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Issue #4 Fall 1998

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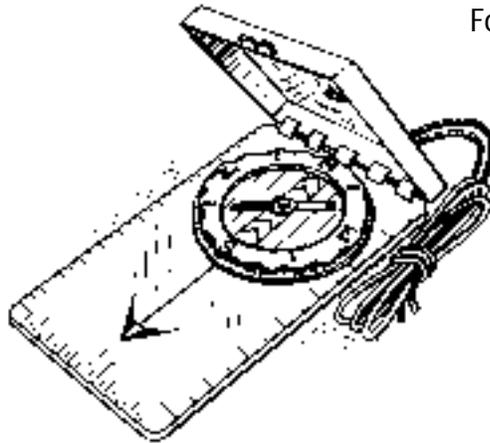
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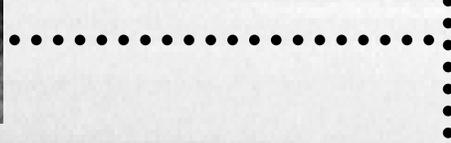
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for Winter Issue,
13th November 1998

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Contents: Bedwell Sound and Tofino from Mariner Mountain
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LETTERS

Dear Editor:

Just a quick note to say how much I am enjoying your magazine. While toying with getting into the ecotourism business, being born on Vancouver Is., I have had many questions and your 'zine seems to answer them all in a timely fashion. It improves with every issue.

We have such unique and great natural assets here, it is nice to see them formally recognized enmass in the private sector.

Keep up the good work.

Melanie Perkins

Letters can be sent to: PO Box 482, Heriot Bay, BC V0P 1H0
Fax: 250 285-2236 or email: wildisle@island.net

New Route on Mt. Tom Taylor



On 5 August '98 Jan Neuspiel and Andrew Findlay opened up the long rumoured granite walls of Mt Tom Taylor with a new route, Finnagan's Buttress. The pair climbed a 300 m long line at about 5.9. Finnagan's Buttress follows the crest of a prominent buttress, taking a series of chimneys and corners on spectacular granite. The line leaves the crest briefly in the midsection before returning to finish. Access is from the standard route to the summit from Bedwell Lake. From the col immediately east of the summit, descend snow on the south side of the mountain to the base of a long wall (see above photo).

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Its hard to believe this summer is still going but yet another fine weekend approaches in what has been an epic run of sunshine. Here at *Wild Isle* Central we are hanging on the edge with anticipation for the many stories and pictures that are surely going to come flooding in once the rain starts.

This issue marks our first full year as Vancouver (and surrounding) Island's very own adventure magazine. It has been an exciting 12 months that has seen some inspiring images and tales fill these pages. As we look forward to our second winter issue preparations are underway to introduce subscriptions, conduct a reader's survey and generally up the ante.

Wild Isle needs your support; tell our advertisers you saw their ad here and if there is a business you know would benefit from exposure in *Wild Isle* get them to give us a call. We are itching to move into full colour printing and hope that will happen in the next 12 months. Have a great fall and let's hope for an early winter!!!

Philip Stone

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ViewPoint

Andrew Smith

The view is not always clear

Mountain bikes should be banned from Provincial Parks! That's quite a bold statement but one that is voiced by a number of park users. This view point comes from those who may have been forced to the side of a trail by individuals speeding along with little regard for other users. The same opinion is supported by those who have seen some of the impacts caused by bikers such as chewed up trails, erosion, exposed tree roots, destroyed vegetation, scarred trees and rock faces denuded of mosses and seedlings.

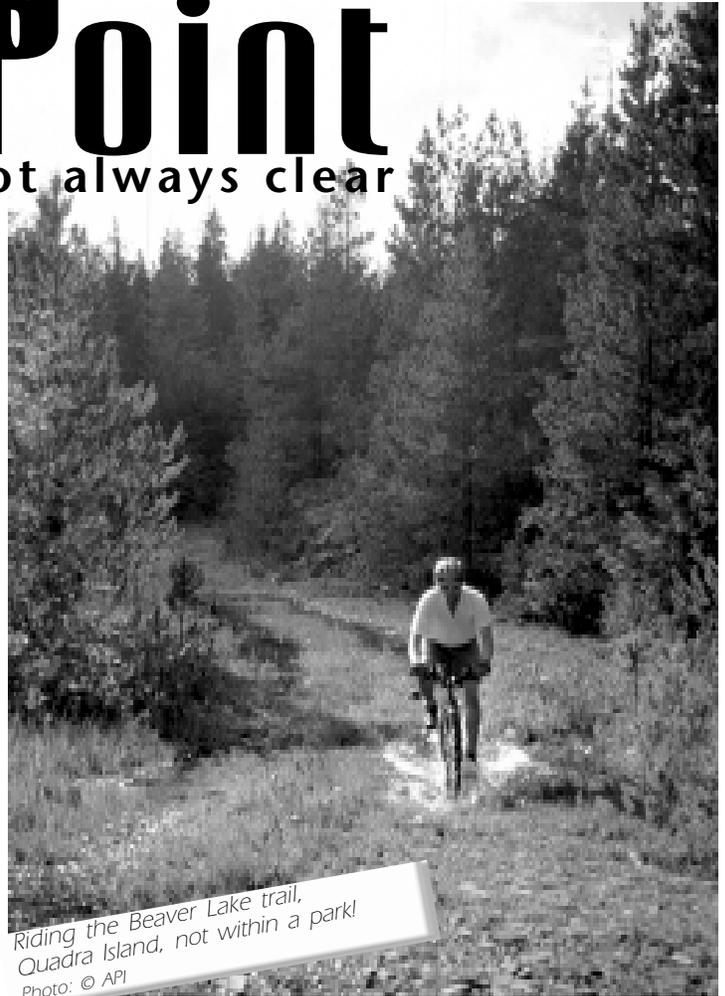
If the above is true, is the use of mountain bikes an appropriate activity for our provincial parks? For some, the answer is a decisive NO! However, there is more to this issue than what has been noted so far and that is the reason for this month's article.

BC Parks' Mission is to protect and present as a public trust, representative and special natural places for conservation, outdoor recreation and scientific study. The key words here are conservation and outdoor recreation. Both aspects have been identified, and mountain biking aside, the fact that parks are managed for both often raises some controversial issues.

Mountain biking is a fast growing sport and unfortunately did not exist when the Park Act was established. Had it existed, there may have been some better guidance offered. However, mountain biking is an outdoor recreational activity and therefore cannot be simply excluded from consideration. However, this activity does impact on important park resources, and the safety of all park users and potential conflicts between activities must be taken into consideration.

BC Parks is currently trying to deal with this growing issue and in doing so must consider many things. One of the first things to review when considering the approval of mountain bike use in a protected area, is why the area was protected and what is its designation. If the area is an Ecological Reserve rather than a Park, its intent is to protect unique natural values and that generally excludes recreational use. If the area is a park, it may have been established to protect a special natural feature, a type of ecosystem as a whole, recreational values or a combination of all of the above. If recreational values were identified as significant (this could in fact include mountain biking in new parks), then mountain biking should be considered along with all other activities. This consideration is given today when Management Direction Statements or Management Plans are developed with public input. For older parks, Park staff are guided by what was agreed on during a public Master Planning process and this could restrict any approval until the plan is publicly reviewed and amended.

Other considerations include the potential for user conflict (hikers/walkers vs. bikers), safety, type of flora and fauna in the area, erosion, difficulty of construction and cost of development and ongoing maintenance. There will be impacts if and wherever mountain biking is allowed, as is the case when any trail or facility is constructed. The question is: what are the limits of acceptable change? All these considerations are ones which mountain bike clubs and users can help BC Parks address. Cooperation and collaboration may open up opportunities for more biking in the future.



Riding the Beaver Lake trail, Quadra Island, not within a park!
Photo: © API

A good example of this is a recent agreement signed between BC Parks and the Sprocket Rocket Cycling Club of Campbell River. BC Parks has authorized the use of a portion of Elk Falls Park for mountain biking while the club has agreed to maintain the trails, refrain from constructing new trails without authorization, restrict use to designated trails through self policing and work together with BC Parks to promote safe and friendly riding practices.

Whether mountain biking in BC Parks becomes a common activity will depend much on mountain bikers themselves who must consider the impacts of their sport on resources and other users. Proper biking ethics, showing respect for other users and the forest's natural resources, will garner public support and help when the issue arises at management planning meetings.

For those readers who do enjoy mountain biking, please try to assist BC Parks by learning more about the areas you travel in, sticking to designated bike trails (biking is generally not allowed on park trails unless signed accordingly) and practising proper biking ethics. If you have any suggestions, concerns or would like to discuss the potential for mountain biking in a specific Provincial Park, please give us a call. 🐾

Send your viewpoint to: Andy Smith, BC Parks, 1812 Miracle Beach Drive, Black Creek, B.C. V9J 1K1 Phone: (250) 337-2405, Fax (250) 337-5695, e-mail: asmith@galaxy.gov.bc.ca

MT ARROWSMITH

PARK PLAN FACES OPPOSITION

Tanya Storr

The regional district of Alberni-Clayoquot's proposed park plan for Mount Arrowsmith regional park is facing opposition from a number of park user groups. The user groups are concerned that the plan will give too much control of the public park to a private developer and will allow the developer to restrict public access to the park. They are also worried that development plans for the park will have negative effects on the environment.

Mount Arrowsmith, visible throughout most of the south central portion of Vancouver Island, is located along Highway 4 between Parksville and Port Alberni. It is one of very few easily accessible alpine areas on Vancouver Island south of Strathcona Park. Mount Arrowsmith regional park is situated roughly 20 kilometres from Highway 4 along a gravel logging road.

The area has long been a destination for outdoor recreation enthusiasts, including hikers, mountaineers, rock and ice climbers, and skiers. A historic trail from Cameron Lake to the Cokely Ridge area was built by the CPR (formerly the E&N Railway) at the turn of the century. This trail continues to be very popular with hikers. Part of the trail runs through land owned by TimberWest, and this old-growth section is slated for heli-logging in October.

The Mount Arrowsmith area has attracted skiers for decades. In the 1950s, avid skiers hiked for hours to a small ski trail, rope tow, and cabins. The Mount Arrowsmith Ski Club was formed in 1959 and some of its members later formed Arrowsmith Mountain Recreation Limited.

After lobbying by the Mount Arrowsmith Ski Club in the 1960s, MacMillan Bloedel agreed to donate 607 hectares to the Regional District of Alberni-Clayoquot (RDAC) in 1972. The agreement states that the block of land was set aside for "public use and enjoyment as a recreational park."

Arrowsmith Mountain Recreation was granted a 20-year lease to operate a winter and summer recreation facility, and a day lodge, ski runs, double chair lift, and utility services were constructed. Poor snowfalls in the area in many years hampered attempts to make the ski hill a viable operation, and in 1990 when the lease expired, Arrowsmith Mountain Recreation sold all of its assets to Cokely Ridge Holdings.

Cokely Ridge Holdings and the Management Group were both given licences to operate the ski hill, but neither met with success. The latest licensee to occupy the regional park is Arrowsmith Ski and Park Limited.

Arrowsmith Ski and Park Limited has ambitious plans for the mountain, including installing lifts up to Cokely Peak and having as many as 48 groomed runs to service up to 4,000 skiers per day. The RDAC has applied for an expansion of the park boundary towards Cokely Ridge.

In late June, Lyle Price of Port Alberni unveiled plans to develop a resort village on the slopes of Mount Arrowsmith. Price, a former operator of the Mount Arrowsmith ski hill, is proposing the construction of an independent village that would be connected by gondola to the summit ski area. The village would be developed on about 950 acres of land currently owned by TimberWest.

For the past year there has been an ongoing debate between the RDAC and various park user groups concerning the issue of restricted public access. User groups argue that access should not be restricted in a public park. The RDAC's park plan states that the regional district envisions a private operator providing structured activities—including skiing, camping, and mountain biking—on a user fee basis.

During both the summer and winter seasons, the park would be open to the public for "unstructured activities that do not materially interfere with the structured activities operated by a private operator." The plan also states that exit points from the park will be developed at points along the cross-country trails for members of the public who wish to access the area beyond the park boundaries.

Peter Rothermel, an avid park user and member of the Public Access Resolution Committee (PARC), a group opposed to the park plan, has written a critique of the plan. He has sent it to Ron Lampard, BC Parks Strathcona district manager, who is making recommendations about the plan to the RDAC.

In his critique, Rothermel questions whether people wanting to back country ski, ice climb, or snowshoe will have to pay a fee, as they cross groomed runs and trails in order to access ungroomed areas. He also asks who defines "material interference" and "summer and winter seasons", pointing out that many winter activities can be done from October to late June in some park areas.

The issue of liability has been a key part of the public access debate. Arrowsmith Ski and Park Limited has expressed liability concerns, and the RDAC has based its position for limiting public access to the park on the liability issue.

However, user groups have pointed out that recent changes to the Occupiers' Liability Act have shifted the responsibility from the occupier to the non-paying user. As long as the occupier does not create a danger with intent to do harm or act with reckless disregard to the safety of the non-paying user, the occupier has no duty of care to that person.

In a letter to the RDAC directors, PARC member Gary Young asserts that these changes invalidate much of the rationale for the proposed park plan. "In fact, access to the park through the use of user fees (as suggested in the plan) will almost certainly increase, rather than limit, liability," he writes.

Some park users have also expressed trepidation about the potential effects of Arrowsmith Ski and Park's development plans on the environment. In a letter to Environment Minister Kathy McGregor, Peter Rothermel explains that he is concerned about ground preparation (such as clearing trees and rock blasting) in the alpine and sub-alpine, water supply limitations, and waste water disposal, among other things. He urges McGregor to use the power of her office to ensure that an environmental impact study be conducted on the proposed development.

The Mount Arrowsmith area is currently being considered for an official biosphere study area by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The designation would attract scientists from all over the world to study the effects of human habitation on the natural environment.

COASTAL EXPEDITION CONCLUDES

Five Women's Dream to Paddle the Outside Coast of British Columbia Becomes Reality

Robyn Irvine

The first few saxifrages began to unfold their petals in May on the north Pacific coast. The moisture denied south coast displayed final aster blooms and arbutus berries as August drew to an end. We watched a season pass from the inshore waters and from the cobbles, sand, cliffs and swamps of many campsites.

It was a trip the five of us had dreamed about for quite a while. We desired several things in our ideal trip: a substantial time span, a route within Canada and a way of travelling with an ethic of traceless wilderness use. The trip underwent many metamorphoses before it reached its final form. The route we decided to sea kayak was the outside passage of the north coast islands and Vancouver Island from border to border (U.S.-Canada). We were all able to afford four months, which gave us time for weather waiting and for exploration along the 2000 km route. As far as

we were able to discover from the research carried out by us and by others in the paddling community, we were to be the first all female team to paddle this route.

Paddling around each unknown corner and matching the coast to the current chart's markings made us attempt to imagine the feelings of past aboriginal and colonial explorers who had journeyed with little to no information down this rugged coast. We often fell short of adjectives with enough expansiveness to describe the diverse landscape beside which we paddled. Words such as beautiful and amazing could not capture or encompass every new view. The basalt and granite cliffs grinned back at us with black streaks on grey as we struggled to put into words feelings of joy, awe and privilege. We had chosen the length of the British Columbia coastline for many reasons and it did not disappoint. We

experienced challenging paddles, water ranging in colour from aquamarine to grey-green moving underneath our boats, wildlife on both ocean and land, fun with friends and quiet time to explore and reflect on inner realms.

The leaves were beginning to turn colour on some of the shoreline trees and shrubs as we paddled the final few miles from Bowen Island to West Vancouver on September 5th. A closing celebration on Ambleside Beach in Vancouver highlighted the support we had received throughout from family, friends and coastal residents that we met as strangers and left as friends. It was the end of a summer replete with memorable moments.

Images and stories from the four month expedition will be presented in a series of slide shows. Watch for further information on locations and specific dates.

Give us yer' beta!!

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ELECTRIC TRIP TO NINE PEAKS



Nine Peaks from the south summit
of Big Interior Mtn. (Marjorie's Load)
Photo: © Randy Jones

Randy Jones

I remember the first time I saw a picture of Nine Peaks on the Strathcona Park Recreation Map. The photo is a bit of an illusion, making the mountain seem much closer to Cream Lake than it really is. Nine Peaks stands like a sentinel guarding the south boundary of Strathcona Park. Personally I think it is one of the most beautiful mountains on Vancouver Island. No wonder it was chosen to be on the front of the brochure.

In June '98, Don Stenner, Glenn Fuller and I left Victoria at the standard 3:00 a.m. departure time to make the now much quicker drive via the Inland Island Highway to Strathcona Park. We stopped in Campbell River for the obligatory Logger's Breakfast before continuing on Highway 28. It feels like the trip has truly begun once you have left Campbell River and started heading inland toward Strathcona. Our anticipation was climbing as we drove along Buttle Lake identifying the peaks as they came into view. The question had to be asked: "Why is it that when you encounter one of those big Westmin trucks you're at one of those winding cliff-edged sections of the road?"

Soon we were making our final pack adjustments at the Bedwell Lake trailhead. There was lots of bear scat on the road but we weren't lucky enough to see one this time. There wasn't a cloud in sight, and with five days at our disposal, we were off to Nine Peaks via Big Interior.

Three hours along a rather unique trail which includes the infamous metal stair sections, we were looking across Bedwell Lake at Big Interior, Oinmitus Peak and Mount Tom Taylor. This spot typifies the intense beauty of Strathcona Park.

The continuous snow level began just above Bedwell Lake. One hour above Bedwell we were at Gun Sight Pass, below Little Jim Lake. At this point one has the choice of either going to the summit of Big Interior via the Humps, which is a longer route, or swinging around to the foot of the glacier. We had planned for the latter and had been advised to drop down 400 feet before traversing. Because the foot of the glacier is the same elevation as Gun Sight Pass we decided not to drop the 400 feet, but to traverse from the pass. We had no difficulty at all, probably because of the snow level.

We made camp on some exposed rock at the bottom of the glacier. We were treated to a fabulous sunset over Tom Taylor with the Golden Hinde and Behinde far in the distance, silhouetted in front of a deep orange sky. Not a whisper of wind or a cloud to be seen, just the sound of waterfalls on the side of the Humps. A few species of birds came by, including a Hummingbird.

After a breakfast of Oatmeal and Power Bars, we left under a clear blue sky for the summit of Big Interior. The sun shone on the route first thing in the morning, so it was very hot ascending the glacier.

The view of Nine Peaks jumped out at us when we reached the summit ridge and we enjoyed the view all the way south. It reminded me of seeing Milla Lake from the North Summit of the Comox Glacier: a sudden view that takes your breath away just for a moment. Truly awesome and inspiring.

Soon we were on the top of Big Interior marvelling at the view in every direction. While we enjoyed our traditional tinned fish seafood smorgasbord, we read all the entries in the summit register. Upon reading how quickly some people go from the trail head to the top of Big Interior, then over to Nine Peaks and back, I was glad we had lots of time to 'stop and smell the roses'.

After leaving the main summit we followed the ridge toward the south summit. The rock outcrop about 3/4 of the way along the ridge became our second campsite. We wanted a dramatic tent site and this proved to be the place. After camp was established we headed for the south summit. At this point something else came into view...cloud.

While we were lounging on the south summit we found a metal film canister containing the names and arm patch of the first Arrowsmith Scout Troupe from July 1965. The clouds were now looking a lot more threatening as we headed back to our tent site. As we got off the summit block and back on the ridge a lightning bolt hit Septimus and thunder began to roar. We were concerned but it appeared we were on the very outside of the storm and hoped it would pass just missing us. Septimus took a few more hits and the storm seemed to quit. An hour had passed and I was outside of the tent with my back to it, enjoying my backpacker's beef stroganoff, looking down at the still snowed-over Della Lake, when I began to feel like I had spider webs on my face. Then I thought I had ants on the back of my neck. Next I thought I was having an allergic reaction to my stroganoff. I looked over my shoulder and saw Don flicking his hair, and realized it was electricity causing this sensation. We found if we put our hands above our heads we heard a very audible buzz. Our hair was standing straight up as if you were in science class with

your hands on the Van Degraff generator. I thought a bolt was about to launch from right under our tent. A few anxious minutes later it passed and the sky to the north looked very promising for the morning.

Day three began with a high cloud cover and fog rolling up the Bedwell Valley from the ocean far below us. More oatmeal and Cliff Bars and with a reasonably early start we headed over to Nine Peaks. Conditions were perfect and without a heavy pack we were having a lot of fun. We headed for the Main Summit first as the weather was becoming more unstable above. Below, the valleys were filling with mist. Another seafood smorgasbord on the top and a very dramatic view which was half obscured by cloud. We couldn't find a register but left our own film canister record of our visit. We were lucky enough to stand on four of the nine peaks before heading back to camp on Big Interior.

In the evening, while reflecting on the day's activities from our summit ridge campsite, we were amazed at the constantly changing, powerful images caused by the shifting cloud and setting sun. We had a visit from two of the mountain's permanent residents, a couple of ptarmigans that didn't pay us much attention.

When I got up on day 4 the cloud level was just below our tent and only the tops of the bigger mountains were showing. The plan was to go back to Bedwell Lake for one more night. The moment we started down the Big Interior Glacier we dropped into the mist which turned into zero visibility for most of the way back to Gun Sight Pass. One hour later we were sitting on the relative luxury of a tent platform cooking dinner beside mist-draped Bedwell Lake. It seems we were down to one more decision: which restaurant to go to when we returned...



Hiking on Big Interior Mountain with Nine Peaks behind
Photo: ©Randy Jones

PADDLING BEYOND OUR ISLE

A Taste of the Wild Central Coast

Setting sun from Blackney Island Spit
Photo: © Brent Henry

Brent Henry

Ceremony is something that we don't get enough of in our modern culture, a friend of mine once said. I had to concur with that, as three dozen-odd fellow passengers, invited by the Queen of Chilliwack's captain, cheered my push-off from the stern kayak platform. Ten minutes later, I was alone at the north entrance to Rivers Inlet, solo-bound eventually for Pt. Hardy. After several long-distance phone calls, a log entry by the previous watch's captain, and a lengthy waiver, my request for a drop-off south of Namu was rewarded. From here, I would make my way to some of the remote pristine beaches of southern Calvert Island and the central mainland coast en route to Pt. Hardy.

The remote beaches of Calvert Island, beckoning across the five mile gap of Fitz Hugh Sound, seemed a reality at last. From my shell midden on Fury Island, in the Penrose Group, I fuelled up, checked out this familiar spot I had visited before, and waited for better conditions to cross the sound. Fury Island hadn't changed much since my visit six years earlier. The shell beach and old cabin, with their protected harbour behind, brought back memories of a previous stay-over, marred by a sport fishing yacht running its generator throughout most of the night. Choosing between the half dozen cruisers anchored behind me, and the quieting waters of the sound, I made my escape to Calvert.

Two hours of easy paddling brought me to the flank of Cape Calvert, where a small islet, with a single weathered conifer, testified to harsher winter weather. After a short paddle to the west I arrived at beautiful Grief Bay, with its long empty sandy beach, my evening campsite.

I always find that going solo or being distanced from familiar surroundings makes me regard certain events with greater meaning. So, while deciding where to put up my rain tarp, the discovery of an animal trotting towards me along the sands, arrested my task. A single wolf was headed my way, apparently without having noticed my presence. I froze standing. It slowly stopped 50 meters short, searching the air for something out of place. It stood unalarmed, until perceiving my white kayak below on the beach. Something was amiss. I eventually introduced myself and it retreated a hundred meters along its route. From here it laid down and watched my progress setting up camp. I had obviously intruded. At some point between glances, with my own job at hand, it departed, perhaps deciding that I wasn't leaving and a detour was worth the effort. This encounter, I reflected, was definitely a good omen.

After a day of rest and exploration on the sands of Grief Bay, I set off for Blackney Island, off the southwest shore of Calvert. The effects of a small blow during the night remained in the one metre swell. There are several islands close to shore here where one can thread along the coast. Another small sandy beach that I had visited on a previous trip lies just west of Grief Bay, in the indented shore. I stayed out from the open shallows of Chic Chic Bay today, as the swell and rocky shore looked less inviting from a soloist's point of view.

About three hour's paddle brought me in view of Blackney Island and the protective spit formed between it and Calvert. The ocean swell exploded over offshore shallows and rocks, producing a wild landscape that rewarded my effort.

Blackney Island is battered by the outside Pacific swell, but in its lee rests protected landing for kayaks, and one of the finest sand beaches on the coast. A mid-size deposited triangle of millennium-ground sand presents an artist-like collage of driftwood, mini-dunes, and animal tracks, bathed in spectacular sunsets.

The next morning, I was reluctant to leave this little paradise. Forecasted storm winds forced me to position myself closer to the open crossing at Fitz Hugh Sound. The return paddle was passive by comparison with that of the previous day. It almost had that stagnant stillness that makes any distance a slog.

Awakening the following day, I exited from my storm sheltering tent, again in familiar Grief Bay, only too eager to start my crossing of the sound. The conditions were now relatively smooth and clear, with most of the remaining rain clouds anchored to the mainland hills and mountains. The weather call was for a returning storm that evening, but I had worn out my welcome at Grief Bay. I paddle saluted Captain MacDonald and the Queen of Chilliwack, as they made their way by me, up the mid coast again. Skirting the reefs off of Kelp Head, a couple of sea lions 'stood up' to survey my passing. Scientists' warnings of their decreasing numbers seem to be true, as I see fewer of these graceful creatures each season.

Open Bight, a curving stretch of northern facing sand, basking today in warming sunshine, brought nostalgic memories of a group camp here, six years earlier. The beach was now vacant, yet as I walked to refill water bottles, I was reminded by the buzz of sport fishing boats from several floating lodges in the area that the mouth of Rivers Inlet is far from wild in the summer. Lunch would include a pleasant taste of memories and then I'd be off.

Heading south, the rock of Kelp Head holds a beautiful garden of sea palms, attesting to the seasonal ferocity of Queen Charlotte Sound. Stalks stand toward the sky when low tide affords them the luxury. Little pocket beaches dot the indented shoreline to the entrance of Smith Sound. On the east side of Brown Island sits a perfect example of a small midden beach, created over a rocky shore by hundreds of years of deposition, only to be inaccessible at low tide. I decided to explore the near shore of the sound instead of an immediate crossing. In Millbrook Cove, I was a little disappointed to find no beach and a small logging outfit that had left the cove far from appealing to the camper.

It is sometimes fortunate that we follow our whims and just turn off the beaten, or paddled, path and take what comes. If not, on this day for example, I wouldn't have met Bill and his clients, and not only had a lovely camp at Dsulish Bay, and an invitation for dinner, but a reminder that our coast is a lot smaller than one thinks. Bill worked for an old industry acquaintance of mine, and with my having been a guide, familiar with the background, together we produced enough camping stories for that evening's entertainment.

Unfortunately, stormy weather kept me beachbound another day. After a day of reading, writing and introspection on a very small sandy Smith Sound beach, I was again ready to paddle. I started my paddle across the sound toward Cape Caution. Just north of the Cape, broad sandy beaches became more numerous and I entered the summer feeding grounds of gray whales, the ones that don't migrate fully up to Alaska. The gray whale has been a success story in returning in population to the east Pacific coast. Each spring, large numbers migrate north from the calving grounds of Baja, Mexico, and travel the longest mammal migration on earth to the rich feeding grounds of the north. Increasing numbers, perhaps immature non-breeding individuals, remain to feed on the sandy muddy bottoms of our coast. These are the ones that provide whale watching in places like Tofino.

Having guided whale watching trips, from kayaks, I always try to make some noise, like banging on my hull, as I pass through their area. Today, it was my own complacency, basking in the sunshine outside the splendid Blunden Bay, that caused my closest encounter with a gray whale. I had seen it surface twice before me, and was grabbing my camera for a great shot, when I realized that the usual third surfacing, before diving deep, was going to happen right about where I had almost dozed off. Dropping my gear in its box and hastily closing my skirt, I took my first stroke in reverse to the misty blowing of ten meters of healthy whale. It rose alongside my starboard quarter. With its dorsal bent in that perfect dive form, it would have been only a matter of will to rid itself of a pesky kayak. It took all my might to keep my mouth shut and not spook it, as it slid silently into the cold water. Lunch, sunshine and the beautiful sand beach of Blunden Bay were a perfect calming follow-up to this incredible experience!

Intending to revisit the very magical beach of Burnett Bay that evening, I continued south to round the rocky head of Cape Caution. The seas were calm with a small swell, or in other words, perfect. There are a couple of beaches after this obstacle, and the small one, just north of Wilkie Point, offers protection for landing in heavy swell. For me that afternoon, it was also a good source of drinking water.

At the north end of Burnett Bay, several offshore islets provided a break from the constant surf for a landing. Most of this bay is an incredible three plus kilometres of crescent shaped sandy beach that must contain, besides its fine record of animal tracks, one of the largest accumulations of driftwood on the coast. The stunted conifer backdrop, dwarfed in comparison,



Tight quarters in Dsulish Bay
Photo: © Brent Henry

ONE TRACK MIND

Dan Clements

is evidence of the storms that can hit this shore. The beach provided an excellent post meal walk, and the sunset a colourful punctuation to an exciting day.

With a delayed departure the following morning to savour this special place, I decided to continue following the coast, rather than make an open windy crossing to the Storm Islands. The Fox Islands, sitting in the current flow of Slingsby Channel, with their prolific undersea life, are well worth a side exploration. The smaller channels provide good vantage points at low tide. As I islet hopped towards the Southgate group, several haulouts of harbour seals nervously surveyed my passage.

By the time I had reached a flat surface in the Southgates, to land and have some late lunch, the north-westerlies had picked up enough to cancel my plans to cross to the Walker Group for my last camp. I instead headed for the familiar sandy comfort of Shelter Bay, a quiet little cove often visited by Hardy residents on weekends. I was lucky to find the small beach empty. However, within half an hour, some visitors had arrived, only to again demonstrate the connections between folks and time on this coast. Two guides had arrived in a water taxi to retrieve stashed equipment. They happened to work for someone I had also known years ago in the kayak industry. The skipper of the taxi, on the other hand, was the seiner captain I had met at a campfire, six years ago, on my previous visit to Blunden Bay. He was the one who had earlier shared with us the location of my present camp. We swapped some tales, shared the weather report, and said goodbye until next time. Perhaps with this and my encounter with Bill in context, an earlier meeting in the ferry queue with a couple that I had guided in Baja, thirteen years before, wouldn't have seemed so coincidental!

The next day's fourteen miles into Hardy, through the Walker and Gorden Groups, were sunny, hot and flat. It was Sunday, and sport fishers were dotted throughout the islands. It was an appropriate stretch to reflect on a great trip. This is a wonderfully accessible route from Vancouver Island, due to the Discovery Passage ferry route and its accommodating crews. Although part of a route I had done before, and in better weather, this paddle had unique elements, from whales, to wolves, to past renewed acquaintances. There was some magic here, as in every voyage, even if sitting out on a beach was necessary to bring it to light!



This past Sunday a group of us went back to our roots. After meeting at the Bee Hive (a Campbell River 'must dine') for breakfast at 7:30, we headed out for what was to be a 60 km mountain bike ride. Our destination was Morton Lake Campground. Once there we planned on turning around and simply heading home. As often happens, a lot of nervous energy was spilt at the table, along with coffee too. The coffee spilt down Max's arm, but he didn't flinch! The waitress, very apologetic, begged forgiveness. Max replied "I get off on that sort of thing." Most at the table hardly took notice but that moment was a foreshadowing of things to come.

Beginning with a few clicks warming up on the road, we soon reached single-track. Instantly a young lion attacks the hill, but those of us in-the-know relax. Our tempo doesn't change; we are in for the long haul. Shortly, we were a group again. I ride to the front and begin to set a moderate pace through some rough single-track. Riding a bit slower than normal puts a premium on balance and a few riders have trouble and complain the pace is too slow. I press on relentlessly; like a metronome my tempo never falters.

As we pass through Snowden a couple of riders are shed. One, battered and depressed with his condition after 3 months out of the saddle, looks fried. We are an hour into the ride, approaching the 40 km mark. Six clicks to the turn around point. I hear a rider comment that perhaps the pace has been a bit quick! My blood begins to boil. A sign of weakness in another rider means only one thing...ATTACK!!!

I quietly pull to the side of the group, we are on double-track. I notice a spot up ahead where there

is less gravel on the shoulder. Silently I shift to the big-ring, drop down two cogs...and hammer. "Holy shit!" is the first sound of response. No one expected an attack in a ride we knew still had over 40 kms left. And the hard terrain was still to come. A few kilometres down the road I am reeled in; we are a group once more.

Instantly another attacks. I am slightly off the back and nearly see the Hive Special on my bars by the time I bridge to the leaders. The pace drops abruptly, we turn a sharp corner and pass the halfway point. A few riders lean their bikes on a picnic bench and begin to remove their helmets. Max inquires quizzically "What are they doing?" I have no reply, I don't know. We turn and head for home and attack! The ride continues, attack, attack, attack; we are thrashed.

By 60 km it has become a death march for some. A struggle to remain upright and continue peddling. The attacks continue. We are no longer a group, riders are strewn throughout Snowden, the Pump House, and we don't care, we attack. The sole purpose has become to be first to arrive at some imaginary place. A place where the other riders sit up, their legs and lungs crying for relief and respite. They are cooked and can no longer respond to your relentless attack. You have won, you stand upon the highest pinnacle, you have become a Sunday hero.

The carnage is completed. Max and I cruise home, exactly 80 km as we step through the door. Max grabbed a Kootenay training aid. This guy is earning his new nickname "The Liver." I cannot think of beer; I cannot think. Another Sunday stroll complete, I flop onto the couch, and turn on NASCAR. We are back to our roots.



ANTICIPATING

Graham Jacobs, Mt Cain



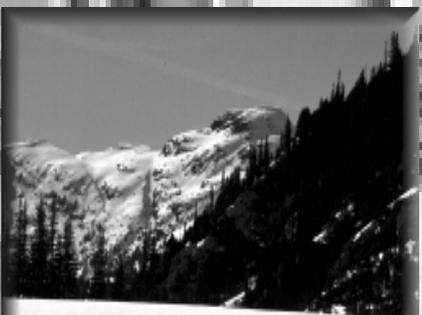
Darren Wilman, Mt Cain



Crystal Jennings, Mt Washington



Telemark skiers on Mt. Becher, Forbidden Plateau, Strathcona Park



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WINTER

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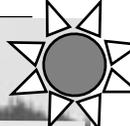
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