



# WATERWAYS

Natural History Coastal Adventures

SPRING 2011

## I Can't Wait to Get Back Out Exploring

Every winter, I become more of an inside person, dreaming of getting out on the water again. I look forward to the glee of the first whale, the sudden appearance of a bear at the forest edge (quieting myself, so it doesn't leave too quickly); the peacefulness of early morning at anchor – seeing the water so still, trees are reflected perfectly; and the hiss of water along the hull as the wind carries us freely, filling the billowing sails. But more than anything, I look forward to feeling overwhelmed, when something so wonderful happens.

Chef Debra Fontaine told me a story from one trip. Everyone was up on the bow watching a blue whale – the largest creature on the planet – off Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlottes). The passenger beside her, looking through his binoculars, suddenly exclaims "Would you look at the beak on that bird!" What a great statement on the wonderful variety of wildlife, and diverse interests we experience.

I invite you to join us this summer, for the wonders of Haida Gwaii – Canada's Galapagos, the Great Bear Rainforest, Alaska and northern Vancouver Island. The whales and bears await you!

Owner – Randy Burke

## How to pick a Bluewater trip?

If you want to see a Spirit bear there is only one choice: the Great Bear Rainforest in the Fall. To experience floating before a massive glacier surrounded by icebergs, only Southeast Alaska will do. If you love the mystery and art of the Haida, nothing else compares to visiting the old villages of Haida Gwaii. But Bluewater voyages are so much more than single highlight, day trips. The complexity comes in choosing which combination of experiences is right for you. For grizzly or brown bear viewing – Alaska, the Great Bear Rainforest and northern Vancouver Island are all great – but none are to be found in Haida Gwaii.



Island Roamer slips quietly along under a colourful spinnaker

If you love to sail or kayak, choose the trips with less distance involved like Vancouver Island or Haida Gwaii. All of our trips see whales and a variety of other marine mammals; however, some behaviors such as "bubble-net feeding" are only seen regularly in Alaska.

We can guarantee that if Bluewater is offering a trip, it is the 'right time' to be there for wildlife! So if the dates work for you, rest assured – our reputation is on the line. Please talk to us in the Bluewater office. We would be happy to take the time to discuss your interests and share our knowledge from over 30 years on the coast.



Bluewater guests paddle up close to the ice in Southeast Alaska

## The Vancouver Island North Experience

Our Vancouver Island trips have been a mainstay of the company since the late 1970's. As you get up to the northern end of the Island, the world gets more rugged and filled with wildlife. In such a relatively small area, it is hard to beat the amazing concentration of orcas, humpback whales, Pacific white-sided dolphin, Dall's porpoise, and black bears, combined with the native culture and art of the Kwakwaka'wakw First Nation. (We also feature grizzly bears on some trips.) With smaller distances to travel, there is more time for kayaking and sailing. These trips are a perfect "starter" trip for someone wanting to try a nature trip traveling aboard a yacht.



Above: Two male 'resident' orcas in Johnstone Strait  
Right: Kwakwaka'wakw memorial poles in Alert Bay



## Quotes from you...

"Just got back from the S.E. Alaska trip. It exceeded our already high expectations! It was a marvelous trip made even better by the very special crew. We were very happy to find that the special culture of Bluewater which we experienced on our first trip years ago has been maintained. We are recommending the trip to our friends with great enthusiasm."

*J. & L. D.,  
Switzerland / Hong Kong*

"The natural forested areas are so special, even in the rain. The sheer majesty of the 'spirit bear' really got me as did the specialness of the Grizzlies and their cubs."

*V.B., New Zealand*

"The Island Roamer was a wonderful 'home away from home' – comfortable, roomy, and clean. I loved the covered deck, as well as being able to spend so much time on the open deck. I felt safe and completely relaxed."

*L.R., Saskatchewan*

# Salmon, The Heart of the Rainforest

by Bluewater Naturalist, Lindsay Janes

Dead salmon rotting in coastal streams smell... and not exactly like the wild roses or freshly baked cookies you otherwise smell on a Bluewater trip. However, those dead salmon are a natural part of the salmon cycle, and an essential ingredient in the health of our marine and terrestrial ecosystems.

On the west coast of British Columbia and Alaska we have 5 species of Pacific salmon – chinook (king), coho (silver), pink, sockeye, and chum. These salmon begin their lives in small streams until they are old enough to head out into the ocean. They travel hundreds of miles into the North Pacific in order to feed. After 2-5 years – depending on the species – they begin their final journey back to the west coast, literally smelling their way to the same stream where they began.

Once back in freshwater, their bodies begin to change. They stop eating and, after spawning, they die...but, their influence on the forest is just beginning. Spawning salmon are a massive food source for hungry forest predators such as bears, wolves, martens, and eagles. One black bear can eat up to 700 salmon during a spawning season! The bigger predators often drag their catch over 100 metres into



Salmon return from the ocean to spawning streams

the forest, eating only a small part of the fish. The rest is left to decompose, becoming food for insect larvae and fertilizer for the forest floor.

Several species of birds rely on these insects for food along their migration. Trees that grow beside salmon streams will be larger and grow faster than trees alongside non-salmon streams. The trees' growth ensures that the stream is kept cool and clear for salmon generations to come. Dead salmon left to rot in the stream feed other insects, who will eventually become food for the baby salmon (fry) that hatch the following year.

Copious amounts of rotting salmon in our streams is an indication of a healthy salmon run; a healthy salmon run is vital to the health of the west coast... and that smells pretty good to us. To see a west coast salmon run (and view grizzlies and black bears feeding on them) join us on a trip to [Southeast Alaska](#) or the [Great Bear Rainforest](#).



A spirit bear lunches on spawning salmon in the Great Bear Rainforest



Randy Burke

## On the Horizon for 2012

Planning Ahead? The Bluewater 2012 trip schedule is now available on our [website](#). We have some very special trips planned. Noted ethnobotanist, professor and author, Dr. Nancy Turner returns with Haida matriarch, Kii'iljus to share traditional Haida culture and women's use of

plants (July 1-8, 2012). Bluewater will be offering Haida Gwaii trips with a series of Canadian universities and noted conservation groups, Sierra Club and World Wildlife Fund, join us in Alaska and the Great Bear Rainforest respectively. Contact us for details.



# Learning Series

## Travel with an Expert



### *Captain Gold*

**Haida Gwaii** – June 1-9

Join this Haida Gwaii trip to experience SGang Gwaay with Haida historian, Captain Gold. We are

thrilled to announce that he will be our resource guide for this very special trip. Captain Gold is an elder, author, Haida representative on the Gwaii Haanas management board, and the “original Haida Watchman”. In addition, there will be some incredibly low tides for exploring and a wonderful variety of whales and other marine mammals.



### *Dr. Rob Butler*

**Haida Gwaii** – May 23-31

Beneath Rob Butler’s mild demeanour, lies a “super human” with a passion for birds, ecological connections along the Pacific coast, and a killer sense of humour. Travel with this author, Canadian Wildlife Service research scientist, conservation advocate and have some fun, too.



### *Sherry Kirkvold and Brian Falconer*

**Haida Gwaii** – Aug 16-23

What a team we have for this trip! Naturalist,

Sherry Kirkvold, has twenty years of experience leading trips along the BC coast (and around the globe). She has a depth of natural history knowledge, and an easy going way. Captain Brian Falconer ran his own nature tour company for years, and is now Raincoast Conservation’s coastal campaigner. He shares his passion, stories and incredible experience with all who sail with him.



Time for a delicious lunch and homemade cookies – back to the Island Odyssey!

The curious, Pacific white-sided dolphins love to bow ride on Vancouver Island’s north coast!



Andy Wright

A mother grizzly eyes up a salmon lying in the sedge grass



### *Danny Catt*

**Southeast Alaska** – July 11-19

Biologist, teacher, award-winning conservationist, photographer, and trip leader around the globe, Danny

Catt returns for another voyage in Alaska with Bluewater Adventures.



### *Matthias Breiter*

**Great Bear Rainforest** –

– Aug 30-Sept 6 and Sept 7-14

We are excited to have Matthias back onboard with us for two trips in the

Great Bear Rainforest . He is a biologist with a deep knowledge of bears, and a professional nature photographer. In the last five years, he has authored “Bears – A Year in the Life”, “Wild Alaska” and “Inside Passage”, all featuring his incredible photographs. His photographs have been showcased in *National Geographic*, *Canadian Geographic*, *Geo*, and at the Smithsonian.

### *Dr. Barrie Gilbert*



**Carl Safina**

### *and Carl Safina*

**North Coast / Kutzeymateen**

– June 21-27

Noted conservationist, and award winning nature writer, Carl Safina joins friend and bear researcher, Dr. Barrie

Gilbert for this incredible trip. Enjoy the grizzlies, whales, remote islands and local native culture of the British Columbia North Coast, and evenings spent discussing the state of the oceans – the North Pacific in particular.

*“You could call Safina a Thoreau for the 21st century.”* – New York Post



A humpback whale fills its huge mouth with water and fish as it lunge feeds off the shores of Gil Island

## *Be an Ambassador, Tell a Friend*

When you tell a friend about your Bluewater trip, you are providing us with the best advertising possible. To demonstrate how appreciative we are of all of our ‘Bluewater Ambassadors’, we have a special offer – For every person who signs up after hearing about the trip from you, we are going to offer you a 5% discount off your next trip. If six people sign up, you receive a 30% discount. Please ensure when they sign up they mention your name.

## *Need More Info?*

If you want to check availability or find out more details about a particular trip, please contact the Bluewater office. Telephone toll-free 1-888-877-1770. Erin, Randy and Yin are happy to answer your questions. Or contact us via email at [explore@bluewateradventures.ca](mailto:explore@bluewateradventures.ca)





# A World Heritage Site

SGang Gwaay is an ancient Haida village site located on Anthony Island, at the southern end of Haida Gwaii. Previously named Ninistints, after one of the village chiefs, this remote site is accessible only by boat after days of travel. It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and a highlight of the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and Haida Heritage Site. Even if it didn't boast all these credentials, it would remain as one of the most magical places on our coast.

SGang Gwaay's magic is created by its location on the wild, west coast and its history. For thousands of years it was the home of the Kunghit Haida – some of the most feared and proud warriors on the west coast. Haida canoes traded and raided as far south as California, but when the small pox epidemic hit in the late 1800's SGang Gwaay's population was devastated – dropping from 300 to 30. Those who survived moved north to Skidegate by 1884. For an oral society, the loss of people meant most of the stories were gone – we no longer know who carved these poles nor the stories they told.

In 1957, a crew from the B.C. Provincial Museum removed seven of the village's totem poles. Two of the crew were Bill Reid, renowned Haida carver, and Wilson Duff, curator at the Provincial Museum. The poles were so large that they cut them into sections and floated them out of the bay for transportation south. You can visit these poles today at UBC's Museum of Anthropology.

Another person who played a key role in the recent story of SGang Gwaay is 'Captain Gold' (or Richard Wilson). In the 1970's he paddled a canoe down from Skidegate to SGang Gwaay – nearly 250 km of hazardous seas. People thought he was mad. They knew the village was full of ancestral spirits and couldn't understand why he wanted to be there alone. But Captain Gold knew the importance of reconnecting with his heritage, making sure village remains were not further disturbed and being there to welcome visitors. He single-handedly changed the image of the village and became the present day "Haida Watchman". In the 1980's, the Haida Nation decided to send elders to other uninhabited villages to be Watchmen and in 1987, when Gwaii Haanas was officially created, the Haida Watchmen became the figurehead program.



The ancient Haida Village of SGang Gwaay, where we see some of the last standing mortuary poles in Haida Gwaii.

This gave Haida youth a chance to learn about their heritage, spend time with elders at the old villages and educate visitors with stories from the Haida themselves.

SGang Gwaay is indeed a magical place, full of stories, so if you visit this incredible village site, heed the advice of Captain Gold's sister- Haida Watchman, Irene, "Walk softly, tread carefully, and listen."

National Geographic named the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve the Number One National Park in North America and Bluewater Adventures' Gwaii Haanas voyage "One of the 50 of the Worlds Best Tours".

## Quotes from you...

"Thank you for allowing me to push back a bit against time, and enjoy again the adventure of exploration."

M.G., Virginia

"The cook worked her magic every day! She's a 'genius' and kept everyone in awe, looking forward to every meal and snack!! A great person too!"

L.R., Saskatchewan

"I had never travelled on a yacht before, so it intrigued me, and I loved it!"

P.B., Ontario

"I thought I appreciated my 'Super, Natural British Columbia' coastline before, but now words cannot describe my new view of this beautiful region. Thanks to the crew for fantastic information, guidance and food! We'll be back!"

D.V. and B.K., Vancouver, BC



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## Conservation Update

In January, Bluewater put out an appeal to support Raincoast Conservation's effort to buy out the trophy hunting license in the prime spirit bear area of the BC Central Coast. To date, about \$200,000



has been raised towards the needed \$360,000 required by May 31. At least \$15,000 has been donated by Bluewater passengers and the company. [Help us once and for all end the hunt.](#)

### Correction from Fall 2010 newsletter

Skidegate Haida carver, Norman Price was called Norman White. Our apologies.



## Save Trees, Receive the Newsletter by Email

As part of our commitment to the environment and to reduce the use of paper, we are now using email as much as possible, including an email version of this newsletter. If you would prefer to receive "Waterways" by email please let us know. If your email address has changed please inform us. Guests with email also receive extra updates. Bluewater will never sell, share or abuse the private information of our guests.