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The Islands' Adventure Magazine

5th Anniversary Issue

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#23 Winter 2003

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The Islands' Adventure Magazine

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Above- Sweet turns on Mt Arrowsmith. Jeni Christi photo.
Cover- Ryan Stuart sliding some silky powder in the Abel Creek valley, Schoen Lake Park. Philip Stone photo.

Take to the hills!

Hidden among the high peaks and deep valleys of Vancouver Island waits a world of backcountry skiing and snowboarding, find out more about these gems ...

see page 11

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Wild Isle Magazine

#23 Winter 2003

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**Next Deadline for
Ads & Editorial**

**March 15th, 2003 for
Issue 24 - Spring, 2003**

EDITORIAL



Well as they say better late than never, finally our winter issue is in print. Not that we've been slacking here at Wild Isle HQ, on the contrary in fact. We've been hard at work compiling a long promised and long overdue guidebook to the mountains of Vancouver Island - 'Island Alpine'. As I write the final proofing stage is underway and we hope to have this great book in stores by sometime in March.

'Island Alpine' is just the first of a series of books we have planned covering outdoor adventure on Vancouver Island and the adjacent mainland coast. Watch out later this year for 'Island Whitewater' and 'Island Turns & Tours'. The guidebooks will draw on many of the themes we have been publishing in Wild Isle Magazine over the years and we hope they will help make the magazine a more viable proposition over the long haul.

Speaking of long hauls... this issue of Wild Isle is our fifth anniversary issue! It has been a fun and adventure packed journey with Wild Isle since we first put ink to paper in the name of Island outdoor adventure in January 1998. It's neat to look back and see what we thought could pass for a magazine back then!

Over the years there have been some great stories, many with invaluable information on trips and areas. To make this storehouse of beta more readily available we're contemplating making the entire catalogue of Wild Isle back issues available on CD-ROM. Does this grab you? Let us know by dropping us a line at wildisle@island.net or give us a call at 250 285-2234. In the meantime you can always access Wild Isle backissues in various forms on our web site: www.wildisle.ca

Enjoy the winter snows, enjoy this read and watchout for the guidebooks later this year!

Philip Stone

HAPPENINGS

- Jan 26** Jerry Kobalenko - 'Horizontal Everest' Sid Williams theatre Courtenay 7pm
- Feb 8** Island Farms Slopestyle Competition Mt. Washington
- Feb 15-17** Vancouver Outdoor Adventure Show GM Place
- March 6** VIMFF 'Best of the Fest' Tour Victoria, (250) 380-3829
- March 7** VIMFF 'Best of the Fest' Tour Nanaimo, (250) 753 3245
- March 8** VIMFF 'Best of the Fest' Tour Campbell River, (250) 287-4611
- March 9** VIMFF 'Best of the Fest' Tour Powell River, (604) 487-0487
- March 10** VIMFF 'Best of the Fest' Tour Sid Williams Courtenay, (250) 338-2420
- March 15** Cain Cup ski and snowboard race Mt. Cain
- April 5** Gutbuster mountain run at Mt. Tzouhalem in Duncan
- April 18-21** White Water Association Social - Gold River Allan Polk, (250)923-9361
- April 27** Snow to Surf Race www.snowtosurf.com

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.

VIMFF On Tour

After the main event, at various venues in Vancouver between February 14-22, the Vancouver International Mountain Film Festival is coming to Vancouver Island in Victoria March 6 (250-38-3829), Nanaimo March 7 (250-753-3245), Courtenay March 10 at Sid Williams Theatre & Campbell River March 8 at Timberline. The Festival's goal is to approach the

outdoor communities of the Pacific North-West, and to offer them films and slide presentations dealing with mountain culture and mountain sports. The Festival will also create a platform for the exchange of ideas between filmmakers, outdoor activists, and the public, while at the same time it will support the most artistic and effective ways of communicating outdoor related issues. For more information log on at www.vimff.org

Jump like a champ at Forbidden Plateau Jump Camp

The slopes of Forbidden Plateau Ski area are empty most of the winter. But on 5 weekends this winter the snowboarders will be flying, sliding, flipping and landing all over the mountain. For the third straight winter Patrick Kitto will be hosting Jump Camp, an instructional freestyle snowboarding camp on the slopes of Forbidden Plateau.

Kitto and his co-instructors are former professional freestyle snowboarders who teach tricks in a friendly and positive way.

"We want to give the students a better feel for freestyle boarding, wherever they are at," Kitto said. "For some that means grabbing their board in the air; for others it means 540s and backflips."

Everything from railsides to big table tops are set up all over the mountain for "campers" to test their new skills. Snowmobiles whisk jumpers from one area to another and at the end of the camp tons of prizes are given away.

Kitto says campers have ranged in age from 39 to 11 and in ability from beginner to expert.

"Everyone has a great time and learn lots," Kitto said.

Jump Camp's will be held Mar 8-9, Mar 15-16, Mar 22-23 Girls Camp, Mar 29-30, Apr 5-6 all at Forbidden Plateau, starting at 9:00 am

Cost \$275. Contact Jump Camp for more info at 250-338-8128 or online at www.jumpcamp.com



Patrick Kitto, Jump Camp 2002

www.wildisle.ca

COAST to COAST

The inaugural Adopt-a-Crag event a sweeping success

The Squamish Rockclimbers' Association and the Climbers' Access Society of B.C.'s first annual Adopt-a-Crag event went very well, thanks to a lot of help from volunteers and supporters. 52 climbers and friends helped with our ongoing stewardship of Squamish's Little Smoke Bluffs.

The event included: -a thorough clean-up of all public land in the Bluffs - cliff bottoms, cliff tops, trails and parking lots. We bagged about 20 sacks of garbage!

-general trail maintenance - clearing, moving obstacles, rebuilding worn areas. We did about 5 km of trails.

-building a new access trail to the popular Penny Lane cliff. Jesse, Dary and friends did an amazing job. The new trail includes two sections of ladders/steps, plus a lot of clearing and step-building. It should be finished in the next few weeks, and the eroded old trail will be blocked off.

-coffee for everyone, including our neighbours from nearby residences on Hospital Hill. About 25 neighbours came by; 10-12 of them were also climbers, and helped with our work, and few non-climbers also helped.

-free climbing lessons for our neighbours; eight gave it a try.

-visits from a reporter for the Georgia Straight, and from two documentary film-makers.

The weather co-operated, everyone worked with a will, we had lots of fun, and got a lot done. Afterwards we socialized and had some draw prizes.

Thank you to each and every one of our 52+ volunteers and helpers for your great work!

In the meantime, special thanks to our sponsors and donors for this event: The Access Fund, Valhalla Pure Outfitters (Squamish), Starbucks (Squamish Station), Mountain Equipment Co-op (Vancouver), Wild Rock Adventures (Squamish), Mountain Building Centre (Squamish), D&A Fabricating (Squamish).

Adopt-a-Crag is an annual event organized by the Access Fund, the largest climbers' organization in the U.S.A. 2002 is its third year, and there are volunteer events organized around North America, including one in Canada (ours). This year there were over 30 events, and over 2,500 volunteers helped. The event is sponsored by Clif Bar, W.L. Gore & Associates, and Recreational Equipment Incorporated.

Over the years, B.C.'s climbing and mountaineering community has done a great deal of volunteer work to look after our cliffs and mountains, going back to the Mountain Access Committee in the 1960s.

In the Little Smoke Bluffs, this has included many trail building and trail maintenance projects, clean-up work, toilet building, and even purchasing land. Not to mention lots of meetings.

We do our best to be responsible stewards, not just of the Little Smoke Bluffs but of all other climbing areas where we can help. Probably CASBC's biggest volunteer event to date was the 2000 Skaha projects, which involved 200+ volunteer days; the Heathens, our Campbell River member club, does 100+ annual days looking after Crest Crag. We've adopted lots of crags, even if they weren't part of Adopt-a-Crag.

Looking For Adventure?

For trail conditions, new route info, stories, snow reports, trip planning links, route guides, plus our entire catalogue of back issues log on to

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Island Adventure inPrint and onLine

24 Hours of Adrenalin' 2003 Event Schedule Announced

Trilife Sports International announces the release of the 2003 24 Hours of Adrenalin' event schedule.* New additions for 2003 are South Central USA and Nevada, totaling 14 events across North America. The event series will commence one month earlier in April 2003, beginning in Fountain Hills, Arizona.

For 2003, 12,000 participants are expected to participate in the 24 Hours of Adrenalin' event series. 24 Hours of Adrenalin' is recognized as one of the fastest growing cycling events in North America and is known for capturing the spirit of mountain biking through the celebration of people and bikes throughout North America, and around the world. www.24hoursofadrenalin.com

Lake Names Honour War Heroes

Two lakes in Strathcona Provincial Park were named this past Remembrance Day in memory of Canada's war dead. Jack Owen, of Comox, and Allan Hutton, from Cumberland died defending Canada during World War II. In their honour the BC government named two previously unnamed lakes, south west of the Golden Hinde, Owen and Hutton lakes. The lakes are about 10 kilometres south of the Island's highest peak. Both officers were members of the RCAF Aircrew. Owen died when his plane was shot down returning from a bombing mission in Germany. Hutton's plane disappeared somewhere over the Mediterranean Sea, and was never found. The naming of the two lakes is part of the BC government's annual Remembrance Day tradition of naming geographical features after BC's war dead.

2003 Lillooet Ice Festival

The 2003 Lillooet Ice festival will be Feb 14 to 17th. www.Lillooeticefest.ca Friday registration Saturday and Sunday Climbing and social events Monday depart. Access will be opened up to Phair Creek. A gear tryout set up. An indoor climbing wall. There may be at least one unclimbed bit of ice that will be unveiled during the festival. Anyone wanting more details should call Bernard Schulmann at 250-256-0137 or email bernard.schulmann@lilloonet.ca

The 2003 BC Ice Conditions page is online at <http://casbc.bivouac.com/ice0203.htm> If you have information for the ice climbing report, send it to Adrian Burke (CASBC's webmaster) at adrian.burke@discoverysoftware.com

News & Events

regularly posted online: www.wildisle.ca

Breaking News



COAST to COAST

The Regional District of Nanaimo officially opens McBey Creek bridge on the historic Arrowsmith Trail.

The Regional District of Nanaimo officially opened the recently constructed trail bridge over McBey Creek on the popular Arrowsmith Trail, on Saturday October 19th.

The 48 foot bridge spans McBey Creek and replaces a temporary crossing installed by hikers in 2000. The new bridge is a steel beam structure similar in design to backcountry bridges installed by BC Parks on the Della Falls and Bedwell Lake trails in Strathcona Provincial Park.

The bridge project is a partnership between TimberWest Forest Company, who own the land, and the Regional District who hold a renewable five-year access licence over the trail. TimberWest and the Coastal Community Credit Union both contributed funding for the project. Weyerhaeuser who own the higher elevation portions of the trail also granted a five-year renewable trail access agreement to the Regional District.

VB Evans Construction (Parksville) was awarded the contract to install the bridge over McBey Creek and in conjunction with the RDN involved volunteers in the work. In August volunteers from various local outdoor clubs packed up a pickup truck load of material, including a generator, rock drill, rock bolts, decking lumber, cement, tools and a wheelbarrow. In early September a helicopter flew the bridge beams into place. Decking, handrails, and access stairs were installed to complete the bridge to the engineered specifications.

In preparing to officially open the bridge, RDN Chair George Holme said, "the RDN is pleased to have coordinated the bridge's construction, and we thank TimberWest and the Coastal Community Credit Union for their generous funding support." Holme went on to add that he "is very pleased to formally acknowledge the cooperation shown by TimberWest and Weyerhaeuser in ensuring the public has continued access to this long established trail."

Steve Lackey, a TimberWest Forest Company spokesman added, "this is just one more example of how communities and forest companies can work together to provide recreational access to special places on private working forest lands. TimberWest is pleased to have been a partner with the RDN on this project."



The contribution from the Coastal Community Credit Union was made through their Community Investment Program. Lynne Fraser of the Credit Union said, "this was an opportunity to invest in the future. It is a great project that supports people getting outdoors and it is good for the local lifestyle."

Despite being only in place for six weeks, feedback from hikers has been extremely favourable. Regular trail user, Judy Carlson from Port Alberni said, "the Alberni Valley Tuesday Hikers group were very impressed with the bridge and congratulate the RDN for its work."

The Arrowsmith Trail is best suited to moderately fit hikers, and is accessed from opposite the Cameron Lake picnic area on Highway 4. Most local hiking books include the trail and information brochures are available from the Recreation and Parks offices in the District 69 Arena (Parksville) and the Ravensong Aquatic Centre (Qualicum Beach).

CAA Finds Funding - Vital Public Service off the Ropes

Two avalanche industry contractors have saved the Canadian Avalanche Association's public bulletin. Janod Contractors and Vertec Contractors helped bail out the not-for-profit bulletin with private donations. Combined with historic sponsors: Mountain Equipment Co-op, Marmot, Columbia Brewery, SEAR Search and Rescue Equipment, Sandman Hotels and Inns, Parks Canada, Cloudveil and Survival on Snow the public avalanche bulletin is safe for another winter.

The CAA will continue to provide regular avalanche bulletins on a phone recording and online free of charge. The CAA received government funding from the province of BC up until last winter. Mid way through the season the BC government funding cut backs forced several government agencies to withdraw their funding for the bulletin.

Private sponsors stepped in to keep it going for the rest of the winter. Things looked bleak this fall until Janod and Vertec stepped in. The public bulletin is still looking for private funding. Anyone who uses their public avalanche bulletins, knows someone who does or just wants to see the not for profit service continued is asked to help out in any way they can.

The service helps save lives in Canada's winter backcountry. To support the bulletin in its funding fight, support the bulletin's sponsors, contact your MLA and let them know that you think the CAA bulletin saves lives and donate to the CAA. Information and the avalanche bulletin can be found at the CAA website at www.avalanche.ca or by calling 1-800-667-1105.



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New White Water Discoveries on Vancouver Island

Did someone say there aren't any paddleable rivers or creeks left on Vancouver Island that haven't been run? Shayne Vollmers (the president of the newly formed Vancouver Island Whitewater Paddling Society) would disagree with you.

Last spring Shayne and Jason Cathers did a first descent of Banon Creek. Banon Creek flows from north to south and joins the Lower Chemainus at the put in to the lower run (near the hydro lines). Wild stuff!

But an even better discovery that followed was the Upper Cameron River. The Upper Cameron is located between Qualicum and Port Alberni. It runs along side the Port Alberni Hwy. After passing Cameron Lake and Cathedral Grove, on your way to "Port" you will notice the Upper Cameron on your left hand side (before the road turns to the right and goes over the hump). When we canyoned the lower part of the Upper Cameron, this is where we came out. This section is full of wood and is very technical. There is a non navigable water fall that may be the take out for this section, one day.

Before that Shayne and Chris Wulff did a first descent of the Upper Cameron. They ran it after work, on a nice evening, last spring. What they discovered was a 4 km continuous class 4-4+ drop pool river run. On the map it's called a river but it's more of a creek. Although I haven't run the entire thing yet, what I did run reminded me of the Seymour Canyon in North Vancouver. It is a run that paddlers will enjoy for years to come. It may one day be as popular as the Gordon River on the south island.

How one gets there is quite simple. On your way to "Port", you turn left just after the hump, as if you were going to the old ski hill at Mt. Arrowsmith. When you come to the T, hang a left. Continue until you see the Cameron on the left. There's a culvert. Blink and you'll miss it. You're at the lower take out. The river is at least 100m down a 50-55 degree bank. It's a nice treat after a long technical run.

On the first descent it took Shane and Chris two and a half hours. The second time they ran the whole thing, there was a group of seven. They scouted a lot of the drops (you can scout everything) and it took them five and a half hours.

To get to the middle take out (the upper half is easier) continue down the road until you hit the second clear cut on the left. It's full of clay pigeons. Follow the right side of the cut, down to the bottom and walk to the north east. Continue till you find access to the river. To get to the put in, continue down the road until you come to the Cameron River bridge.

This is only the beginning of a long quest Shayne and his adventurous friends, have embarked on in search of virgin rivers and creeks on Vancouver Island.

This fall we cut two hazardous, river wide, three foot diameter trees out of the lower half of the Upper Cameron canyon. Only paddle this creek if your sure the river level is good. If it's too high, it's dangerous. If it's too low, it's unrunable. Enjoy!

Sean Plecas

The Vancouver Island Whitewater Paddling Soc.

Forming an organization for whitewater kayaking on Vancouver Island is long overdue. Whitewater kayaking on the island has been growing over the years. There are now active paddlers in almost every community; from Victoria to Port Hardy, and from Parksville to Tofino.

This season there will be three events and several Society socials (trips). There will be another kayak surf festival, at Long Beach, in the fall; www.surfkayak.org There will be a rodeo on the Putledge River in Courtenay and a slalom race on the Cowichan River near Cowichan Lake. There will be a Society trip to Surge Narrows (a tidal rapid which is off Quadra Island). There will be several Society trips to rivers all over the Island.

Membership in the Society will be \$10.00 annually. Members will receive a membership booklet which will include all the other members names, addresses, phone and email addresses. They will then be able to contact paddlers from anywhere on the Island, to find out water levels and paddle with new people on new rivers.

A web site will be maintained to keep the members informed on things like events and Society trips (among other things). Members will be given a code to access member only parts of the web site.

Members will be given a membership card so that they can get 10% off merchandise at the Alberni Outpost (Port Alberni and Nanaimo), and the Vancouver Island Kayak Center (Victoria). We will also publish a bi-annual newsletter.

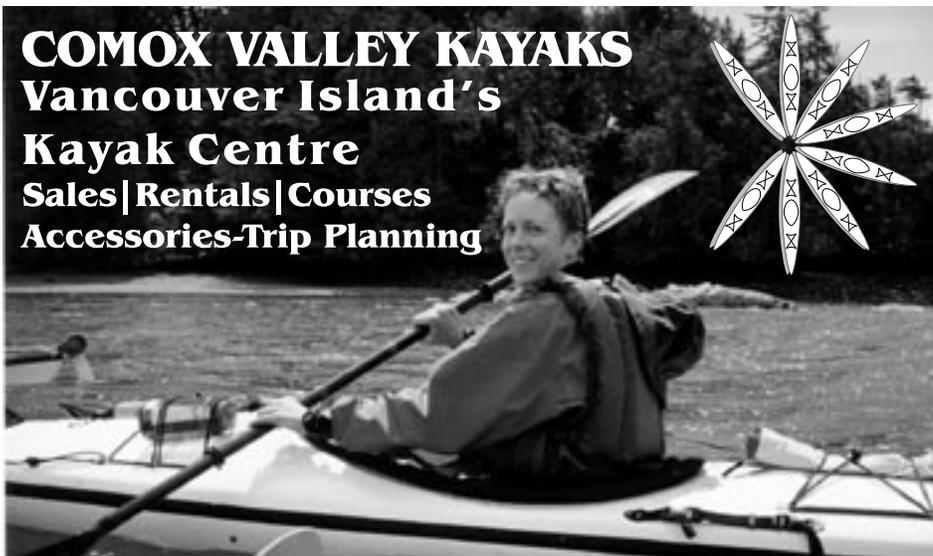
The VIWPS wants to make sure paddlers have access to rivers, now, and for generations to come. There are many mini Hydro Electric projects proposed on Vancouver Island. Construction has already started on some of them. We could lose the Browns River near Courtenay (one of the best play rivers on the Island). The Whitewater Kayaking Association of BC is going to help us with some of these issues.

As you can see there are a lot of benefits to being in the Vancouver Island Whitewater Paddling Society. See you on the river.

If you'd like to join you can contact us at the address below.

Vancouver Island Whitewater Paddling Society

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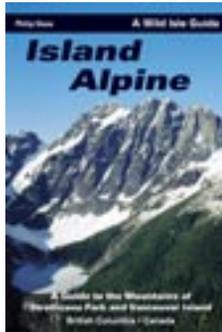
COMING SOON: Vancouver Island alpine guide

Wild Isle Publications has nearly completed a comprehensive guidebook to the mountains on Vancouver Island.

'Island Alpine' covers technical climbs, scrambles and hikes from Mt. Arrowsmith to the Rugged Range and beyond. It includes maps, access info, route descriptions and all the beta needed to climb in one of the North America's least known mountain playgrounds.

By the time you read this advance proof copies will be available for viewing and comments at selected Island outfitters. Island Alpine will be on sale some time in late March. Stores may place advance orders by calling 250 285-2234 - faxing 250 285-2236 - email bookorders@wildisle.ca

The Vancouver Island Alpine Climbs guidebook will feature classic mountaineering peaks like Mt. Colonel Foster, and obscure, rarely visited giants like Lone Wolf.



More Route Info Needed

To fill the Island's guide book void Wild Isle is also working on two other guide books. 'Island Turns and Tours' will highlight the little know and rarely explored ski touring possibilities on Vancouver Island. And 'Island Whitewater' will provide all the needed information on Vancouver Island's rivers, surf spots and tidal rapids.

We're looking for beta from backcountry riders and whitewater paddlers on all the destinations on Vancouver Island. We need details of river runs, access, grades and facilities and the same information on possible touring paradises. These guides are slated for publication in late 2003.

Canadians rule at Tofino Quiksilver/Roxy surf competition

by Josh Temple

Despite thick fog and chilly October conditions the 2002 Quiksilver/Roxy Surf Jam held at Cox Bay in Tofino this past weekend proved that Canadian surfing, and Canadian surf talent, is as hot as ever.

Pro and amateur surfers from as far away as California descended on the quaint coastal community of Tofino for this year's big event hosted by the British Columbia Surfing Association (BCSA) and Long Beach Lodge. Top US surf pro's including Peter Mel and Shaun Burrell went head to head against Canada's finest watermen and women and discovered a plethora of local talent that proved more than a match for their honed professional skills.

Competing in a myriad of categories including pro men and women short board, longboard, junior, and amateur divisions surfers faced challenging conditions on day one of the event as dense fog forced two separate delays and sent contestants and spectators scrambling for their cold weather gear. As finicky as ambient conditions were however, contestants couldn't have asked for better surf as consistent October swells produced shoulder to head-high waves with the occasional over-head set rolling through to keep things interesting.

Surf contests are usually filled with a certain level of high drama and the 2002 Quiksilver/Roxy Surf Jam was no exception. Undertones of multinational rivalry predominated the event as top US pro's vied for honours over local Canadian talent. Consequently, Canadian pro's were adamant about defending their titles and subsequent national pride and dug deep within their respective talent pools to produce a strong defense against a proven stateside offence. The result, to the delight of judges and spectators alike, was bar none some of the finest surfing ever witnessed at a BCSA event.

Local Canadian pro's Peter Devries and

brothers Raph and Sepp Bruhwiler dominated the surf with flawless maneuvers that displayed both style and power. A combination that proved too much for visiting US pro's as the two top spots in the pro men's short board division went to Peter Devries and Raph Bruhwiler respectively. A finish that no doubt left visiting Californian pro's scratching their heads and running for cover.

The pro women's shortboard division was equally as exciting and filled with it's own sense of high emotion as past champion Catherine Bruhwiler-Temple, who struggled for nearly four years competitively as she juggled competitive surfing with raising two children, reclaimed her spot at the top after nearly four years in semi-retirement. Besting Kassia, yet another US pro from Malibu, CA Catherine proved that women's surfing is as strong as ever north of the border and able to hold it's own on a competitive level with the best the US has to offer.

The real cinderella story however belongs to the men's amateur short board division where yet another Bruhwiler rose through the ranks to land at the top with a first place finish. Francis Bruhwiler, who has historically received more recognition for his alpine skills rather than his surfing, decided at the last minute to enter the competition and brought a level of surfing to the Surf Jam that leveled his opposition. Winning his championship heat with solid maneuvers that displayed talent perhaps more suited for the pro division Francis proved that even on an amateur level Canadian surfing is as exciting as ever.

With all top honours going to local Canadian talent it's a wonder if we'll see more US pro's making the journey north to compete against what's now considered a formidable opponent in the global competitive surf scene.

For information on next year's event contact Dom Domic at the British Columbia Surfing Association at www.bcsa.ca.



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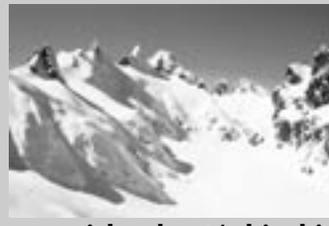
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Judging from the busy schedule on the top and shoulders of Mount Washington, the ski season is just about to get started. After the long hot summer one can imagine that even the valley's grassland is still green and the people are still enjoying the sun. But the ski season is just about to get started. After the long hot summer one can imagine that even the valley's grassland is still green and the people are still enjoying the sun. But the ski season is just about to get started.



Just when you think that the Mt. Washington Freestyle Club (MWFC) is back for its second year of great freestyle ski instruction, the club is back for its second year of great freestyle ski instruction. The club is back for its second year of great freestyle ski instruction.

The club coaches have backgrounds in various parts of the world, including Europe and the United States. They are experienced and their training continues to grow. The club is back for its second year of great freestyle ski instruction.

Freestyle skiing is a winter sport and it is growing in Canada. There are competitions out there for those who wish to push a pole and do a trick. The club is back for its second year of great freestyle ski instruction.

Freestyle skiing is a winter sport and it is growing in Canada. There are competitions out there for those who wish to push a pole and do a trick. The club is back for its second year of great freestyle ski instruction.

So, all you hot dog skiers out there, if you are interested in learning more about the Mt. Washington Freestyle Club, then contact the Registrar by telephone at 250-223-4444 or by email at info@mwfc.com and learn to do the whole mountain with style. Freestyle!

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Exploring

Campbell River's

Secret

Underground

By: Paul Lachapelle

Have you ever reached a point in your life when you just wanted to pack your bindle and walk down the tracks of life to find the adventure you have always been looking for? Well my opportunity came a knocking and I answered the door.

I was studying some old writings about Vancouver Island and came across some interesting subjects of how cavernous the region of NW Campbell River is. I found that Memekay mainline logging road would take me into some far out areas, with picturesque scenery, abundant wildlife, and caves.

Biking from Menzie Bay Logging Division tested my endurance right away, as I pedaled up four-mile hill. The morning air was cool but I knew it is going to be a great day. I slowed my pace to drink some water and reflect on the scenery and at this rate, I could scout out interesting niches and trails. Past Long Lake Road turnoff and over Brewster Lake bridge, I climbed until the falls that flow into the Brewster stopped me with the magnitude of the scenery and my stomach saying "Hey time for a snack." The growling wasn't a bear but my gut wondering if any food was forthcoming.

Following the road I climbed higher, and arrive at a closed road sign. The bridge up the road is not weight worthy. Mid point to this bridge, you should see a pond to your left. To this pond,

a small stream runs from the right bubbling from under the rocky hillside. Halfway up this hill amongst the alder and cedar trees is the entrance to a small cave large enough to fit into, standup, and shine a flashlight around, without endangering oneself.

This cave didn't go on for miles, it is a one room – get the thrill type – cave safely enjoyed on ones own. An old-timer told me if I followed this contour down to the lake, I should be able to find some more caves in the same region.

Continuing downhill, I walked along the hillcrest, following the lay of the land. Sure enough, I found several top holes, or blowholes from when the steam had escaped long ago. I had to watch my step and keep an eagle eye open for the top holes as moss, leaves, sticks, and falling debris often cover such holes. A missed hole could mean a

broken leg. The lake shore showed promise and after an hour of searching, I found two caves that were not deep but fun to enter.

At each cave I had to shine my light into the cave, throw some rocks in, and make noise, anything so I didn't surprise some animal that maybe living inside.

Ah..... the adventure of finding something not mapped out or over enjoyed by the masses. This was all mine... to bask in.... like finding a lost continent. I must be a left over from the Cro-Magnon era as caves have always felt like home.

As the afternoon sun waned, I realized I had just enough

time to setup camp and get comfortable for the night. Exploring consumed my time and energy. Settling in for a good night's rest after completing a campfire meal is a great ending to a great day. Tomorrow I will start to search the lake edge.



Memekay Falls

Backcountry Stashes



upper Abel Creek, Schoen Lake Park

The first whispers of cloud creep across the blue fall sky. Piles of cotton candy race towards the mainland. And then the sun disappears as the first rains fall. Winter is upon us; snow coats the Island Range in a blanket of icing. Like an alarm clock sounding, the snow signals the devoted to come out and play!

Well known to anyone who enjoys riding through pillows of powder snow, BC's numerous mountain ranges are as good a place as any to start winter riding. The interior and Coast ranges of the province's mainland are a Shangri-La for powder hounds everywhere. The backcountry is huge in every sense: huge snow, huge runs and huge mountains.

There are few valleys, forests, peaks, passes and glaciers that have not felt steel and wax at some point. But one corner of the province often overlooked as a backcountry riding destination is Vancouver Island. Many of the peaks have been sliced but it is a rare day when anyone tracking up one of Vancouver Island's peaks meets another person. And for the adventurous and dedicated there are many first descents to seek out.

The mountains are smaller yet the intricacy of the terrain stashes hidden lines endless begging to be skied. Perceived long access turn back the meek. But the reality is that there are many destinations well worth the effort and some that

require little effort at all. With storms pounding the island almost non-stop "tracked out" is not one of the adjectives used for describing Vancouver Island backcountry. While the runs are not as long as on the mainland, the solitude and adventure of Island backcountry makes any winter trip as rewarding as any in the interior.

From Heather Mountain to Victoria Peak and beyond Wild Isle offers ten destinations that beckon a winter visit. They are a sample of what Vancouver Island's backcountry has hidden. Some of these places are ridden yearly and some just look like they should, either way they promise adventure and turns in the Island backcountry.



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Heather Mountain

Map: 92 C/16 - GR 9323

Gentle ski slopes and great south Island backcountry rides await on Heather Mountain, just above Cowichan Lake. All sides of the mountain are skiable through open old growth subalpine forests. To get there drive around Cowichan Lake to the Heather Forest Service Campsite at the far west end of the lake. Follow the Heather Mountain Trail up the south side of the mountain and follow the ridge to towards the summit and the powder runs below.

Green Mountain

Map: 92F/1 - GR 0234

Home to the Vancouver Island marmot during the summer, when the rodents hibernate the turning potential comes alive. Green Mountain, not far from Nanaimo, used to be the local ski hill complete with lifts and lodges. But snowfalls were sporadic and the hill closed. When the snow line dips low in the hills turn the ski machine up the Nanaimo Lakes Road to ... The old ski runs make perfect touring terrain.

Steamboat Peak

Map: 92 F/3 - GR 2354

Some of the more extensive alpine terrain found in the Central Island is within Clayquot Plateau Provincial Park including Steamboat Peak. There is plenty of terrain to explore north west of the peak along with some good runs down the north and west sides of Steamboat itself. Easy access may be found from Highway 4 just west of Sutton Pass up the Caver's trail. Open alpine ridges and exquisite lakes makes this a promising destination. Watch for sink holes in the prevalent limestone.

Mt. McBride and Marble Meadows

Map: 92 F/12 - GR 0810

One of the finest multi-day ski tours on Vancouver Island. Begin by paddling across Buttle Lake to Marble Meadow Trail head near Phillips Creek. The trail leads to a vast area of undulating subalpine perfect for exploring on skis. A day trip to the summit of Mt. McBride rewards with views Strathcona Park and an epic perfectly pitched run down McBride's north snowfield.

Big Interior Mountain

Map: 92 F/5 - GR 1381

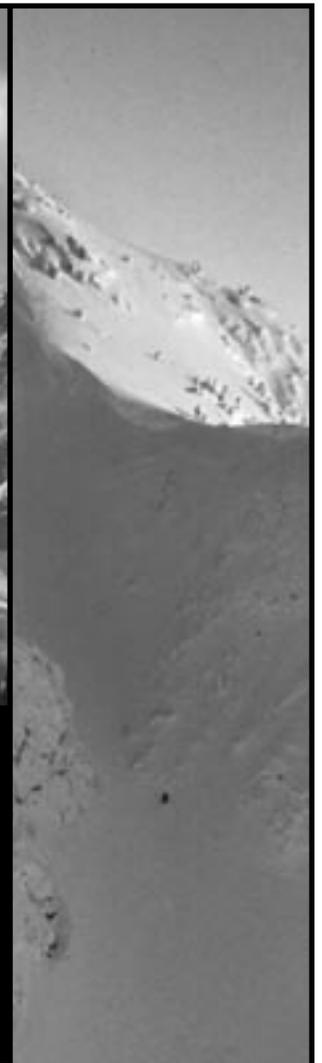
Realatively easy access up the Bedwell Trail from Buttle Lake (especially in spring) make the glacial bowls of Big Interior a choice destination. Ideal ski touring terrain with the option of heading further on to Nine Peaks and more turns down to Beauty and Della Lakes.

Mt. Myra/Mt. Thelwood

Map: 92F/12 - GR 1190

As ski touring day trips go it is hard to beat Mt. Myra especially in the spring. A giant north facing bowl, a long north ridge, the tempting north glacier and several smaller slopes all tempt skiers and riders. Myra is also a jumping off point for longer ski tours to summits like Mt. Thelwood and Moyeha Mountain. Access can be gained several different ways. From the mine at the end of Buttle Lake follow the parks trail up the old cat road to Tennent Lake. Leave the trail at the pipeline bridge and follow the left bank onto Myra's north west ridge, or continue up the hikers' trail to the dam and then up the west ridge.

Backcountry stashes



Photos: L-R Tim Stanton, Mt Cain,
 Top: Chris Lawrence Marble Meadows,
 Below: Ryan Stuart Mt McBride,
 Sitter, Rugged Mountain,
 Above: Victoria Peak and Glacier
 Right: Skiers in the Dream Chute, Mt Cain

Haihte Range

Map: 92 L/2 - GR 6643

The premier Island alpine area, the Haihte Range home to simply the finest of backcountry runs and touring on Vancouver Island. Difficult and exposed access is possible from the Nomash valley near Zeballos leading to a wild range of glaciers and rock spires.

Hkusam Mountain

Map: 92 K/5 - GR 9779

From the Island Highway near Campbell River Hkusam's south west face shimmers in the afternoon sun like a mirage becoming snow riders of all kinds. A huge snowfield is what calls. The tempting slope is easily accessed from the Stowe Creek Main logging road off Timber Rd just south of Sayward junction. From the farthest point you can drive continue up the road until two trail options lead up to the alpine above.

Victoria Peak

Map: 92 L/1 - GR 0748

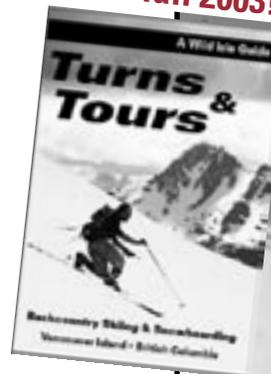
One of Vancouver Island's most impressive summits Victoria Peak's North Galcier is worth a visit for a day trip or a couple of nights. Victoria Peak is best reached from Sayward heading south on the White River Main or via Gold River and Twaddle Lake. Ride the glacier from the Victoria - Warden col or look for good lines below the north west face. The south face has some very long lines but watch out for sun effected snow conditions!

Mt. Cain area

Map: 92 L/1 - GR 9067

When it comes to ski touring on the Island it doesn't get much easier than around Mt. Cain ski area. The community hill sports two lifts that, for a minimal price can lift backcountry tourers to lofty heights. From there bowls, chutes and sick lines drop in every direction. Valley's full of powder disappear in every direction. Get a Map: and go explore.

Watch Out for
 this Wild Isle
 Guide fall 2003!



BC Hydro May Dam Rivers

In its quest to find environmentally friendly power sources BC Hydro has its eyes on small and medium volume rivers all over the Island. The Vancouver Island Whitewater Paddling Society wants to make sure whitewater paddlers have a say in which rivers become micro-hydro projects. Shayne Vollmers, the society pres. says paddlers were left out when the Tsable River was approved for a micro-hydro project. With nine projects soon to be decided on and 38 applications being made for other sites on the Island, the society wants paddlers to come forward before more rivers are dammed. 'The more people that come forward and voice their opinions the more likely paddlers will be heard' Vollmers says. Contact the VIWPS at www.surfkayak.org, email: info@surfkayak.org

Winter Ramblers

Rambler Peak, Vancouver Island's fifth highest summit received its first recorded winter ascent earlier this January. Cam Powell, Ryan Stuart & Phil Stone climbed the peak in a nasty winter storm January 11th after a two day approach to Elk Pass under clear skies! The trio climbed the standard route via the lower East Gully and upper North Gully. The climbing was moderate up to Grade 3 ice on superb well formed névé. Whiteout, Force 9 conditions made for some good sport.



photo; Ryan Stuart & Cam Scott descending under Rambler Junior a.k.a. 'The Needle'

Horizontal Everest

Arctic Adventurer JERRY KOBALENKO will be speaking and giving a "breathtaking" slide presentation "Horizontal Everest ... Extreme Adventures on Ellesmere Island." at the Sid Williams Theatre in Courtenay Sunday, Jan. 26th at 7pm.

Avalanche Claims 7

An avalanche in the mountains near Revelstoke has buried and killed seven people including snowboarding pioneer Craig Kelley. The dead were from BC, Alberta, Colorado and California but only Kelley's name had been released at press time.

Twenty-one people, in two groups, were ski touring on the Durrand Glacier, north of Revelstoke in the Selkirk Mountains, when one group was trapped by the slide. The backcountry skiers and snowboarders were part way through a week of touring with Selkirk Mountain Experience.

The slide happened in the early afternoon of January 20. The Canadian Avalanche Association, the RCMP and the coroner will be investigating the slide, which they assumed was a slab avalanche.

Kelley was one of the first well snowboarders in the early 1980s. He starred in extreme skiing movies. The owner and guide of the guiding company, Ruedi Beglinger, is characterized as a safe and professional guide. He has run SME since 1985 and was a heli-ski guide before that.

Clients of Selkirk Mountain Experience are flown in to the companies base lodge deep in the Selkirk Mountains. They general spend a week ski touring, under their own power, before returning to Revelstoke a week later by

helicopter. The CAA rated the avalanche danger in the Selkirk Mountains at the time as considerable. For up to date avalanche conditions check the CAA avalanche bulletin at www.avalanche.ca

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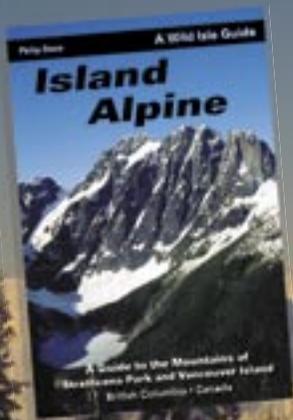
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Ross Nichol, Mt Colonel Foster first winter ascent. photo: © Joe Bajan.

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