



Free

**Arrowsmith Update
Raptures of The Emerald Sea
Around Vancouver Island, Solo
The West Coast Trail Revisited...**

Issue #8 Fall 1999



*WHERE EVER YOUR TRAVELS MAY TAKE YOU
ON THE ISLAND (OR FURTHER AFIELD)
STOP IN AT*

STRATHCONA OUTFITTERS



for personal service,
quality equipment,
local knowledge
and No Bullshit!

(250) 287-4453

OUTFITTING YOU FOR ISLAND ADVENTURE

CLIMBING, HIKING, CAVING AND KAYAKING CLOTHING AND EQUIPMENT

Next to Starbucks, Discovery Harbour, Campbell River

CONTENTS



*Cover: Dave Foster and Wayne Aitken
near Darling River, West Coast Trail*

*Contents: Surge Narrows tidal rapids,
Quadra Island. Photos: Philip Stone*

**Diving Queen
Charlotte Strait
p7**

**Solo Kayak
Around the
Island p13**

**Arrowsmith
Update
p12**

**West Coast Trail
Revisited
p10**





#8 Fall 1999

Managing Editor
Philip Stone

Art Director
Sheahan Wilson

Associate Editor
Tanya Storr

Contributors

Andrew Smith, Jett Britnell,
Dave Foster, Peter Rothermel,
Haley Shephard

Photography

Jett Britnell, Kevin J Smith,
Philip Stone

Wild Isle is published four times a year by Hyacinthe Bay Publishing and is distributed free of charge across Vancouver Island.

Advertising Inquiries and Submissions
Hyacinthe Bay Publishing
PO Box 482, Heriot Bay, BC V0P 1H0
Tel: 250 285-2234
Fax: 250 285-2236
email: wildisle@island.net
Web site: www.island.net/~wildisle

Opinions expressed herein are those of the writers and in no way reflect the views of the publishers, editorial staff or distributors.

The sports featured in Wild Isle are inherently dangerous with real risk of injury or death. In no way should this magazine be taken to advocate participation in any activity whatsoever. Wild Isle is for reading enjoyment only. If you choose to engage in any activity you do so entirely at your own risk.

Printed on Quadra Island, Canada
ISSN 1480-4026
All rights reserved. Copyright 1998

Agreement # 1408593

Next Deadline,
for Winter Issue,
19th November 1999

If you're a regular reader of Wild Isle and enjoy it, read this..

In the grand scheme of magazine survival *Wild Isle* has done well to make it to this our eighth issue. There seems little doubt that Wild Isle is well received by its readers and has a strong following. But that alone is not enough to keep it going, we need material to print. *Wild Isle* needs stories, photos, artwork, gear reviews, listings of coming events and whatever else might be of interest to the outdoor community on Vancouver Island. We also need the support of advertising businesses. If the volume of interest on both counts doesn't improve and soon, *Wild Isle's* days are numbered.

It is a necessity for small businesses to appear bigger than they are in this dog eat dog economy. A magazine, with all the media tools required for its production at hand, finds this an easier feat than most. But don't let that fool you into thinking that there is a staff of thousands leaning on water coolers, scratching heads with pencils, mocking up storyboards, busy with design planning and shredding waste paper. Not so, *Wild Isle* is brought to you effectively by unpaid time, the generosity of its contributing writers and photographers, boxes thrown into friends' vans, the faith of its advertisers in a quality publication and of course the support of its readers.

So this is a plea to you, our readers, *Get Off the Couch and help out!* It's time to put a little bit back to keep the boat afloat. This is a small craft getting dangerously close to the waters of readership apathy. Don't let *Wild Isle* sink in those murky depths where only glossy rags of pseudo-adventure are buoyed by cheesy modelled smiles and advertising for products no one can afford.

We are not without our wiles and charms here at WI-HQ to help convince you to come to our aid. A quick glance through this issue's pages will reveal news of fantastic prizes awaiting the lucky and perhaps talented individuals who enter our **Dispatch Roundup** story writing contest.

By now we're hoping for just a pang of guilt, a surge of pride and a swelling of community spirit within you. So seize that power, find a pen, pencil, laptop, iMac, quill or whatever other mode of communication you choose and write something down, sketch a doodle, map a trip, shoot a great photo and send it all to us.

In return you could win a great prize...

So there it is, *Wild Isle* needs your support. We'd love to hear from you.

Strathcona
Wilderness Institute

Working in partnership with BC Parks, 'SWI' inspires awareness, appreciation, and stewardship of the natural world through education and participation. To learn more about programs and volunteering opportunities

Call (250) 337-1871

URBAN LEMMING
Adventure Sports

SIMPLY THE BEST BIKING GEAR AROUND

286-6340
lemmings@island.net
151p Dogwood St Campbell River

Easykayaker - Local information for laid-back kayaking

Those interested in kayaking Vancouver Island's eastern shore have a new tool at their disposal. That tool is Easykayaker, a local information source available free of charge on the Internet at <http://www.easykayaker.com>. Easykayaker's main aims are to provide the information needed for day paddles in our local waters and to strengthen the network of people and businesses related to kayaking and the local kayaking industry. We on Eastern Vancouver Island live in the world's most popular kayaking area, where sheltered waters allow kayaking year round and many small islands provide incredible scenery.

Easykayaker has put together Vancouver Island kayaking information in an easy to find format. Information includes launch sites, maps, journals, adventure tour guides, lodgings and kayak related B&Bs, kayak related retailers and manufacturers, kayak rental locations and links to BC Ferries, weather, tides and road report information. Links to kayaking magazines and a calendar of local events are also available along with information such as kayak etiquette, kayak care, coastal kayak regulations, basic safety tips and equipment recommendations.

The day trip journals are descriptions of paddles that the authors, Gary Backlund and Paul Grey, have taken. In most journals, safety, local history and outdoor educational information get slipped in between the how-to-get-there and the where-to-go.

Both Gary and Paul are avid kayakers and both are aging baby-boomers with children. They felt that much kayak information available was directed to the young twenty-something endurance paddler. What they saw was that kayaking is now very much embraced by all ages from 9 to 90. Easykayaker focuses on the word "easy". They have located easy launch sites, and describe many easy two-hour paddles. Paul has carried the "easy" concept to the website to make searching for local kayak information easy.

Easykayaker is registered with the key Internet search engines and over 400 Internet sites. Most of Vancouver Island's premier paddling areas will eventually be covered. As this site grows, new sections will be added on kayaking for kids (written by kids), low impact environmental kayaking, kayak camping and much more. Gary and Paul are also working on producing much of Easykayaker in a book form that they hope to publish within the next year.

Hopefully Easykayaker will not only help local paddlers, but will also help encourage ecotourists from all over the world to visit Vancouver Island. For more information, contact either Gary Backlund at (250) 245-4939 or Paul Grey at (250) 722-3582. You can also email them at ekayaker@island.net.

Open letter to the Minister of Environment, Lands, and Parks On the Subject of Backcountry User Fees

The Editor, Wild Isle Magazine

Ref: 'Backcountry Fees' by Andrew Smith of BC Parks, article Wild Isle, The Islands Adventure Magazine, Issue #6 Spring 1999. Unlike Nepal, Africa, India, South America, and Europe, where park user fees are apparently common, Canada is not a third world country desperate for revenue from any source. Canadians pay a significant amount of taxes for education, medical services, highways, and parks. BC Parks implementation of a user fee amounts to nothing more than a tax grab and is reflective of the irresponsible fiscal policies of the current NDP government. If park users are targeted now, what is to stop the implementation of user fees for schools, hospitals, and roads in the future? While older hikers are using the trails, the majority of users are younger people who would find the implementation of even low user fees prohibitive after the cost of travel and supplies. BC Parks is impinging on the last place where people can enjoy a real outdoor experience at no cost. The Parks Branch obviously has no business plan that indicates how they are going to collect and manage fees. There is going to be a cost for collecting user fees that will in all probability exceed any balance of funds in favour of fee collection. Parks Branch will probably have to raise the fees to meet costs. If there is a favourable balance of funds, there is no plan that indicates fees will go back into park services or that funds will go to anything other than general provincial revenue. The implementation of overnight fees should require that the Parks Branch clean outhouses daily, provide a higher level of maintenance to tent pads, bridges, bear caches, and require that trails are kept clear of debris such as fallen logs and garbage. Hikes into Circler lake and Price creek at Strathcona Park this July indicate that little if any maintenance is being done at this time. The level of service that is now provided does not warrant the implementation of a user fee. The statement that back country costs exceed front country costs are probably valid. A solution is to stop spending on backcountry "improvements". Tent pads and outhouses are only useful from the perspective of protecting the environment from the ravages of overuse that developed trails, complete with bridges, ladders, stairways, and signs, bring to an area. Ten years ago few of these "improvements" were in place. Signs, tent pads, bridges, and other "improvements" take away from the wilderness experience that back country enthusiasts seek. The best approach to the implementation of user fees? Forget it. The NDP government should exercise better fiscal management of tax dollars and allocate sufficient funds to provide for a reasonably funded Parks Branch.

Ken Vande Burgt

Victoria

P.S. I want my tax dollars back!



COMOX VALLEY KAYAKS
Vancouver Island's
Kayak Centre

SALES-RENTALS-COURSES
ACCESSORIES-TRIP PLANNING

Two Locations:
Courtenay & Campbell River

phone: 1-888-545-5595 (toll free)
e-mail: seakayak@island.net
http: [//www.island.net/~seakayak/](http://www.island.net/~seakayak/)

View Point

- the view is not always clear-

by Andy Smith

Air Access

Have you ever been hiking into a remote location, experiencing the solitude, relishing the fact you have faced the challenges and earned the privilege of exploring an area few people can reach? If you have, you understand the feeling of peace, joy, exuberance, success and self-satisfaction all running through your body at the same time. If you haven't had this type of opportunity it is a feeling which, to be quite honest, is hard to describe and better experienced.

While you ponder the above, picture a mountain top with a 360 degree panoramic view of the world below, an alpine lake tucked in a hidden valley, or a pristine remote meadow covered with wildflowers. These thoughts can capture the imagination of anyone and photos of such places are often used to promote and entice visitors to British Columbia.

If the conflict hasn't jumped out at you yet, let me be more precise. There are many people who enjoy experiencing our park wilderness areas addicted to the feelings they experience while hiking into an area away from all motorized impacts. At the same time, there are many people who, because they are not physically capable, experienced, or they don't have the time needed, have little opportunity to enjoy the wonders of some of our wilderness areas. The latter are seeking other alternatives, which often include air access into areas.

BC Parks has been experiencing a greater demand for air access into our parks in the last few years. While only a few of the parks have strict guidelines restricting air access, all such requests for landing permits within parks are carefully scrutinized and only granted when in the opinion of park officials, impacts both on resources and other park visitors is minimal. However, many aircraft companies, both fixed winged and helicopter, argue that there is a growing public demand for this type of recreation and it should be considered more. Clients are either transported and dropped/picked up in remote park areas, or flown to exceptional sites for a few hours spent inhaling the beauty of areas which they could never access by themselves.

In parks covering thousands of hectares, is it an unreasonable request by air companies to use only a minute percentage of the park, with little impact to the

natural resources, to service this recreational niche? Should the solitude of a small percentage of park visitors who are capable of wilderness travel, take precedent over others who prefer easier access?

On the flip side, are there not enough comparable areas outside of park boundaries which could be used for this type of activity? Can we not provide a few small islands of solitude and total wilderness in this large world, which for the most part will only be 12% protected?

If you have some thoughts, pro or con concerning this issue and would like to express your viewpoint, please write or contact Andy Smith at:

BC Parks, 1812 Miracle Beach Drive, Black Creek, B.C. V9J 1K1

Phone: (250) 337-2405, Fax (250) 337-5695, e-mail: asmith@prkparksvl.elp.gov.bc.ca

RAPTURES OF

Adventure diving in Vancouver Island's majestic Queen Charlotte Strait Region

Words & pictures
by Jett Britnell

In his book, *The Silent World*, Jacques-Yves Cousteau wrote brilliantly about his daring 50-fathom dive into the zone of rapture, where divers become like drunken gods. It was 1953 and Cousteau was recounting his early experiences diving under the brain-numbing effects of nitrogen narcosis. He described these intoxicating seizures as *l'ivresse des grandes profondeurs* (rapture, or 'intoxication', of the great depths). Raptures of the deep is a poetic phrase that I've always thought more aptly described the dizzying grandeur of Vancouver Island's Queen Charlotte Strait ocean realm.

Long a treasured destination of local divers, the undersea wealth of Queen Charlotte Strait has on occasion been explored by members of the diving community who are better known for their tropical exploits. The list of renowned ocean pioneers who have dived here reads like a 'Who's, Who?' of diving. Stan Waterman, Bob Talbot, Al Giddings, David Doubilet, Chris Newbert, Paul Humann, Ron & Valerie Taylor, the late Jack McKenny, and yes, even the grand guppy himself, Jacques Yves Cousteau, have all braved British Columbia's cold ocean abyss in order to study or photograph some of the most colourfully exotic and bizarre-looking sea life on the planet.

Situated off the northern tip of Vancouver Island, Queen Charlotte Strait is an expansive waterway that is pockmarked with narrow, constricted passages, fjord-like inlets, large islands and a jigsaw puzzle of smaller current-swept islets. Seasonal upwellings mixed with extreme tidal water movement produces an enriched broth of planktonic food that in turn supports a rich habitat of marine life. The water is exceptionally clear and harbors more than 500 species of fish, 500 marine plants, and thousands of marine invertebrates. This also



Diver exploring Seven Tree Island's subsea terrain. Seven Tree Island is situated in Browning Passage. Photo: Jett Britnell

happens to be one of the best places in the world to observe marine mammals frolicking in their natural habitat. More than a dozen species are seen here including stellar sea

THE EMERALD SEA

lions, Pacific white sided dolphins, Dall porpoises, minke whales, gray whales, humpback whales and a resident pod of more than 100 killer whales.

It can turn nasty out here very fast. Fortunately, even when the weather turns sour it's always possible to tuck in somewhere and go diving. Then there are also those halcyon days of summer and fall when Queen Charlotte Strait resembles a placid mill pond. So it's always a wise decision to dive with one of the established liveaboard dive charters or dedicated shore-based operations that are familiar with the area. Many of the region's celebrated dive sites are widely scattered and miles away from the small coastal town of Port Hardy.

Generally speaking, the more spectacular dive sites are found in areas that experience swift to moderate tidal movement. Most of these sites can only be explored after the tumultuous water movement slows to a dead calm. This brief window of time, or slack water interval, can last anywhere from a few minutes to over an hour. Predicting these slack periods is not an exact science, therefore divers must be at the dive site, dressed into their gear, and ready to go as soon as the sea conditions permit. Most dive operators use a live pick-up boat to quickly pluck divers out of the water. Aside from making life easy, this is an added safety measure should the current rear its ugly head and unexpectedly pull you away from the dive site.

Famed Browning Passage offers a visual feast of shape, texture and color. Browning's precipitous drop-offs, delirious ledges and rainbow reef tops are festooned with massive nuggets of mustard yellow sulfur sponge, bushy bouquets of pastel pink soft corals and several varieties of anemones. Neon-veined candy-striped shrimps seek shelter beneath the tentacle umbrella of crimson anemones. Jamming every nook and cranny are feathery hydroids, deep purple hydrocorals, lacy basketstars, orange-lipped rock scallops and billowy white plumose anemones.

Schools of widow rockfish swim casually in the open water column. Kelp greenlings and the beautifully mottled red Irish lord sculpin sedately perch themselves on sponge outcroppings. It almost appears that they're waiting for the current to spoon-feed them their next tender morsel. Most species of rockfish common to the West Coast can be seen here as well as voracious-looking lingcod, grunt sculpins and timid decorated warbonnets.

Thrilling wolf eel dives are virtually guaranteed on a kelp-covered, open water seamount known as Hunt Rock. Ascending from the shadowy abyss, Hunt Rock rises to within 25 feet of the surface. Near its summit, living in 60 feet of water you'll find Hunter and Huntress, two of the most sociable wolf eels on the West Coast. Despite their undeservedly ferocious reputation, these 6-foot long, muppet-faced ambassadors entertain divers with their playful antics and downright sociable behavior. Breathtaking encounters with giant Pacific octopus, the largest octopus in the world, are also relatively common here, as they are just about anywhere in British Columbia's Emerald Sea.

Queen Charlotte Strait Dive Operators

Recreational diving along British Columbia's coast is centered in a number of communities. The diving industry operates year-round with many diving lodges, professional dive shops, and live-aboard charter vessels. While costs vary depending on services, most dive packages include accommodations, meals, two boat dives, tanks and weight belts. A good 1/4 inch wetsuit or drysuit with hood, boots, and gloves is required to dive in comfort in summer or winter.

The live-aboard diving season for the Queen Charlotte Strait/Port Hardy region is March to December (possibly year round for shore-based dive resorts.) For more information on scuba diving in Vancouver Island's Queen Charlotte Strait region, contact any of the following dive operators.

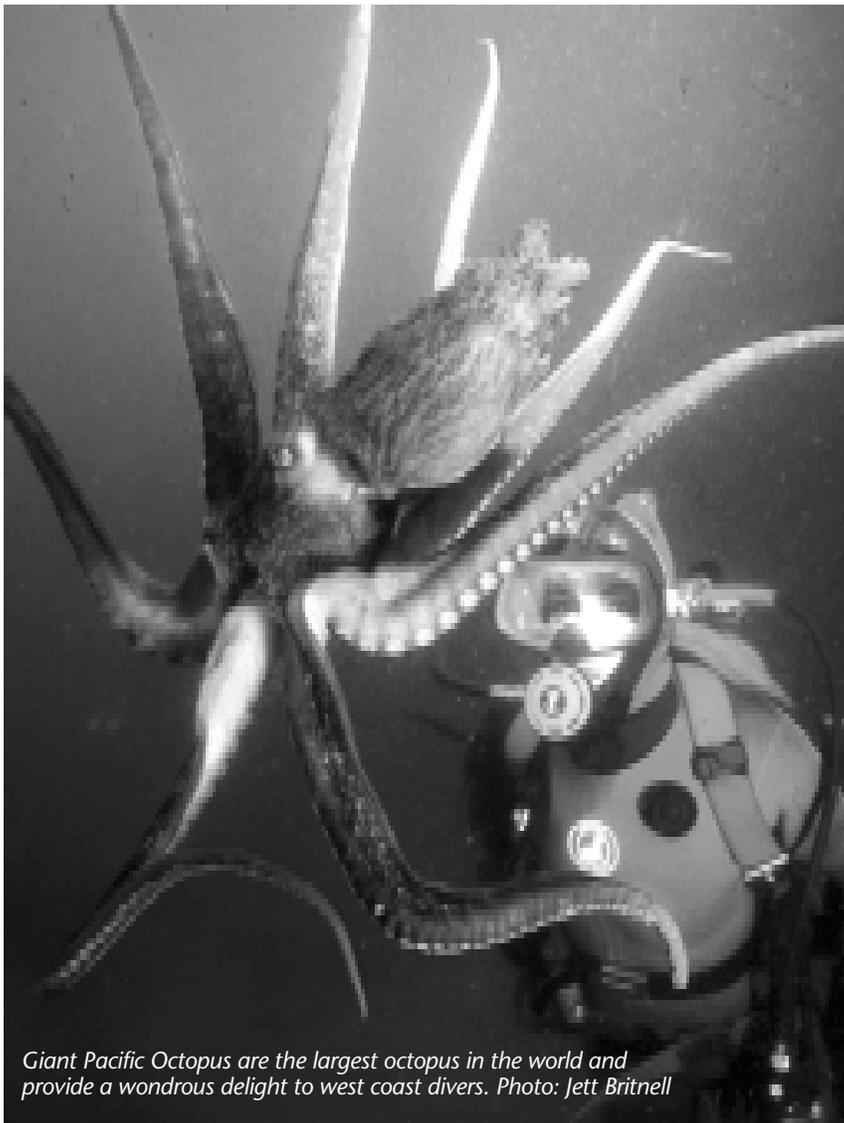
Clavella Adventures 60 ft. Liveaboard, group or individual packages for 1 to 10 days.
PO Box 866, Nanaimo, BC, V9R 5N2
(604) 753-3751 Fax (604) 755-4014

Lever Diving - 114 ft. Nautilus VII liveaboard dive vessel, up to 20 divers. Departs from Vancouver for Port Hardy/Queen Charlotte Strait.
(604) 657-7614 www.divebc.com
Email Nautilus@divebc.com

Extasea Charters Ltd. Operates several liveaboard dive vessels and specializes in 2-10 day packages.
203 1840 Stewart Way, Nanaimo, BC, V9S 4E6
(250) 755-9144 Fax (250) 755-9146
www.extasea.com Email info@extasea.com.

Lady Goodiver Charters Liveaboard charters for 10 to 12 guests.
P.O. Box 1711, Parksville, BC, V9P 2H5
Tel/Fax (250) 954-2389 www.goodiver.com

God's Pocket Resort - A remote first class land-based resort.
Box 130, Port Hardy, BC, V0N 2P0
(604) 949-9221
Email godspock@north.island.net



Giant Pacific Octopus are the largest octopus in the world and provide a wondrous delight to west coast divers. Photo: Jett Britnell

Queen Charlotte Strait is also yielding new discoveries. At the south end of Ripple Passage, in 100-feet of water, you'll come across a small ravine of seven to eight inch tall pink and white gorgonian corals. Previously unreported in British Columbia waters, this elegant species of coral has since been identified as *Calcigorgia spiculifera*. Sparsely distributed, these fragile gorgonians are known to occur in only three separate areas along the BC coast.

Revelations such as these are becoming increasingly common as more and more sport divers fan out to explore Queen Charlotte Strait's remote subsea wilderness. Though federal or provincial governments have granted no official protection, all the local dive charter operators consider Queen Charlotte Strait to be a marine park. Spearfishing and the harvesting of marine life by recreational divers is strictly prohibited and enforced by every operator. Consequently, the dive sites display absolutely no signs of being anywhere near depleted, beaten up, or 'dived out'.

Wild, staggeringly beautiful and always mystifying, British Columbia's ocean realm is what adventure diving is meant to be. An Emerald Sea frontier where intrepid divers can still boldly go... 'where few drunken gods have ever gone before'. Its raptures of the deep will leave you spellbound. 🐙

Jett Britnell is an internationally published marine photojournalist who lives in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. His cold water and tropical diving articles have graced many diving publications worldwide.



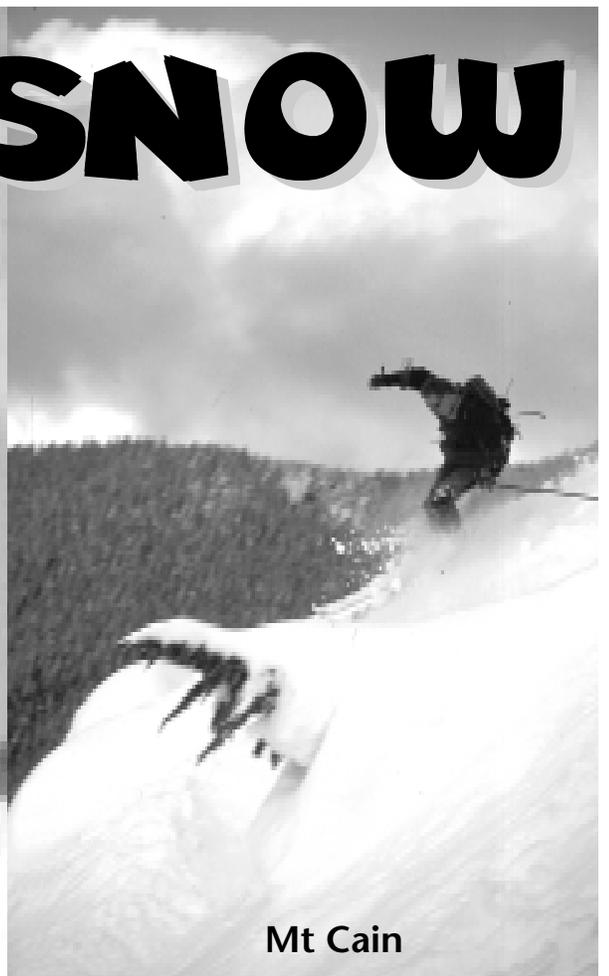
Seven Tree Island is one Queen Charlotte Strait's more popular dive sites. Photo: Jett Britnell

ISLAND SNOW

It's Coming...!!!



Mt Washington



Mt Cain



Forbidden Plateau

Summit Registers

by Peter Rothermel

I got interested in the replacement and care of summit registers the first time I replaced the one on Mt. Arrowsmith. What to do with the old full one? After calls to several local museums - not interested- I decided to send it to Judy Holm, Alpine Club of Canada VI section secretary, and there it found a good "Holm". Since then I have plucked more than a few full or damaged registers off peaks and sent them to Judy's archives. I have also started replacing damaged or inadequate summit tubes.

After reading the last ACC Gazette with the article on summit registers by Alan Kane (from Alberta), I decided to write him. In his article he implied that any peak under 9000 ft. should not have a register, which means all of Vancouver Island as our highest peak, the Golden Hinde, is only 7200 ft. In my letter to Alan I said (tongue in cheek) "maybe it's because we start our climbs nearer to sea level or maybe we're just wimps, but they sure seem like mountains to me!" I then asked him for advice on tube standards and such. The upshot is that there are no standards- only that plastic has less a chance of being hit by lightning than metal.

So here is what I've come up with by the "seat of my pants" approach. I always carry a waterproof, spiral bound, 4 5/8 X 7 inch, 30 page notebook (write in the rain, available at Monks Office Supply, \$8-\$12) and a couple of stubby pencils (ink freezes in winter). These are good

for note taking and great for replacing a soggy damaged register, especially in our damp coastal weather.

After summiting Victoria Peak only to realize the end cap was missing from the tube, I replaced the soggy notes with a waterproof book this is an OK solution but a new tube needs to be brought up along with the cremation certificate and memorial notes to Stephen Andrew Haigh, since dried out and laminated in plastic. (See Judy, 477-8596 Victoria, if you're headed up Vic. Peak).

On my next summit trip to Mt. Septimus I decided to bring a waterproof note book and a new summit tube. A good thing too since all that was up there was a plastic bag and a couple of film canisters. Now I always carry a summit tube as well as a notebook.

I make my summit tubes out of three inch inside diameter white pvc plastic pipe (white is easier to spot and reflects the sun's heat). Glue one cap on and mark the other end "open". This next step is important! Make three or so grooves on the length of the tube body from the opening down with a hand saw to allow for air transfer while opening and closing the end cap. If this step confuses you, I'd be glad to make tubes for any summit party, especially if you take me along! If you use waterproof paper inside there's no need to double tube the register, just place it opening end up in a cairn.

For very popular mountains such as Mt. Arrowsmith you need a bigger book and in turn a bigger tube. On Arrowsmith a forty page 8 1/2 X 11 inch book can nearly fill up in six months. So when the first book is almost full I tie a second new book to it. When book #2 is almost full I retrieve the first book and add a third new book and ad infinitum. That way there's always six months or more of register for summiters to read, lots of room to write and the older third goes to Judy's archives. This bulky register needs a big tube, so I've put up a 6 inch inside diameter tube.

Last thoughts: I mark ACC and the name of the mountain on the side of the tube and again in the register with dates, names and phone numbers for replacement when it's full or damaged. Dry out damaged wet papers and plastic laminate them. In addition to preserving paper, the plastic laminate makes fuzzy writing clearer to read. Bring them back up to the summit or send them off to Judy's archives.

I think every summit party should carry a waterproof notebook and summit tube. It weighs almost nothing and takes up very little room in a pack. The end result is we're taking care of the history of our beloved mountains and what better way to stake your claim to a peak than record it in fine style?



Arrowsmith Update



by Peter Rothermel

The Arrowsmith Massif Advisory Committee (AMAC) has been formed to advise the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) on the formation of a new park encompassing the peaks of Arrowsmith, South Summit and Cokely as well as the pristine lakes Hidden, Fishtail and Jewel/Emerald.

We have a very solid committee devoted to keeping this massif in its natural state and are represented by the Alpine Club of Canada, Federation of Mountain Clubs of B.C., Arrowsmith Naturalists, Federation of B.C. Naturalists, Island Mountain Ramblers, Tuesday Walkers of Port Alberni, Alberni Valley Outdoors Club, Adventures Anonymous Youth Group, Nanaimo Thursday Hikers, Sierra Club, District 69 Trails Society and District 69 Parks.

To date AMAC has drawn up a rough draft application to the Crown Lands Corp. to obtain this area for a regional park. When finalized it will include appendixes on the history of the mountain, common and rare species of flora and fauna, maps and descriptions of trails and routes, geology and hydrology of the area, trail restoration goals and submissions of support.

In addition AMAC is setting up meetings with Mac-Blo and Timber West to lease a corridor of land from Cameron Lake up to the ski park that the Old Arrowsmith (CPR) trail runs through to also be included in the new regional park.

This would create a string of regional and provincial parks from the summit of Arrowsmith to the Little Qualicum falls.

Other news on the Old Arrowsmith trail: Timber West heli-logged a portion of this trail last fall. In early summer they came back, as promised, and cleared the debris off the trail and regraded some of the damaged trail bed. It still looks like hell but at least its passable excepting that the bridge over the gorge is still out requiring wading of McBey creek.

Our ACC section hosted a trail maintenance day on July 24th for the Judges route. I figured if we had four or five turn up it would be a success. We had 17 able bodies that day! Also in attendance were members from the Alberni Valley Outdoor Club, the Tuesday walkers of Port Alberni and District 69 parks. We rerouted part of the lower trail to avoid a heavily eroded area, switch backed the middle section where it had been a straight up gully, cut all the deadfall off the trail and reflagged it in green/orange combination. The highlight for me was at about two thirds the way up when we encountered some fallen trees too big for handsaws, so Rudy Bruger ran down to the trucks and hauled up a not so small chainsaw. Super human springs to mind. Lastly thanks to Leslie Gordon for coordinating the whole affair. The next day most of us went up to the summit through the clouds and into full sun looking down on a sea of cotton candy. There must have been at least 25 people up there that day.

News from the ski park on Cokley's North slopes: Because of this winter's record snowfall the ski operation shut

down mid-January and never reopened for the season. I was up with a Ministry of Environment Lands and Parks (MELP) snow survey on April 1st and we found the snow level to be 235% above normal and 65% above the all time high record taken four times a year since 1951.

MELP has strongly stated to the Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot (RDAC) that they must allow "unfettered public access to and through" the ski park "with camping in the traditional areas". MELP recommended that the RDAC have an advisory committee and, to advise them on park policy and decisions, to include some of the groups that lobbied for unrestricted public access. Two members of Public Access Resolution Committee (PARC) have been asked to sit on this advisory committee, yet a meeting has never been called. Decisions are still being made behind closed doors and the RDAC is just playing lip service to MELPs requests. This coming fall things are going to heat up!

Lastly, I want to mention Lockwood Village Alpine Resort: This past spring a scheme was hatched to build an "alpine" village on Cokely's NE slopes at about 500 meters elevation on privately owned (Timber West) forest land reserve, capable of housing up to 5000 people and with a gondola capable of whisking 3000 people a day up to the ski area. All the local governing bodies are drooling over this proposal with dollar signs in their eyes yet hopefully this will die a quick death!

Arrowsmith and its surrounding area will continue to be embroiled in controversy and I just may have my life's work cut out for me. 🐦

Woman's Solo Sea Kayaking Expedition Around Vancouver Island. June 19th - August 25th 1999. 640 nautical miles, 67 days.

by Hayley Shephard



Hayley Shephard near Columbia Cove, Brooks Peninsula.
Photo: Kevin J Smith

The eerie silence of fog engulfed every rock and reef, and suffocated all points of land that were my destination. Within seconds I was left with my hearing, compass and dead reckoning skills as my only tools to navigate around this extremely exposed, rugged coastline. A bulb from bull kelp kept me stationary as a 2 metre SW swell pulsed beneath my hull, crashing violently on this tormented shoreline. 3 choices tossed around in my head: 1, to stay clinging securely to this ocean anchor and wait for the sun to burn away this foggy blanket (at least here I know exactly where I am); 2, head into what seemed a landable shore that I got a last minute glimpse of and risk landing on what could be a treacherous rock garden; or 3, continue in my SE line of travel, but heading off shore to clear this erratic area of unpredictable breaking water.

Only the night before had I made an entry in my journal expressing the need for a challenge and to be put to my long awaited test. On June 19th I departed the sheltered arms of Victoria Harbour to begin a solo seakayak journey exploring the entire coastline of Vancouver island. After three summers of seakayak guiding and crewing on charter boats in various areas throughout Vancouver Island, I decided it was time to fill in all the gaps and piece this Island together. I wanted to become completely absorbed within this ocean environment and develop an understanding of all its characteristics. I needed to be go solo in order to achieve this goal, leaving

nature to be my only distraction. I realized the challenges that tagged along with this dream but had decided I was ready and very willing.

I set off equipped for a 2 month expedition, feeling like gadget girl as my PFD bulged with a VHF Radio, GPS, Eperb, rocket flares and half a dozen energy bars. My 19ft Seaward kayak was packed with enough gear and food to carry me past the Island's more populated Georgia Strait coastline. I was relieved to be on my way but emotional as the good-byes to friends and family lingered and warmed my heart.

The morning of this fog incident had started off so clear. The full moon sat high in the sky and at 6:00 am the sun only teased as it lay low beneath the mountains. The forecast

sounded promising and the glassy, rolling ocean welcomed me. This portion of land 10 miles south of Kyuquot Sound juts out into the Pacific, encouraging crazy currents and wild water as winds wrap around this jagged area. It was the month of August, so I wasn't surprised to see a thick blanket packed snugly along the south of the Pacific Ocean. This area has a unique shelf lying beneath the ocean floor causing swell to suddenly peak and break half a mile off shore, then break again on and over the battered reefs that lace this entire coastline.

I was about to increase my understanding and respect for the power of fog. I recalled the many days I had travelled by motor boat in thick fog, enjoying the silence and mystery of this blinding ocean blanket. The damp, salty air tingled on my skin and the smell was so ocean like. I love the sailor's song of fog horns echoing throughout this mariner's path, lighting the way with this well known ocean tune.

However, this time was different as I was the captain of my own boat and it was only up to me to find my way to safety. Throughout my journey I discovered I wasn't a good waiter, whether waiting for winds to die or sitting in a kevlar shell holding onto a piece of bull kelp. Within minutes I had released this forested anchor and continued blindly in search of a rock free, surf friendly beach to land on and wait for the fog to clear.

I pointed my boat in a slightly southerly direction to go out and around the breaking waves I could only hear. The wind had picked up on this exposed ledge as it often does at this time of morning. The swell I estimated to be two metres and when in fog it seems to look even larger, standing like city sky scrapers. I decided to head into what seemed a beach from my estimated chart position. The idea of being out here in big winds and swell I could only feel encouraged me to want to land. I tried to get an accurate position with my GPS but it wasn't picking up any clear

signals. I edged very slowly, every stroke deliberate towards shore. The waves were peaking and crashing in front of me so I knew I was getting close. For one split second the fog cleared enough for me to get a glance at the beach I was just about to land on.

There was a beach alright but the entire edge was scattered with rocks, rugged enough to pierce any bullet proof boat. Simultaneously a huge two metre wave was about to pick me up and toss me forward towards this land I no longer wanted. I thought it was too late and leaned back, getting in a surf

position. I put a back paddle in for good luck and my eyes closed for a second as I figured the wave was now in control of my destiny. Somehow that back paddle gave me enough momentum to avoid riding the untamable wave. I found myself in the trough of the wave which now exploded violently in front of me. A series of strong back paddles were put in to reinforce my secure position. I turned and with a racing heart and relieved soul I continued with my back to this exploding shoreline. My mounted camera had taken the brunt of the wave. I paddled on for 20 minutes and found a perfectly sheltered bay with one metre waves breaking.

The fog had lifted, exposing a welcoming pebbled landing surface. Minutes later I was on shore, hot choccy in my hand and thankful feet on land. The fog once again moved in, wrapping me up within the arms of this bay. In many ways the enclosing sensation of fog gives me a feeling of protection but adding exposed coast and the chaos of reefs and waves, it seems to deny me of the signs of danger.

From this portion of the west coast onwards offered me regular challenges and teased me with all its ocean obstacles. Each day I rose to the occasion and problem solved like any good mariner. I definitely felt well rehearsed as SE winds confused the seas and gave me hectic paths of ocean travel and 25 km. NW winds pushed me up and over surfable swell. The continually fog ridden coast played a significant role in my journey leaving parts of this shoreline a mystery to me. Gray Whales cruised within the numerous cluttered kelp beds. I was their only intruder and felt thankful to be alone to soak up every blow and breath released from these gentle giants.

I had been alone at sea for over two months, becoming so in tune with the rhythm of this weather and water, feeling extremely content as I glided effortlessly on this salted skin. My eyes and ears had become open to absorb every detail of this aquatic classroom and within it I had become an eager student with a dream fulfilled and a soul awakened. 🐙



*Hayley Shephard, paddling through a kelp bed off Vancouver Island's west coast.
Photo: Kevin J Smith*

HOW WILD IS YOUR ISLE?

We all want to hear...so here's a little incentive...

A Weekend for two at

Tsa•Kwa•Luten Lodge

The Resort at Cape Mudge - Quadra Island



Including kayak rental
with optional instruction from

 **STRATHCONA
OUTFITTERS**

MSR Miniworks Water Filter

Where have you been and what have you seen?

Share your adventure with all *Wild Isle* readers and you could win one of our great prizes.

Write a magazine article about your greatest adventure or favourite trip destination, a thought provoking essay, how to climb a certain peak or paddle your favourite river. Include photographs, maps, drawings and any other material you see fit to enhance and embellish your piece. Send your dispatch to **Wild Isle** and you could win one of our wicked prizes.

Entries may be submitted up until December 31st, 1999. Mailed submissions must be postmarked on or before the closing date. Our distinguished panel of literary icons will select the best items in these two categories:

1-Feature Article

Typically a 1,000 to 1,500 word story about a trip by the writer on or around the islands with a choice of five photographs (slides or prints). Could also be an essay on an ethical issue.

2-How to

Between 300 and 750 words describing factually/guidebook-style how to access and climb a certain peak or paddle your favourite river. Might include a map or sketches or one or two photos. Could be anywhere along the coast accessible from the Islands Might be a primer on a certain activity for either novice, expert or both, self-propelled of course, or a safety issue.

All entries are eligible for publication and permission to publish is a condition of entry and assumed on receipt of each submission. Entries may be submitted on paper or electronically to:

Wild Isle Dispatch Roundup

PO Box 482, Heriot Bay BC V0P 1H0 or
by email to wildisle@island.net

West Coast Trail Revisited...

by Dave Foster Illustrations by Nelson Dewey

Since our publication of "Blisters and Bliss: A Trekkers Guide to the West Coast Trail" in 1989, Wayne Aitken and I have claimed a special interest in the development of the West Coast Trail. Our annual pilgrimages together began in 1986. Prior to that we had made independent ventures dating back to 1974.

Over the years we've come to know and love the coastline like a familiar neighbourhood walk. We've witnessed changes that bred anger, changes that sparked delight and changes that engendered awe. Opinions about the trail have flashed hot and heavy. The following have been edited to make them suitable for publication. "All those roots and holes! Why don't they fix it before someone gets hurt!" "If they keep building these boardwalks, there's going to be no challenge left!" "It's time they cleaned up that campsite. It's disgusting!" "This is no place for kids or dogs!"

"All the tramping across the sandstone shelves is killing the sea life!" "How come they let them sell chocolate bars and beer?" "That seems like a lot of money to pay for a long walk." "There are too many people! I wish they'd let fewer on." Woe be the decision makers at Parks Canada. Can there be any way to make us all happy?

Today the parks branch maintains comfortable offices at each end of the West Coast Trail. Hikers proffer their VISA cards to pay the \$95 toll, sign a register, watch a safety video and get briefings on local conditions in preparation for the famous 75 kilometre trek. A permit encased in plastic is attached to each pack. These red tape formalities stand in marked contrast to the complete lack of structure of the

past. In 1974, four of us arrived in Port Renfrew with vague information from a friend of a friend that "a Norwegian fisherman will ferry you across." This knowledgeable source went on to assure us that "if all else fails, try getting a boat at the Indian Reserve. You can throw a stone across from there."

The local pub was the same rustic but sociable meeting place it is today. As we enjoyed a beer and cheeseburger, word of our need quickly spread. We were soon aboard a battered aluminum skiff, plowing our way across to the trailhead. Later in the 80s and early 90s, with 8000 hikers to transport, this ferry route became a lucrative business. Today, the price of your hiking ticket includes a ride in a solid looking landing craft that skips across the river several times a day.

"The first part's a killer!" This lament is common among hikers starting at Port Renfrew. The southern half has always had a reputation for beating up the unsuspecting. It's up and down constantly as you wheeze your way over countless stream beds and around huge rock faces. Beautiful open forest sparkling with broken rays of sun suddenly gives way to tangles of greenery so thick and impenetrable it's impossible to step off the trail.

As I nimbly cross a new bridge built from indestructible, pressure-treated planks, I glimpse the tangle of brush and debris below and wonder, "Egad! Did I walk through that 10 years ago?" At another spot I'm faced with balancing on a log to cross a bushy ravine. The top of the log has been flattened with an axe and the thousands of cracks and grooves are filled with slippery looking mud. A small step has been carved to help me step up. Should I take the log or follow the muddy track down below? I choose the faster but more dangerous aerial route. Many of these daunting log crossings remain on the south end.



Good balance along here is definitely an asset. Reflecting back to an earlier era, I decided we must have spent half our time balancing on one log or another. We chuckled as we looked over a former mud lake bordering some new boardwalk. In among the lush, reviving skunk cabbages and moist mosses, a few tell-tale footprints reminded us of the energy we burned skirting this hole the previous year. No more sinking in-above-the-boot here. This spot was beginning to radiate some of its former tranquility.

Boardwalk was often the solution for the early trail blazers too. Split cedar planks, four feet long, spanned much of the original lifesaving trail. Another early system for bridging mud, used three slender poles lying parallel and nailed to a cross piece at each end. A few of these springy challenges can still be found between Walbran and Adrenaline. Today's state-of-the-art track is a well-supported, twenty-four inch span, which provides ample room for the single hiker.



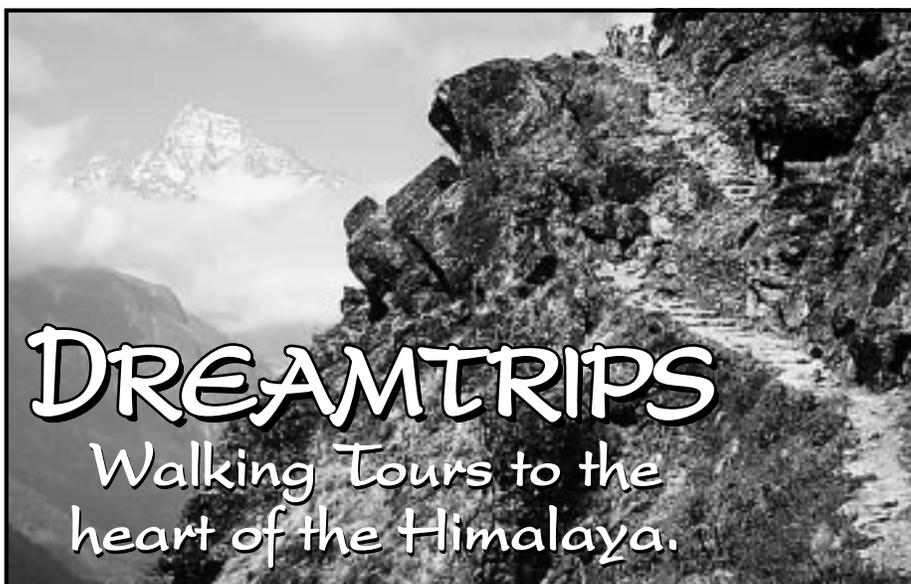
In spite of all the boardwalk, mud continues to be a favourite topic of conversation. Muddied hikers arriving at Walbran from the South love to tell tales of horror to the clean-skinned beach walkers from the North. Perhaps it is Murphy's Law that a place to walk is also a place to fall. I'm confident that as long as we have rain we will have mud on the West Coast Trail.

The most popular campsites at Michigan, Tsusiat, Camper and Thrasher have been fitted with delightful, comfortable and odour-free composter toilets. I hope these will be the final solution to an ugly problem that has plagued the trail since it began catering to 8000 or more visitors each year. At these stops, our old habits of using the ocean or "surfing" as we call it may be gone forever. I remember the first outhouse that was placed at Thrasher Cove. It faced out over the ocean.



On my first visit, I noticed slightly muddied knees protruding from the partially open door. I backed off out of sight, thinking this hiker in repose deserved to enjoy his few moments convening with nature. Moments later, as he came by me he remarked, "That thing must have been designed by a midget." I soon knew what he meant. There wasn't enough room to shut the door across my knees. At Tsusiat a few years back, two open-air, moulded fiberglass privies without roofs sat high on the sand at either end of the beach. Patrons sat facing inland, their lower body hidden from the beach by a

Again and Again and Again...



To Everest: Jan. 31/39 days

\$4150 (incl. airfare)

Annapurna Circuit: March 6/36 days

\$3900 (incl. airfare)

- Small Groups •
- Personalized Service •
- Budget Travel Prices •

TOM CARTER

Tel: 250-954-2345

Fax: 250-248-8972

email: tomcarter24@hotmail.com

raised back. Hikers waiting below could track progress by watching the upper torso dance. The winter storm that claimed these bastions of exposure did us all a big favour.

In August of 1974 the trail spilled us out of the thick salmonberry onto the rocky, muddy shore of the Nitinat. There was no dock, just a couple of bleached planks and some broken buckets. We looked out over the river in anticipation, but there was no boat to take us across or other sign that humans lived nearby. The length of shore, some 100 yards away, had no landing beach but to our left a rocky point blocked much of the view. The water flowed past us towards the sea, stretching the shore weeds like streamers in a breeze. All was silent except our voices.

Our packs become back rests. We settled along the planks and in the grassy bank to wait. An hour passed. Salmon jumped, we skipped a few muddy stones, an eagle flew over and then quite suddenly a canoe emerged from around the point. The loan boatsman skilfully lifted his outboard as the canoe slid smoothly up our beach. The tide had changed and the movement of water had almost ceased. A dark-skinned, wrinkled old native greeted us with an orthodontically-challenged smile. "You come two at a time," he said.

As I loaded my pack, I realized the canoe was an old weathered dugout. My grip on the shiny, smooth gunwales tightened as the small boat settled in the current. Three, small freshly-caught cod gaped up slightly ahead of where I'd settled on my knees. Greasy, blood-streaked water sloshed around the cod and between my legs. Water lapped against my clutching hands. In moments we were all across and our native friend was tucking away \$5 from each of us. From our new vantage point we could see out the mouth of the river to the ocean as the canoe headed that way. We watched it disappear over the crest of a huge rolling breaker.

Cut to August 1999. We are lounging about on the small north dock of the Nitinat eating crackers and peanut butter and chatting with two other hikers. Carl Edgar arrived in his huge, aluminum skiff. He'd been fishing that morning and snagged his forearm with a hook which was still embedded in the flesh. A friend used heavy wire cutters to snip off the shaft close to the skin because the dangling lure kept jolting and causing pain. "My wife will be taking me into Port Alberni right after I drop you off," he explains. In spite of the injury, he sold us a freshly caught ling cod which he filleted right on the spot.

Carl Edgar is a descendant of the old man in the dugout canoe. His family has been collecting the toll for the last dozen years. On the opposite dock about ten hikers were waiting. Some were resting on the same grassy bank we used 25 years before. This time the cost of the boat ride was included in our trail pass, but we still paid Carl a few bucks for the fish and a couple of cans of beer. We called a few greetings to the other hikers and then headed off up the boardwalk into the salmonberry with another Nitinat story to trade.



I usually stop in the middle of the Logan Creek suspension bridge to look in all directions. Gently bouncing high above the creek, I'm filled with a sense of awe and drama as I savour the ocean view. I'm hanging on a marvel of technology that makes me feel small and yet it's dwarfed against the steep walls of the canyon. Before the bridge, these were the toughest walls to climb. Wide ladders lashed and spiked from driftwood poles leaned perilously against bare rock faces. Rough ropes were strung from outcroppings and roots to provide precious hand holds.



Progress was dead slow as hikers picked their way across the cliff faces from ledge to ledge gasping from the effort and the thrill. The experience was repeated to a lesser degree at Sandstone and Cullite. Today it's tortured lungs and grinding knees as I climb the endless ladders. I'm happy I no longer need to worry about finding my next foothold. The ladders provide their own dramatic challenge.

There's a long stretch of soft, golden sand near Cribs Creek that collects the markings of every trekker's feet all day long. Between the tides, footprints over footprints accumulate upwards from the water's edge. It's a stark contrast to those days when there were no footprints but your own. Those were beach combing times when I used to poke at the clumps of fresh flotsam hoping to find the elusive glass ball. Now I find myself watching for the next set of hikers. "Good day! Having a good hike?" "Great! How about you?" "Terrific as long as it doesn't rain. Just watched a whale back there. He hung around for about an hour. Seemed to be foraging on the bottom or something." "No kidding? Hope we see some. How's the trail up ahead?" "The sand is brutal. Have a good one!" "You too."

Hiking the trail has become a wilderness experience mixed with a strong dose of socializing. At Michigan an Irish policeman and his wife shared our evening coffee; at Tsusiat a German school teacher offered to translate "*Blisters and Bliss*"; at Monique's place more than 20 trekkers chatted over lunch; at Carmanah the lighthouse keepers, Janet and Jerry dropped in for morning coffee; at Walbran a group of 10, who signed up at the YMCA, enjoyed their guide's cooking; at Camper a 78 year old man, who trained by carrying his pack up a ladder to his roof, shook our hand; at Thrasher a large group of retirees proudly showed us all their home dried food; in the pub at Port Renfrew we celebrated the completion with a beaming group of hikers. The West Coast Trail has become a different and unique hiking experience. When I'm out there, there is no other place I'd rather be.



BUSINESS DIRECTORY

RETAIL

Coast Recreation Maps

specializing in marine areas along the B.C. coast

15 maps available: Bella Bella, Hakai Passage, Broughton Archipelago, Johnstone Strait, Kyuquot Sound, Esperanza Inlet, Nootka Sound, Clayoquot Sound (North & South), Barkley Sound, Georgia Strait- North, Desolation Sound, Sunshine Coast, Gulf Islands, Quatsino and Goletas Channel

Provide information on campsites, points of interest, hiking trails, wildlife viewing areas, surf zones, tidal currents, access points, plus much more available at popular outdoor stores or contact:

Suite 547, 185-911 Yates St. Victoria, B.C. V8V 4Y9

www.coastalwatersrec.com/maps/info@coastalwatersrec.com

Geophilia Adventures

Sea Kayak Guide Training

Endorsed by the Sea Kayak Guides Alliance of B.C.. 10 day professional courses this spring. Ideal for potential guides, or anyone looking to improve their sea kayaking skills.

Ph/Fax: 250 653-0011

email: geofilia@island.net

www.island.net/~geofilia

190 Reynolds Rd, SaltSpring BC V8K 1Y2

Mountain Meadows Sports

Your Vancouver Island outdoor outfitter, centrally located in the Comox Valley. Chain store prices with family store service.

Ph: 250 338-8999

Fax: 250 338-1823

email: meadow@island.net

368-5th St. Courtenay,

B.C. V9N 1K1

Robinsons Sporting Goods

Come visit Vancouver Island's most complete Outdoor Store featuring Canada's largest tent showroom. Our extensive lines can outfit anyone from the weekend enthusiast to the hardcore adventurer. Stop by to check out the Island's only "Summit Shop" by The North Face, Robinson's "Climbing Shop" and Robinson's "Fly Shop".

Toll Free: 1-888-317-0033

Ph: 250 385-3429

Fax: 250 385-5835

robinsonssportinggoods@home.com

1307 Broad Street, Victoria V8W 2A8

Strathcona Outfitters

The North Island's best selection of hiking, kayaking, climbing and caving equipment and clothing, rentals too! Stop in for friendly knowledgeable service at our new location in:

Discovery Harbour, Campbell River.

Ph: 250-287-4453

Fax: 250-287-7354

email: soutfit@island.net

Urban Lemming

We sell Brodie, Trek and Klein Bikes from a shop, featuring excellent service. From custom wheel building to minor tune-up we can keep you out there. Stop in for the most up to date trail info and a free map of area trails.

151p Dogwood St. Campbell

River, B.C. V9W 6B9

Ph/Fax: 250-286-6340

email: lemmings@island.net

Valhalla Pure Outfitters

Factory Outlet for Valhalla Pure™

outdoor clothing. Valhalla Pure is designed and manufactured in our own factory right here in B.C. Vancouver Island's best selection of outdoor clothing and equipment. Check us out at the following great locations:

615 Broughton Street,
Victoria, BC, V8W 1C8

Ph: 250-360-2181

Toll Free: 1-888-551-1859

Fax: 250-360-4054

email: victoria@valhalla-pure.com

<http://www.valhalla-pure.com>

499 Wallace Street,
Nanaimo, BC, V9R 5B7

Ph: 250-741-1855

Toll Free: 1-888-551-1858

Fax: 250-741-1834

email: nanaimo@valhalla-pure.com

<http://www.valhalla-pure.com>

219 5th St. Courtenay, B.C. V9N 1J5

Ph: 250-334-3963

Toll Free: 1-888-551-1860

Fax: 250-334-8573

email: courtenay@valhalla-pure.com

<http://www.valhalla-pure.com>

Business Listings are \$95⁰⁰

+GST for 4 issues (one year)

Call 250 285-2234 or

fax us at 250 285-2236



Alpine Pacific
Images and Design

250 285-2234

alpine@island.net www.island.net/~alpine

SEASON PASS FALL SPECIAL!

SAVE 10% ~ OCT. 1-31, 99

- UNLIMITED LIFT ACCESS
- FREE CROSS COUNTRY SKIING
- COOL NEW SKI ZIP FOR YOUR PASS
- FREE Y2K MT. WASHINGTON CALENDAR
- FREE SUMMER SCENIC 2000 CHAIRLIFT RIDES
- REDUCED RATES AT MANY BC SKI RESORTS



SEASON PASS	ADULT	YOUTH	CHILD	SENIOR	FAMILY (MAX)
	\$599	\$470	\$320	\$320	\$1365 (4 OR MORE)

MIDWEEK	ADULT	SENIOR
	\$320	\$175

X-COUNTRY	ADULT	YOUTH	CHILD	SENIOR	FAMILY RATES
	\$135	\$110	\$75	\$75	\$235 (4 OR MORE)

RATES SUBJECT TO ROAD LEVY & GST

SEASONAL LOCKER RENTAL... \$75

SKI & BOARD CHECK SEASON PASS:
INCLUDES 4 HOT WAXES AT SNOTEK... \$60

From Nov. 1, 1999, Regular Season Pass rates apply.
It's still a great deal and you get all the benefits of membership!



MT WASHINGTON™

ALPINE RESORT

PHONE 338-1386 FAX 338-7295

www.mtwashington.bc.ca