



Hanson Island

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Whales in Danger
Free Corky Campaign
Shop & Support
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When we arrived on Hanson Island in 1970, one of our first impressions was of landing amidst a vast and virtually untouched wilderness - the surrounding forest. We soon realised that much of the island had actually been "hand-logged" many years before, and that numerous individual trees had been taken. But parts of the original forest remained untouched, and other areas had acquired healthy stands of "second growth"... so ancient ambience remained. In the past, the island had also been subject to natural traumas from fire and wind that forced change, so the forest of Hanson in the '70s presented a marvelous mixture of old and new growth of evergreens... cedar, fir, hemlock, balsam and spruce. Occasional stands of deciduous alder appeared here & there, and salal bushes grew abundantly in openings wherever they had the chance. The forest was dense, and dark, its floor soft and brown, covered in deep green moss near streams, and strewn with the debris of fallen trees and branches. Animal trails were everywhere, making travelling through the forest easy so long as one didn't have a destination in mind. One could walk for hours, as we did, and never find a hint of "civilisation".

Then, in the '80s, the loggers arrived. The engineers came first, walking the woods to mark "cut blocks" with pink ribbon - areas to be "clear-cut" - and then they informed us of their plans. The forest surrounding us would be eliminated almost to the shoreline, the 1,000 year old tree we called "Big Cedar" would fall to make way for a logging road, OrcaLab would exist on the edge of a wasteland. Naturally, we objected. A more than 20 year period followed, in which one "development plan" after another was proposed by one logging company after another... the plans were all created by the same people, though the corporate owners changed. Somehow... through interventions by the Namgis First Nation, "downturns" in market conditions, David Garrick's meticulous research into historic usage of Hanson's forest by native people, and protests which came from around the world... enough delay occurred to cause the period allotted for each plan to expire and force the permit process to begin again.

Finally, in 1999, the issue of logging Hanson Island became part of a formal consultative process initiated by the government of British Columbia, under which land use issues were considered by multiple "stake holders" with a view to reaching consensus. The Central Coast Land Use Management Plan (CCLRMP) working group met for more than 2 years and eventually, in April 2001, came to an agreement acceptable to all parties... though to everyone it represented compromise. Hanson Island became a "candidate protection area" under the agreement, the specifics of its final status to be decided by negotiation with First Nations. We were ecstatic... our bodies reacting as if a huge weight had been lifted from our shoulders, our minds free at last to think of other things.

Though final agreements have yet to be set in detail, we are now (relatively) certain that the forest of Hanson Island will never be subjected to the impertinence of clear cut logging. For this, we will be forever grateful to the Namgis First Nation, David Garrick, and countless friends from around the world who came to the aid of Hanson Island.

THANK YOU ALL!!!!

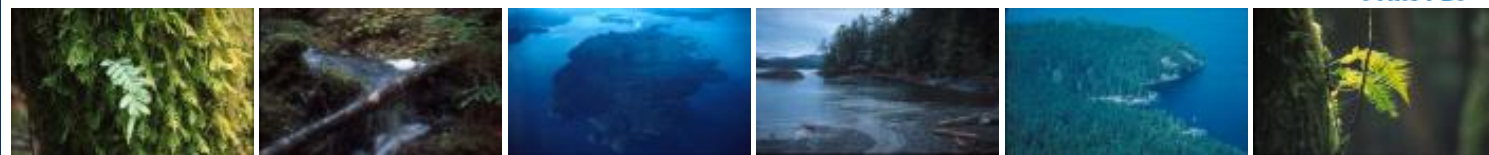
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