

COWICHAN VALLEY PADDLE NEWS

Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not. --
Ralph Waldo Emerson

Club News Letter for October 2009

4.0 A trip to remember

PADDLING IN THE BROUGHTON ARCHIPELAGO

SEPTEMBER 5TH TO 9TH, 2009

Submitted by Richard Bird

We, being nine Cowichan Kayak & Canoe Club members, visited the Broughton Archipelago, stayed at Paddler's Inn and had a fine time. The Inn is located on the site of a former small community shown as abandoned on the chart we used. The name of the community was Simoom Sound. There is a body of water named Simoom Sound, the entrance to which is about five miles north of the Inn. The explanation for this confusing state of affairs is that there was a post office at a village beside the body of water. The post office moved to Gilford Island without changing its name. Later the post office closed.

The Inn is on the northwest side of Gilford Island near Baker Island. Broughton Island is not far from the Inn. None of us, the participating members, had paddled in the Archipelago before. We and our kayaks were carried from Port McNeill to the Inn by a motor boat. It was operated by Bruce McMorrان, a kayaking guide & enthusiastic paddler. While en route we enjoyed grand, somber views of many islands and crossed Johnstone Strait and Knight Inlet.

Upon arrival Bruce assigned us to a two story floating lodge. Bruce and his wife Josee own the Inn. They were genial hosts. The lodge has six bedrooms, a bathroom with flushing toilet, sink and shower, and a large open kitchen, dining and lounge area. The kitchen has a double sink, a four ring propane stove with an oven and a large propane refrigerator. Propane wall fixtures provide light to all rooms. Hot and cold running water is available in the bathroom and kitchen. We paddled during the day and enjoyed unaccustomed luxury at night. We supplied our own food, did our own cooking and ate and drank on crockery, utensils, pots, cups and glasses provided by the Inn. We ate delicious dinners and drank well in a convivial atmosphere.

Bruce helped us plan our trips by providing important information about the Archipelago including its history. Various participating members paddled to the Burdwood Group, around and between Baker and Insect Island, to Echo Bay, a community with a winter population of about seven persons, and even to Mars (the island not the planet). Some visited Bill's Museum at Echo Bay. Bill was present. He collected thousands of pieces of what individually can be called just old junk. By intelligent organization and presentation, the pieces tell much about the history of the Broughton Group. At the head of Shoal Harbour many jumping pink salmon, waiting impatiently at a creek mouth at low tide to spawn in the creek, presented a fascinating spectacle to members.

Rain showers were frequent during our four nights and five days at the Inn. Powerful winds in the general area were deprived of strength by the topography: The many hills and mountains in the Broughton Group acted as shields against the wind. They also protected the area from heavy swells from nearby Queen Charlotte Strait, notorious for its strong winds and rough seas. We agreed that the area is suitable for novice paddlers provided they are accompanied by competent experienced paddlers. Surf landing and launching skills are not required but good navigational skills are desirable due to the complex coastlines of many islands. The prospect of a hot shower at the end of the day makes paddling in wet weather tolerable and even rewarding.

Sea life and wonderful views are in abundance in the area but places to land and camp are not. In most places along the islands' coasts are handsome dense forests and low rock cliffs make landing dangerous to the kayaker and the kayak without offering any reward by way of a place to put up a tent. However, advance research including a chat with Bruce will provide the careful kayaker with information about good camping places. One cannot just paddle off expecting to find a good place to spend the night without taking a significant risk of not finding any place at all. Without some research suitable places are hard to find because of forest density and a general lack of good beaches.

Returning to Port McNeill gave us a second look, but from a different perspective, of the somber beauty and abundant sea life of the area between Gilford Island and Port McNeill, a trip of over two hours.

Those who participated were Richard, Lis, Jane, Linda and Randy, Gloria, Diane, Adrian, and Dennis. Lis organized the trip and did a fine job. This trip opened up a large new area for exploration by the Club. Lis observed that the Broughton Archipelago and the Broken Group are comparable except that the Archipelago is much bigger. Club members can expect to see trips to the Archipelago listed in the Club newsletter in the years to come. It is a fine place to paddle.