

RAINCOAST BULLETIN

Newsletter of the Raincoast Education Society January 2012



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Notes from the Field

By Dan Harrison

For over eleven years, the Raincoast Education Society has been dedicated to providing residents and visitors of the Clayoquot and Barkley Sound region with the necessary tools and information to make environmentally responsible life choices.

Every program we deliver, from school programs to public lectures to outdoor education, we strive to provide people of all ages with a unique perspective

of our community, our role in the greater environment and to encourage informed discussion and responsible action towards stewardship and sustainability.

After years of studying, teaching and living amongst the pristine marine and terrestrial ecosystems of Clayoquot and Barkley Sound, we have come to appreciate the value of diversity. Diversity, in an ecological sense, brings resilience, the ability of an ecosystem to adapt and reorganize following disturbances and other rapidly

changing conditions. It is with this in mind that we strive to put these lessons into practice by providing a diversity of educational programs and opportunities so our community is able to adapt to future challenges. In this newsletter, we are pleased to share with you some of the ideas and programs we have been putting into action over the past year.



School Programs

Our local school programs reach over 1,000 children and youth per year in an area of British Columbia where very little environmental and cultural education (outside of regular school curriculum) occurs. Recognizing that our children are most invested in a future with clean air, clean soil and clean water, we work hard to design and deliver a broad range of high-caliber educational programs that inspire local youth to think critically and become actively engaged in building a sustainable future.

Pacific Salmon School Programs

Beginning this past fall, the Raincoast Education Society launched its Pacific salmon school programs to elementary and high school students on the West Coast of Vancouver Island. Each program includes a marine ecology component, a cultural history component, and a sustainability component, with “hishuk-ish- tsawalk,” interconnectedness, as the overarching theme of the program.

The fall component focused on the seasonal spawn, with students visiting either natural spawning grounds or hatcheries. Grade 10 science students at the Ucluelet Secondary School also had the opportunity to learn the basics of

salmon stream restoration during a 1-day Streamkeepers field course.

The Raincoast Education Society's Pacific salmon program will continue into 2012, with school programs reflecting the seasonal cycles of wild salmon. We will also be coordinating with Uu-a-thluk (Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council Fisheries) in February to host a Salmon Sustainability Youth Forum in Ucluelet. The forum will provide high school students with the opportunity to engage with local representatives and stakeholders to discuss the future of wild Pacific salmon.



Raincoast Sustainable Living Programs

As part of the Raincoast Sustainable Living Program, our organization actively engages local youth with hands-on activities focused on a range of sustainability topics. In 2011, some of this work included programs on, healthy

food, green building, alternative transportation, tap water vs bottled water, recycling, living without plastic and many more! Several of these programs were made into short Public Service Announcement (PSAs) that ran on local television. Please check out these videos at: www.youtube.com/user/RaincoastEducation

Waste Reduction

On Flores Island, located north of Tofino, the Ahousaht Nation is currently implementing a waste reduction strategy focused on alternative waste streams, such as recycling and composting. As part of the education component of the project, the Raincoast Education Society is delivering recycling and composting programs to ensure that local youth have the information to lead this important initiative.

Natural History

As an organization, we evolved from the recognition that the pristine old-growth forests and Pacific ocean that define our region were under-represented and needed a voice in local schools. We are, therefore, very proud to continue offering our core natural history programs. In 2011, some of these programs included: plant ecology, geology, sea otters and mushrooms. Look out for our wolf programs in 2012!

RES salmon sustainability program, Atleo River October 2011

“The program has brought to life, in a tangible way, the importance of the salmon spawn, in a much larger context than what most of the students were aware of before”

-Rebecca Miller, Grade 5 Teacher at Maaqtusiis School, Ahousaht.



“The watershed scale is ideal for discussions of sustainability...because by natural consequence what someone does in a watershed affects everyone and everything living within it.”



HARRISON PHOTO

Photos from 2011
Raincoast Watershed
Forum, November
28th at the Tofino
Community Hall



HARRISON PHOTO



HARRISON PHOTO

Raincoast Watershed Stewardship Project

The Raincoast Watershed Stewardship Project is a multi-faceted research, education and outreach initiative dedicated to promoting environmentally responsible behaviours within the watersheds of Clayoquot Sound. By challenging conventional perceptions of how we use water and providing people with information to make responsible water-use decisions, we are working to ensure that activities within our communities have a minimal impact on the overall watershed.

We began our project by surveying residents to gauge local knowledge about our water system and other water use topics. Based on the feedback from

the survey and other community members, we have focused the bulk of our efforts on the creation of a website compiling locally-relevant information about:

- 1) water and energy efficient home appliances, (toilets, laundry machines, dish washers, hot-water heaters, faucets), grey-water systems, rainwater harvesting systems, and contact lists of local suppliers;
- 2) environmentally-responsible wastewater discharge (recipes for biodegradable cleaning products and other products included in wastewater);
- 3) disposal of hazardous waste and recyclable materials;

- 4) environmentally-responsible boat maintenance;
- 5) the history of Tofino's water system. It is anticipated that the website will be complete by the end of February, 2012.

In addition to the reference website, we have made a concerted effort to raise the profile of our local watersheds by hosting the 2011 Raincoast Watershed Forum, a public event that brought together 14 local organizations currently working on research, monitoring and stewardship projects in our local watersheds. With over 50 people in attendance, the forum provided a platform for sharing information and discussing local issues.



“The mission of the Raincoast Education Society is to help shape an environmentally sustainable future for Clayoquot and Barkley Sound region through education and community outreach”



Tofino Mudflats Wildlife Stewardship Project

For the past six years, the Raincoast Education Society has been delivering a range of education and outreach activities to encourage conservation and stewardship within the Tofino Mudflats Wildlife Management Area (TMWMA). The TMWMA is protected under the BC Wildlife Act and consists of approximately 1770 hectares of tidal flats and 338 hectares of terrestrial lands near Tofino, BC (see map right).

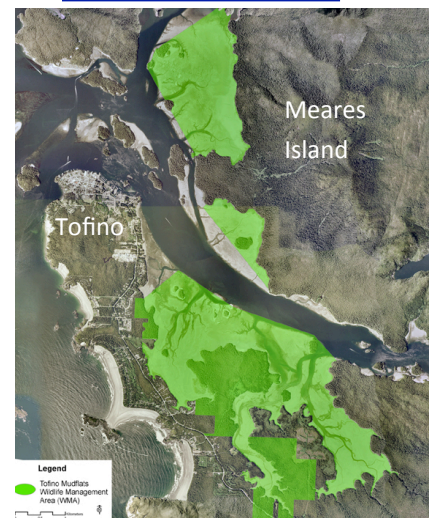
The TMWMA is a globally significant ecosystem for migratory shorebirds, a critical wetland for wintering waterfowl and supports a wide variety of other wildlife, including fish and shellfish species and various marine and terrestrial mammals such as harbour porpoises,

harbour seals, mink, river otters, raccoons, black bears, gray wolves, black-tailed deer, and cougar.

In 2011, we delivered a range of outreach programs to create awareness about the Tofino Mudflats, including guided walks, school field trips, invasive species removals, birding workshops and monthly “More Than Just Mud” columns in the Westerly Newspaper.

We also helped coordinate the 2011 shorebird survey during the spring and fall migrations on the Tofino Mudflats, which at it’s peak, observed 30,000 birds per day! The 14th Annual Tofino Shorebird Festival was held at the peak of the spring migration and welcomed over 300 people to the Tofino Mudflats to

celebrate the largest wildlife migration in the region (see festival info on page 5). For more information about the Tofino Mudflats, please visit www.tofinomudflats.com



Beach Seine
marine
explorations
on the Tofino
Mudflats
(right)

Fire building
workshop as
part of our
wilderness
survivor camp,
Tofino (below)



HARRISON PHOTO



JOHNSTON PHOTO

Summer Programs

Summer is a time of plenty. Plenty of fish, plenty of visitors and plenty of summer programs! This past summer, the Raincoast Education Society, with the help of summer interns, Laura Timmermans and Ava Hansen, offered a range of summer programs for local and visiting children and adults on the west coast of Vancouver Island.

Summer Camps

In 2011, we were pleased to offer 6 summer camps (4 in Tofino, 2 in Ucluelet) focused on engaging children in the outdoors, with the goal of building life-long appreciation and respect for the natural world. We also offered 9 Young Naturalists programs for children ages 7 and younger. This past summer, some of our programs focused on: berries, mudflats, watersheds, animal tracking, amphibians, wilderness survival and environmental

film camp (with Strongheart Productions).

Guided Walks

In addition to children's camps, we also offer weekly nature walks during the summer months at Cox Bay. Our walks begin at the beach with an introduction to the area, then continue by exploring the spectacular tide pools at the north end of the beach before entering the old-growth forest trail leading to one of the most breathtaking vistas on the coast.

Special Programs

This past summer, we were pleased to offer two public beach seines on the mudflats below Tofino Sea Kayaking. With help from Dorothy Baert, Jen Yakimishyn and Katie Beach, we were able to put on two excellent events, reaching over 50 people. The beach seines, which involve seining the nearshore eelgrass with a net, provided a great snap-shot of our rich marine ecosystems.

Festivals

14th Annual Shorebird Festival

This year marked the 14th year for the Tofino Shorebird Festival. With over 300 people in attendance and over 30,000 shorebirds visiting our beaches and mudflats daily during the week, the event was a huge success. With the goal of celebrating and creating awareness about our region's largest wildlife migration, we were pleased to host guest speakers, guided bird tours, art shows and children's events. Don't miss this year's Tofino Shorebird Festival, May 4-6, 2012.

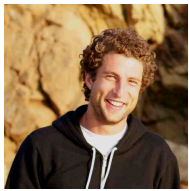
11th Annual Tofino Lantern Festival

The Tofino Lantern Festival is the Raincoast Education Society's largest fundraiser and the family event of the season. Located within the Tofino Botanical Gardens, this festival displays hundreds of hand-made candle lanterns, from owls to sharks to jellyfish, a galaxy of planets and much more. The Tofino Lantern Festival is a car-free, alcohol-free event. Join us August 26, 2012.



WINDH PHOTO

Jellyfish and kelp
lanterns as part
of the "undersea
display" at the
Tofino Lantern
Festival



Staff

Dan Harrison
Executive Director
dan@raincoasteducation.org



Kimberly Johnston
Education Coordinator
kimberly@raincoasteducation.org

2011 Summer students:
Laura Timmermans and Ava Hansen.
UVic co-op student: Scott Skagford.

A huge THANK YOU to Josie Osborne for five remarkable years as Executive Director of the Raincoast Education Society. Josie left the RES in 2011 to put down roots at the Tofino Botanical Gardens.

Thank you to Cameron Dennison and Lindsay Rehner for all of their volunteer dedication.

Board of Directors

Caron Olive, Jen Pukonen, Kathleen Shaw, Marnie Helliwell, Melanie Morris and Morgan Callison.

Thank you to Barbara Beasley, Barbara Schramm, Tanya Dowdell and Silva Johansson for all of their dedication as long-time board members. You will be greatly missed.

By Mail:
PO Box 815
Tofino BC
V0R 2Z0

In Person:
1084 Pacific
Rim Hwy.,
located in the
Ecolodge at
the Tofino
Botanical
Gardens

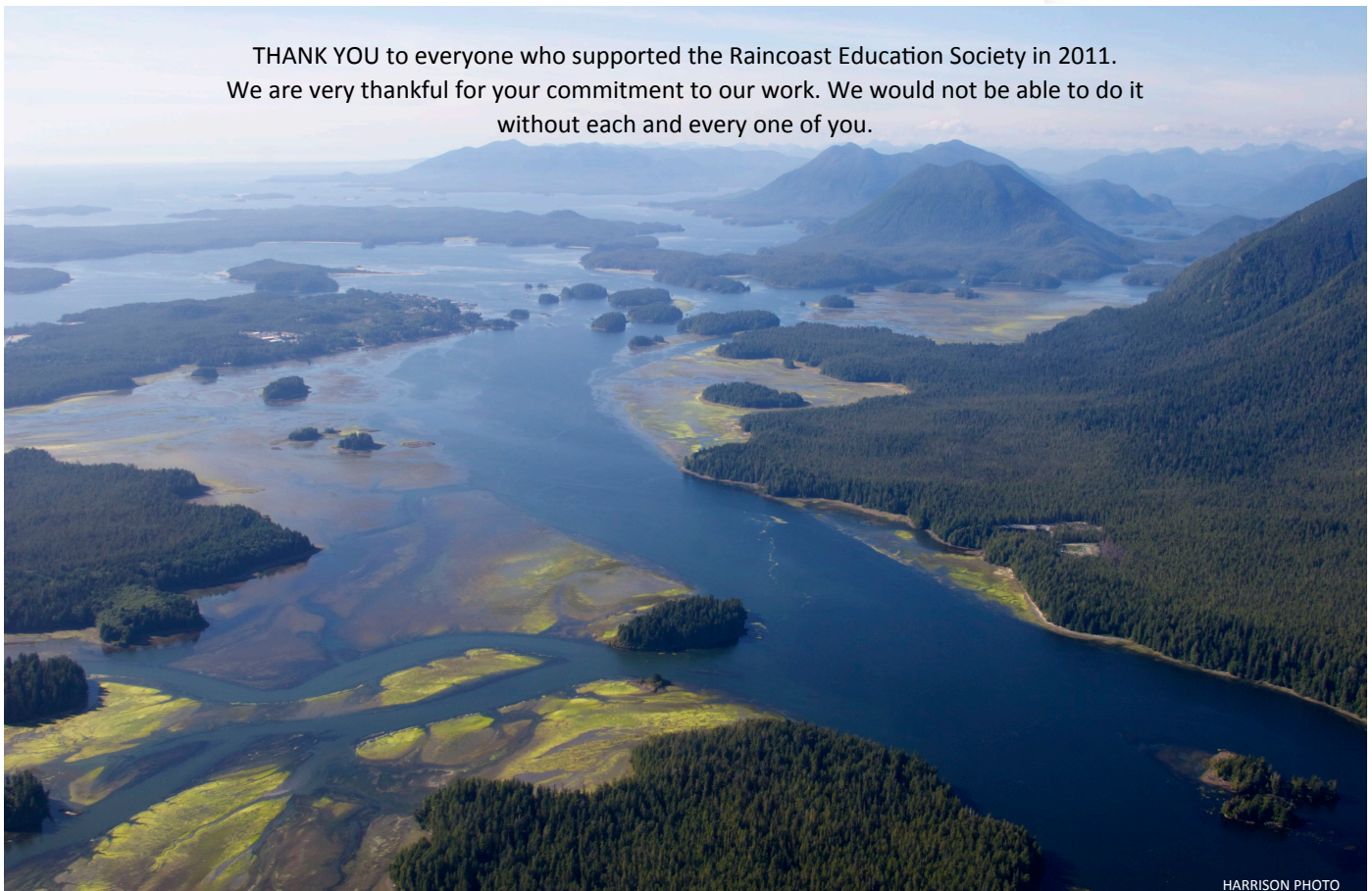
Supporters

The Raincoast Education Society greatly appreciates the generosity of the following organizations for their financial support of our programs in 2011 (>\$1,000): Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Anonymous Donor, BC Ministry of Environment, Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, District of Tofino, Ecotrust Canada, Environment Canada, Jamie's Whaling Station, Long Beach Lodge Resort, Nuuchah-nulth Tribal Council, Pacific Sands Beach Resort, Paddle West Kayaking, Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia, Services Canada and the University Of Victoria.

Interested in supporting our work? Please visit our website www.raincoasteducation.org, send us an email info@raincoasteducation.org or give us a call 250-725-2560. The Raincoast Education Society is a non-profit organization and a registered charity.



THANK YOU to everyone who supported the Raincoast Education Society in 2011. We are very thankful for your commitment to our work. We would not be able to do it without each and every one of you.



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