

**ORIGINAL PURPOSE** To protect unusual dry-site plant communities in the Coastal Western Hemlock Zone

#### OVERVIEW

<b>Date established:</b>	30 April 1996	<b>Location:</b>	5 km SW of Courtenay
<b>ORC #:</b>	6081	<b>Latitude:</b>	49°38'N
<b>Map number:</b>	93 K/2	<b>Longitude:</b>	125°06'W

<b>Total Area:</b>	47 ha	<b>Elevation:</b>	140-280 m
<b>Land:</b>	47 ha		

**Access:** Accessible via Lake Trail Road out of Courtenay to BC Hydro's day-use area. A 200 m hike along an old logging trail leads to Comox Lake.

**Biogeoclimatic Zone:** Coastal Western Hemlock (CWH)  
**Biogeoclimatic Variant:** CWHxm 1 Eastern Very Dry Maritime  
**Ecosection:** Nanaimo Lowlands  
**Region:** Vancouver Island  
**Management Area:** Strathcona

#### COMPOSITION

**Physical:** In its southwestern portion the reserve comprises steep, south-facing slopes with predominantly very shallow soils and exposed rock outcrops of Karmutsen volcanics, while in the northern and eastern parts more gentle slopes and surficial deposits prevail.

**Biological:** The physical features are reflected in the vegetation: The south-facing portion with exposed bedrock sites shows a variety of open dry-site plant communities, while the remainder is covered by young Douglas-fir forest. The southwestern portion has the larger species and community diversity.

As a result of the stunted, shrubby and predominantly evergreen plant cover and the warm lakeshore aspect, the site has a "Mediterranean" character. Unusual plant communities associated with dry open sites are characterized by the following tree/shrub combinations: 1. Douglas-fir (Shore pine)- Arbutus-manzanita- bearberry, and 2. Douglas-fir (shore pine)- Arbutus- rocky mountain juniper. [This is most likely *Juniperus maritima*.] This is one of only three sites on Vancouver Island where rocky mountain juniper occurs inland and above sea level.

Shallow soils support a large number of spring flowers which are more typically found in the Coastal Douglas-fir biogeoclimatic zone such as common camas, field chickweed, blue-eyed Mary, pretty shooting-star, woolly sunflower, chocolate lily, spring gold, chickweed monkey-flower, seablush and others. The rich fern flora include the Indian's-dream, maidenhair spleenwort, parsley fern, goldenback fern, licorice fern, narrow-leaved sword fern, and the rare least moonwort, dune bentgrass, western St. John's-wort and Macoun's groundsel.

There is also a rich dry-site bryophyte and lichen flora.

Many species on this reserve are near the environmental and/or geographical limits of their range.

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**Cultural:** There is a logging history within the reserve.

#### MANAGEMENT CONCERNS

SIGNIFICANT SPECIES	BC LIST STATUS	COSEWIC STATUS	CF PRIORITY
Northern Goshawk, ssp. <i>laingi</i>	Red listed	Threatened (2000)	1
Macoun's groundsel	Blue listed		2
least moonwort	Blue listed		3
elegant rein orchid			4
western St. John's-wort			4

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#### THREATS

**Climate Change:** Depending on the levels of disturbance and the role of invasive species, the diversity of rare plants within this community may be reduced.

This site, being a relatively dry and warm adapted community, may actually be representative of future expanding ecosystems in British Columbia.

**Forestry:** Forest activity on private land adjacent to reserve has eliminated any buffer leaving the reserve as an isolated forest patch.

**Recreation:** Isolated incidents of camping, partying and campfires occur.

A network of trails throughout the backcountry has been created.

Dirt bikes and motorized recreational vehicles are entering the reserve.

Mountain bikers are biking and constructing ramps and associated facilities within the reserve.

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#### RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES

The reserve is a good site for research on rare plant species.

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**ER WARDEN  
ACTIVITIES**

- Monitor/report illegal camping where observed
- Survey fauna present in ER
- Monitor for invasive plants (control or eradicate where possible)

**SCIENTIFIC NAMES OF SPECIES MENTIONED IN THE COMOX LAKE BLUFFS ER  
ACCOUNT**

**Flora**

arbutus (*Arbutus menziesii*)  
bearberry, red fruit (*Arctostaphylos rubra*)  
bentgrass, dune (*Agrostis pallens*)  
blue-eyed Mary, small-flowered (*Collinsia parviflora*)  
camas, common (*Camassia quamash*)  
chickweed, field (*Cerastium arvense*)  
Douglas-fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*)  
erriophyllum, woolly (*Eriophyllum lanatum*)  
fern, goldenback (*Pentagramma triangularis*)  
fern, licorice (*Polypodium glycyrrhiza*)  
fern, parsley (*Cryptogramma acrostichoides*)  
fern, sword, narrow-leaved (*Polystichum imbricans* ssp. *imbricans*)  
groundsel, Macoun's (*Senecio macounii*)  
Indian's-dream (*Aspidotis densa*)  
juniper, Rocky Mountain (*Juniperus scopulorum*)[Most likely seaside, *J. maritima*]  
lily, chocolate (*Fritillaria affinis*)  
manzanita, hairy (*Arctostaphylos columbiana*)  
monkey-flower, chickweed (*Mimulus alsinoides*)  
moonwort, least (*Botrychium simplex*)  
orchid, elegant rein (*Piperia elegans*)  
pine, shore (*Pinus contorta* var. *contorta*)  
seablush (*Plectritis congesta*)  
shootingstar, pretty (*Dodecatheon pulchellum* ssp.)  
spring gold (*Lomatium utriculatum*)  
spleenwort, maidenhair (*Asplenium trichomanes*)  
St. John's-wort, western (*Hypericum scouleri*)

**Fauna**

Goshawk, Northern, *laingi* subspecies (*Accipiter gentilis laingi*)

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