



Doubling **VANCOUVER ISLAND'S PROTECTED AREAS**



OUR OPPORTUNITY TO LEAVE A LEGACY



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Growing up on Vancouver Island, I've fallen in love with the parks and protected areas that make our home famous. These places have helped shape my identity, and like many, I have taken them for granted. For a time, I thought the whole Island was protected and that it would be forever.

Of course, this perception is false. The staggering majority of Vancouver Island is not protected at all. With each passing generation more of our Island paradise has disappeared.

On the southeast part of the Island, due to logging and urban expansion, the forests of the Coastal Douglas-fir ecosystem have all but been eliminated. In many parts of Vancouver Island, finding a river valley with its old-growth forest cover intact from mountains to sea is no longer possible. Every one of them has logging roads and clearcut scars.

However, this isn't what makes Vancouver Island unique. Many places in the world have lost their original landscapes to industrial development.

What does make Vancouver Island unique is the fact that many of our ancient landscapes still exist. Trees that are over 25 storeys tall and well over a thousand years old still live on our Island, though we sometimes take them for granted.

I believe that we need to act now to double the amount of protected area on Vancouver Island. This will put us near 25 per cent of the Island protected. We are far behind many other parts of the world like New Zealand, Costa Rica and Tanzania, which have protected twice as much of their wildlands as we have.¹

We all know that pressure from heavy resource industries and land developers will only

increase, so right now is the best chance we'll ever have.

We know that doubling Vancouver Island's protected areas will require a broad effort and participation by everyone. This educational report illustrates how important it is that we do it now—the places we cherish are at risk every day.

On Vancouver Island we have a rare opportunity to do something incredible. If we rise to the challenge, we will do more than conserve world-class wilderness areas. We will have protected an essential part of ourselves, our past, and our future.



Photo top: **Big Tree Trail, Meares Island Tribal Park, Clayoquot Sound** (Mike Grandmaison), above: **San Juan Spruce, Canada's largest Sitka spruce tree** (Joe Foy), left: **View from the Nootka Trail** (Warrick Whitehead).



1 CLAYOQUOT SOUND: NOT SAVED YET

Just saying the name Clayoquot Sound brings back vivid memories of environmental protest for many Canadians. That's because protecting Clayoquot's ancient forests from logging sparked the biggest act of Canadian civil disobedience in a generation. It was broadcast coast to coast and around the world on the evening news throughout the summer of 1993.

So it comes as a surprise to many that today, a great deal of Clayoquot Sound's unlogged valleys and islands are still not protected from logging—but it's true. Since 1993, successive provincial governments have failed to respond to the public desire to see the intact valleys of Clayoquot fully protected, so the forests there have existed in a sort of uneasy truce as nearby forests have continued to be chainsawed down.

The ancient forests of Meares Island, Flores Island, Vargas Island, Clayoquot River, Ursus River, Sydney River,

Bulson River, Easter Lake, Pretty Girl Creek, Satchie Creek, Upper Kennedy River and Hesquiaht Point Creek all face an uncertain future. Wild places such as these with intact forests and huge, thousand-year-old trees are rare on the Island and nonexistent today in many parts of the globe.

The Tla-o-qui-aht First Nation, one of the First Nations of Clayoquot Sound, have designated two parts of their territory as Tribal Parks—Meares Island and the Kennedy Watershed. These Tribal Parks need to be enshrined in provincial law, and our government needs to work with the First Nations of Clayoquot Sound to designate more Tribal Parks to encompass all of Clayoquot's remaining intact ancient forests. The government must also provide economic development funds so the communities can participate more fully in the fishing and tourism economies of the region.

For more information, contact our local allies: The Friends of Clayoquot Sound focs.ca



Photo left: Vancouver Island wolf (Mark Hobson), right: Chicken of the woods mushroom (Mark Hobson).

3 UPPER WALBRAN: A NATURAL TREASURE

When the Carmanah-Walbran Provincial Park was designated in the 1990s it encompassed some of the finest ancient temperate rainforests remaining on Earth. However, the park's boundaries left some very important forests in the Upper Walbran Valley unprotected, and conservationists have been trying to remedy that ever since. Trails have been constructed in the Fletcher Falls area just outside the park. These Upper Walbran trails meander through groves of giant redcedar and Sitka spruce trees that are a world class natural treasure. However, the Upper Walbran continues to be defaced with new logging operations year after year. This amazing forest needs to be added to the park now.

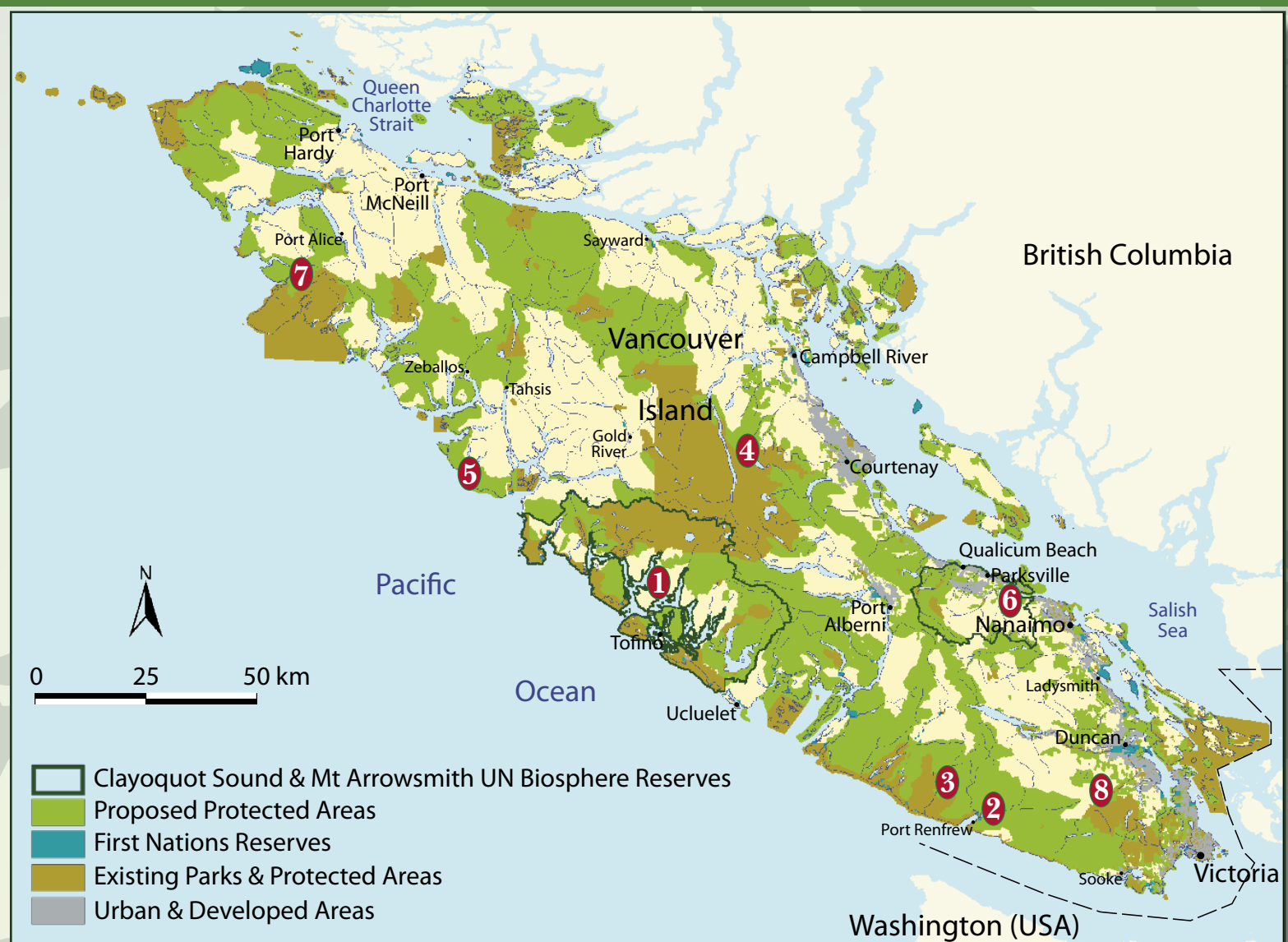
4 PEARL LAKE: ADDITION TO STRATHCONA PARK

The Friends of Strathcona Park are famous for defending BC's oldest park from industrial activities like logging and mining. But this group has also been working with allies in the Comox Valley Conservation Strategy to map out additions to Strathcona Park.

One such proposed addition is picturesque Pearl Lake, located at the headwaters of the Oyster River, and just outside the park boundary. A slight redrawing of Strathcona's boundary would bring in Pearl Lake, and the old-growth forests and hiking trails that surround it.

For more information, contact our local allies: Friends of Strathcona friendsofstrathcona.org Comox Valley Conservation Strategy cvconservationstrategy.org

PROPOSED PROTECTED AREAS ON VANCOUVER ISLAND



2 PORT RENFREW: HOME OF GIANT TREES

Vancouver Island is famous for its giant trees. But one Island town stands out amongst all others as being the big tree capital. It's the village of Port Renfrew and it gets its big tree reputation because of two trees—and what amazing trees they are!

The Red Creek Fir is the world's most massive Douglas-fir tree with a height of 73.8 metres and a girth of 12.55 metres.² That's as tall as an office building and as wide as your living room.

The Red Creek Fir can be reached by hiking up a short trail through mostly second-growth forest and past a grove of old-growth redcedar trees. Then before you the old giant

towers above.

Living a few kilometres away from the Red Creek Fir is another giant—the San Juan Spruce. This is Canada's largest Sitka spruce tree. It's located right beside a road with a great riverside picnic site nearby. The San Juan Spruce is 62.5 metres in height and 11.6 metres in girth.³

Making a pilgrimage out to Port Renfrew to see the giant trees is a must-do Island experience! Surprisingly, neither of these natural record winners are in a provincial park. Much more needs to be done to protect the natural wonders of the Port Renfrew area, starting with the forests surrounding these two giants.



Photo above: Red Creek Fir, world's largest Douglas-fir (Joe Foy), right: Red-breasted sapsucker (Mark Hobson).



Photos from left to right: East Creek old-growth forest (WC files), Salmonberry (Mark Hobson), Walbran Valley Douglas-fir tree (WC files), Killer whales (Jim Borrowman / All Canada Photos).



7 EAST CREEK: CAN'T WAIT ANY LONGER

In 2003 when the Wilderness Committee first journeyed to East Creek Valley on the northwest coast of the Island, we were shocked at what we found. Clearcutting in the neighbouring Klaskish Valley was some of the worst ever. Great swathes of the forest had been levelled and trucked away. Massive stumps jutted out of the muddy landscape—a testament to the great size and age of the trees that had been there.

Out of the clearcut, a lone logging road snaked up the mountainside and passed through the pristine, unlogged East Creek Valley. Following the road

until the end, it entered the ancient rainforest.

In the 1990s the Klaskish was listed as one of the few pristine, unlogged primary watersheds remaining on Vancouver Island. It was heartbreaking to see what had become of the Klaskish.

Today, the upper East Creek Valley has been logged, but the lower valley remains in pristine condition. If we are to hand a remnant of this amazing North Island forest down to future generations so they can understand what was here, it's time to save the lower valley—East Creek can't wait any longer.

5 NOOTKA ISLAND: EDGE OF THE PROVINCE AND THE IMAGINATION

Absolutely spectacular—in terms of wildlife and pristine coastline, Nootka is second to none.

This is how veteran wilderness guide and environmental activist Warrick Whitehead describes the west side of Nootka Island, a remote and unprotected wilderness in Nootka

Sound, on the central-west coast of Vancouver Island.

Here the Pacific Ocean crashes onto the shores of dense rainforest—the result is an ecosystem home to wolves, bears, cougars, countless rare birds, marine mammals, and plant communities that thrive only in healthy rainforests.

The island is also steeped in history. This is the traditional territory of the Mowachaht/Muchalaht First Nations,

who have lived here since time immemorial and whose culture is incredibly rich and diverse. Yuquot, the main village on Nootka Island, is where Captain James Cook landed in 1778—marking the first known interaction between Europeans and Indigenous people on this coast.

"Absolutely spectacular—in terms of wildlife and pristine coastline, Nootka is second to none."

The rugged Nootka Trail stretches 35 kilometres along the western edge of Nootka Island, and is an unbelievable West Coast experience. The trail is slowly being discovered by enthusiastic hikers, although guides like

Whitehead have long felt that it surpasses southern Vancouver Island's Juan de Fuca Trail and even the world-renowned West Coast Trail in terms of unbridled scenic beauty, and First Nations culture and history.

6 NANOOSE FOREST: DISAPPEARING HABITAT

The Nanoose Forest, located northwest of Nanaimo, is an example of why Vancouver Island's protected area system needs to be greatly expanded as soon as possible. First identified as a rare Coastal Douglas-fir forest by nearby residents, this 64-hectare parcel of provincial public land completely surrounded by private lands soon became a famous forest. Since the Coastal Douglas-fir forest of eastern Vancouver Island is a highly endangered ecosystem, due to logging and urban expansion, people came together to mount an intense campaign to save it. Hundreds of people visited and hiked its trails. Newspapers and TV stations reported on their efforts. Elected officials called for the forest's preservation. However, in early 2012 the BC government permitted about a third of this rare forest to be logged.

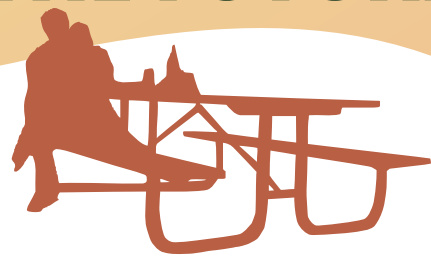
How could this happen? In 2007 scientists advised the

government that within the Coastal Douglas-fir forest the ecosystem viability was unlikely to persist unless much more of it is protected from logging.⁴ Scientists later calculated that to move ecosystem viability from high risk to moderate risk, the current five per cent (12,700 hectares) of protected Coastal Douglas-fir forest would need to be increased to ten per cent (26,000 hectares).⁵ Moving ecosystem viability from high risk to low risk would require that the total protected area be increased to 20 per cent (52,000 hectares).⁶

Yet the provincial government refused to protect even the 64-hectare Nanoose Forest from being damaged by logging.⁷ Clearly, we need to take action now to save what remains of the Nanoose Forest and to increase Vancouver Island's protected areas—especially in the endangered Coastal Douglas-fir forest.

WORKING TOGETHER TO CHANGE THE FUTURE

8 THE KOKSILAH RIVER GROVE: WHERE ENVIRONMENTALISM GROWS



Less than an hour from Victoria stands a grove of old-growth Douglas-fir, redcedar and Western hemlock, along southern Vancouver Island's Koksilah River. The giant trees found here tower skyward above massive sword ferns, salal thickets, and deep blankets of moss. Amongst the rich flora of this stunning ancient forest grows environmentalism itself.

From the loggers who came across the grove in the 1980s and refused to cut the giant trees, to local grassroots activists who've fought for the old-growth giants on an ongoing basis for decades, this special place stirs our emotions and demands a kind of loyalty from all who come here.⁸ Visitors leave the grove proud that a forest like this still exists so close to urban areas, and with a great desire to see the area protected. For many of

us, the grove is an inspiring place.

The Koksilah Grove is a pristine old-growth Douglas-fir stand in the Coastal Western Hemlock ecosystem—one of the rarest in Canada and most underrepresented in our parks. The forest is remarkably accessible and a chance for us all to see how our forests used to be.

But like so many other incredible areas on Vancouver Island, it is still

unprotected. It stands near—but not inside—a provincial park and is still at risk of being logged.

Places like the Koksilah Grove and all that they represent must be protected. That is why we need to act now to expand the amount of protected area on this island—before it's too late.

TIME TO DOUBLE VANCOUVER ISLAND'S PARKS

Here in the Victoria office of the Wilderness Committee we are bombarded with a constant stream of e-mails and phone calls about special places on Vancouver Island under threat from industrial development. Our organization was formed back in 1980 to conserve Canadian wilderness areas, and never have we seen a time when so many one-of-a-kind wildlands have been at risk of being lost.

It doesn't have to be this way.

If Vancouver Island were to double the current percentage of lands now under park protection, we would be at par with other progressive jurisdictions around the world. Then we would be able to preserve the intact valleys of Clayoquot Sound, the upper Walbran Valley, the remaining Coastal Douglas-fir forests, Cathedral Canyon, Lower East Creek and much more.

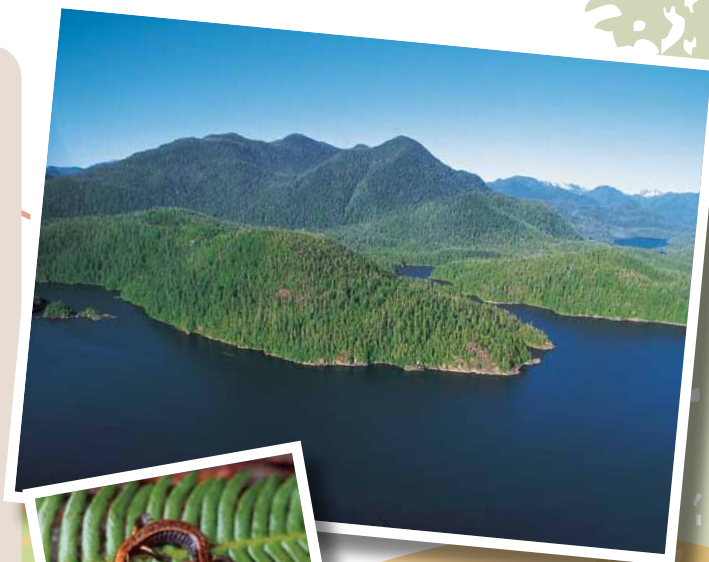


Photo above: **Pretty Girl Valley, Clayoquot Sound** (Jacqueline Windh), left: **Western red-backed salamander** (Mark Hobson).

TAKE ACTION

Please take a moment to send a letter to the BC government and tell them how important Vancouver Island's special places are to you, and ask them to double the Island's protected areas.

Photo: **Pacific tree frog** (Jakob Dulisse).



Contact these elected leaders and tell them that it's time to double Vancouver Islands Parks

BC Environment Minister Honourable Terry Lake,
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@ env.minister@gov.bc.ca

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@ rob.fleming.mla@leg.bc.ca



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- <http://www.mfe.govt.nz/environmental-reporting/report-cards/biodiversity/2010>, http://www.tanzaniaparks.com/corporate_information.html, <http://www.biodiversityhotspots.org/xp/hotspots/mesoamerica/pages/conservation.aspx>
- <http://www.portrenfrew.com/redfir.htm>
- <http://vancouverislandbigtrees.blogspot.ca/2010/10/san-juan-spruce-canadas-largest-sitka.html>
- <http://www.nanoosebayforest.com/forestpracticesboard2010final.pdf>
- Ibid
- Ibid
- <http://nanoosebayforest.com/osdec8.pdf>
- <http://www.ancientforestguide.com/big-trees.php?ID=3>

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YES! I WANT TO HELP DOUBLE VANCOUVER ISLAND'S PROTECTED AREAS!

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