



LBCS research camp starts 19th year

Limestone Log #1 : May 3-16: Laskeek Bay Conservation Society has embarked on another field season on East Limestone Island, Haida Gwaii. This is our 19th season of research in the Laskeek Bay area.

Many thanks to this season's hard working setup volunteer crew which consisted of: Lon Sharp, Russ Fleming, Alan Moore, Lea Menzies and Haley McKnight-Yeates. Staff who helped with the camp start-up included: Camp Supervisor/Biologist, Jen Rock, Interpreter/Biologist, Jake Pattison and LBCS executive director, Lisa McKnight-Yeates.

The big project this year was the installation of the composting toilet and outhouse. Last year LBCS was able to purchase the composting toilet thanks to funding from the Prince Rupert Community Foundation. The crew of the Gwaii Haanas II delivered the toilet to ELI part way through the season. Lon Sharp agreed to be the building manger and spent the last few weeks before camp, working diligently on this project. He spent hours planning, measuring, organizing material and cutting wood. Andrew Yeates also assisted with the wood cutting prior to camp start-up. Once on island, a crew of Lon, Russ, Alan, and Haley worked diligently putting the outhouse together and preparing an overflow drainage pit.



A new composting toilet for ELI; many thanks to Lon Sharp.

Ancient Murrelet funnels were set up during the camp start-up weekend and started being checked on May 9. The first chick arrived at funnel #7 on May 12. As of May 15th 18 chicks have been counted and weighed. There continues to be concern about the decline of the Ancient Murrelet population on East Limestone Island. Last year a number of changes were made to the program partly due to results of a 2006 census which revealed a significant population drop in the bird colony. Changes instituted last year are still in place and include: no chick capture work in North Cove, no banding of chicks and no night time visits by groups other than schools. Raccoon predation was a serious threat on the island last season; the MOE has done a cull this year prior to the breeding season. Excavated burrows containing cold eggs have been located this season, raising concerns of possible raccoon activity. Weekly predation transects were reinstated last season to get a sense of how predation rates are changing over time.



Volunteers Fran Fowler and Kate Pierce follow a predation transect.

Project Limestone is now underway. Students of GM Dawson (Masset) visited on May 15th with other school groups expected from: Living and Learning, Queen Charlotte Secondary School and Agnes Mathers, Sandspit. Students come to ELI for an interpretive tour and help with the night time chick work.

As well, this year students joined the LBCS staff and volunteers for dinner.

Wild life tree monitoring has started, with three trees being active to date. Bald Eagles are again nesting at Cassin's Tower for the third year in a row and the Peregrine Falcons are again present on the South side of the island; staff have heard their loud calls and witnessed some conflict with the eagles in the area.

Plants are beginning to flower, despite the stormy weather of late. On the cliffs around Cassin's Tower there are Monkey Flower (*Mimulus guttatus*), Field Chickweed (*Cerastium arvense*), Trailing Black Currant (*Ribes laxiflorum*) and Red Elderberry (*Sambucus racemosa*). In the forest the Fairyslippers (*Calypso bulbosa occidentalis*) were already in bloom when we arrived, and more recently we have seen Single Delight (*Moneses uniflora retialata*) flowering near Boat Cove.

An introduced plant species, Wall Lettuce (*Lactuca muralis*), noted in only one location near boat cove in 2002 is now widespread in Crow Valley, around camp and on the SW side of the island. Efforts in 2006 to remove it were not effective.

Edition 2 will be published in two week's time. Thank you to volunteers: Lea Menzies, Fran Fowler and Kate Pearson and to the crew of Haida Fisheries for dropping fuel and to Parks Canada (Gwaii Haanas) for pre-season boat maintenance and winter boat storage.

There are still volunteer opportunities in the months of May and June. If you would like to volunteer, please inquire at laskeek@laskeekbay.org or by calling (250) 559-2345.



QCSS students, Alan Moore and Haley McKnight-Yeates on work experience.