



# WATERWAYS

Natural History Coastal Adventures

SPRING 2012

## Canada's David and Goliath

Every now and then an issue comes up that strikes us personally. Something we really can't ignore. Right now, up a remote fiord along the British Columbia coast, there is a proposal to connect a pipeline from Alberta's tar sands across the Rocky Mountains to the remote community of Kitimat.

500,000 barrels of tar sands bitumen a day would be loaded into super tankers, nearly one a day, to navigate the narrow fiord, rock strewn outer islands and shipped to Asia.

But why should we care? Business says it will be good for the economy. The Canadian Government has announced its support. It seems far away. Environmental regulations are meant to protect us if there are risks and an environmental review is now underway. Citizens should be able to trust their elected officials and business leaders to act responsibly and without prejudice. Right? So why have an unprecedented 4500 people signed up to speak to the environmental review? Why have countless environmental groups made this their principal issue? Why has every single one of the First Nations along the pipeline and tanker route signed a declaration against the project despite offers from the pipeline company to be financially included in the project?

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## Inside a World of Whales

Johnstone Strait is a long narrow channel of water extending from near the open Pacific Ocean at the northern end of Vancouver Island, down to the inner waters of the Salish Sea. It has a long history focusing on orcas (killer whales) and is considered the best place in the world to see them. First Nations people have long revered orcas, considering them chiefs of the underwater world. In the 1970's, fisheries agents set up a machine gun to fire on the whales because they were considered competition for salmon. While it was never used, the action symbolized human's lack of understanding.

However, two events transformed our relationship with these amazing creatures. The Vancouver Aquarium captured an orca (nicknamed Moby Doll) to get measurements to build a model whale. Injured and captive in a floating pen, thousands of people flocked down to see this "wolf of the sea" and what they discovered was an intelligent, social creature. Thus began a transformation in public perception.

Soon after Dr. Michael Bigg, a Canadian scientist, started focusing his work on orcas. Mariners frequently reported sighting orcas, and it was commonly thought there must be thousands on the coast. What Dr. Bigg discovered was that each animal could be identified by the shape of its tall dorsal, pigmentation patches and individual nicks and

Orcas are identified using photos of their unique dorsal fins – always from the left side.



V Deeke

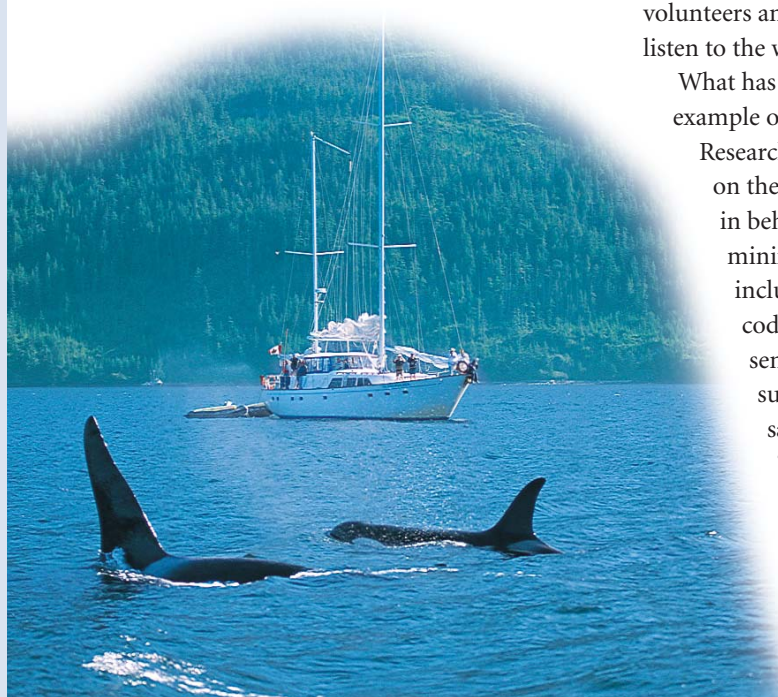
scratches. Population estimates quickly dropped to a few hundred and researchers realized orcas often travel over 60 miles a day. This groundbreaking discovery was highlighted in naming the Dr. Michael Bigg Ecological Reserve at Robson Bight. This special bay is off limits to boat traffic. It is one of the few places where orcas come and rub themselves along the shallow bottom – why is still a mystery.

Dr. Paul Spong started his love affair with orcas as a Vancouver Aquarium trainer. Again, working directly with the animals transformed him and lead to a lifetime dedicated to learning about orca social culture, communication and their conservation. Dr. Spong wanted to minimize any impact on the wild orcas, so he set up a network of underwater microphones to listen and track their daily movements. Scientists can now identify individual family units or 'pods' by their vocalizations. All summer long, 24 hours a day, volunteers and researchers at Spong's Orca Lab listen to the whales.

What has developed now in Johnstone Strait is an example of the new human love affair with orcas.

Researchers and boat operators constantly chat on the radio comparing observations, changes in behaviour, and ways to observe while minimizing impacts. Years ago, boat operators, including Bluewater Adventures, developed a code of conduct to ensure consistency and sensitivity around the whales. So every summer when orcas return to feed on salmon, it is like the return of friends.

"Look its A62... and she has a new calf!"



We voyage right into orca territory on day one of our trips in Northern Vancouver Island.

## Quotes from you...

"Laughter, shared magic and dreams of adventures to come. You and your crew have given us all an incomparable gift. Thank you for an unforgettable experience."

PM – British Columbia

"Everyone is still talking about our great family trip and I have told many people that it was the best thing we've ever done as a family."

MM – Vancouver, BC

"Thank you again for the best experience, ever! The trip surpassed any other I've ever taken! You and your crew are wonderful!"

IT – British Columbia

"We knew this would be the trip of a lifetime, but it was even more! It touched our spirits and enriched our souls. Thank-you Island Roamer & Crew"

MR & RT – Vernon, BC

"The gourmet meals were superb, outstanding. There was always enough, always different, flavourful, colourful, completely satisfying and exciting. I was amazed, surprised and completely happy with them."

CR – Vancouver, BC

# World Class Experiences with Fascinating Resource Guides

Bluewater is thrilled with the quality and diversity of the resource guides on our trips. While our different destinations offer unique highlights, the expertise of our onboard resource guides deepen and "flavour" each trip experience.

These trips provide an excellent example of our range of resource guides:

## Southeast Alaska

**July 11-19:** Join bear researcher and retired Utah State professor, Dr. Barrie Gilbert. Our new Alaska itinerary includes bear viewing at both Anan Creek and Pack Creek, and it will be great to have a bear expert onboard.



On our trips to SE Alaska, we get up close and personal with the glaciers.

**July 28- August 5:**

Aboard the Snow Goose, naturalist RJ Rex will share his love of Alaskan wilderness while teaching guests about the wonderful variety of wildlife we will encounter.

## Haida Gwaii/ Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve

**July 23-30:** Walk among the ancient totem poles and villages with Haida Chief and renowned artist, Jim Hart. See carving through a carver's eyes and understand the symbolism, myths and stories from a man raised in the culture to be chief.

**July 30-August 6:** University of Washington Professor and Burke Museum Curator of Native American Art, Dr. Robin Wright, joins us for her 15th annual tour. It is fascinating to travel with someone who studies Haida art and its revival. Her work brings her in close contact to the culture today, and what museums are learning about the past.



Randy Burke



Sherry Kirkvold

A "friendly humpback" spy hops in Haida Gwaii – There is nothing like seeing them this close!

**August 6-13:** Sherry Kirkvold is a geographer, naturalist and writer who has worked in national and regional parks and as the Interpretation Specialist for BC Parks. Although she leads trips to destinations around the world, the BC coast is her home and guests really benefit from her 30 years of experience.

**August 20-27:** Kate Henderson earned her BSc in Biology at the University of Victoria. Before becoming a biology teacher, Kate spent 2 years working at the Bamfield Marine Station as a marine educator and research assistant. You can't help but get excited about learning...

## Northern Vancouver Island

**August 8-14:** Join whale conservationist and educator, Rob Lott. As an ardent supporter of orcas, Dr. Paul Spong's work at Orca Lab and a regular summer visitor for over 10 years, Rob brings an insider's perspective to the area.



Pacific white-sided dolphins were seen in great numbers last season—hundreds at once! We call them "super pods".

**August 22-26:**

Lindsay Janes, a frequent Bluewater naturalist, grew up on the north end of Vancouver Island. Her studies in earth and ocean sciences give her a passion for marine biology, geology, and sharing the wonders of this coast.



Our trusty zodiacs are used to explore and taxi us to shore.

Randy Burke

In addition, we are excited to have back aboard Dr. Scott Wallace, Keith Moore, Bruce Whittington, Scott Jensen, Dr. John Nightingale, Dr. Nancy Turner, Barb Wilson, Carol Heppenstall, and Tim Irvin as resource guides on our other trips.

See our website for more information on all of these and more destinations.

In SGang Gwaay, we stand quietly and imagine what life was like when these ancient mortuary poles were carved and erected.



# Glaciers 101

by Bruce Whittington – Bluewater Naturalist



Dawes Glacier – WAY bigger than it appears!

Most of us know that glaciers are “rivers of ice”, but where does all that ice come from? On the west coast, glacial ice is created up in mountains where snow accumulates faster than it melts. As the depth of snow increases, pressure on the snow crystals beneath converts them to ice crystals.

When the depth of ice increases to fill a depression or valley, it will spill over the top. Gravity is a driving force here, but pressure continues to play a role. The pressure of the great depth of ice creates heat in the lowest layers, softening them so the ice “flows” more easily, and lubricating the path with meltwater.

The infant valley glacier moves down slope accumulating gravel and rocks. Some is plucked from the bedrock, and some picked up when it slides onto the surface. Some of this debris is embedded in the sides and bottom of the glacier, converting it into a massive sheet of sandpaper, grinding and polishing the terrain as the ice advances.

While the deepest ice flexes over the valley floor, the surface ice, still frozen hard, cracks as it is carried

Our stable sea kayaks are a great way to explore the shallows of remote estuaries.



A calving glacier is an extraordinary event to witness – from a safe distance, of course!

along—a sound native people call “white thunder.” The cracks become deep crevasses, breaking the glacier’s surface into pinnacle-like seracs.

Some glaciers terminate at a lower elevation where the melting, or ablation, occurs faster than the forward advance of new ice. Others meet a watery barrier at the sea. As the ice continues its advance, large seracs, pushed beyond the supporting valley floor into the sea, “calve” dramatically to begin new lives as icebergs. With luck, we’ll be watching when it happens!

## Want to Join the Crew?

This October, we are inviting a few select guests to join the crew aboard Island Odyssey for a 4-day delivery from Bella Bella to Vancouver. Stand a watch, take a turn at the wheel, learn how we navigate and plan each day, and help with meals. With 300 miles to cover, days are long and weather unpredictable. We anchor every evening and will make a few stops along the way. Dates: October 7-10 - \$600 per person plus tax for food and fuel. Call us for details.



## On the Horizon for 2013

Planning Ahead? The Bluewater 2013 trip schedule is now available on our website. We have some very special trips planned. Bluewater will be offering trips with various universities and educational institutions, noted conservation groups, and some well-known wildlife companies. [Contact us for details.](#)



Sherry Kirkvold

## 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 Jaclyn are happy to answer your questions. Or contact us via email at [explore@bluewateradventures.ca](mailto:explore@bluewateradventures.ca)





Erin Boyle

## Quotes from you...

"...surrounded by knowledgeable people available to answer questions and give 'running commentary' on what we were witnessing was truly the best learning experience ever!"

S & J – British Columbia

"Sailing in the sunshine while watching whales; visiting the Haida sites, especially SGang Gwaay; learning from Robin Wright; eating lovingly prepared meals; kayaking in Burnaby Narrows; BEING THERE."

TG – New Zealand

"This trip exceeded my expectations in all ways. I was charmed by the boat and all its efficient details, found the Crew amazing and Haida Gwaii unique. It's been an enriching experience..."

PS – New York

"We spent 7 weeks in Alaska/Canada, this was the highlight"

GP – Australia



**BLUEWATER ADVENTURES**

## Canada's David & Goliath *continued from page 1*

The major risk is another Exxon Valdez or BP Gulf of Mexico oil spill. Despite assurances, the best intentions and plans, human error happens. In the 1989 Exxon Valdez spill 257,000 barrels (41 million litres) of crude oil leaked into Alaska's Prince William Sound. Within the first week 140 bald eagles, 302 harbour seals, 2800 sea otters and 250,000 were found dead. This does not count the wildlife that died at sea and was never found, including 23 killer whales and the subsequent failure to reproduce of the entire AT1 transient killer whale family. According to the International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation Limited website, 50 oil tanker spills this size or larger have occurred in the past 10 years. It isn't a matter of "if" a spill will happen, but "when".

People aren't trusting Government or big business. It hasn't helped that Government ministers suggested that the 4500 review speakers are all "radicals", that the conservation groups are funded by "foreign interests"; and now the announcement that conservation groups will lose their charitable status if they are involved in "political campaigns". Enbridge, the pipeline proponent has spent millions to assure us of safety. But they don't point out that once the oil is loaded into tankers, they have no responsibility. Canadian marine law limits a shipowner's liability to only \$140 million. There are international oil pollution funds available up to about \$1 billion, but after that it would be Canadian taxpayers left paying for the clean up of a major oil spill. The Exxon Valdez spill is estimated to have cost \$3.5 billion to clean up; and the Gulf spill may reach \$100 billion.

The Canadian Commissioner of Environment and Sustainable Development declared the emergency response plans of the Coast Guard and Environment Canada completely inadequate to clean up a large spill. These tankers will pass right by Hartley Bay (where Bluewater starts some of our Great Bear Rainforest voyages), and along Haida Gwaii and its treasured Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve.

So what can one person do to stop a massive industrial development? To start, stand up and be counted. I will be one of the 4500 people speaking to the Environmental Review Panel. I'll tell them that ecotourism is a valuable and sustainable alternative to resource extraction. In 2005, BC's wilderness tourism industry revenues were \$1.2 billion and growing at 8% per year. A major oil spill will not only devastate the ecotourism and fishing industries along this coast, it would "tar" our 'Super Natural' image for years and years to come.

Owner – Randy Burke

Bluewater Adventures Ltd.  
#3 – 252 E. First Street  
North Vancouver, BC V7L 1B3  
Tel: (604) 980-3800  
Toll Free: 1-888-877-1770  
Fax: (604) 980-1800  
Email: [explore@bluewateradventures.ca](mailto:explore@bluewateradventures.ca)  
[www.bluewateradventures.ca](http://www.bluewateradventures.ca)

## Conservation Update

Over the last year, Bluewater Adventures has strongly supported the buyout of a commercial bear hunting license by Raincoast Conservation to stop the trophy hunt of these majestic



Marni Grossman

creatures. The license area includes the principal spirit bear territory along the BC Central Coast in the Great Bear Rainforest. Over \$15,000 was contributed by Bluewater Adventures and our guests and we are happy to report the buyout has been completed and license transferred. Raincoast Conservation will now operate "hunts" with people intent on seeing bears up close through a camera lens, not a rifle scope. [www.raincoast.org](http://www.raincoast.org)

## Wanted: Spirit Bear



Last seen hanging around in the remote rainforest. Citizens should be on the lookout around creeks and streams because of his fondness for salmon in the Fall. If spotted do not approach. To confirm his identity researchers would appreciate photographs. For Spirit Bear's own safety please do not spread information on his exact location and let your guides handle the situation.



## 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.