

Visit Our Wildlife

in

Campbell River

North Central Vancouver Island



Campbell River is the gateway to the northern end of Vancouver Island and to Strathcona Provincial Park. Located about a 2-hour drive from Nanaimo, Campbell River is situated on the east coast of Vancouver Island along the biologically diverse Discovery Passage.

In this brochure is information for 13 sites where you may visit our wildlife. The river and streams in the Campbell River area are important for spawning salmon and the extensive forests are home to large herds of deer and elk. The tidal shorelines contain miles of accessible beaches where intertidal invertebrates may be observed, and where a wide range of birdlife and marine mammals are common offshore.

In addition to Campbell River, this area includes the communities of Black Creek, Gold River and Tahsis, and several Gulf Islands including Salt Spring Island. Strathcona Provincial Park, British Columbia's first provincial park in 1911, is a hiker's paradise and is located a short drive from Campbell River.

Highway Change - With the completion of the Inland Island Highway from Courtenay to Campbell River, the Vancouver Island Highway referred to within as Highway 19 will be renumbered to Highway 19A.

Discovery Passage

Discovery Passage is situated between Vancouver Island and Quadra Island. For more information contact the Environment and Lands regional office in Nanaimo [(250) 751-3100; 2080 Labieux Road, Nanaimo, B.C. V9T 6J9].

Access - Access to this area is by private boat or the ferry to Quadra Island. Viewing of this area is possible from land at Discovery Pier, the fishing pier located in downtown Campbell River.

Viewing Highlights - The common year round birds include Bald Eagle, Harlequin Duck and Great Blue Heron. Harbour Seals are very common. Low tides at tide changes are good for viewing. During the winter months, especially from November through March, the area attracts large numbers of marine birds including Common Loon, Pacific Loon, Marbled Murrelet, Common Murre, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Pigeon Guillemot, Pelagic Cormorant, Double-crested Cormorant and Brandt's Cormorant.



Did You Know?

After Coho Salmon spawn, their fertilized eggs remain in the gravel bottom until spring when the young emerge. Unlike Chum Salmon, these Coho fry will remain for another 1 or 2 years in their home stream system before migrating to the sea. So, please, be careful in salmon streams throughout the year, not just when you see spawning adults.

Ripple Rock

The Ripple Rock area in Seymour Narrows is visible from a distance at the highway rest stop northwest of Campbell River and just southeast of Menzies Bay. For more information contact the Environment and Lands regional office in Nanaimo [(250) 751-3100; 2080 Labieux Road, Nanaimo, B.C. V9T 6J9].

Access - There is trail access to the Ripple Rock area located about 16 km north of Campbell River. A rest stop with small parking area and views of the area is located on the east side of the Vancouver Island Highway (Highway 19).

Viewing Highlights - From the Wilfred Point lookout over Seymour Narrows you may be lucky enough to visit at the time when Harbour Porpoise, Dall's Porpoise or Orca are present. Binoculars will improve your chances of seeing these marine mammals. Harbour Seals are found in the bay year round. The spring and fall migrations bring many sea birds into Menzies Bay. The forests are home to Varied Trush and many wood-pecker species. In summer look for warblers. Red Squirrels are seen and heard.

Rebecca Spit Provincial Marine Park

This park is located on the east side of Quadra Island. It contains a long spit and sandy beach along Drew Harbour. For more information contact BC Parks, Strathcona District [(250) 954-4600; Box 1479, Parksville, B.C. V9P 2H4].

Access - From Campbell River take the Quadra Island ferry. Turn left onto Green Road, left onto Smith Road and finally left onto Heriot Bay Road. Watch for the park directional signs that lead you right off Heriot Bay Road.

Viewing Highlights - Some of the best birding is during the late fall, winter and early spring months from October through April. Common seen are Double-crested Cormorant, Pelagic Cormorant, Harlequin Duck, Oldsquaw, Black Scoter, Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Common Murre and many gull species including Glaucous-winged Gull.



Viewing Tip

The best way to watch wildlife is from a distance with either binoculars or a spotting scope. If the wildlife you are watching stop whatever they are doing to watch you, whether or not they move away or flee, then you are too close! Remember to move slowly and quietly and to when moving toward an animal, take a roundabout route.

Elk Falls Provincial Park

Elk Falls Provincial Park is located west of Campbell River along Highway 28. For more information contact BC Parks, Strathcona District [(250) 954-4600; Box 1479, Parksville, B.C. V9P 2H4].

Access - From Highway 19 in Campbell River take Highway 28 towards Gold River and Strathcona Provincial Park. Elk Falls Provincial Park begins at the highway bridge over the Quinsam River 1.5 km from the junction of Highway 19 and Highway 28. Park on the right just past the bridge and opposite the entrance to the campground. The trail begins here and goes upstream along the Campbell River. Another trail leads from the campground up the Quinsam River to the Quinsam River Hatchery.

Viewing Highlights - During the fall Chinook, Coho, Chum and Pink Salmon may be observed. Pink Salmon spawn from September through December, Chum spawn in November and December; Chinook from the middle of October through the middle of November, and Coho peak during the middle of November.

Quinsam River Hatchery

Located a short drive from Campbell River, the hatchery contains a small display and visitor area that leads to a marked route around the outside of the facility. The hatchery is situated along the Quinsam River and is also accessible by trail from Elk Falls Provincial Park. For more information contact Quinsam River Hatchery [(250) 287-9564; 4217 Argonaut Road, Campbell River, B.C. Canada V9W 7P6].

Access - From Highway 19 take Highway 28 towards Strathcona Provincial Park. Watch for the hatchery signs and turn left onto Quinsam Road. Follow the hatchery signs onto Argonaut Road and to the hatchery parking lot.

Viewing Highlights - The fall months are best for viewing salmon in the river. Chinook, Coho and Pink Salmon are present in significant numbers, while only a few Sockeye and Chum may be seen. Pink Salmon are visible in September. Coho and Chinook Salmon are observed in October and November.



Did You Know?

Your first sight of a Double-crested Cormorant may be as it rests in the sun, wings outstretched. This bird rides low in the water and often all that is seen is its thin black neck. Like most cormorants, it feeds primarily on fish caught by diving and swimming underwater, propelled by its feet and sometimes its wings. After feeding a cormorant must dry its wings in the sun.

Miracle Beach Provincial Park

This provincial park, located at Black Creek, is very popular with beach goers. A Nature Centre is open between June and September, and interpretive program are offered. For more information contact BC Parks, Strathcona District [(250) 954-4600; Box 1479, Parksville, B.C. V9P 2H4].

Access - From Highway 19 about 23 km north of Courtenay turn onto Miracle Beach Drive and follow the signs to the park.

Viewing Highlights - Coho Salmon may be observed in Black Creek during the fall months. A counting fence makes seeing the fish easier. The second growth forests of the park are home to many woodpeckers. During March and April the spring migration of Brant can be seen offshore. Several species of owls may be observed in the park, including Northern Saw-whet Owl and Western Screech-Owl. Red Squirrels are common and Black-tailed Deer are often seen.

Oyster Bay Shoreline Park

This small park is located along the highway and contains a diversity of habitats and viewing opportunities. A kiosk at the trail head provides both wildlife and plant information. Many interesting plants are found here, including the yellow-flowered gumweed. For more information contact the Comox Strathcona Regional District [(250) 334-6000; 4795 Headquarters Road, Courtenay, B.C. V9N 7J3].

Access - Located off Highway 19 about 14 km south of Campbell River and about 30 km north of Courtenay. There is a small parking lot at the highway rest stop.

Viewing Highlights - This small park on Oyster Bay boasts an impressive bird list. The best viewing periods are the spring and fall migrations and the winter months. During almost anytime of the year you may see Common Murre, Pigeon Guillemot, Great Blue Heron and Bald Eagle. The winter months are best for eagles. Brant migrate offshore in March and April. Low tides during spring and fall are best for shorebirds. Harbour Seals are regularly seen in the area.



Viewing Tip

Fade into the woodwork by wearing natural colours and unscented lotions. Clothes that don't rustle are best.

Woodhus Slough

Woodhus Slough is located just north of the Oyster River along a shoreline that contains slough, marsh, farm field, beach and gravel habitats. A number of rare plants are found here. Almost 200 bird species have been recorded in the area. For more information contact the Environment and Lands regional office in Nanaimo [(250) 751-3100; 2080 Labieux Road, Nanaimo, B.C. V9T 6J9].

Access - Located midway between Courtenay and Campbell River, and just north of Miracle Beach Provincial Park. From Highway 19 turn onto Salmon Point Road and continue to the resort and a trail sign. At the beginning of the trail you go through two openings in a fenced off area on an open flat area. The slough is located an easy 10 minute walk from this end. You can continue 2 km along the shoreline habitats to the other end of the trail.

Viewing Highlights - During the summer months, the slough is home to the secretive Virginia Rail and Sora. The areas open and shrub areas along the trail to the slough are frequented by many songbirds. At the slough look for Belted Kingfisher, Great Blue Heron, Beaver, Muskrat and Pacific Tree Frog. In the winter months Trumpeter Swans may be seen.



British Columbia Wildlife Watch is the Ministry of Environment, Lands and Parks' program designed to promote viewing opportunities within British Columbia. For more information on Vancouver Island contact the

Environment and Lands regional office in Nanaimo [(250) 751-3100; 2080 Labieux Road, Nanaimo, B.C. V9T 6J9]. Wildlife viewing information, including festivals and special events, is available at the British Columbia Wildlife Watch web site www3.telus.net/driftwood/bcwwhome.htm.

For more information on the north central portion of Vancouver Island contact the **Campbell River Chamber of Commerce** [(250) 287-4636; P.O. Box 400, Campbell River, B.C. V9W 5B6; e-mail crchamber@vquest.com].

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The **Habitat Conservation Trust Fund** is a financial sponsor of *British Columbia Wildlife Watch* activities. For more information on this fund write P.O.Box 9354 Stn. Prov. Govt., Victoria, B.C. V8V 9M1.

WBT Wild Bird Trust of British Columbia supports the goals, objectives and activities of *British Columbia Wildlife Watch*. For more information on WBT write #124 -1489 Marine Drive, West Vancouver, B.C. V7T 1B8, phone/fax (604) 924-2581 or e-mail minerva@direct.ca.

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Conuma River Hatchery

The Conuma Hatchery is open daily from 8 am to 4 pm. Tours should be pre-arranged. Salmon may be viewed moving up through the fishway. The general area has good populations of Black Bear, Roosevelt Elk and Coastal Black-tailed Deer. Watch for these mammals as you drive out to the hatchery, or check out the Conuma River estuary viewpoint located 2.4 km past the hatchery towards Tahsis. For more information contact the Conuma River Hatchery [(250) 283-7148; Box 247, Tahsis, B.C. Canada V9P 1X0].

Access - From Highway 19 in Campbell River take Highway 28 through Strathcona Provincial Park and on to Gold River. The hatchery is located 36.5 km from the InfoCentre in Gold River. **Caution:** Shortly after leaving Gold River the road becomes an active logging road. It is a dirt road ranging from good to rough. There are some 1 km long steep grades up to 14%. Drive slowly, take care and watch for logging trucks. Best travelled on weekends. It is a 45-60 minute drive from Gold River one way.

Viewing Highlights - The best viewing occurs from late September through October. Chinook Salmon spawn in late September, and Coho and Chum in October and November.

Strathcona Provincial Park - Elk River Valley

The Elk River valley of Strathcona Provincial Park is located along Highway 28 after crossing the narrows between Buttle Lake and Upper Campbell Lake. Interpretive signs provide information about elk and their habitat. A short, easy walk leads to a viewing platform over the Elk River and the power line cut. For more information contact BC Parks, Strathcona District [(250) 954-4600; Box 1479, Parksville, B.C. V9P 2H4].

Access - From Highway 19 in Campbell River take Highway 28 west to the park. Take the road to Gold River, crossing between Upper Campbell and Buttle Lakes. At the end of the arm of Upper Campbell Lake the Elk River Valley begins. The parking area for the Elk River Viewing Area is located about 19 km from the road junction at the lake crossing.

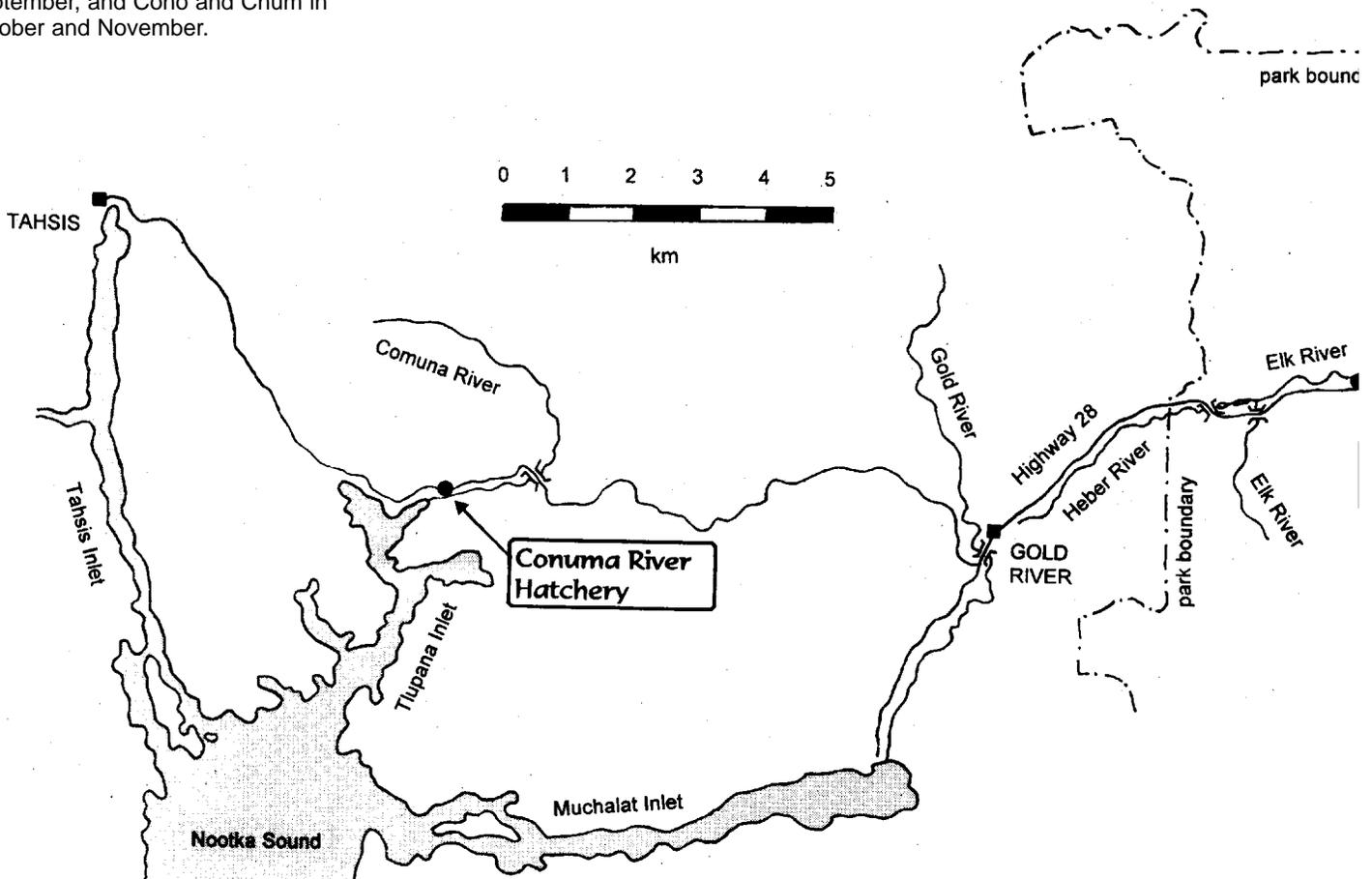
Viewing Highlights - While some Roosevelt Elk inhabit the Elk River Valley, throughout the year, the best time to view elk is from the end of November to early March.

Strathcona Provincial Park - Thelwood Creek

The Thelwood Creek area of Strathcona Provincial Park is located at the southern end of Buttle Lake. For more information contact BC Parks, Strathcona District [(250) 954-4600; Box 1479, Parksville, B.C. V9P 2H4].

Access - From Highway 19 in Campbell River take Highway 28 west to the park. From the turnoff to Gold River, take the Westmin Mine Road to the end of Buttle Lake where Thelwood Creek enters. The Thelwood Creek area is located 33.3 km from the road junction at the lake crossing.

Viewing Highlights - The shallow waters where Thelwood Creek enters Buttle Lake provide suitable habitat for a small number of wintering Trumpeter Swans, provided the waters are not frozen over.



Wildlife Are Everywhere

While opportunities to observe or to learn about wildlife and fish populations are highlighted at 13 sites, remember, wildlife are everywhere. Visit these sites to develop your observation skills. Once you do, you will see, hear and find evidence of creatures everywhere you go.

When visiting these areas please remember that you are visiting wild creatures in their home. Leave their homes clean, and keep your pets under control on a leash at all times.

Some animals are only present for short periods of time, so it is best to plan your visit when they are at home.

Marine Environments

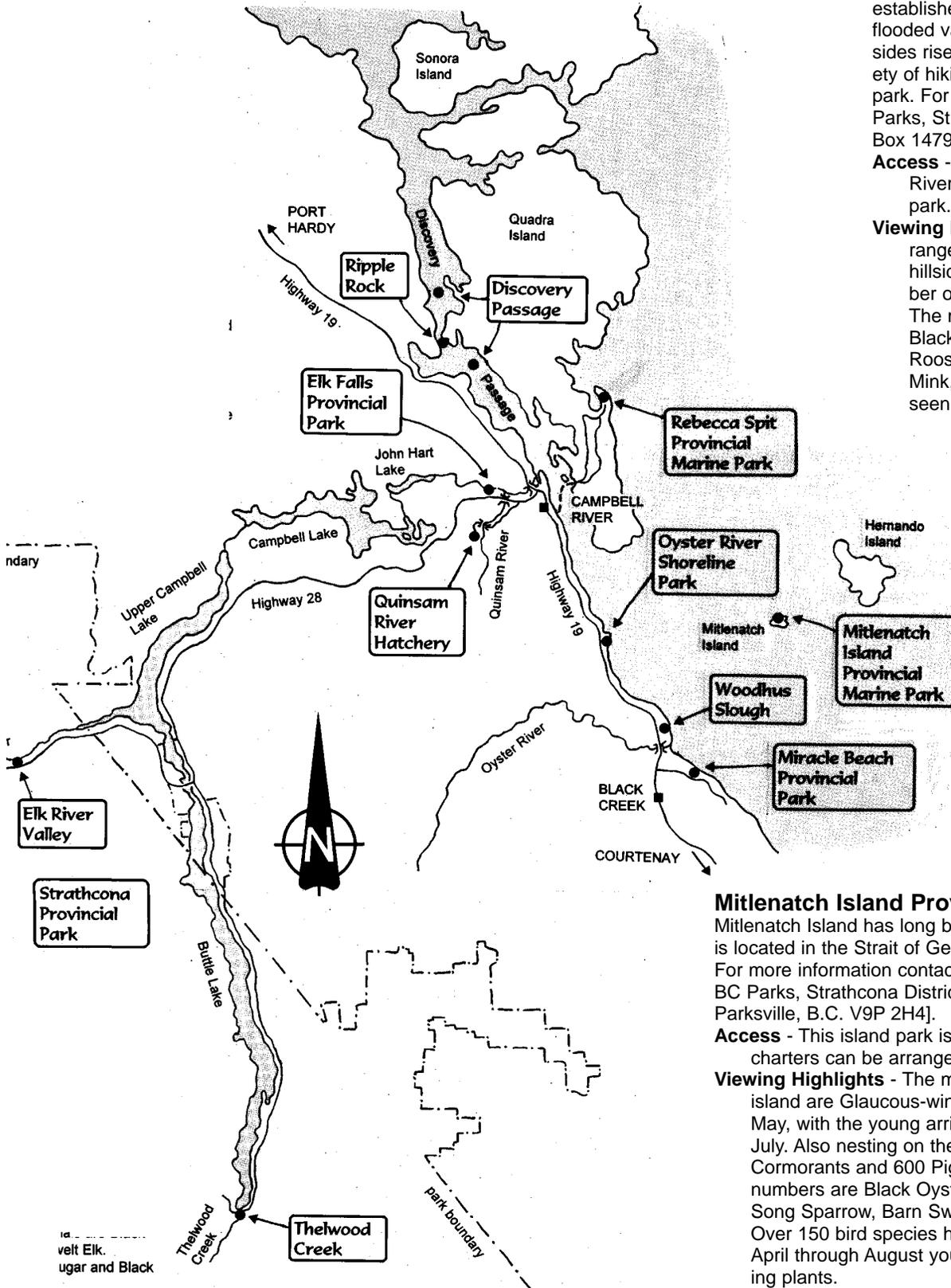
Salt water habitats provide excellent opportunities to view birds and sea mammals. Seals and diving waterbirds are commonly viewed from shore. Small rock islands and open water areas are also visited by sea-lions and by bird species such as guillemots, cormorants and murrelets.

Strathcona Provincial Park

Strathcona Provincial Park, British Columbia's oldest provincial park, was established in 1911. The park contains a flooded valley bottom and steep mountain sides rise up from the water. There is a variety of hiking trails located throughout the park. For more information contact BC Parks, Strathcona District [(250) 954-4600; Box 1479, Parksville, B.C. V9P 21-14].

Access - From Highway 19 in Campbell River take Highway 19 west to the park.

Viewing Highlights - In addition to a wide range of birds in the river valleys and hillsides up to the alpine areas, a number of mammal species may be seen. The most common land mammals are Blacktailed Deer, Red Squirrel and Roosevelt Elk. Occasionally Marten, Mink, Wolf, Cougar and Black Bear are seen.



Mitlenatch Island Provincial Marine Park

Mitlenatch Island has long been a favourite place for birders. It is located in the Strait of Georgia southeast of Campbell River. For more information contact BC Parks, Strathcona District [(250) 954-4600; Box 1479, Parksville, B.C. V9P 2H4].

Access - This island park is accessible by boat only. Boat charters can be arranged in Campbell River.

Viewing Highlights - The majority of birds nesting on the island are Glaucous-winged Gulls. They arrive in April and May, with the young arriving and being fed in June and July. Also nesting on the island are about 1,000 Pelagic Cormorants and 600 Pigeon Guillemots. Nesting in smaller numbers are Black Oystercatcher, Northwestern Crow, Song Sparrow, Barn Swallow and Violet-green Swallow. Over 150 bird species have been recorded here. From April through August you may find a wide range of flowering plants.