

Biodiversity enthusiasts explore forest to the sea

Mating crabs, peeing sea cucumbers and pole-vaulting cockles escaping from sunflower stars were just some of the recent marine bio-adventures experienced by participants in the Chemainus Biodiversity Education Project.

The project was officially launched in late May to foster learning about local biological diversity and how the variety of life on earth sustains humans and ecosystems. It is a pilot collaboration between local communities and the University of Victoria's POLIS Project on Ecological Governance.



DR. KELLY BANNISTER

An initial focus on forests in June stimulated extensive discussion about the importance of biodiversity for health of people and their communities, especially First Nations. Comments are still being received after a popular food and medicine walk at Echo Heights, co-led by University of Victoria's Dr. Nancy Turner and Penelakut elder August Sylvester.

"Everything here at Echo Heights has a purpose," said Sylvester. "Food, medicine, ceremony, spiritual purposes. There's not much here we can't use."

"It's a good place to take our children to learn."

The project aims to address something called 'nature deficit disorder', the sad reality that today's children and youth are spending more time in front of a television or computer than outside.

A recent study south of the border has shown developmental problems in children who only use their visual and auditory senses.

The Chemainus Biodiversity

Education Project plans to link with the Walking The Talk team based at Simon Fraser University and the BC Working Group on Sustainability Education that have similar aims.

"Education enables us to understand ourselves and others and our links with the wider natural and social environment, and this understanding serves as a durable basis for building respect," says Dr. Kelly Bannister, one of the project leaders. (see www.walkingthetalk.bc.ca/)

"Universities and governments are really getting behind the idea of education for healthy communities and a sustainable future" says Dr. Kelly Bannister, one of the project leaders.

But Bannister and others say they have been frustrated by North Cowichan's unwillingness to get involved with the project.

Bannister says North Cowichan municipal council has been silent about recent invitations to get involved with the project, even though they have supported two other environmental education initiatives: the Learn to Fish program of the Freshwater Eco Centre and the Vancouver Island Trout Hatchery in Duncan.

"It's odd, but I guess it's their loss," says Bannister, who was just appointed to the Canadian Commission for UNESCO's sectoral commission on natural, social and human sciences. A key priority of the Commission falls within Bannister's specialty of what UNESCO calls "mobilizing science knowledge and policy for sustainable development."

The last few weeks of the biodiversity project have migrated from forests to ocean life. Late June and early July involved shoreline marine walks with educator and marine naturalist Andy Lamb of Thetis Island.

Lamb is co-author of the impressive book "Marine Life of the Pacific Northwest" which features descriptions of 1,300 local marine species complete with photos.

"Every beach walk is unique," says Lamb. "You never find everything you are looking for and you always find things you don't expect."

Lamb and his wife run an educational diving operation on Thetis Island. Adventurous beach walks took place on Boulder Beach in Saltair in June with Ladysmith teachers in search of outdoor classrooms for their students and on Clam Bay, Thetis Island in July with



Marine naturalist Andy Lamb shares his expertise with a group people who took a tour of Clam Beach on Thetis Island in June.

participants spanning three generations from ages four to 70.

"It was inspiring and will hopefully lead to more investigation on my part of the seashore. Even though I have been in BC a long time I have not taken as close a look at marine life as other things," says participant Lorrie Wood.

Now that the Chemainus Biodiversity Education Project has organized activities around our forests and seaside, organisers hope to focus the near future on the wealth of biodiversity in the waterways in our area, from creek systems to the Chemainus River.

The project hopes to support an

Honouring the River celebration with Halalt First Nation.

"Many synergies are being created," said Chemainus resident Mark Kiemele about the project. "We are learning a lot about how everything is connected – our forests, oceans, rivers."

As part of the next phase, the project plans to explore biodiversity of local river systems and the many ways that water supports our environmental, social, cultural and economic needs.

For more information see: <http://www.polisproject.org/projects/biodiversityeducation>.

CHEMAINUS OCEAN FRONT On BEACH DRIVE



5 BEDROOM HOME ON BEAUTIFUL .3 OF AN ACRE LOT

Home overlooks Chemainus harbour with its ever changing views of boats, ocean, mountains and lights of Vancouver's ski hills. A place for your boat out front. Large deck with hot tub enclosed with wisteria blossoms. Fruit trees. **DON'T MISS YOUR CHANCE TO BUY THIS OCEANFRONT HOME WITHIN WALKING DISTANCE TO DOWNTOWN.**

Great potential for B&B.

\$749,000



Sutton Group - Resource Realty
AN INDEPENDANT MEMBER BROKER
9650 Chemainus Road
Chemainus Office: (250) 246-4966
Fax: (250) 246-4951

*Dawn
Snell*



"Nothing dreams come true."