed and endurance to skill and camaraderie. Occasionally I will even ride a section I don't normally clean in summer. I have found that with no exceptions other than to ride, I ride better.

That's what this column will be about: the enjoyment of mountain biking. Riding for the sake of riding, no hidden agendas (no butts to kick, no races to train for), no judgements of which area is better or best, just the fun of being out on the Island trails. From Port Hardy to Victoria, I hope to meet all of you and ride your favourite terrain and tell our story here.

To that end, if you would like to show me your local stuff please call 286-6340 or email me lemmings@island.net and we can arrange any thing from a

short tour of a favourite playground to an epic exploration of new ground. To kick things off I will take the easy way out and tell you about our scene here in Campbell River.



Campbell River, Old School Soul

It is partially to do with the history of trail builders and partly to do with the terrain, but Campbell

River is a traditional cross country riding area. With over 100 kilometres of trail and some double track built in only four years, this is one of the fastest growing areas on Vancouver Island. The majority of trails are intermediate in difficulty, with enough easy and extreme terrain for anyone. The local club, 'The Sprocket Rockets', have been very active and there is a regular schedule of rides both day and night. If you are in the area check out the local shops for free maps. Everyone is welcome.



Winter riding in the Comox Valley.

Around Campbell River there are four areas, each with a distinctive style. The Beaver Lodge Lands is the closest to town and the place for family, people new to the sport, or a leisurely spin. Not too much here to challenge the adrenaline seeker. Radar Hill is where we get into the extreme stuff with trails like Skid Marks (refers to your undergarments), Area 51 and Designer Underwear; few can clean these statements of ultimate commitment.

The Pump House trails are a small playground of rocky, root-ridden bluffs. This is the most popular area here because there is a challenge for everyone. But do yourself a favour and head out to Snowden.

You can't ride single track to disco!

The Snowden Demonstration Forest is the largest single area with the most diversity, and is the site of the annual Slug Slam race. There over 40 kilometres of single track at Snowden. This area provides a true test of skill and endurance for anyone. The choice for our featured ride: Snowden.

A group of us met at 6:30 for the Sprocket Rockets' Wednesday night ride. It was pouring as we headed out, two of us locals and two industry reps, Barry from Manitou up from Victoria and Patrick with Roux Components in Nelson. Typical start: the locals attempt to hammer the new guys to see what they've got. As I led the way to

Mudhoney Pass, the pace slowed. Mudhoney Pass is a moderate trail with a short rise midway. The resulting descent and drops are always fun, but on this particular evening I found a tree I hadn't noticed before so everyone rode by me. Payback as the reps hammer the rest of Mudhoney and I play catch-up.

My lesson learned I suggest Scotts trail, a tight gnarly affair. This is 40 minutes of typical Campbell River terrain; the roots and rocks are relentless. What is a favourite ride became hell for me and I found myself alone near the back. Even Wylie, my dog and best riding partner, deserted me in favour of faster riders at the front. Frustrated by the continuous obstacles, I slow down more and finally begin to fall into a rhythm. The problem is that the rhythm is the song 'Funky Town' and you can't ride single track to disco! At the junction of Lost Lake and Scotts trails we regroup. An hour into the ride and some have called it quits. Four of us and Wylie push on, looking like school kids stomping in puddles, defying everything their mum ever said. We plough through creek after creek, pond after pond. I can't remember who, but someone looked at me and said they felt like a spawning salmon. Not comfortable with this I up the pace a notch.

The Riley Lake connector is aptly named, as on this evening it was nothing more than a river connecting numerous beaver ponds with Riley Lake. Next we set our sights on Wylies Wood, named after our four-footed riding companion. This is my personal favourite trail because of the variety. The open forest on rock bluffs reminds me of riding in Penticton but the lower, heavily forested area is total west coast. There are logs everywhere

and one big drop, all rideable if a bit intimidating. At close to two-and-a-half hours, our lights were close to

browning out so we blasted the access road to Gun Barrel, a new line that promises to be very fast when dry. A little more new school, this trail has several jumps and banked corners. Gun Barrel shoots us out onto Riley River, I mean Riley Connector, and we headed back to the vehicles. A great ride evidenced by the smiles on everyone. Driving home I felt complete and content. Like years before when I was a school kid, I feared no punishment. I hoped for hot chocolate mum always had waiting. 🍌

Breaking



Point

© Greg Shea/API

Unknown Surfer at Firsts..

Adam Smallwood

Somewhere off in the deep cold waters of the North Pacific, a long way from any land, is the location where a phenomenon is to begin. Today the seas mix with a local wind casting a shimmer of motion across the water, tranquil — smooth sailing for any small craft oceangoer. However, lurking on the horizon, dark clouds are about to bring their own winds, sweeping over the ocean surface and eventually bursting into rippled whitecaps. Rain starts and builds with the wind in a southeast direction. The wind dominates and exerts pressure on the backs of the waves it has created. Night falls and the storm begins to reach full throttle. Wind waves, now larger, start to build and connect all in the same direction, rolling and gathering momentum.

By dawn, hundreds of kilometres from its beginning, the wind still blows, fetching over this great distance. The waves, now joined energies, organize themselves into even lines, travelling on their own. Large, rolling walls of water make their way towards Vancouver Island. The waves are like balls of energy rolling through the deep cool waters, lifting and falling. The new swell begins to feel bottom just in sight of the north end of the island. Soon enough the first set of waves come peaking on the horizon feeling their way along the sandy bottom of an empty bay. The swell has hit.

A seagull eager for excitement starts flight at one end of the beach, travelling parallel with the lines of water. As the gull cruises with wings nearly touching the water, the wave breaks abruptly. Locked in and racing with the cresting lip hovering above, our feathered friend is faced with a closing section. At the last moment the seagull rockets out and upward, pulling a fast carve back to get some more.

Since the beginning of life on earth, living-things have surfed. Some animals that surf today are dolphins, seals, penguins, pelicans, seagulls and many others. Seemingly for pleasure, they use their own distinctive technique to ride waves. Humans, without any craft, can be a part of this pure form of surfing. The first record of surfing with a craft were the ancient Polynesians who both built boards and rode them as sacred practice. This has brought us to what surfing is today, and although a lot has changed, the fundamentals of riding waves with surfboards have stayed.

There is a powerful spirit in surfing and its there for everyone. The essence of surfing is a very difficult feeling to dissect, but you can embrace it right from the start. Soul surfer, Dave Parmenter, describes it as this:

"Surfing is like one of those bright ornate tide-pool creatures that crumble into pieces when you try to remove them from the tide-pool, that shrivel up grey and lifeless when you put them in jars of formaldehyde for study. Every depiction of surfing has fallen flat, whatever the medium."

Still, spiritually, a lot can be said about surfing. For me it clears and calms my mind while cleansing the body and soul. As well, it's the adventure and anticipation of finding my perfect wave.

Eh-2!

Chris Barner

This winter is the perfect time to extol the virtues of aid-climbing at Crest Creek. There is not much snow to ski or snowboard yet, its too cold to free climb, too balmy to ice climb, too wet in the alpine and in Campbell River at least climbers have enough sense not to build a climbing gym. Just grab yer aiders.

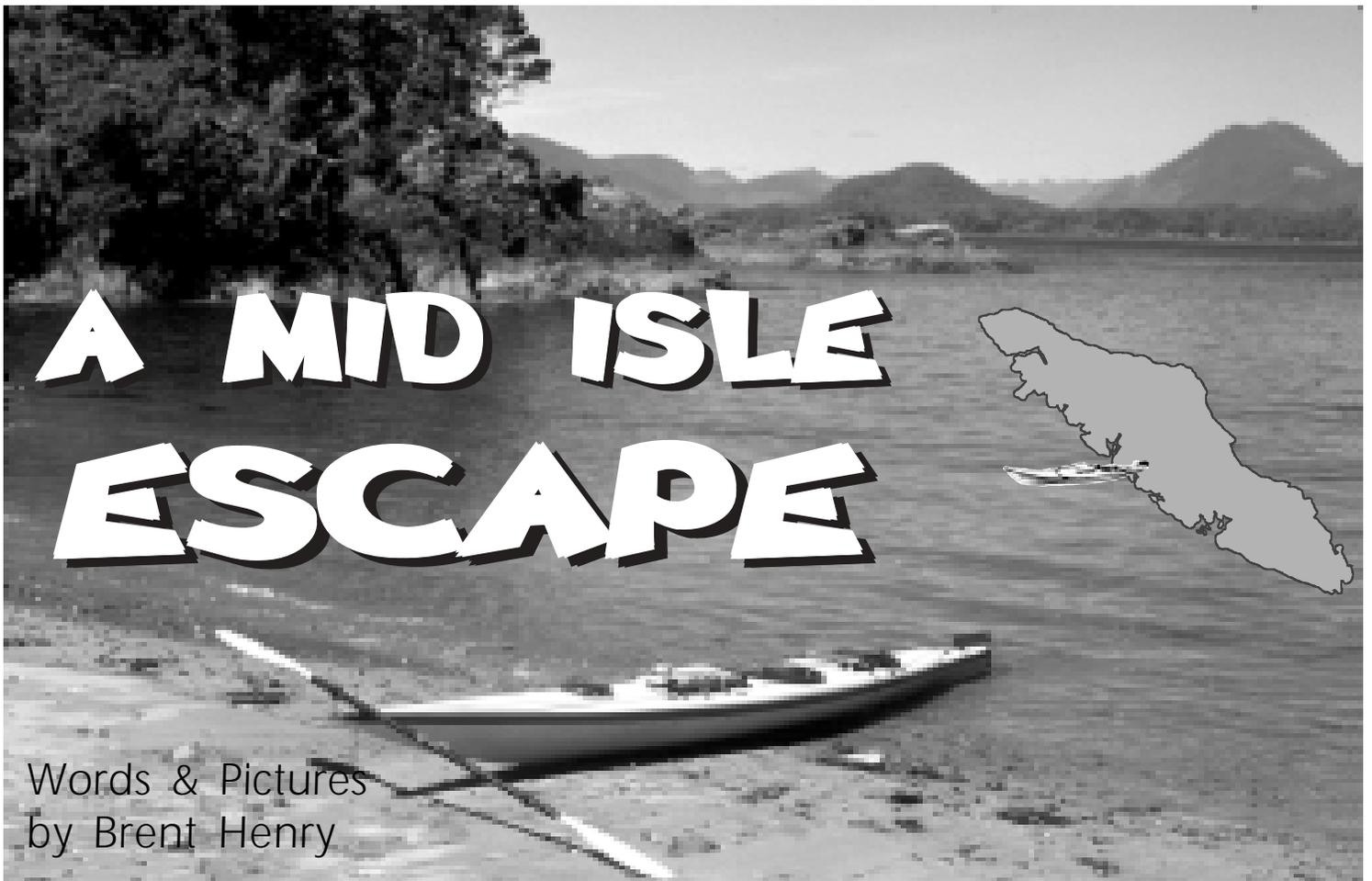
If you are going to climb at all, you better know the rudiments of aid. It can get you across the 25 ft. of 5.13b between you and 2,000 ft. of perfect 5.9 cracks; and fifty feet of aid beats half a dozen windy rappels every time if rain catches you just before finishing a long free outing. Aid a lot through the winter and it might only take a fraction of the time to place a crucial piece of gear the next time you free some testpiece.

Crest Creek has some excellent short aid routes on which to hone the craft. There are two main areas: Sunset Roof and the Emerald Wall.

Sunset Roof boasts seven lines, all severely overhanging. 'Dr. Bolt' (A1) is a simple bolt ladder through the widest overhanging section. Just to its left is 'A2 Brute' (A2) which follows a few fixed pins to a perfect crack that swallows gear and a few specialty aid items. The other notable routes at Sunset are 'Sasquatchewan' (A2), 'Fumbling Towards Ecstasy' (A2), 'Total Eclipse' (A3), 'This Guy is Falling' (A2+), and an ongoing project 'The Rise and Fall of Sleeping Dog'. These all require pitons. The rock can be deceitful here so be gentle (to preserve the rock), and careful (to preserve yourself).

The Emerald Wall is awesome, big for Crest Creek, up to 175 ft. high and 220 ft. across. Most of the leads take several hours even for an experienced leader. The rock on this wall sucks, there are many loose flakes, and the rare cracks tend toward incipience. Your best bet for getting started here is 'Rainy Daze', a fun climb that takes a direct line through the open part of the wall. The route can be broken into two pitches. Take a hook and a half dozen rivet hangers. 'Forever and a Day' (5.10, A2), 'A Scar is Born' (A2+), and 'Cliff Mosswater' (A3) round out the completed routes at Emerald. There are a few wild looking projects still underway. In fact, I smashed my face with a piton I ripped out of crumbly rock just yesterday.

If Cerro Torre is on your tick-list, Cliff Mosswater on a frosty February morn will firm you up. It's drippy, cold, loose, and scary sometimes, but no matter how blustery the weather, you'll always be able to climb something, and on nice days you can aid pretty much any crack, and execute pendulums and Tyrolean traverses. Just use your imagination!! Too complicated? See if you can figure out how to use your hands for something more challenging than dipping them into a chalk bag. The opportunity to aid casually through a roof festooned with huge multicoloured icicles in pursuit of winter sunshine awaits you.



A MID ISLE ESCAPE

Words & Pictures
by Brent Henry

Beached at Burdwood Bay

Abandoned by friends in the evening dusk with a single kayak, assorted paddling gear and about 9 days of food, I finally asked myself what I was doing there alone in this coastal access called Cougar Creek. I guess one could say that sharing camp with about a hundred sport fishers is not really what one would call alone. Although in light of being a solo sea kayaker, about to head down the outer coast to Tofino, and the only vessel in camp without an outboard, it did feel quite alienating. Believing that one can always make the most of a situation, I set up my tent within arms reach (official site size) of a truck camper to either side, filled my "melmac" mug with that night's ration of white wine and headed down to the crowded dock to enjoy the sunset and immerse myself in sport fishing lore.

4:00 in the morning is not my idea of, you know, a normal "early" start, with a forecast for light winds and no tidal overfalls to beat. I did discover that this is when fisher life rises at Cougar Creek. After adding a couple of light restless on-the-ground hours, it was finally time for this paddler to brave the old bedroll exit. By about 8:30, I was paddling along Tlupana Inlet with a clear sky and a bare hint of breeze.

With these weather conditions, it wasn't long before I had lunched on the northeastern point of Bligh Island and was soon welcoming my favourite seascape, the transition from protected to outside waters. As I skirted the Vancouver Island coast towards Burdwood Point, swell height gradually increased and the odd hint of whitecaps was spotted in Nootka Sound. Burdwood Bay itself makes a very hospitable takeout for a break and assessment of sea conditions.

The hour-long stretch from Burdwood to the first major beach at Escalante is shallow and interspersed with barren offshore rocks and walls that can cause turbulent waters with reflected wave patterns. This necessitates a cautious attitude and a dependable brace. Landing on the semi-protected southern hook of the beach, I set up camp and

was later rewarded for my paddling efforts with a visiting gray whale backdropped by a striking sunset adjacent to Nootka Island.

The next days fair weather afforded a relaxed trip south to Barcester Bay. En route, the lee of Escalante Island provides a protected kelp-strewn mini habitat where a careful eye may spot sea otters. This was not to be my fortune that morning. A brief stop at the creek mouth southeast of here provided a good landing, and this August, a good source of drinking water.

The next stretch, to my idyllic west coast cove at Barcester Bay, took me through kelp beds and swell-washed rocky outcroppings along a beachless shoreline. Barcester Bay provides a taste of wild west coast to the sea paddler, with its limited view toward Japan and its sandy mosaic of animal tracks. In the morning, while returning from the freshwater spring at the end of the beach, I followed the tracks of a wolf that had come to within 15 metres of my tent before detouring to avoid my possible detection.

Following the coastline, I skirted kelp beds and fragmented points, such as the Perez Rocks, which the ocean swells can make impassable in the lee. Sea otter activity became more frequent, although at a distance. The seascape was quite quiet, and with the explosive exhale of a nearby gray whale, I almost launched myself from my boat.

Homais Cove, an old West Coast village site, is highly worth a visit. Offshore, the swells crash along shallows while this horseshoe shaped bay remains in a tranquil carefree timewarp. It's an impressive site for an old summer village and a perfect tactical stop before navigating the offshore rocks and swells of Estevan Point.

The point and its reefs created impressive towers of froth as swells swept over them. It was a mild seascape by coastal standards, but with the present tide I was unable to find a protected gap inside the rocks. The long paddle out around Estevan was worth the effort,

as the life in and beyond the kelp beds was energized. Sea otters fed and frolicked in nearby clusters while gray whales grazed beyond the spray zone. As I adjusted my heading eastward towards Hesquiat Harbour, I saluted the reassuring presence of Estevan Lighthouse, and understood why the public was questioning the removal of devoted keepers from these stations.

The shoreline around Matlahaw Point and the old village of Hesquiat are potentially dangerous in more animated seas, as is the shallow bar that guards the interior of the harbour. Only one house now remains occupied, and it's easy to imagine how difficult access was to this village in inclement weather. Gazing towards the barren clearcut hills north of the basin, I guessed that few of the relocated families missed the old view. The east side of this harbour provides good camping and the first of many caves one can explore between here and Hotsprings Cove.

Between Hesquiat Harbour and Hotsprings Cove lie a beautiful mix of pocket beaches and caves, guarded by offshore rock sentries. Unfortunately, I was occupied with another coastal feature. For the next three and a half days I was tested by some of the soupiest seafog that I've ever experienced; the kind where you hone your navigational skills fast or sit still. I honed fast! Being prepared to make the most of this coastline means expecting low visibility at any moment. This is a challenge and flavour of west island paddling that I both respect and relish.

Hugging the coast for a couple of hours with senses sharpened, I detected the narrow passage between Vancouver and Mate Island, and entered the contrastingly serene waters of Hotsprings Cove. As I paddled through the partial visibility to the public dock, I wondered about the summer popularity of the springs. I hadn't seen a soul for three days. Pulling my kayak on to the dock to save precious space, I was informed by the friendly wharfinger-campground owner that in one hour, at 5:30 p.m. the springs would lose all their day tourists. As informed, the long colourfully initialed boardwalk led myself and two other kayakers to several natural hot pools, abandoned to us for the evening. We had all earned that glorious soak.

With a great beach campsite next to Mate Island and a natural hot spring nearby, it was easy for us to decide to stay put the following morning. A day of relaxing and touring the cove would be rewarded with another post-tour group soak. After a sleep-in and relaxed brunch, we visited New Hesquiat, as it is locally known, for some treats at the store. Folks were friendly, and it seemed that the new village site was proving a better location in this modern age. Their recently built visitors lodge had been well received as a convenient stopover for hotsprings visitors.

The next mornings launch took some courage, as I had to navigate the crossing to Flores Island while avoiding the high speed tour zodiacs. This had to be accomplished in the thickest fog in three days. My arsenal of preventative safety gear included my latest radar reflector, a vertical plastic tube extending beyond head height, filled with crumpled metal foil. I also carried a large canister air horn that serves as a blast of desperate warning in case of an impending collision. A kayaker of any worth shouldn't go down quietly!

This stretch can have numerous gray whales feeding during the summer. Their absence and the heavy fog gave it an eerie quality that amplified my ready caution. The route allows the option of staying out from shore and bypassing several coastal bays. This shortens the length of exposure to fog and shoals, but increases the dependency on accurate navigation. Raphael Point and Siwash Cove fell behind,

giving welcome references to my location. The combination of fog and swells with the rocks and shallows guarding Cow Bay made entering this large bight on the south shore of Flores Island a challenge. Having heard it was inhabited, I ignored the first large beach and headed for the small bay that divides the larger bay in two. Having had enough fog for one day, I called this one off early and spent a leisurely afternoon setting up my comforts.

One of the finest pleasures for me in the wilderness is the close uninhibited presence of wild animals. My last morning exemplified this. While I sat by my dwindling breakfast fire, French dark in hand, procrastinating my re-entry into the fog, two large wolves appeared at one end of my beach. They briefly sniffed the fog laden air and proceeded to trot down the beach, oblivious to my presence. Suddenly, I knew why I had prolonged my stay that morning.

I wasn't too long on the water before I again realized why I had been reluctant to start my last day. Heading out for the

Whaler Islets from a spot near Kutcouc Point, I had been paddling for about twenty minutes when the fog suddenly deserted me. The sparkling vistas of Clayoquot Sound and sandy beaches of Vargas Island were indeed spectacular. What I truly found visually shocking though, was the large number and variety of boats in the short distance. Eight days had nurtured proprietary feelings towards this coast and I wasn't sure I wished to abandon them. After lunching on the first expansive beach of Vargas Island, while paddling towards Tofino, I counted four commercial kayak groups of substantial size. By the time I had passed Eugvik Rock, I had spotted private kayaking parties on each successive beach. I knew that I was now within easy access of Tofino, the summer "downtown" of the west coast!

The paddle from Nootka to Tofino has several features to endear it to the intermediate and advanced kayaker. It is easily accessed from either end, via Tofino in the south, or Cougar Creek, about an hour's unpaved drive from Gold River, to the north. Its shores are definitely under used, with many isolated coastal beaches, an abundance of animal life and unique vistas that reinforce that rugged west coast quality. Lastly, it requires a commitment that makes fog, rocky shorelines, swells and outside exposure the pure pleasures of the west coast paddling experience.



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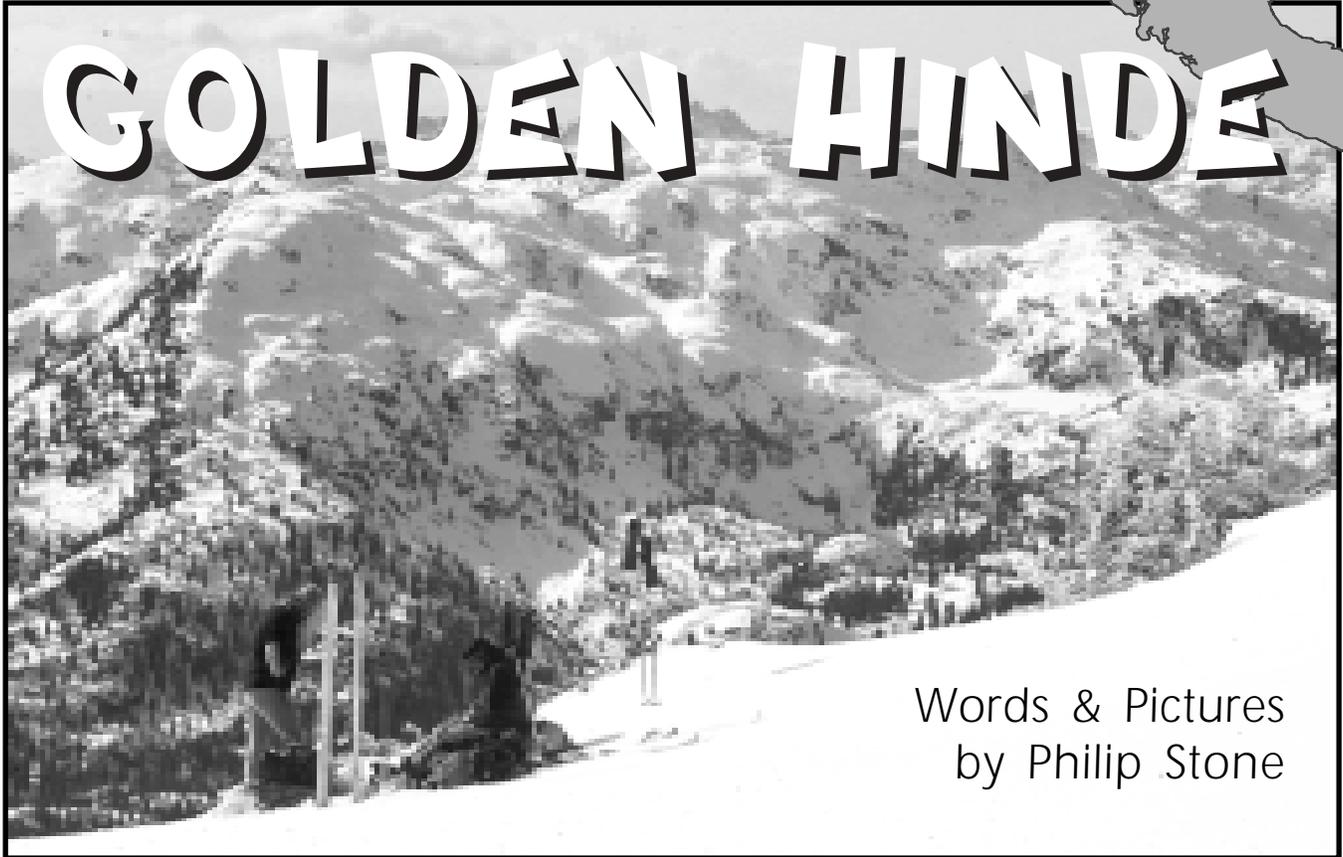
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WINTER ON THE



GOLDEN HINDE



Words & Pictures
by Philip Stone

Chris Barner and Robin Sliker overlooking the upper Myra Creek valley from Phillips Ridge.

There is something unreal about heading into the Vancouver Island mountains under clear skies in February. So it was perversely comforting for myself and my two friends Robin Sliker and Chris Barner to watch the skies darken, then blacken, on this particular February day as we began a journey to the Golden Hinde.

Digging in our first camp on Phillips Ridge, the invested effort we had made in hauling touring skis and winter camping gear from Westmin to Arnica Lake was thrown to the whim of a forecasted front. If it followed the forecast, the front would pass overnight leaving clear skies the next day. And if not? Well, I for one would not have been surprised. Winter on the Island is usually a very overcast affair.

Thus, it was from an unreal world to a surreal world that we awoke. We found our tarp sagging under a couple of centimetres of fresh snow, but there was a clear azure sky the colour of the lake water by which we had slept.

The skiff of fresh snow initially made travel on skis a little easier than it had been the previous day. But as we continued up onto the higher and more exposed parts of Phillips Ridge, there was little accumulation and a hard icy crust that made purchase even with wide skins on the skis almost impossible. I was beginning to envy Chris who was on foot, carrying light snowshoes in case of a deep dump of snow. He was making an easier time of it than either Robin on telemark skis or me with my alpine touring setup. However, Robin and I drew some comfort from recalling that there is as much downhill travel along the ridge as uphill and the skiers' time would come.

In the unusually bitter cold we continued westward along the crest of Phillips Ridge. The Golden Hinde dominated our view to the north, its classic pyramid lines severed at the summit by a sly lenticular cloud. A lone cloud in the panorama surrounding us, draped over our objective and alluding to the illusion of good weather in which we were immersed.

We snatched a quick cold lunch break, revelling in the splendour of the glaciated peaks of Mt. Thelwood, Mariner Mountain and Mt. Tom Taylor. However splendid, they did little to warm us and we ate hurriedly before swinging northward above the Burman River valley.

A group of small knolls presented a little difficulty, forcing us off the safety of the ridge crest and into skiing several exposed bowls and chutes. Even with a large pack the 40centimetres of fresh snow was a dream to ski. From a low pass to the north of the knolls, we descended westward down to an unnamed lake at the head of this branch of the Burman River. It was a joy to fly across the flat frozen surface of the lake after the gruelling up and down of the ridge. A short climb through the pass separating the Burman from the Wolf River led us to Schjelderup Lake, just as the long winter shadows enveloped the mountains.

To have made it so far with such relative ease generated a certain tension and anticipation. From Schjelderup Lake it would certainly be possible to climb the Golden Hinde in a round day-trip time-wise. But what of other factors? Would the weather hold? What of the snow conditions, would they be suitable for the limited equipment we had allowed ourselves? As a weight saving measure we hadn't brought crampons, definitely a gamble that we wouldn't encounter any ice on the climb. Our collective

knowledge and experience led us to believe that the avalanche risk was moderate. However, that was still little more than an educated guess and high up in the exposed gully on the mountain the consequences of a slide did not bear thinking about. With all these questions flying around, at least one nagging feeling I had was being laid to rest.

That question was concerning the validity of a winter ascent in conditions that up until a few days ago had seemed more like mid-spring than midwinter. The calendar may have said February but the unseasonably warm temperatures of the preceding week made a winter attempt seem like cheating. It was a point for self-debate only and with each passing hour, the mercury dropped lower and lower, eventually freezing the question into icy oblivion as it passed -20°C.

The exertions of the day and the lulling warmth of a water bottle filled with hot water eased the three of us into a deep sleep. Morning arrived after a perfect rest. Robin seemed to have slept even better on his mattress of skis and backpacks than he had on his, since lost, ensolite the night before.

Morning alpenglow cut through the twenty below air, bathing the Golden Hinde in an amber glow. We ceremoniously prepared breakfast, packed our climbing gear and headed across Schjelderup Lake. All now on foot, we cruised toward our golden grail.

From the outlet of the lake it is usual in summer to climb onto a bench high in the north cirque of Mt. Burman. Crossing this leads to the north ridge of this small peak and then down to the edge of Burman Lake. However, loaded with winter snow the bench looked far too exposed for our comfort and we chose a route to avoid it. We descended into the Wolf River valley and crossed the cirque in the forested meadow at its base. From this low point we hiked back up to join the summer route at Burman Lake and continue the long 1,200 m. climb to the summit.

In the glorious sunshine and hard-packed snow, it seemed to be in no time at all that we arrived at the small tarn at the base of the Golden Hinde's south face. Looking back we could see our tracks now far behind on Schjelderup Lake. Above, several route options led up the right side of the south cirque and onto the crest of the mountain's southeast ridge, where our line to the top lay. We opted for the long steep gully closest to us. It was choked with deep snow and some dangerous wind slab near the top. We safely climbed it, and with views of Strathcona Park opening up around us we took a well deserved break for lunch. Melting snow for water on a MSR stove, we filled water bottles and drank as much tea as we could swallow. High in the couloir above, the weak sun worked the little magic it could, softening the snow and preparing it for our ascent.

After a little debate on the finer details of our route, we crossed the wide snow field at the base of the Hinde's southeast couloir. Reaching a narrow rib of exposed rock, we scrambled up it until it ended and forced us onto the steep snow in the couloir itself. Taking turns kicking steps in the variable snow, we marvelled at the incredible exposure below. The gully narrows and steepens near the top, and the last two hundred metres took on a big

mountain feel that was compounded by our remoteness in the cold winter world surrounding us.

Reaching the summit, we greeted the familiar grey weathered cross with howls of joy and disbelief. There we were, gazing out from Vancouver Islands apex in the dead of winter with not a wisp of cloud to be seen. My camera shutter almost overheated snapping away at this unique panorama. It was by now mid-afternoon and the sun was already shimmering low on the ocean waters of Nootka Sound, as it drew this wonderful day to a close. Instilled with a sense of urgency, we searched for the summit register. It was hidden deep under the snow, so we settled for leaving a note in a zip-loc that was eventually added by a party later that spring.

The long down climb required exhausting concentration but passed without incident. We kept a respectful silence until safely back below the tree line, where we stopped for tea in the fading evening light. The relief of a successful climb washed over us. Glowing in unison with the alpenglow on the mountain, we raced against the darkness retracing our steps back to the camp on Schjelderup Lake.

The return journey back along Phillips Ridge the next day seemed leisurely with packs now buoyed from the loss of consumed food and fuel. We could have made it back to Westmin and the van that day, but decided to remain out one more night and enjoy the spectacle of a Pacific sunset from a high camp. The moon danced with Venus and the Golden Hinde brooded in their light as our thoughts turned from our frosty perch to the waiting warmth of home.



East Face of the Golden Hinde seen from Mt Washington. The route described takes the sweeping snowfield on the south east (left) side.



Chris Barner, Robin Sliker, and Phillip Stone basking on the summit of the Golden Hinde.

The Golden Hinde is Vancouver Islands highest peak at 7,219 ft. It is located in the heart of Strathcona Park and can be reached within a few days from either the Phillip's Ridge trail at Westmin or the Elk River trail along Highway 28, depending on the party and conditions.

The first recorded winter ascent as told above took place on February 24, 1993.

CANVASES



Tim Stanton in the East bowl of Mt. Cain.

Photo: Philip Stone



Camp at 'Iceberg Lake' below the North East Face of Mt. Colonel Foster. Photo: Patrick Moreau



Queen's Face, King's Peak, Strathcona Park. Photo: Greg Shea





Riding the Long Beach wave. Photo: Josie Boulding



Greg Shea awash in the Ash River. Photo: Liam Edwards



Climbers descending the Franklin Glacier 8,000 ft. below the towering summits of Mt. Waddington. Photo: Philip Stone

PLAY IT SAFE

Got your spanking new board(s) and ready to play this winter? Bet you've got your eye on some sweet backcountry turns to supplement the days at the lift area. But really how safe is it out in the backcountry? It seems like everybody is jumping the ropes these days. Why on some days at Mt. Cain there are more people in the back bowls than riding the T-bars. Well, if you have any doubt as to whether or not avalanches pose a risk, take a good look at the picture to the right. Now imagine you are strapped into your groovy snowboard or slick fat skis trying to ride that puppy out. The fact is, avalanches are one of the most significant hazards we tangle with in the mountain environment.

The two main classifications for avalanches are sluffs and slabs. Sluffs occur on the surface of the snowpack usually with fresh snow that has been disturbed in some way: a glob of snow falling off a tree, a passing skier, or even just from gravity. We are all familiar with sluffs, they happen everywhere in fresh snow and smaller ones pose relatively low risk. Slabs on the other hand occur because of instability within the snowpack structure: they can be likened to plates slipping over one another. Slab avalanches can be catastrophic in scale. They are much more difficult to predict than sluffs because the conditions that produce them are hidden deep inside the snow and, as such, present a serious risk when in the backcountry. Slab avalanches are less common on the island than elsewhere in the province but they most certainly do still happen. Their infrequency is due to the milder temperatures on the island that generally promote stabilization of the snowpack. But it can sometimes take only a few hours of colder temperatures to create an instability in the snow that might not manifest itself in an avalanche for several weeks.

Despite the risk, more and more of us are heading into the backcountry for our turns. The allure of untracked snow is just too sweet to resist. How then to scoop some fresh tracks and stay safe? The two golden rules are: 1) Don't travel in avalanche terrain within 24 hours of a fresh dump of snow (yeah right I hear you say) and 2) Be completely prepared for self-rescue in the event of an avalanche.



The first rule initially sounds ridiculous. If we don't get out and carve up that 30 cm. dump today, tomorrow it is going to be either pig snot or raining. Well that may be true, but the rule says to keep out of avalanche terrain. It says nothing about safer lines, for example, among trees or along ridges, rather than in bowls or chutes which are potential death traps in bad conditions. Recognizing avalanche terrain on the large scale is not too difficult. Tapering chutes flanked by bent or snapped trees, wide bowls, cornices and any convex slopes are prime country for avalanches. On the smaller scale, things are more subtle but require equal care. Creeks especially should be given a wide berth.



Guide & Avalanche Forecaster Lyle Fast illustrates the presence of instability within the snowpack with a shovel shear test on Blackcomb Mountain.

Of equal concern to the terrain you are riding is the terrain above and below. A small patch of warm sun on a cornice far above you might be the furthest thing from your mind while carving down a shady bowl, but should the cornice crack off it will catch up in no time. It is always safest to scout possible lines thoroughly from as many angles as possible. Have safe areas noted along the way and an escape plan in place before starting your descent.

Preparing for self-rescue is imperative. Statistically, assuming no fatal injuries are sustained in the avalanche, a buried person has 20 minutes in which to be uncovered before suffocating. If you think that is long enough to hike out and rustle up a rescue party, you're dreaming. Any group travelling in the backcountry during winter must have the equipment and training to conduct a complete unassisted rescue; there is no time for any alternative. Don't go out of bounds or into the backcountry without gear and the know-how to use it.

Always be completely prepared for self-rescue when planning to ski or snowboard in the backcountry

Basic self-rescue equipment includes: an avalanche transceiver/beacon, shovel, and probe poles. The use of the shovel should be fairly self-explanatory but using a transceiver and probes to locate a buried person should be practised on safe ground on a regular basis, especially at the start of each winter season. Always ensure that everyone in your group can use a transceiver well *before* you enter hazardous terrain, and that everyone's unit is transmitting correctly. An avalanche beacon is undeniably a pricey bit of gear, but in theory it should literally last a lifetime and may even prolong it. For occasional backcountry travellers, many outfitting stores now rent transceivers by the day, leaving no excuse not to carry one.

Additional avalanche equipment might include tools to measure snow stability and weather conditions but that is a whole other story and one best told in a formal training course by professional instructors. Snow science is incredibly complex and can take years of experience to fully appreciate. Nevertheless, a weekend avalanche awareness course can give a solid overview of some of these techniques which with practice can make the mystery of avalanches a lot clearer. PS 



If you were an obsessive ice climber perhaps Vancouver Island would be one of the last places in Canada you would choose to come and live. The hanging cascades of the Rockies would most likely spring to mind first, and farther east, Québec could supply a lifetime of solid water to satisfy your ice thirst. Ice climbing is not for the faint of heart and many a hardened rock climber would have to agree that it takes some extra edge to perceive climbing up a vertical wall of ice as recreation. But ice climbing certainly does have its following and while the Island may never become a Mecca for ice climbing, this is in part due to perception rather than a lack of ice. If you are willing to work for it, there are no shortage of things to climb.

It takes several weeks of cold weather to freeze a waterfall thick enough to climb on. So even though the mercury may drop below zero at sea level from time to time, our mild winters usually mean that to find enough ice we must head up into the mountains where the weather is much colder. Winter access into the Island mountains is far from easy once trails and logging roads are snowed under. Fortunately there are some very reliable ice falls that form on or around three of our ski hills. High quality climbing can be reached from: the road up to Mt. Arrowsmith, the back side of Mt. Washington and across on Mt. Becher from Forbidden Plateau.

The longest routes amongst these are probably the falls above the Arrowsmith road; when fully formed they are about 150 to 200 metres high. Probably the most developed are the 17 or so established routes on the northeast side of Mt. Washington. And the quietest area is above Boston Lake, about an hour's ski or snowshoe across the meadows from the top of the chair at Forbidden Plateau. When the lift is running, a single ride to the top gives an excellent view right into the "Boston Bowl". This gives an ideal opportunity to check ice conditions before heading off through the sub-alpine trees, which obscure any view until arriving in the Boston Lake basin.

Mt. Becher is a popular ski tour destination and there is often a broken route following the summer trail up to the top. To reach Boston Lake you need to leave the summit trail just as it begins the long climb up the east ridge, by the unmarked view point overlooking Boston Creek, 2 kilometres from the ski area. Although the lake is hidden, the tops of the ice falls can be seen through the trees for reference. From the lookout, a straight traverse line, neither gaining nor losing elevation, across the steep side hill leftwards will bring you right around onto the lake. From this quiet sanctuary, the climbs form a ring above you, deep blue, frozen in space, hanging off a circular band of cliffs. There are three main ice falls that form most winters and several other thinner lines that take a long cold snap to freeze up.

Boston Lake is an excellent place to spend a night or two in order to get several routes done, but the relatively quick access also means that a day trip will allow just enough time to squeeze a climb in. PS 

