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WILD ISLE

The Islands' Adventure Magazine

August-September 2001

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Cover: Raph Bruhwiler emerges from the green room near Tahsis, by Aaron Jackson
 Contents: Ride'm cowboy, Kris Holm spurs his unicycle through the bike trials at the Test of Metal Mountain Bike Festival in Squamish, by Lara Hildebrandt

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**Next Deadline for
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Welcome to our latest issue of Wild Isle. This issue we begin the first in a series of regional profiles starting by highlighting the incredible adventure opportunities to be found in and around Nootka Sound.

It was an encouraging picture that was painted on an otherwise gloomy canvas when we began researching this feature. The struggle that the Nootka Sound communities have and are continuing to go through as the major industrial employers pull out or scale down their operations is playing itself out all over the island and the coast at large. It is changing the face of the towns and their economies.

Change can be beneficial but when the direction, time frame and end result are uncertain new opportunities are easily masked in a cloud of doubt. Kudos should be credited to the people and businesses that are striking out on new ventures like tourism and other low impact and value added enterprises.

EDITORIAL

By remaining and building within their communities they preserve not only their own lifestyle but an integral part of what makes up coastal British Columbia. Nootka Sound is a very special part of Vancouver Island and if you haven't been out there, move it up the list and go and see for yourself the beauty of the landscape and the determination of those that inhabit it.

We will be continuing this series of profiles moving to the Comox Valley for our October-December issue. If you can assist or would like to draw attention to a particular area that we could feature please don't hesitate to contact us.

Throughout the summer I was invited by CBC Victoria to highlight on their morning show 'On the Island' some of the awesome adventure recreation activities and destinations we are blessed with around Vancouver Island. Our thanks to the CBC Victoria crew for providing the opportunity and helping spread the good news of all that awaits on the Wild Isle.

Philip Sone

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FROM THE FIELD

Mountain Bike Access Notice

Mountain bikers beware. BC Parks and the new Ministry of Water, Land and Air protection are telling two wheeled fanatics to respect the rules at Campbell River area hiking trails.

In a press release mountain bikers were asked to stay off the Canyon View and Quinsam River trails within Elk Falls Provincial Park.

"Mountain bikers may use the trails on the eastern side of Elk

Falls Provincial Park - access being from the water tower location at the Campbell River logging bridge," said the statement.

It continued to say, "These rules will be strictly enforced with a \$86 fine. If mountain bikers continue to use unauthorized trails it may result in all trails being closed to mountain biking."

Please respect BC Parks rules and keep the trails open for the enjoyment of everyone.

Unidentified Flying Objects Sighted on Mt. Washington

In what appears to be an episode out of The X Files, large numbers of flying saucers have been sighted hovering in the vicinity of the resort.

Further investigation confirmed the activity, but luckily earth domination by an outer space power is nowhere to be seen. However, groups of excited individuals were spotted taking part in the latest sport phenomena: Disc Golf!

Mt. Washington Alpine Resort is now open for its summer season and there is a whole lot of excitement being generated around the brand new Disc Golf Course.

Disc Golf is played much like traditional golf, but instead of a ball and clubs, players use flying discs, much like a Frisbee. A specially weighted golf disc is thrown from a tee area to a target, which is the "hole." The most common hole is a chain-link basket.

As a player progresses down the fairway, each shot must be taken from where the previous throw lands. The trees, shrubs and natural terrain changes located in and around the fairways provide challenging obstacles for the golfer.

"Our new course is designed to be challenging for the whole family. It's a Par 31 course, and should take about an hour to play" says Don Sharpe, Director of Resort Services for Mt. Washington. He adds, "I played the course with my kids ages 10, 8 and 5 the other day and we

had a blast and a good workout as well."

The course starts at the base of the Whiskey Jack lift, winds it's way through trees and open spaces to end up at the bottom of the Eagle Express High Speed Quad lift, which is open for the summer. The most difficult hole is #6 with its 114 yards of steep incline.

This course is guaranteed to be a challenge to all levels. It's FREE to play on the course if you bring your own discs, otherwise, you can rent a disc for \$3.50 from the hill. Discs are also available for purchase in Altitude Sports and Gifts in The Alpine Lodge.

Negotiations are under way to hold a British Columbia Disc Sports Society (BCDSS) sanctioned event in 2002.

If you have been wondering what all the hype is around Disc Golf, now is great time to come and play for yourself. You can also catch some of our local experts make some extraordinary shots on this challenging Mountain course. And spend some time at "Hole # 10", Fat Teddy's Bar and Grill for an exciting après' with cool beverages and yummy menu choices.

Warning: Disc Golf may become habit forming. It's been said that no one can play just once. Check out Mt. Washington Alpine Resort's website at www.mtwashington.bc.ca for more information and the exciting schedule of events for Summer 2001!

Surf Competition and Party

Plans are shaping up for the second Pro-Am surf competition held in Canada. The Quiksilver/Roxy Summer Surf Jam 2001 will hit the beach at Cox Bay near Tofino on August 18 and 19. This years event will feature 136 competitors, both men and women competing in hopes of walking away with their share of over \$10,000 in cash, prizes and giveaways.

Competitors are sure to put on a show with the like of Megan Abubo, ranked number two in the world, registered. Local hot shots and surfers from

around the world have also registered. Confirmation has also been received from GOB and OCEAN3, for the spectator and surfer apres party.

This event will be hotly contested as winners will qualify for the 2002 World Surfing Games and top Canadians can qualify for the Canadian National Team.

For more information, to register for the events or buy tickets to the party check out the British Columbia Surf Association Web site at www.bcsa.ca

Take A Safari - West Coast Style

CAMPBELL RIVER, BC-Destiny River Adventures today announced an amazing combination full day trip that you won't find anywhere else. The trip combines a short, splashy run of river rafting, floatplane flight seeing over the islands of Johnstone Strait, and wildlife viewing in a covered catamaran from Stuart Island to Campbell River. Working together with several other operators has produced an excellent result.

"We are very excited to be working with two other quality adventure companies, Vancouver Island Air and Morgan's Landing Retreat, to offer this unique West Coast Safari experience", said Jim DeHart of Destiny River Adventures. "This tour has been developed specifically for the bus tour market. Our capacity is 48 participants and we offer an incredible day".

"It's action packed! No where else can you raft a river, tour

historic Haig-Brown House, fly over the discovery islands, have a seafood lunch at a remote island resort and take a marine boat tour back to your destination all in the same day!" said Larry Langford of Vancouver Island Air.

Several familiarization tours have already taken place with tour operators and early indications from industry are very positive.

"The history, wildlife and adventure of this amazing trio of activities will take your breath away and leaves you feeling in tune with the west coast lifestyle", said Rose Epp of JAC Travel Canada.

Destiny River Adventures, located in Campbell River, BC, is Vancouver Island's premiere river rafting company offering a number of river rafting tours in the North Central Island region of Vancouver Island, call 250-923-RAFT or www.destinyriver.com

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HAPPENINGS

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Every Sunday	Mountain Market - Arts and Craft Fair	Mt Washington
August 3 - 6	Adrenalin Fest - Mountain Bike Clinics	Mt Washington
August 4 & 5	Strathcona Offroad Triathlon (250)923-7911	Mt Washington Campbell River
	Three Ferries Ride-Cowichan to Salt Spring (250)480-5155	Victoria
August 8 & 9	Dragon Boat Festival Colleen (250)472-2628	Victoria
August 16 - 19	Mountain Musicfest MS Bike Tour (250)388-6496	Mt Washington Victoria
August 18 & 19	12-hours of Phat Fun Mtn. Bike race (250)286-6340	Campbell River
	Summer Surf Jam	Tofino
August 24 - 26	Epic Fest - Mtn. Bike trials & bike skills events, (250)286-6340	Campbell River
September 1	Full Moon Sunset Ride & Dinner	Mt Washington
September 1 & 2	Mtn. Bike Downhill Race	Mt Washington
September 21 - 23	Bamfield Sea Kayak Festival (250)728-3500	Bamfield

If you want to have your event in HAPPENINGS, send us a fax at (250) 285-2236 or email at wildisle@island.net with all the dirt.

Grouse Mt. Hosts World Cup

Grouse Mountain hosted World Cup mountain bike races on July 6 thru 8. Riders from around the world came out to race in cross country, downhill races, and against each other in dual slalom events. The epic riding the North Shore is known for got spectators pumped and challenged the best riders in the world.

Mens' Downhill

1. Barel Fablen, Fra
2. Christopher Kovarik, Aus
3. Mick Hannah, Aus

Womens' Downhill

1. Anne-Caroline Chausson, Fra
2. Missy Giove, USA
3. Tracy Moseley, Gbr

Mens' Cross Country

1. Chrisoph Sauser, Sui
2. Roland Green, Can
3. Cadel Evans, Aus

Womens' Cross Country

1. Barbara Blatter, Sui
2. Chrissy Redden, Can
3. Alison Dunlap, USA

Womens' Dual Slalom

1. Leigh Donovan, USA
2. Anne-Caroline Chausson, Fra
3. Tara Llanes, USA

Mens' Dual Slalom

1. Brian Lopes, USA
2. Eric Carter, USA
3. Mickael Deledycke, Fra



Sean McCarroll rips up Grouse,
photo by Dan Graham.

New Adventure Fitness

Adventure Fitness opens warehouse shop in North Vancouver, B.C.. Sales and rentals of Seaward, Wilderness Systems, Ocean Kayak, Nova Craft and Navarro kayaks and canoes Located just over the bridge in North Vancouver at 1475 Hunter Str., Ph 604-715-7174 After 11 years on Granville IIs., Its a better pace with greater parking and less hustle and bustle of the tourist trade.

Heli Hiking Takes Off

Dreaming of soaring with the eagles over the waterways and mountains that surround our island paradise? Then take to the skies with Discovery Heli Adventure the latest addition to Quadra Island's thrill packed adventure tour industry.

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The seasonal winter snows will soon be gone leaving the

alpine meadows aglow as wild flowers and glacier fed streams come alive with colour. High above the emerald inlet waters await the casual walker and eager hiker alike. With the security and logistical expertise of a professional guide at hand and a gourmet lunch to savour, a heli hiking day trip to the Coast Range mountains will be an experience to remember for a lifetime.

For special occasions there's no treat like it, catered alpine picnics, champagne breakfasts, glacier walks if you can imagine it Discovery Heli Adventure can arrange it.

For more information call 250 285-2724 or visit online www.heliadventure.com

Rainforest Tours in the Mt. Arrowsmith Biosphere Reserve

One of the finest eco-tourism destinations this country has to offer, the Ancient West Coast Temperate Rainforest, is now available as a one day adventure geared for people of all ages and abilities. Tours depart from the resort community of Parksville in dry rainshadow climate, then travel to some of the last virgin rainforests remaining in North America. Coastal Rainforests have existed for some 2 million years, with the biomass of the trees and plants in these forests being the heaviest in tonnes per hectare in the world.

Gary & Ronda Murdock, owner/operators of Oceanside area's newest eco tour company love Vancouver Island and never cease to be amazed by the Island's splendid natural beauty and diversity.

Pacific Rainforest Adventure Tours Inc. was formed and started operating in February 2001. The company's mission statement is: to enhance ones' environmental awareness and cultural appreciation while providing a unique nature experience to people from all walks of life.

Their specialty is ancient old

growth forests and interpretive forest tours where they guide you through the "Land of the Giants" where some of the trees are 1500 years old and 290 feet tall. Mode of transportation to their wilderness destinations is a four-wheel drive van. They operate year round, with some destinations changing with the seasons. They offer over a dozen different day trips that include activities such as storm watching, wildlife viewing, whale watching, eco-forestry, native culture, wild flower and birding tours, and ancient rainforest walks. June through October they offer guided day hikes to alpine meadows, lakes and several mountain tops. The mountain tops include; the site of a World War two plane crash, Mt Arrowsmith for spectacular views of Georgia Strait and the Port Alberni Inlet, and other Mountain tops that are the homes of Roosevelt elk and the endangered Vancouver Island Marmot.

For more information and bookings visit the website at www.rainforestnaturehikes.com or you can phone, 250-248-3667.

Horne Lake Access Status

HORNE LAKE- Texada Land Corporation recently contacted CASBC, to remind us that the cliffs at Horne Lake are closed. The situation is thus unchanged. Climbing is not permitted at Horne Lake, and as far as the company is concerned, any climbers there are trespassing. We understand that some climbers from Alberta who arrived when logging was underway were asked to leave. Logging is ongoing, and although not continuous apparently includes some weekends.

Discussions between TLC, the Ministry of Highways (which owns some of the land), and the cottage leaseholders on the north side of the lake are ongoing. CASBC is monitoring the discussions, and has brought climbing at Horne Lake, and the

need for access, to the attention of all parties.

If you insist on climbing at Horne Lake despite the closure, keep as low a profile as possible.

- Avoid any interference with logging operations. Park on the main road, or better still at the campground, and stay away when falling, sorting or loading is underway. Especially if any helicopter logging occurs. If logging is underway when you arrive, assume you will be denied access.

- Be aware of hazards e.g. 'hanger' trees, unstable debris, and such.

- Observe posted restrictions.
- Don't make fires of any kind, and be very careful with cigarettes etc.

Mt. Washington Summer Fun

Mt. Washington Alpine Resort The warm days of summer are here at Mt. Washington Resort offering visitors the chance to experience Vancouver Island's high alpine. It is shaping up to be a year of growth as the resort is set to become a four season destination.

The completion of the New Nordic Lodge (now named Raven Lodge) in late summer, renovations to Fat Teddy's Bar and Grill's stage, the addition of a new meeting room for up to 50 people, the building of a nine hole Disc (Frisbee) Golf course, additional bike and hiking trails, and numerous events will make Mt. Washington Resort an exciting place to visit this summer.

"This summer the addition of some new and exciting events and activities are important to us" comments Don Sharpe, Director of Resort Services. „ We want to give those visiting us lots more to do when they come up".

The resort kicked off the summer season June 23 with daily operation of the Scenic Chair Ride, a Village cleanup and a homeowners BBQ. The

second weekend included the hosting of Ecowest's Adventure Race on June 30 as well as Canada Day celebrations. The events continue throughout the summer with Sunday Craft fairs and Brunch, Art shows, family picnics, horse back riding, beer and wine festivals, a mountain Luau, Full moon sunset chair rides, a four day music festival in August and much more.

Sharpe adds "We are also starting Children's Camps this year. They are designed so Mom and Dad don't have to worry about babysitters as we will have an early morning pickup and a late afternoon drop off. Plus we will pick up and drop off the kids in Courtenay!"

Mt. Washington Alpine Resort is located 30 minutes from Courtenay or Campbell River and is situated adjacent to Strathcona Provincial Park.

All are welcome to come up to the mountain and take a look at the work in progress. Fireweeds Restaurant and Altitude Sport & Gift are open daily.

Visit their website at www.mtwashington.bc.ca or call (250) 338-1386 for more information.



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Wolves are Wild Animals

The risk of being attacked by a wild wolf is extremely low, and fear of wolves should not keep anyone from spending time in areas inhabited by wolves. However, wolves are wild animals and should be treated as such. With less persecution of wolves presently than in the past, wolves may be more likely to occupy areas inhabited by people such as towns and campgrounds. When attitudes about wolves were more negative, such bold wolves were usually eliminated.

In a handful of encounters over the past two decades, humans may have contributed toward wolf habituation, either directly or indirectly, and caused a few wolves to overcome their fear of humans. Some bold wolves bit people in camp areas after wolves had become familiar with human presence and may have received food rewards. This relatively new phenomenon of nuisance wolves has not reached the level of problem bears, campground deer, or suburban coyotes. However, as more people spend time in habitat occupied by wolves, the number of encounters with wolves will probably increase.

What is a dangerous wolf?

All of the wild wolves that injured people in North America (6 wolves involved in 7 incidents from 1987-2000, and two verified prior to this time) were described as "fearless" animals. In most cases they had been associating with humans for weeks or months before the attacks occurred. Thus, a wolf that approaches humans calmly and without fear is potentially dangerous. None of the wolves that have bitten people in North America behaved in an overtly aggressive manner before the attacks. None of them bared their teeth, raised their hackles, or exhibited any other behavior

that humans perceive as aggressive. Most seemed indifferent or even playful in the presence of humans. Fearlessness can give rise to situations where wolves start taking human food and garbage, and may boldly tear up fabric-based human possessions such as clothes, packs, or tents. Additionally, an old or debilitated wolf may approach human dwellings or lose their normal caution in an attempt to obtain food.

Most wolves will try to avoid people. Dogs may serve as an attractant to wolves, and may be perceived by wolves as either a trespassing canid to be accosted or as a meal.

Wolves should not be allowed to frequent campgrounds/backcountry camps. Because of their generally curious nature, wolves may be attracted to such places for their novelty as much as the possibility of obtaining food. Such an attraction can quickly become a problem if the wolf acquires food or its tolerance of people increases. After all, this technique thousands of years ago resulted in the domestication of the wolf and the rise of the domestic dog from wolf ancestors. For their own good, wolves need to be taught to avoid us by people responding aggressively toward wolves.

What to do if you encounter a fearless wolf?

If you encounter a fearless wolf you should yell at the animal, throw rocks or sticks, and act aggressively toward it. Pick up small children, and use pepper spray if you have it. Do not run away because this may precipitate a predatory response by the wolf. Remember that a wolf that bites a human will be destroyed, so by responding appropriately to a fearless wolf you may reduce the risk to yourself, other people, and to the wolf. Report all incidents of wolves exhibiting fearless behavior

to local wildlife managers.

If you are attacked by a wolf

The risk of being attacked by a wolf is extremely low. But if an attack does occur, fight back using your fists, a chunk of wood, rocks, or any other weapon available to you. Concentrate your blows on its face and snout. Of the small number of attacks by wild wolves that have been documented in North America, none to date has resulted in a human fatality. If you end up killing the aggressive wolf, save the undamaged head and have the appropriate officials submit the head to a laboratory for rabies tests.

Dens and rendezvous sites

If you encounter a den site or rendezvous site (site where adult wolves leave pups while adults hunt) leave the area immediately. Wolves at dens or rendezvous sites may be defensive of their young and howl, bark, and act aggressively. This may be unnerving to humans but this behavior has not yet resulted in an attack on a human. The best solution is to stay clear of dens and rendezvous sites. Disturbing wolves at this critical time of year may result in abandonment of the den.

Conclusion

It is not necessary to fear wolves. The vast majority of encounters between wolves and humans will simply provide rare viewing opportunities of these normally elusive animals. However, as with all large carnivores, it is important that people maintain a healthy respect for wolves. By following these safety tips you can reduce the chances of having a potentially dangerous encounter with a wolf and improve your response in the unlikely event that such an encounter does occur.

For more information about Strathcona District parks, you can contact BC Parks, Black Creek office at (250) 337-2400.

If you have a point of view about wildlife/human encounters or any other park related topic, please contact Andy Smith, BC Parks, Extension Officer at Tel: (250) 337-2405, Fax: 337- 5695. E-mail: Andy.Smith@gems6.gov.bc.ca or send letters to BC Parks, Strathcona District, 1812 Miracle Beach Drive, Black Creek, British Columbia, V9J 1K1.

PASSAGE ON A

Eight mothers, open water and a tear. It could only mean one thing, the Orcas are back in Johnstone Strait

MOTHERSHIP

devoted to family and mothers. The fact that Orcas are also called Killer Whales wasn't intimidating. The resident pods of Johnstone Strait fed on salmon, not mammals.

When *Spirit of the West Adventures'* owners, John and Christine booked us on a 5 day Mothership tour, my family thought that we were going on a Star Trek adventure aboard the SS Enterprise, but we immediately knew that this appropriately named excursion would be other-worldly in a different sense.

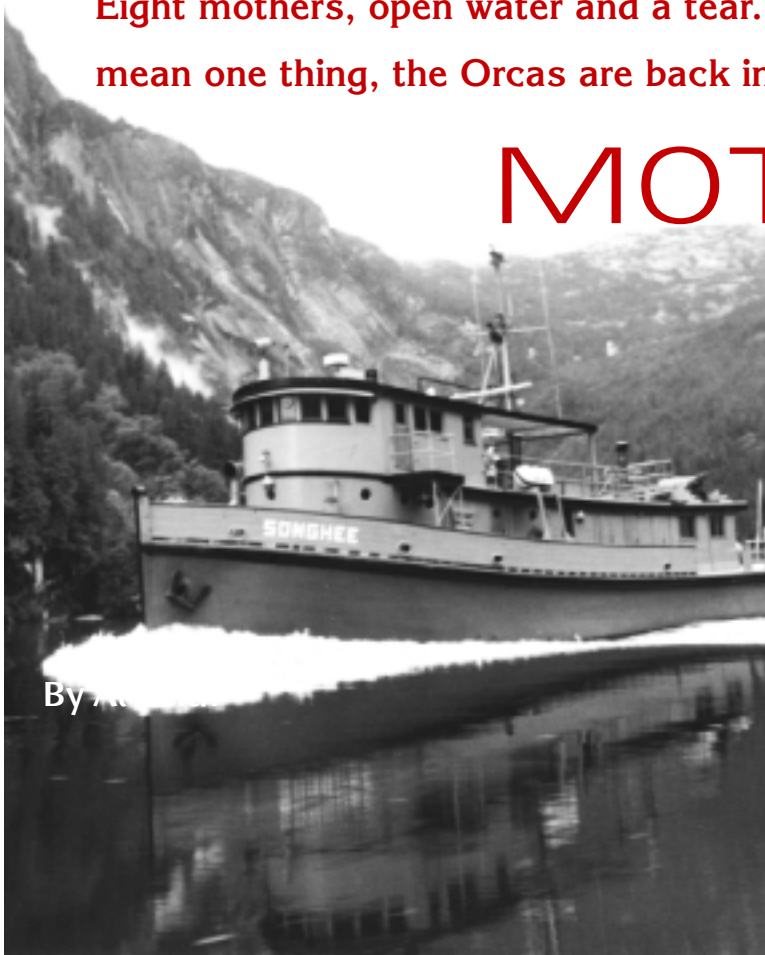
The *Songhee*, a 95 ft. wooden heritage vessel with six guest staterooms, would serve as our home base. The ship would allow us to sleep in comfortable beds, eat delicious, healthy gourmet foods and even relax in a hot tub as we motored along the coasts of Vancouver Island. The ship would also be a backup in case our arms gave out in the kayaks.

We toasted our departure as the *Songhee* motored from Port McNeill up Village Channel to Farewell Harbor on Berry Island. Dall's porpoises, beautiful black and white porpoises often mistaken for baby Orcas, raced alongside the boat. A trio of bald eagles soared overhead. Harbour seals played in front of us, and we heard over the captain's radio another boat had spotted a humpback whale. We watched for grizzly and black bears scavenging by the shore and Pacific white-sided dolphins playing in the waves.

As if our smudged eyeglasses had suddenly been wiped clean, colours were vibrant and sharp when not obscured by hazy city smog. Sounds were crisp and clear without any competing noise. And the silence was deafening. That evening before retiring, we watched the eerie glow of bioluminescence from the phosphorescent plankton in the churning water.

The first morning's heavy fog evaporated into warm sunshine just in time for the launching of our kayaks. After an informative lesson on safety and paddling technique by John Waibel, our guide and co-owner of *Spirit of the West*, we were helped into the single and double kayaks. With seven accommodating, friendly staff and crew for eight women, we felt every need and concern was attended to, including the trepidation felt by those of us who had never paddled before. Fortunately, kayaking requires little skill to maneuver around and we soon found ourselves gliding past pictographs painted on the cliffs thousands of years ago, and burial boxes containing the remains of the Kwakwaka'wakw people.

Arriving at the historic Mi'mkwamlis village of the Mamalilaculla people on Village Island, we pulled our kayaks on to the midden beach, a beach formed from hundreds of years of discarded white clam shells. We heard Tom Sewid, a descendent of the Kwakwaka'wakw, describe potlatch celebrations and tribal lore as he stood flanked by an old schoolhouse and a tribal longhouse, and wearing a resplendent ceremonial robe. In ancient times, the Kwakwaka'wakw believed that great hunters were reincarnated as wolves and Orca whales (that they call Blackfish).



Water dripped off my cheek—was it a tear, or the spray from the whale's blowhole? As we paddled next to the Orca whales, clicking and squeaking sounds surrounded us whenever the six ton mammals surfaced in the water nearby. The majestic male bull led in front with his immense dorsal fin towering five feet above the water. The adolescents surfaced and dove in perfect synchrony on my left while the whale on my right wheezed as she came up for air. Spray from the blowhole exploded in the sunlight with sparkling brilliance. Kayaking in the middle of a pod of Orcas, was a heart-pounding dream-come-true. With the radiant sunshine, cloudless sky, and clear cool water, I knew that even dreams don't get as good as this.

When seven female friends and I decided to go on a whale watching kayak trip in Johnstone Strait, we were housewives going on a nature tour. What we hadn't expected was that this tour would lead us to a mental equilibrium on the water that could not be found on land. Most of us had spent the last few decades raising children in Orange County, California and some were now raising grandchildren. Not typical adventurers, but we were immediately drawn to this trip.

Maybe it was the fact that Orca whales, members of the dolphin family, are a matriarchal society. Females remain with their mothers and grandmothers even after giving birth and are often assisted by them in raising and caring for their young. We felt a connection with this species

The charming port of Echo Bay on Gilford Island in the Broughton Archipelago was the next day's destination. Set against a rocky cliff, the small colorful buildings housed a gift shop with lovely handmade items, bakery, and a small grocery, all of which seemed sufficient to sustain its population of 36 and assorted fishermen and boaters that pass through. Here live local heros, Billy Proctor and Alexandra Morton. Billy, a retired fisherman and logger, watched much of the wildlife diminish to near extinction during his lifetime and is leading the battle to save them.

Alexandra, a whale researcher, came to the island with her husband to study and film the Orcas. Tragically, her husband died a few years later when his diving gear failed while

Vancouver Island. The 1000 acre reserve is home to about 300 Northern Resident whales. Researchers speculate that they return here every summer to rub their bellies on the rocky beaches and to socialize. This warden-patrolled, protected sanctuary is off-limits to boats. As a result, tour boats pace back and forth outside the Reserve markers awaiting the arrival of the whales.

In contrast to the tiny inlets of the Broughton Archipelago, the enormity of the Strait made us decide to use horsepower instead of womanpower to find the whales. On motorized tenders, we searched for them. As if greeting us, the first Orca we spotted spyhopped, launching out of the water head first and, I'm convinced, waved his flippers at us. His tuxedo-like coloring made it

islands we had visited. On departure day we would disembark at Port McNeil to do a little souvenir shopping in the small bustling town before bidding a sad farewell to our adopted family, the *Spirit of the West* crew.

Time was running out to realize my long held fantasy of kayaking with the gentle giants. As the *Songhee* did a final lap through Johnstone Strait toward Alert Bay, a pod of Orcas startled us when they suddenly appeared around the ship. Without time to grab a camera or hat, John launched the kayaks and we scrambled in for the paddle of my dreams. As the whales drew close, time slowed down and the realization of the enormity of these creatures sank in. A flip of their tail would have sent us sprawling. Instead, these gentle creatures allowed us to briefly enter their domain and be awed by their company. Within a few minutes, they did a final dive and disappeared.

No celluloid proof or tangible evidence exists to prove that this final paddle ever occurred, but all I need to do is close my eyes to see the black fins in the water next to me, smell the salty spray from the blowholes, and feel the warmth of the sun on my face. The water on my cheek reappears, and yes, it is a tear of joy.

All I need to do is close my eyes to see the black fins in the water next to me, smell the salty spray from the blowholes, and feel the warmth of the sun on my face. The water on my cheek reappears, and yes, it is a tear of joy.

filming the Orcas underwater. She stayed to do further research, but has been diverted to lobby against pesticide spraying, which kills salmon, the primary food source for the whales. She's also battling the local salmon farms which have been the source of disease in the native wild salmon. A devoted mother raising a family, fighting for the animals she loves, and living on an island without electricity, telephone lines, or TV signals, Alexandra inspired us.

The sunset kayak paddle that evening through the islets of the Broughton Archipelago was better than Prozac. We paddled on smooth reflective water around Insect Island (an ominous name, but thankfully no insects were to be found) and watched the sky's blazing oranges and reds mix with the lingering blues and purples of daylight as the mountain shadows slowly grew longer across the water. Silvery baby salmon frolicked and splashed around us. Labyrinthine waterways made it easy to become lost, but it was easy not to care. Like the Natives, we had become comfortable with the water as a destination, not just a thoroughfare to another land mass. Everywhere we looked was a visual feast. It was like falling in love: it gave me goose bumps.

On Day three, with kayaking skills honed and armed with knowledge of whale behavior we were anxious to meet Orcas. Cruising south through Blackfish Sound, we headed towards the Robson Bight-Michael Biggs Ecological Reserve located where the Tsitika River flows into Johnstone Strait on

a very formal welcome. We listened to their vocalizations on the hydrophone and watched a cow, with her calf close by, head into the Reserve. Taunting the tour boats that were unable to follow, the pod playfully breached six times upon entering the Reserve, landing into the water with grand splashes. Their awesome power and beauty was enough to silence all eight women, not an easy feat!

Twilight fishing was on the agenda that evening with John and Curly, both former commercial fishermen. Since the sun sets after 9:30 during summer evenings, we had plenty of time to cast a few lines into the water. A couple of small rockfish and a small striped bass were the only ones willing to be caught, but several exciting bites kept the adrenaline pumping.

Putting in our kayaks just north of the Reserve by the Sophia Islands on that final day, we hoped to avoid the crowds and meet the whales entering the Strait. In the heavy mist, we quietly paddled past a shrimping boat retrieving its cages and let driftwood float past us near the craggy rocks that purple sea stars latched on. A great blue heron soared overhead while we watched a bald eagle raid a ravens nest. The whales were playing hide and seek, so we returned to the ship.

For our final night, Captain Jim announced that we would anchor at Alert Bay. The town is home to a beautiful arrangement of totem poles in a park near the BC ferry terminal, otherwise it lacked the natural beauty and charm of the other ports and



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BONNY GLAMBECK

Instigator of environmental change

Starting up a sea kayaking company on Vancouver Island is not a truly original venture. But starting one that is entirely geared toward low environmental impact and richer client experience, is original. Bonny Glambeck, with partner Dan Lewis, started Rainforest Kayak Adventures in 2000. Based in Tofino, Rainforest offers a whole host of trips and leadership courses. But instead of the industry norm of ten clients per trip Bonny and Dan take a maximum of eight.

"We want to keep our company small," Bonny said. "That way we have a smaller footprint and can offer a richer experience for those that come with us. There needs to be limits on tourism operators if we want to avoid the pitfalls of other industries."

Things need to change if Tofino, Clayoquot and other marine areas are to remain wild, Bonny says. Creating change is an activity that Bonny is well versed in.

During the 80's Bonny visited the Pacific Rim from her prairie home of Red Deer Alberta. A few visits later she had fallen in love with the small town, marine environment that Tofino is famous for and she moved in. It was 1988 and seas of grain had done little to prepare her for her future lifestyle.

She moved into a cabin a short paddle from town. Thing is she had only paddled a sea kayak once before. She



*Bonny Glambeck:
activist, paddler and
bringer of change*

borrowed one and commuting by kayak became part of her life.

Bonny's life did not slow down. Not long after she arrived she was arrested trying to stop old growth logging. "I just loved the area so much, I couldn't stand to see it logged." For her efforts she was sentenced to spend six days in a maximum security prison.

The 1993 decision to save only one third of Clayoquot Sound, and to log the rest, was met with shock and anger by people across Canada and around the world who recognized the area's global ecological significance. That summer ten thousand people visited the Clayoquot Peace Camp, and almost one thousand people were arrested. Bonny was Action Coordinator for the Friends of Clayoquot Sound. She coordinated music bands, events and volunteers. "With all the smaller blockades we learned how to co-ordinate non-violent direct action. We got pretty skilled at it. In 1993 it took off far bigger than we expected."

Getting the other two thirds of Clayoquot protected and ending old growth logging has driven Bonny ever since. But instead of standing on logging roads, now she is going directly to buyers of ancient rainforest products, to ask them to stop buying. "If logging companies can't sell the wood they won't cut it down". Bonny and Dan went to Japan this year and the results are impressive. Seventy companies, including Mitsubishi, cancelled their orders with Interfor because of Bonny and Dan's work.

Bonny's love of wild places doesn't stop at protecting them, she also loves to enjoy them. In one epic sounding year she did a 60 day trip around Gwaii Haanas, better known as the Queen Charlotte Islands and paddled the Lower Stikine river in northern British Columbia over 21 days. Bonny has paddled from Cape Scott to Tofino, and she spent 30 days exploring Clayoquot Sound by kayak.

In a kayak is where Bonny is trying to make a difference today. She is one of the few women instructors of sea kayak leadership courses, and she runs women-only sea kayak trips, both of which make the sport more accessible to women. "Women have a different approach to sports. In an all-women group, women can feel free to take risks without being judged".

Always fighting for what she believes in, Bonny has tried to bring change to her corner of the world. She practices what she preaches. All Bonny seems to want is a sustainable world. She wants eco-tourism companies to be responsible and conscious of their effect on wildlife and wild places. And she wants the same from logging companies. "We need to protect what's left of the ancient forest, and allow people to make a living here without destroying the environment."



*Bonny Glambeck commuting off the West Coast
Photos: Dan Lewis*

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Riding the lifts

Winter snows have melted away revealing Mt Washington's newest attraction, single-track mountain bike trails with the convenience of lift access and all the resort's summer amenities....

The air at Mt. Washington sounds different this year. Chains are rattling, bikers shout, and metal meets rock and root. Clouds of dust erupt here and there and colors flash through the trees. What's going on? you might ask.

Mountain biking is what's going on. Over the last few years, but especially this spring the ski hill has been cutting trails not runs. The trails fall from the top twisting and turning through the terrain skiers and snowboarders shred all winter. And like their winter relatives the fat tire crowd don't hike and pedal to the top, they ride in style. The sightseeing lift carries mountain bikers and their bikes to the top of the mountain in a breath catching, snack grabbing fifteen minutes. At the top views of the peaks in Strathcona Provincial Park can be enjoyed before heading down a suspension testing downhill roller coaster ride.

Names like 'Crusher' and 'Monster Mile' are sure to strike fear in to the hearts of the meek. Indeed these high profile, neo-classics live up to everything one would expect of downhill single-track: steep drops, dire landings and



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single-track thrills and spills at mt washington

fast straight aways. But beyond the fall line Mt Washington has some great trails for the intermediate and moderate rider and the potential for much much more.

With this seasons expansion there are plenty of trails to enjoy. The expanded trail menu includes: access roads topped with rocks and gravel, served with lots of speed; single-track cooked in the sun smothered in rocks and roots, with cedar, fir and pine on the side. Last but not least a two-course slalom, jumps and banked corners included. All meals served with mud, dust, rocks and spills. And all meals can be washed down with a pint in Fat Teddy's at the base of the lift. What more could a fat tire enthusiast ask for?



Wild Isle best bets

Best steeps

Monster Mile, sit back, hold on and don't let go of the breaks

Best beginner fun

Access road from the top. Top to bottom fire road, need we say more?

Best survival strategy

Wear armour. Exposed rock, roots and logs could easily mess up anyones epidermis.

Best Lazy Apres Activity

Giant chess at the base lodge, or drinks on the deck at Fat Teddy's.

Best high speed

Discovery Lake to base of Red Chair on Discovery Road trail. Want to cruise? This is Mt. Washington's answer to the autobahn

Best hidden stash

Single track to and passed Discovery Lake, mellow cross country riding at its best with the added attraction of views into Strathcona Provincial Park.

Best Apres activity

Frisbee golf on the new Mt. Washington nine hole course.

What to bring

Adrenaline and courage. Mt. Washington rents dual suspension bikes (\$40.00/day or \$10/hr) and body armour at the hill.

Where to go

Follow signs to Mt. Washington, just north of Courtenay, from the Island Highway to the ski hill access road. Drive to the base area parking lots and head for the Eagle Express Scenic Chair Ride. On the way stop in the gift shop and buy a lift ticket for yourself and your bike, \$10.50 for a full day, \$30 for a family of four.



for fat tire fun

FANNY BAY'S bumpy BACK YARD

A spontaneous decision, a wrong turn and a little bushwhacking leads to adventure in the high alpine of the Beaufort Range...

By Paul Macoun

"The Beaufort Range runs from Horne Lake to Cumberland, and has in its bag of tricks, a series of peaks topping over 5000 ft."

My parents bought a house on Ships Point 5 years ago. Since that time I've been curious about the peaks that form the western backdrop to this community. The Beaufort Range runs from Horne Lake to Cumberland, and has in its bag of tricks a series of peaks topping over 5000 ft.

I'm almost embarrassed to admit that it has taken me 5 years to travel the 10 km necessary to have a go at climbing them. One Friday afternoon in Victoria I found myself needing a touch of adventure and decided to travel up to Fanny Bay. The forecast was for sunny breaks on Saturday, but mostly cloud (like all forecasts). They estimated there was an 80 % chance of precipitation. Perfect. My goal became a Saturday morning attempt at climbing Mt. Joan. The basis for this choice had everything to do with it being the first point of interest that my eyes had locked onto as I unfolded the topo map.

I had traveled the logging road before and hence was aware of when to turn off the main line. Once on the spur road, I realized that not all things come easily. My original plan had been to drive up the road as high as possible, and then punch up from there. As the water bars grew in depth and my bumper grated on the road with increasing frequency, I decided to be prudent and park the vehicle. 'Prudent' is a word I've discovered since recently turning 30.

I parked on a switchback corner and noticed that a trail started from that exact spot. A gross misinterpretation of my map had placed me very near to the end of the road, and so I obliviously trundled along the trail, quite proud of myself for having gotten so far by 9 am.

Soon I came across Roaring Creek and, thanks to a rather haphazard crossing, very nearly bathed in its fridity. Soon it dawned on me that something was amiss. The country looming above me seemed too severe and I consulted my map once again. Out with Mt. Joan. In with Mt. Curran!

I began to look for the spur road that would take me much higher onto the shoulder of Mt. Curran. Unfortunately it was nowhere to be found. After 30 minutes of wandering above the road I decided to forego the road route and instead do as all must do on Vancouver Island... bushwhack. Up I went and soon was pleased to discover a road. I became displeased when I realized that it was the furthest extension of the original road, and that I hadn't parked in the right place after all. I continued up the road, and with a new insight into my position on the shoulder realized that the most appropriate means of attaining the summit was straight up (how surprising!). I climbed through clearcut and slash, and eventually found my way onto some rocky ledges. What are those

THE BEAUFORT RANGE

nasty little burrs that cover the ground in these areas?

Further ascent eventually led me to the road I was originally seeking, which quickly propelled me up high onto the shoulder leading to Mt Curran. I hit the snow line and followed flagging tape up the ridge and into a portion of the forest that had burned. The eerie grey carcasses of burnt trees were a dramatic foreground to the panorama that now presented itself to me. Mt Joan, The SquareHead and Mt. Hal were all looking down on me in their glory. Far below, I caught sight of a magnificent cascading waterfall that surely plummeted hundreds of feet on its way to join Roaring Creek.

I decided to forego the road route and instead do as all must do on Vancouver Island... bushwhack.

The sun and clouds made ever-shifting patterns on the surrounding slopes of snow. I pressed on and was soon free of the burn (and all trees for that matter). The view over Fanny Bay and across Denman and Hornby was something to behold, as was the view south to Mt. Hal, and west to Mt Joan. I hadn't realized until this point how much open space there was amongst these mountains. From the beach at Ships Point they looked so close together, almost two-dimensional. As I topped out on Mt Curran the weather turned foul. I did manage a glimpse of a thin ridge that ran from the western flank of Mt. Curran to the massive rock top of The SquareHead, and made a mental note that one could do a round trip from Mt. Curran to Mt. Joan, and down, via this ridge. I kicked back near the summit and was rewarded with another patch of blue sky, and with it, intense heat from the sun. This, combined with falling snow, made for a memorable mountain moment.

More views of Fanny Bay, Denman and Hornby appeared and I expended the remainder of my film trying to capture it all. A cold gust of wind reminded me of the inhospitable nature of mountains and spurred me on to descend. Once back in the burn I was graced by the presence of no less than 3 eagles. They floated effortlessly on the updrafts. I found my way back to the pseudo-road and made a quick descent to Roaring Creek. This road had been my intended ascent route and as I lumbered down I lamented about how easy an ascent it could have been.



Above, Fanny Bay's unheated back yard swimming hole, Beaufort Lake, as seen from the pool side deck, the Beaufort Range, Wild Isle file photo. Opposite page, Hornby and Denman Islands from the summit of Mt. Curran, photo by Paul Macoun.

Further down the road I ran headlong into an army of small birds (I have no idea what they were). They quickly dispersed, which left me cursing my lack of stealth. Further down, I stopped to water the bushes and was scared half to death by a grouse beating his wings directly behind me. I could imagine his friends howling in fits of laughter in the bushes.

That familiar feeling of relief soon followed as I rounded the next turn and caught sight of my truck. The journey down was again filled with spectacular bumper scraping, plus a harrowing log-across-the-road experience to boot. As I bumped along on the main, a black bear emerged from the bushes to say hello and then turned tail and punched back

into the wilderness. I turned up Lenny Kravitz on the stereo and began to mentally count the cold ones I had stockpiled in the refrigerator.

Information

Access: Horne-Bowser Forest Service Road. Heading north on the Island Highway, turn left at the Fanny Bay turn off and follow the logging road approximately 14 km to the spur road on the shoulder of Mt. Curran. The spur road is on the right, just before the second bridge over Rosewall Creek.

Map: Horne Lake 92 F/7

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Nootka



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Remote coastal hikes, white sand beaches, native burial caves, epic surfing, pristine old growth forest, tons of unexplored islands, world famous sea kayaking, endless spelunking potential, solid rock climbing and colourful diving, not to mention tons of wildlife, the Nootka area on Vancouver Island's western shore is full of adventures waiting to be discovered.

Up until recently the communities and businesses in the area rarely saw adventure sports enthusiasts. The economy powered by the logging industry and world famous salmon runs took little notice of adventure tourism, but business is changing. Mills are closing, fishing restricted and so the economies have begun to embrace new business.

First came the sea kayakers. Nootka Sound, the Nuchatlitz, Kyuquot and the Brooks Peninsula all became the places to go for sea kayakers looking for pristine and wild trips on the exposed outer coast. Around the same time the diversity and colour of sea life found below the water attract divers. Now the communities of Zeballos, Tahsis and Gold River are opening their arms to any and all tourism. They are excited to share the untapped natural adventures waiting to be explored in their back yards.

Traditional home of the Mowachaht First Nation, Nootka Sound was the site of Captain Cook's land fall on North America's west coast in 1778. Today recreationalists visit from around the world to hike, fish, surf and explore...

Sound

Wild Isle Regional Profile- Nootka Sound



Fishing has been and still is the biggest draw to Gold River's backyard, says Gil Sampson, economic development coordinator for the village. But with a few lean fishing years and the closure of the mill the village has been forced to look to other industries.

"The idea of diversification has been embraced here as a necessity," he said. "This should have been happening for 30 years, but no one was thinking that far ahead. Necessity is the mother of all inventions."

Sampson says with the mill closure the air is cleaner which is better for adventure tourism. "This has spurred more interest in using the natural beauty of the area to spur tourism."



Gold River definitely has its share of natural beauty. The town is a few minutes down the road from Strathcona Provincial Park's snow capped peaks, raging rivers pristine forest and hiking. Rock climbing

of all sorts can be found in the nearby mountains. Old logging roads and trails provide tons of mountain bike and hiking options.

Access to the Muchalat Inlet which feeds right into historic Nootka Sound is a few minutes from town. Boat and air transport leaves from the deep water harbour to almost any destination on the west coast.

The Gold River runs parallel to the harbour access. The river and its tributaries offers challenging paddling for all abilities. And last but not least, Gold River is home to arguably the best caving in Canada. There are plenty of undeveloped caves in the surrounding mountains and probably some that have never been explored.

Sampson says endless possibilities for visitors will encourage longer stays. "We want to take day trippers and have them stay for maybe two or three days."



To that end the Gold River Chamber of Commerce organized the first annual Burning Boot Festival in conjunction with the Great Walk. Festivities were arranged for the night before and the day after North America's longest walk.



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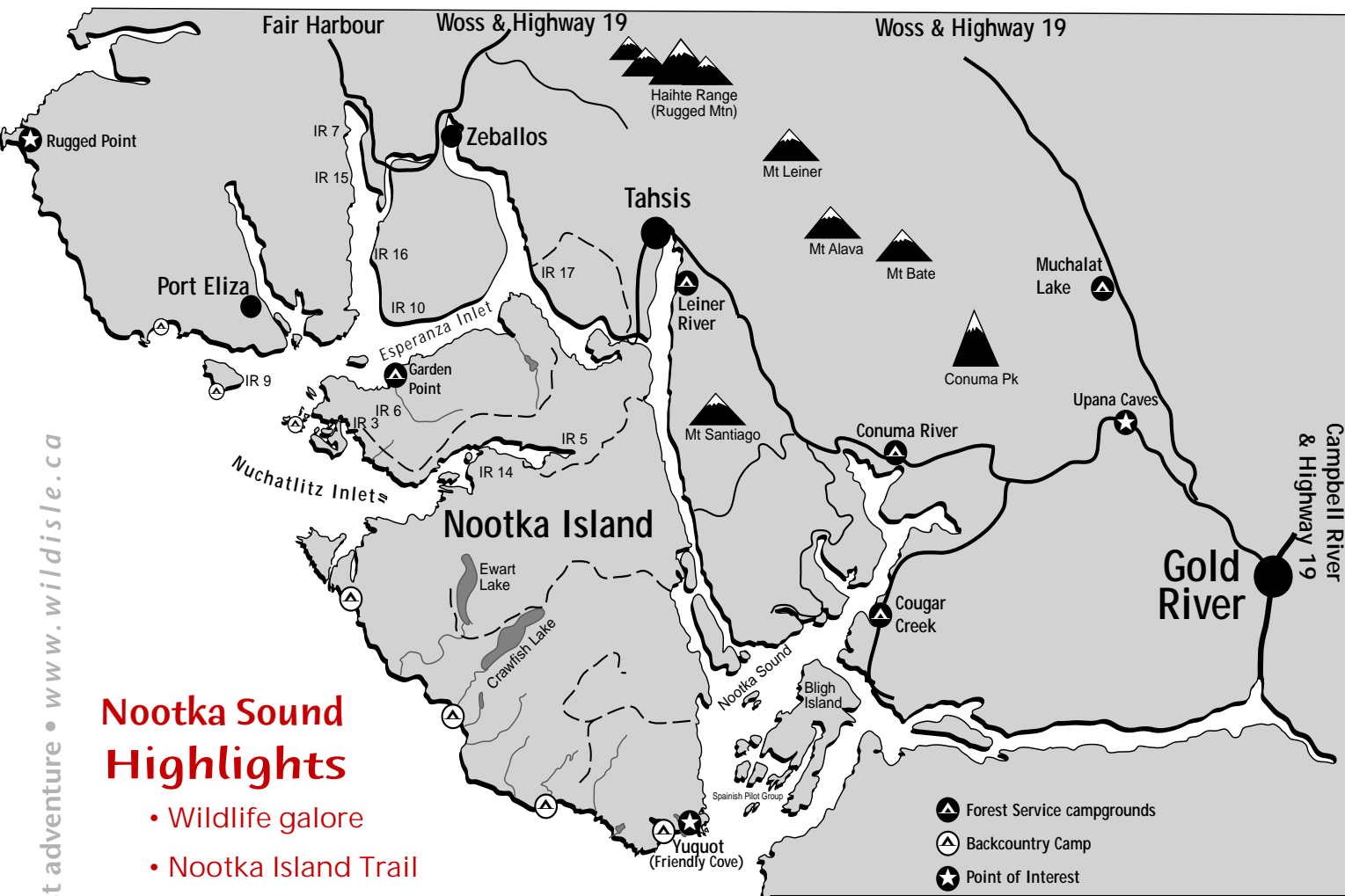
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- Bligh Island, Spanish Pilot Group, Nuchatlitz, Catala Island Marine Parks

*Photos: Clockwise Left- Lighthouse at Friendly Cove.
Waterfall spills through the karst landscape at Upana Caves.
Sea kayak touring in the protected waters around Nuchatlitz.*

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Wild Isle Regional Profile- Nootka Sound



At the finish line to the Great Walk, in Tahsis, the mill has yet to close, officially. Many of the village's residents are still waiting to discover the future of their job, before they embrace any new industries.

"A lot of people are uncertain about their future here," said Paul Edgington, chief administrative officer for the village of Tahsis. "Some are excited, others are worried about current trend with the logging industry."

Tourism infrastructure has yet to be fully embraced but there are several operators making a go of it.

One of those is Nootka Fishing Co. "We are trying to accommodate hikers and kayakers as part of our diversifying," said Kathrine Ridley, Nootka Fishing Co. owner. The company used to only cater to the once great fishing in the area. But since the fishery declined she has been forced to broaden her customer base.

That is something Edgington is pushing for. He said that the future of the mill, which has played a game of open and shut for months, will be decided in the next few months. When that happens he sees the community becoming more receptive to diversification.

"When the uncertainty is resolved, by the end of the year, village council, with residents and industry, will put in place a sound economy. Tourism will be one of the parts, as will a strong shell fish industry and innovative power generating."

Tourism diversification can take many forms in Tahsis, Edgington says. There is tons of cultural and adventure tourism options right in Tahsis. Hiking trails



The town of Tahsis has several operators that run trips from the village's harbour to a variety of west coast locations, including right off the dock, file photo.

are one proposal that Edgington is excited about.

"Getting to the top of one of the peaks around here is as good as summiting a mountain anywhere. You can see from Estevan Point to Catala Island."

During the interview the sun was shining and the wind blowing. Edgington wanted to be windsurfing. "It's not as good as a Woss wind but we get a nice wind here, which makes for great windsurfing."

Right off the dock, the diving is world class. Nootka Sound Charters has hosted some of the world's best divers. They come to see the six gill sharks which roam Tahsis harbour and nearby waters, or to dive the reefs and walls that are rife with colourful sea life. The six gills are so unusual that a National Geographic camera crew came to Tahsis to film the 14 foot fish for a Discovery Channel special.

Long and varied caves abound, including the Thanksgiving Cave System and Wyameer park caves. "Tahsis is to caving like Squamish is to rock climbing," Edgington said.

"Tahsis is the most centrally located of all the Nootka area communities." Nootka, Brooks, Hesquiat, Kyuquot, Nuchatlitz, they read like a best bet list for sea kayaking and they are all within an easy day boat ride from Tahsis. That fact alone makes the village one of the best sea kayaking hubs going.

Tahsis has adventure tourism potential spilling out of town onto the new heli pad that Edgington hopes will one day be a shrine for heli-skiers. But it also has culture.

In the not so distant past this was the gathering place for a whole different winter culture. The First Nations people congregated near the present day village to fish the huge winter salmon runs on local rivers. They traded along the Tahsis-Woss corridor with other Island First Nations. And when the Europeans first landed, also in the Tahsis area, they traded with them too. Today the remains of fish canneries, plants and processing factories are all that remain and they are disappearing fast.

"You can go out to these facilities and the wilderness has almost completely erased

Tahsis



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them," Edgington said. "You know what was there and now it is gone."

Much like the driving forces of town, industry once ruled but now nature, and the money that comes with it are taking over.



Sand, sun and surf are never far from any communities in the Nootka area, file photo.

ZEBALLOS

Culture wise it doesn't much quirkier than the most northern of the Nootka communities than Zeballos. For people looking for something different and to get away from the crowds Zeballos may be just the ticket. Although logging is still the main industry there, adventure opportunities are almost as numerous as the trees.

The tiny community is about as quaint and interesting as one could ask for. The town popped up during one of the last modern day gold rushes. During the depression miners flocked to the town to work in the 30 mines

that sprung up near by. Today the mines are gone but the stores still have false fronts reminiscent of the boom days.

From its wild west like beginnings the town has changed, the roads are now paved and the town cleaned up, but it is still the frontier of Western Canada.

"This is a quaint, quiet, original town," says Roland Shanks, editor of the local newspaper and member of the Zeballos board of trade. "We have the best water in B.C." It is pumped straight from the ground into the houses.

The backcountry, literally out the back doors of the town's residents, complements the towns attractions, says Shanks. "We have access to the west coast by a road connection with Fair Harbour and Kyuquot. Operators run people out to the Nootka Trail, or other spots on the coast and there is lots of wildlife"

The inlet is a year round wild life watchers paradise. Trumpeter swans visit in the fall and bears visit the village searching for migrating salmon and other tidbits all year long. For more adventurous types, Shanks says, there is tons of potential for river kayaking and climbing. And like its neighbouring communities the caving potential has barely been realized.


Because local hotel operators are more focused on forestry which brings in up to 80 per cent of their business, says Shanks, most tourists do not stop in Zeballos but

pass through. Many are on their way to sea kayak destinations like Kyuquot and the Nuchatlitz. These archipelagos are home to marine creatures, like grey whales and sea otters and lonely beaches and secluded coves wait to be discovered around every corner.

Even though most tourist don't stay in town, sea kayak traffic has been increasing rapidly says Rat River Marine Services owner Greg Brooks. He has operated a charter boat in the area for 30 years. "In the 70's there were no kayakers, it was strictly fishing and logging. But every year we pick up a few more kayakers."

Although Zeballos is still a resource industry town at heart tourism operators are finding a way to attract tourists looking for something off the beaten path. But Shanks says growth must come slowly. "It is best that it happens slowly," he said. "We wouldn't be able to cope with a flood of tourists."

It is not very likely that Zeballos, or Gold River and Tahsis, will be inundated with tourists this summer or even a few summers from now. That is for the best, since the biggest attraction of this area is that it hasn't been "done." There isn't rows of hotels, tons of operators and people everywhere. The trails are almost empty, beaches are vacant, there are empty rivers, and caves to explore not to mention all that coast line.

For people who have "been there, done that," the Nootka area is calling. 

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Access to the wild west coast of Nootka Island and Brooks Peninsula is a tricky affair. Luckily help is at hand to make surfing remote Pacific breaks or hiking the Nootka Trail easier than you might think. Give a call to Clay Hunting at

TATCHU ADVENTURES



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Wild Isle Regional Profile- Nootka Sound

In operation since 1999, Tatchu's clientele come primarily from the U.S. Pacific-North-West and South West B.C. As the word spreads Clay is steadily receiving inquiries from further afield. "surfers are a close-knit bunch" Clay relates "I'm building a name for myself in the surfing world as the person on the North-Island who can get surfers out to these remote breaks and beaches". No doubt about it Clay knows this section of the coast. Having logged over 2,300 working hours on tugs, log salvaging and now with Tatchu Adventures, Clay has built up a wealth of knowledge essential for working these wild waters.

The rigid-hull inflatable is the perfect craft for supporting remote surfing. Large enough to transport five to six people and gear in comfort the Polaris can pull right onto the beach for drop off and pickup. When its time to hit the waves Clay motors surfers out to the reef and point breaks and stands watch while the group and guide work the surf.

Selling surf access has its challenges. Surfers are looking for particular wave conditions, the beginners want a waist

high swell typical of July-August whereas the hard cores are praying for storms and prefer the traditionally shoulder seasons of March-April and September-October. "They're on the internet with the whole swell period for the entire Pacific figured out and when its right they

Slipping through the narrow pass lined with rainbow hues of countless starfish into the placid waters of Inferno Bay there is the sensation of being carried back through time to when Nootka people plied the tranquil water by canoe. Not so today, we are propelled by twin Honda 4-strokes that hum respectfully at the stern of a sturdy Polaris Infaltable as we enter the still lagoon. Our skipper is Clay Hunting, owner operator of Tatchu Adventures based out of Tahsis, B.C. From this tiny coastal hamlet Hunting transports adventure seeking hikers, surfers and beachcombers to the spectacular outer west coast of Vancouver Island.

Ranging from the Brooks Peninsula and Kyuquot to the north and Nootka Island and Hesquiat Peninsula to the south Clay's domain is truly one of the finest working environments imaginable. *Wild Isle* joined Tatchu Adventures for a tour around Nootka Island to find out more about the ebb and flow of operating an adventure tourism business on the wild west coast.

"They're on the internet with the whole swell period for the entire Pacific figured out and when its right they call and want to go"



©Philip Stone

call and want to go" says Clay. "Some groups will book but leave the dates flexible within a certain window to allow for wave conditions to build. Its not like most businesses where you take the customers MasterCard number and expect them on a certain date. Its more like a call and 'we're coming tomorrow!'"

As well as supporting surf groups Tatchu Adventures transports hikers to the increasingly popular Nootka Trail. "About 60 per cent of my business is surf related, 30 per cent hikers and the remaining 10 per cent campers, beachcombers and people just looking to get out somewhere quiet and beautiful" says Clay.

The growth in popularity of the Nootka Trail and Calvin Creek in particular has not been without its downside though. In just a few short years the outside of Nootka has gone from being an unknown rarely visited place to being one of the most desirable spots on Vancouver Island's west coast to visit. Access will always be a challenge but on a busy day last summer there were as many as 60 people on the beach at Calvin Creek. A couple of helicopters a day and maybe a plane load or two, this combined with hikers and surfers are making Bajo a busy spot.

Clay attributes this to overflow from Tofino and the Pacific Rim. "Their beaches are getting busier and busier all the time.

It's hard to sell a wilderness experience in Clayoquot when for example there might be over a hundred people on the beach at Vargas Island" he says. "Better management is what is called for. I don't know what form that might take but simply pushing more and more people up the coast doesn't seem to be the right answer"

On the subject of land management and operations permits Clay has mixed feelings. "I've had great experiences with BC Parks" he says "I hold commercial backcountry operator's permits for Nuchaltlitz etc.. and have always had positive dealings with Parks" On Crown land though Hunting feels British Columbia Lands and Assets Corporation (BCAL) are stifling business. "They don't seem interested unless you are a major company and their fees reflect that. It is impossible for a small business to buy into their program, I say let small business grow".

And grow is what Tatchu Adventures is doing. In an area with broad appeal and world-class opportunities for a variety of outdoor activities Tatchu's services are in demand. To find out more about transport to Nootka Island, Learn to Surf camps and Guided Remote Surf Trips, call Clay Hunting toll free at 1-888-895-2011



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Photos clockwise from inset left:

Sep Bruhwiler.

Ray Smith and Clay Hunting off Bajo Pt.

Screaming across Nootka Sound.

Peter Axhorn, one last look at surf day's end.

Clay Huntin.

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This shot and inset at left, ©Aaron Jackson.



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Ryan Stuart enjoying the user friendly MSR - Pocket Rocket, file photo.

It was with a heavy heart that the faithful MSR Whisperlite was passed over while packing for an early summer ski trip. This time we'd be sporting a fleet of stoves to put them through their paces and report back to *Wild Isle* readers.

The Whisperlite has dominated the west coast outdoor stove niche for many years with only a passing threat from the infamous Coleman Peak 1. The more recent addition of a self cleaning jet addressed the only serious complaint that workhorse ever seemed to arouse, fine tuning an already honed unit.

So what is out there now? In the never ending quest to have the lightest gear available, stove manufacturers have come to the banquet with a whole host of new lightweight stoves.

Some are tiny and fit into the palm of a hand, others are larger but equally light weight due to lightweight metals.

The one thing all these new stoves have in common is a non refillable fuel canisters.

No more funneling white gas into a MSR fuel bottle. Instead a quick stop at the nearest outdoor store for one of the light weight, iso-propane fuel canisters, and you're off.

But that convenience and light weight comes at a price. Most canisters cost between \$5 and \$10, and last between one and two hours. Ours lasted two dinners and several brews and was still firing away. When the fuel can runs out it the cannister be recycled, but not refilled.

You might argue that canister stoves are only convenient if one plans well ahead.

Hunting for an outdoor store that carries your fuel canister, and is open when you are leaving town isn't as convenient as stopping at almost any gas station for white gas.

MSR - POCKET ROCKET™



The MSR Pocket Rocket™ (retail \$44.50 CAN) comes in its own sturdy triangular plastic case which defies the imagination as to how a stove could fit. Once removed from the case the Pocket Rocket is a delight to behold. This stove is for the true lightweight aficionado at a scant 86g (3oz).

The setup is very straightforward, simply screw the stove on to the proprietary fuel canister, open the valve and light. The Rocket boils a full pot of water in no time at all. The manufacturer claims 1 litre in 3.5 minutes. Frankly we found no need to test their claim, it's fast!

But what about the low end? If you have a penchant for cream sauces in the backcountry, no problem. The Pocket Rocket simmers down when required delivering a modest, even flame, soufflé anyone?

Where the Pocket Rocket did fall down was in stability. A quick look at the stove with a heavy pot on top and you know you're going to have to keep an eye on it. Good on snow though.

Finding MSR fuel canisters is hard to do. One store owner said there had been problems importing them but that seems to have been resolved. One bright spot with the Pocket Rocket is compatibility. It works with several other fuel canisters.

COLEMAN - EXPONENT XTREME™

A familiar design with a separate stove unit connected to the fuel canister by a flexible hose. The Coleman Exponent Xtreme™ (\$75 US) is a sturdy and stable stove. It boils water faster than you can open a package of noodles and has the distinct advantage of keeping the pot on top of the stove.

As one would expect with the propane-butane fuel mix simmering is a dream and as with the Pocket Rocket there are no fussy priming or refuelling issues.

Weight wise we had no problem with the burner itself but the chunky valve/fuel canister connector seems inordinately bulky. The bulk has a use however. In cold temperatures canister fuel bottles have a reputation as unreliable. The bulky valve was created by Coleman's engineers to combat the problem. In addition the teeth on the valve that bite and screw onto the fuel canister are small and made of plastic.



The canister itself is slim and streamlined like the old white gas ones, making it easy to pack. But finding one was a bit of an issue. We searched three stores before we found the canister we were looking for.

Overall both stoves amazed us with their light weight, convenience, versatility and fast boiling time. But, with all new things the required canister fuel system will take a little time to get used to.



To enter to win a Coleman-Exponent Xtreme, subscribe to Wild Isle on page 25.

New SealLine™ Footbrace Wins Award

The SmartTrack Control System manufactured by SealLine, a division of Cascade Designs, Inc., has been awarded an International 2001 Industrial Design Excellence Award, IDEA, sponsored by the Industrial Designers Society of America, and *Business Week* magazine. Manatee Design of Mount Vernon, Washington, originator of the SmartTrack system design, won a Gold Medal in the category of consumer products/sporting goods.

The Industrial Designers Society of America, IDSA, is the voice of industrial design. Winning the IDEA is a distinction unlike any other, branding a design as the very best in the business. A jury of 18 non-affiliated designers selected this year's IDEA winner during two-and-a-half days of intense evaluation and debate. Encompassing 11 categories from business equipment to furniture and medical devices, the winning designs were chosen from 1,260

entries from around the world. Entries were scored on five criteria of industrial design excellence: design innovation; benefit to the user; benefit to the client/business; ecological responsibility; and appropriate aesthetics and appeal.

The SealLine SmartTrack Control System is an advanced foot brace and rudder system for sea kayaks that provides more efficiency, precision, and comfort while paddling. It features fixed foot pedals for safety, comfort, and better energy transfer, and a foil blade hydrodynamically designed for less drag and more efficient turning. Gavin Ivester, IDSA juror, wrote of SmartTrack: "It takes real guts to aggressively innovate in a conservative sport like kayaking. But by redefining the basic ergonomic scheme used in the foot-operated steering system, the designers have radically improved efficiency and comfort...the design shows rigorous attention to detail benefiting both the user and

manufacturer. And it's retro-fittable to old boats. Efficiency and elegance are beautiful."

SealLine SmartTrack and all other brands manufactured by Cascade Designs (including Thermo-a-Rest, the original self-inflating camping mattress) are available on www.cascadedesigns.com. Descriptions and images of all 2001 IDEA winners can be found on www.idsa.org. The design award will be featured in the June 25th issue of *Business Week* magazine, and on www.businessweek.com. Manatee Design may be contacted through www.manateedesign.com.



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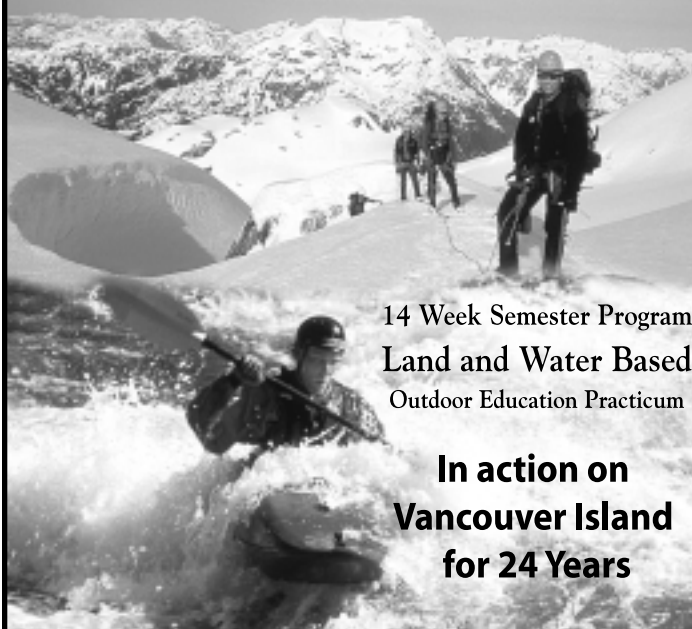
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