



# WATERWAYS

Natural History Coastal Adventures

SPRING 2013

## The Joys of Nature

The blessing of nature enriches our soul. Walk in a grove of giant trees in Haida Gwaii and experience a majesty equal to the grandest cathedral. Among the silence of green, moss-shrouded forests, the senses are stimulated, the mind at peace. Sink into naturally heated thermal waters and simply “be there” – not a person for miles around, except a small group of companions. Watch and wait beside a salmon stream for bears to appear. Nature will not perform like a zoo. It clearly gives to those who know to seek the best – who persevere but expect less. When a mother bear, with her two little cubs, walks out the joy and gratitude is very real. It is a gift when a pod of orca swims by the boat, their blows frozen in the morning light. Even the small, and often insignificant, becomes appreciated when we slow down and observe.

Join us for a very special kind of journey this summer. We have spaces available in all of the areas we travel – but please plan ahead to avoid disappointment. The coast of British Columbia and Southeast Alaska provides some of the most amazing wildlife and wilderness experiences on the planet (if you just sail off the beaten path).

Owner – Randy Burke

## Canada's Galapagos

The islands of Haida Gwaii are unique. The story starts 10,000 years ago towards the end of the last ice age. Much of North America was covered by ice thousands of feet thick. However, on Haida Gwaii there were isolated, ice-free “refugia” – places where plants and animals survived. Perhaps it is the Island’s location right on the edge of the continental shelf that created these conditions. On the west coast, the land drops from 3500’ peaks straight down to depths of 6000’. Plant species, endemic to the Islands, continue to thrive. Recent archaeological work unearthed grizzly bear skeletons dating back into the last ice age. Grizzly bears no longer exist on the Islands but some of them were in those refugia.

Like Ecuador’s Galapagos, Haida Gwaii then spent thousands of years isolated from the mainland. The results are similar with various species developing over time unique characteristics compared to their mainland cousins, and other common species completely absent. Most of the differences relate to size with the unique, island sub-species growing larger or smaller. The Haida Gwaii black bear and Peale’s peregrine falcon are the largest sub-species in North America and the tiny saw whet owl the smallest. Scientists have just discovered that the great blue herons are smaller than their mainland cousins, leading to current studies to determine

## Research in “Mocean”

by Erin Boyle

On the coast of British Columbia there are several organizations who focus on research of animals in their natural habitat – Cetacea Lab, DFO’s Pacific Biological Station, Vancouver Aquarium, BC Birding Atlas, Orca Lab, Pacific Wild and Raincoast Conservation. All must be praised for their vigilant efforts that provide relevant and useful data in the name of conservation.

Ecotour operators, like Bluewater

An orca’s dorsal fin and saddle markings are like a person’s fingerprints and used for identification. No two are the same.

Lindsay Janes

The Sitka black-tailed deer has no predators, here in Gwaii Haanas.



how many may actually exist. Unfortunately, the last of the tiny Dawson’s caribou was killed in 1910.

However, it is the ecological absences that are particularly striking. There are no large carnivores – no wolves, cougars, or coyotes. With no predators, the Sitka black-tailed deer (an introduced species) behave like Galapagos sea lions; allowing visitors to get within feet before slowly sauntering off into the forest.

The Islands were first called “Canada’s Galapagos” by Dr. Bristol Foster in the book “Islands At The Edge”. In the mid 1980’s, the largest environmental effort in Canadian history engaged thousands of people across the country to save the southern Queen Charlotte Islands (now Haida Gwaii) from logging. This remote archipelago gained the recognition as an incredible biological treasure.

Adventures, also have a part to play in collecting invaluable data during our voyages in Alaska and along BC’s coast. In the early 90’s Bluewater made the very first underwater recordings of offshore orca in Haida Gwaii. Dr. John Ford at the Vancouver Aquarium – “the

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## 2012 quotes from you...

"A glorious trip through the cathedral of coastal BC – How splendid is our country? Let's keep it this way."

– T. & R.B. British Columbia

"A great adventure with new discoveries only possible with a remarkable team – many thanks."

– A.M. Quebec

"We had already done three trips; this was next on our Bluewater list. We've always loved the country, Crew and wild life."

– B.S. California

"I've never travelled with naturalists before and now wouldn't want to live without them."

– S.M. Montana

"C'est Magnifique! What better place to learn about "THE MEANING OF LIFE" – and great companions. This has been one of the greatest experiences of my life and to share it with this group was brilliant"

– J.C. Australia

## Research in "Mocean" continued from page 1

father of orca acoustic research" - said that he had never heard anything like it before. Bluewater continues to maintain great working relationships with Dr. Ford, Graeme Ellis and the BC Cetacean Sightings Network by sharing detailed marine mammal information from every encounter. Our sightings are particularly important because of the isolated areas that we travel.

In the Great Bear Rainforest, we happened across a pod of 5 transient orcas stalking a massive elephant seal. For the following 4 hours, we captured valuable video and photographs of the behaviour that eventually lead to a kill. After sending in samples and the footage, we learned that this data was the first of its kind ever collected on the BC coast.

Last year Bluewater guests had the chance to profile various pods of orca. In Haida Gwaii, Island Roamer came upon a large pod of offshore orca. Encounters

like this are rare, so photographs and detailed information is invaluable. After a trip on Island Odyssey in Southeast Alaska, guest Jenny Varley submitted hundreds of photos of a 'super pod' of northern resident orca. Dr. Ford spotted individuals that are not currently identified in the photo identification catalogues. Orca are categorized into family pods and clans using photos of the left side dorsal fin and pigmented "saddle". We also enjoyed having Christopher DiCorrado from the BC Birding Atlas onboard collecting valuable bird nesting sightings for their research.

It is an absolute privilege to contribute data that is so vital to understanding how organisms interact and ultimately contribute to the overall success of the coastal ecosystems that we explore. Join us to see what discoveries lay in store – from the scientifically significant to the extraordinarily beautiful!

## Haida Gwaii - Small is Beautiful

by Lindsay Janes

*"It is advisable to look from the tide pool to the stars and then back to the tide pool again."*

– Ed Ricketts ("Doc" from Steinbeck's Cannery Row)

Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve has a unique advantage for life. Situated on the edge of the Continental Shelf, cold nutrient-rich waters circulate to the surface from depths of more than 2000m. This encourages plankton growth, which ultimately feeds the whole food chain, from the Cassin's auklet to the fin whale.

You may have already heard about the birds and mega fauna of Gwaii Haanas...but have you heard about the small, 'spineless' creatures that feed beneath the high tide line?

Sunflower seastars, purple urchins, red abalone, plumose anemone, feather-duster tubeworms, hooded nudibranchs, red rock crabs... this is just a small selection

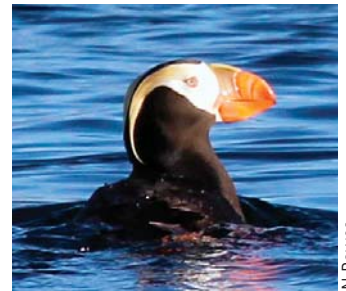
**Colourful invertebrates galore at Burnaby Narrows.**

of the thousands of marine invertebrate species that live among the islands of Gwaii Haanas. In Burnaby Narrows alone, it's estimated that over 200 of these species live in high concentrations. And Burnaby Narrows is not alone – Gwaii Haanas has many areas rich in intertidal life.

Moving at a much slower pace than the animals that feed on them, the intertidal animals are a beautiful mixture of the extremely colourful (bat stars come in veritable shades of purple, orange and blue), the entertaining (hermit crabs), and the odd (the California sea cucumber, with its faux spines, has to be one of the oddest).

And, just as marine invertebrates benefit from the cold nutrient rich waters, their predators also in turn benefit from their success - the sandhill crane, black oystercatcher, great blue heron, and of course, the Haida Gwaii black bear.

Yes, come to Gwaii Haanas for the whales, massive trees, ancient totems and thousands of seabirds, but be prepared to be amazed by the beauty found in the small and spineless. And lucky for us they're easier to find!



Tufted puffins dive down more than 80' to catch small fish!

N Bowes



Val Shore

# World Class Experiences with Fascinating Guides

Bluewater is always 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 guides deepen and “flavour” each trip experience.

## *Haida Gwaii*

■ **June 6-14** – Join Bluewater Captain and owner, Randy Burke, exploring the islands he has known and loved for over 25 years. Early summer is a great time.



**Captain Gold explains the Haida use of sea urchins**

■ **June 30-July 7** – Walk among the ancient totem poles and villages with Haida elder, Captain Gold. He was the original Watchman at SGang Gwaay, has been intimately involved in Haida archaeological and oral history research, and sat on the Gwaii Haanas Management Board for years.

■ **July 14-21** – Captain Brian Falconer is a coastal legend. He started his own sailing company in the 1980’s aboard a historic schooner, and spent the last 10 years with Raincoast Conservation conducting research on coastal wildlife and standing up for habitat protection. He is one of the most knowledgeable critics of the proposed Enbridge pipeline / tanker route.

■ **July 21-28** – Dr. Robin Wright, University of Washington professor and Burke Museum Curator of Native American Art, joins us for her 16th 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.

■ **August 5-13** – Biologist, marine mammal expert, and educator Natalie Bowes leads this 9-day Gwaii Haanas adventure. Randy Burke will be the Captain. We recommend guests extend their trip for the Haida pole raising feast in Skidegate on August 17.



**A classic photograph of a humpback whale breaching.**



Randy Burke

**Protein-rich sedges draws a grizzly to the water’s edge.**

## *North Coast / Kluizemateen*

■ **June 16-23** – Join bear researcher and retired, Utah State biology professor, Dr. Barrie Gilbert as he returns to this wonderful area to the bears he has spent a lifetime studying and championing.

## *Orca, Totems and Grizzlies*

■ **August 1-7** – Lindsay Janes, a core 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.



N Shearer

**A transient orca on the hunt can swim at speeds up to 50 km/hr.**

■ **August 15-21** – 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.

## *Southeast Alaska*

■ **July 9-17** – Well-known bear researcher, author and Calgary professor, Steve Herrero joins us with naturalist, Linda Wiggins. With visits to both Anan and Pack Creek planned in the itinerary it will be fascinating to share their knowledge of natural history.

## *Great Bear Rainforest*

■ **August 29-Sept 5** – This will be Captain Steve Roberts 10th year working for Bluewater Adventures. His depth of coastal knowledge and the care he gives each trip is a joy to share.



**A spirit bear rests at the edge of a salmon stream.**

■ **September 6-13** – Naturalist, Lindsay Janes is a certified bear guide and passionate about the Great Bear Rainforest. An excellent photographer, she can provide tips on capturing images of the bears and whales.

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## *On the Horizon - 2014*

**Planning Ahead?**  
The Bluewater 2014 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.

## *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)





N Bowes

# World Class Experiences

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## Canadian Gulf Islands

**JUST ANNOUNCED**

■ **October 17-23** – We are introducing a new itinerary exploring the Gulf Islands National Park Reserve, focusing on “active exploring”. There are some wonderful hikes up to the top of island peaks and ridges, with breathtaking views. We will make good use of the onboard kayaks to explore along the shore and through tiny passageways. Some of these activities will be optional, but the theme will be “get out and explore”, with longer hikes and paddles than we regularly offer. This is a lovely time of year, with winter birds returning, various species of marine mammal and a gentle calm descending on the islands.



Kayaking is a wonderful way to explore and be active on our trips

## 2012 quotes from you...

“Can’t express the imprint made in my memory of the pristine beauty of BC. The genuine care and thoughtfulness of the Crew made my trip one for the record books.”

– B.P. Texas

“A highlight on the “Great Canadian Bucket List”. Well done and congrats to Passengers, Crew, great mix of wildlife, culture and friendship!”

– Writer, Robin Esrock

“A rare opportunity to visit true wilderness and see animals in their natural habitat.”

– J.S. United Kingdom

“Whoever created the world went to a lot of trouble. It would be downright rude not to go out and see as much of it as possible.”

Edward Readicker-Henderson

## Bluewater’s Logo Whale

In 1986, naturalist Pieter Folkens was onboard Island Roamer with a group from Oceanic Society Expeditions in San Francisco. It was the first year Bluewater operated trips to Alaska. He captured a wonderful photograph of a diving humpback whale heading towards people on the bow of “Island Roamer”. That image was later used to create the Bluewater Adventures logo.



Last Fall, naturalist Bruce Whittington became intrigued by the image and decided to try to photo-identify the whale using the markings on the underside of the tail flukes. He found a match in the Alaska humpback catalogue. He found a match in the Alaska humpback catalogue. See [www.alaskahumpbacks.org/Catalog/25\\_50/25-50.html](http://www.alaskahumpbacks.org/Catalog/25_50/25-50.html) – whale # 533. The ID image was taken in 2004, eighteen years later.

## Join us – We’re Social



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## Save Trees, Receive the Newsletter by Email

As part of our commitment to the environment, we are now using email as much as possible. If you would prefer to receive “Waterways” by email please let us know. Guests with email also receive extra updates. Bluewater will never sell, share or abuse the private information of our guests.



N Bowes

The zodiacs – our steady steeds that take us to shore on daily excursions.



Pacific white-sided dolphins love to bow ride in the calm waters of Northern Vancouver Island.

## Coastal Update Enbridge Northern Gateway Pipeline

The environmental Review Panel hearings into Enbridge’s Northern Gateway pipeline proposal out to the remote BC coast will be complete by summer and a decision expected by year end. Bluewater presented in January. Revelations by the US government on Enbridge incompetence after an oil spill in Michigan have seriously undermined public confidence in the company. The Keystone XL project targets to transport the same heavy bitumen from the Alberta oil sands south to US refineries and remains a giant environmental issue after the election. The world waits to find out what President Obama will decide.

Bluewater has been very involved in this conservation battle and not just because the expansion of the oil sands threatens the stated goals of both Canada and the US to curb global warming. The Enbridge pipeline project and its associated super tankers threaten one of the most precious areas on the planet – the Great Bear Rainforest. I don’t think I can express how special it is to see a Spirit Bear; or if you haven’t experienced it, the beauty and power of a humpback whale exploding out of the water in a full breach... or your first glimpse of a wolf. This small coastal area is a sanctuary for some amazing creatures. It is too precious and rare to allow its industrialization.

