

RAINCOAST BULLETIN

Newsletter of the Raincoast Education Society

raincoasteducation.org

Spring/Summer 2014



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Notes from the Field

By Dan Harrison

Spring on the coast is always a time of anticipation: the thrill of the first herring spawn; the first blows of returning grey whales; the arrival of tens of thousands of migrating shorebirds; the wolves denning up with their pups; the spruce buds emerging from winter dormancy; the skunk cabbage poking up through boggy substrate, attracting the first fly hatches. There are few things more compelling than watching a coastal landscape awaken. One can't help but feel privileged to experience it, and to be part of it; however, with privilege, comes responsibility.

We believe that healthy ecosystems and healthy communities are interconnected and that knowledge is the bond that strengthens that connection. It is with that in mind that we have made it our goal to ensure that residents of the West Coast have the knowledge needed to act responsibly and serve as stewards of our land, air and water. Conservation is our goal, education is our tool.

This past year we were pleased to reach over 3000 people through our school programs, summer camps, outdoor

education, field monitoring, guided walks, speaker series, field courses, festivals and the Tofino Ambassador Program.

In this season's newsletter, we're pleased to share some of the programs we've been delivering this past fall and winter, as well as what you can look forward to in the coming months.

Our programs take an informal approach to education and bring people of all ages out on the land and the water to learn about, appreciate, and be inspired by the natural world through immersion; only through getting our hands dirty and our feet wet will we truly understand what makes this place so special.



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RAINCOAST SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Our local school programs reach over 1,000 youth per year in an area of British Columbia where very little environmental and cultural education 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. Here is a sample of some of the programs we've put into action in the past year.

WHALES OF THE PACIFIC

Through the Whales of the Pacific program, students within the Nuuchah-nulth regions of Vancouver Island gained an understanding of common whale species of the North Pacific and their roles in local ecosystems, their cultural significance, and how to be active stewards of these species.

In partnership with Strawberry Isle Marine Research Society, we delivered the Build-a-Whale Program at Maaqtusiis Elementary School (Ahousaht) and Haahuupayak School (Port Alberni). See photo (right).

We also took the Gr. 6 Wickanninish Community School's Oceanography class to Echachist Island with Gisele Martin to delve deeper into whaling culture and to observe whale bones on Echachist Island.



OWL PROGRAM

The Owl Program taught children about owl identification, habitat, mating habits, calls, and prey. The program culminated with an owl pellet dissection, in which students worked in pairs to dissect the pellets. Bones were pulled out of the pellets and fur was removed from them. Once the bones were cleaned, students matched the bones up with the corresponding anatomy sheet that went with the pellet.

E.G.O.L.S.

The *E.G.O.L.S* (students for: environmental and global awareness, outdoor leadership and sustainability) are a group of Grade 5,6,7 students at Wickaninnish Community School who have an avid interest in outdoor education, wilderness skills, and survival training. Every Monday the E.G.O.L.S. leave their classrooms for their outdoor curriculum: 1.5 hours outside - rain or shine! Students this past year tested navigation techniques and directional markers, adventured down muddy trails, learned about surviving off the plants of our rainforest, and their medicinal values.

This spring, students will learn about animal tracking and making rope from plants in our rainforest.



RAINCOAST SCHOOL PROGRAMS (CONTINUED)

LIFE WITHOUT PLASTIC

Life without Plastic was lead by guest educator Taina Uitto of Denman Island, who has eliminated the use of plastic in her life. The Gr. 6 class of Wickannish Elementary School was tasked with keeping all of their plastic for one week and then bringing it to class. Taina gave students alternatives to their plastic choices by showing them her plastic substitutes: a wooden tooth brush with boar hair, stainless steel containers, home-made tooth-paste and cleaning products, bamboo straws, etc.



SECRETS OF SCIENCE

Secrets of Science is a playful, outdoor experience that incorporates environmental education with learning the scientific method. Secrets of Science was recently delivered at Wickaninnish Community School with the Gr. 3/4 class. Students worked in teams to collect 3 diverse soil samples and then made hypotheses about which soil would retain the most water; they then tested to see which type of soil retained the most water. The aim of the lesson was to teach students about the qualities of the rainforest soils and what makes our rainforest so special.



PLANT TECHNOLOGY

Plant Technology introduces students to 12 plants, each with a diversity of human benefits or disadvantages. Student teams are given photos with the different plants, and work together to find their plants in the rainforest. They then work as a class to match each photo with the correct plant, and explore how that plant has been used by humans.





TOFINO AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

The Tofino Ambassador Program aims to build a strong and healthy community, encouraging a positive attitude among responsible citizens, improving community relations with visitors, and growing support for the diversity and wellbeing of area businesses.

The Tofino Ambassador Program is a free training program for residents and is offered through a partnership with the Tofino-Long Beach Chamber of Commerce, with support from the District of Tofino and Tourism Tofino. As of Spring 2014, three Ambassador Program courses are now offered to the public. For a complete course schedule, and to register online, visit raincoasteducation.org.

INTRODUCTORY COURSE

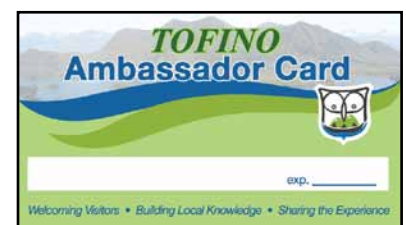
This four-hour orientation session delivers fun and informative material for newcomers and first timers to the program. Learn about local history, cross-cultural understanding, natural ecology, businesses and activities, festivals, good host etiquette, and civic information.

WEST COAST ECOLOGY

This four-hour session focuses on the rich natural landscape of the region, from the rare coastal rainforests to the rich marine environment. Learn about the wide range of species that inhabit these complex ecosystems and gain an understanding of why Clayoquot Sound is recognized internationally as a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

NUU-CHAH-NULTH LANDSCAPE *New in 2014!*

This **NEW** Ambassador course, taught by Gisele Martin, is a four-hour introduction to Nuuchahnulth homelands, culture and language. Learn about local history, cross cultural understanding, Nuuchahnulth language and cultural world view. Explore the ancient and continued interconnections between the local landscape, the ocean and First Nations culture.



Participants of the program will receive an Ambassador Card, which can be redeemed for discounts and benefits at many local businesses!



RAINCOAST EELGRASS MONITORING ON THE TOFINO MUDFLATS

In 2012, the Raincoast Education Society commissioned a State of the Eelgrass Report for Clayoquot Sound, compiling all eelgrass research, monitoring and mapping projects in the region between 1974 and 2012. The report suggested the major knowledge gap of the region is related to the lack of understanding of the distribution and health of eelgrass habitats.

Loss of eelgrass beds can have serious impacts on coastal ecosystems, including declines in commercial fisheries and migratory waterfowl populations. Further, eelgrass is essential foraging habitat for the Pacific Great Blue Heron (*Ardea herodias fannini*), a provincially blue-listed species.

The Raincoast eelgrass monitoring program, in partnership with Parks Canada, Nature Trust of British Columbia, Strawberry Isle Marine Research Society, the Sitka foundation, and local residents, maps and surveys eelgrass beds in the Tofino Mudflats Wildlife Management Area and empowers local youth through the participation in outdoor, conservation-based science.

RAINCOAST RADIATION MONITORING PROGRAM

On March 11, 2011 the magnitude 9.0 Tohoku earthquake and resulting tsunami led to meltdowns in three of six nuclear reactors at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant. Some of the radionuclides released to the atmosphere and directly into the Pacific Ocean could potentially pose environmental and public health risks on Canada's west coast.

The Raincoast Education Society has partnered with the University of Victoria and California State University Long Beach to carry out radionuclide sampling of sea water and kelp in Clayoquot Sound. Financial support for the project comes from the Clayoquot Biosphere Trust.



RAINCOAST FIELD COURSES

MUSHROOMS OF THE WEST COAST, 2013 with instructors Shannon Berch & Andy MacKinnon

This 4-day course, taught in October 2013, introduced participants to the wonderful world of West Coast Mushrooms! The course covered a range of fungal topics, including identification of edible, medicinal and poisonous fungi, proper collection techniques, cooking with wild mushrooms, and the role of fungi in west coast forests.

The 2013 mushroom course had 25 eager participants (see photo below), great weather, and plenty of mushrooms in the forest!

The next Mushrooms of the West Coast field course will be held on Thanksgiving weekend, October 10-12, 2014.



BIRDS OF THE WEST COAST, MAY 9-11 2014 with instructor Barb Beasley, Ph.D \$280 incl tax./person.

This weekend course (taught in Tofino, BC, in Clayoquot Sound UNESCO biosphere reserve) will introduce participants to the unique adaptations and ecology of West Coast birds. This three-day, field-based course will focus on:

- Intro to Birds – What are they? Why are we so fascinated with them?
- Understanding the unique behavior and ecology of:
 - Songbirds of the coastal temperate rain forest
 - Migrating shorebirds on the coastal mudflats and beaches
 - Seabirds and their near shore nesting islands
- Detailed instruction on how to ID birds in the field by sight and sound

Please visit raincoasteducation.org for more course info and for the current listing of 2014 field courses!



RAINCOAST SUMMER PROGRAMS

SUMMER CAMPS

We are happy to be continuing our partnership with the Parks and Recreation department of the District of Tofino in offering 3 week-long youth (8-12yrs old) camps this summer. Dates and registration will be published in the Tofino Summer Parks and Recreation Guide.

1. *Raincoast Young Inventors Camp*
2. *Raincoast Wilderness Camp*
3. *Raincoast Navigation Camp*

YOUNG NATURALISTS

The Young Naturalists Program is one of our longest running programs, with a goal of providing meaningful, nature-based learning opportunities for the leaders of tomorrow, ages 2 years – 7 years. One-day programs are offered on a weekly basis throughout the summer months (July & August).

GUIDED WALKS

Our expert guides draw on both scientific and cultural perspectives to provide a unique understanding of the globally significant ecosystems of the region. From the rare coastal rainforests to the rich marine environment to the impressive wildlife migrations, our guided walks explore the incredible diversity of flora and fauna. Our most popular guided walks are our rainforest walks, intertidal walks and mudflat walks, but we are always excited to take your group on a tour that is unique to your needs.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

We offer a series of events throughout the summer including public beach seins and other engaging, hands-on outdoor learning opportunities.

For more info on Raincoast Summer Programs, visit RAINCOASTEDUCATION.ORG

FESTIVALS!



17th Annual Tofino Shorebird Festival

The 17th annual Tofino Shorebird Festival will be held on the weekend of May 2-4, 2014. The Tofino Shorebird Festival celebrates the arrival or tens of thousands of migrating shorebirds with a series of educational birding activities throughout the region. We draw on local and visiting experts to participate in the festival, offering guest lectures, birding workshops and much more! For more info, visit raincoasteducation.org.



14th Annual Tofino Lantern Festival

The 14th annual Tofino Lantern Festival will be held on Sunday, August 17th, 2014, from 7:00 pm - 10:30 pm in the Tofino Botanical Gardens. This is our 'signature' community event and fundraiser, drawing the young and old with an unbelievable variety of hand made lanterns and local entertainment. For more info, visit raincoasteducation.org.

Don't miss this magical, candle-lit celebration of West Coast culture!

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

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Marnie Helliwell, Laura Loucks, Melanie Morris,
Jen Pukonen & Sarah Timberlake



SUPPORTERS

The Raincoast Education Society greatly appreciates the generosity of the following organizations for their financial support of our programs in 2013 (>\$1,000): Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, Anonymous Donor, Clayoquot Biosphere Trust, District of Tofino, Jamie's Whaling Station, Long Beach Lodge Resort, Nature Trust of British Columbia, Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, Pacific Sands Resort, Paddle West Sea Kayaking, Sitka Foundation, Services Canada, Tides Canada, Tofino Botanical Gardens, Tofino-Long Beach Chamber of Commerce.

THANK YOU to everyone who supports the Raincoast Education Society.
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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