



linking people to nature on Lasqueti and surrounding islands

Issue #6, Summer 2015

Membership \$5.00 annually

**Donations to support our work are tax deductible
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Charity BN #84848 5595

2014-15 Report, by Gordon Scott

This last year for the Lasqueti Island Nature Conservancy has been busy! LINC volunteers were active in all four areas of our mission: Education, Stewardship, Outreach and Land Protection.

LINC published three educational newsletters and sent them to every household on the Island. If you didn't get one, look for a stack of newsletters at the PO when you pick up your mail. They are free and full of interesting news about the natural history of Lasqueti. On top of your annual membership fee of \$5, you can send us an added \$5 to have one delivered to your personal address.

A really fun day was had by all at our *Squitty Bay Day Celebration*, organized by LINC and the Islands Trust Fund to highlight the exceptional natural beauty and ecosystems of Squitty Bay Provincial Marine Park. About 35 people came out and participated in excellent nature walks led by local experts. **We are going to do this again this year on August 22nd!** Bonnie and Darlene Olesko have offered to make a pancake breakfast. Please put this on your calendar!

As part of our stewardship mandate LINC (with the help of about 15 volunteers) constructed a single, safe trail route to Mt. Trematon. We also organized two invasive plant removal workdays to contain the spread of Daphne Spurge, an escaped ornamental plant that is toxic to humans and animals. Thank you volunteers!

In addition we conducted our annual monitoring of the Mt. Trematon Conservation Covenant.

Land Protection is the primary goal of LINC. In addition to assisting interested landowners in the conservation of their properties LINC is also responsible for the enforcement of the terms of conservation covenants. This winter LINC learned that North Island 911 (NI911) was proposing to install a radio repeater on the top of Mt. Trematon. No structures are allowed on Mt. Trematon under the terms of the conservation covenant signed between the land owner, Islands Trust Fund, and LINC. Once LINC learned of the proposal we contacted NI911 and worked cooperatively and successfully to find alternate locations for the proposed radio repeater.



hikers at 2015 AGM on Osland Nature Reserve, photo GScott

This winter LINC, in partnership with the Island Trust Fund, created an informative brochure, *Lasqueti Island, Conserving this Special Place*, and sent it to every registered landowner on the island. We undertook this project to connect with those folks who own property here but live elsewhere, introducing the conser-

vation options available to landowners. Please contact us at linc@lasqueti.ca if you wish to know more about these options.

Lastly, LINC, in partnership with ITF and Nanaimo and Area Land Trust (NALT), negotiated a conservation covenant over the 160-acre Osland Nature Reserve. At LINC's AGM this April about 20 members hiked to the top of the Nature Reserve and enjoyed a wonderful afternoon gazing out across the spectacular Salish Sea.

Report 2014/15 continued:

As part of our natural growth, LINC increased its funds, receiving several wonderful donations and added 23 new members for a total of 50 active supporters. LINC now holds two conservation covenants; the Mt. Trematon Nature Reserve and the Johnny Osland Nature Reserve, together totaling about 300 acres.



Sea Stars seen at Boat Cove in May

LINC welcomes two new Directors to the Board, Barb Brooks and Daniel Jacobs. I want to thank Melinda Auerbach for her many years as a Director of LINC. Melinda consistently provided thoughtful and careful advice and deliberations. Thanks to both Melinda and Ezra for their work founding this growing organization!

The Johnny Osland Nature Reserve

Draped across an isolated glen in the middle of Lasqueti, the Johnny Osland Nature Reserve rises gently from lush valley bottom wetland to the arid summit of Earl's Peak. Coastal Douglas-fir forests carpet the hillsides surrounding a 5-acre restored wetland. Old knurled and fire-scarred Douglas-fir trees nod above cedar and hemlock understory. In natural sheep-free zones along cliff faces, assemblies of Fawn lilies and Indian paintbrush flourish.

John Osland purchased the 162-acre tract in 1948 and lived lightly on the property until his death in 2010. Purportedly furious over the wanton destruction of then current logging practices, John vowed to halt commercial logging on his newly acquired property. With help from neighbours John arranged to leave his property to the Islands Trust Fund upon his death to insure the forest would never be cut. In 2012 the property formally was anointed the Johnny Osland Nature Preserve.

In February 2015 The Lasqueti Island Nature Conservancy (LINC) and the Nanaimo and Area Land Trust (NALT) signed a conservation covenant with the Islands Trust Fund that vests LINC and NALT with specific responsibilities and authority over the management of the Osland Nature Reserve. The conservation covenant requires the Islands Trust Fund to maintain the property in a natural state, prohibits the erection of buildings and logging, yet allows for the removal of exotic and invasive species. With LINC, NALT and the Islands Trust Fund working together, we will ensure that Johnny Osland's last wishes will be honoured.

Sea Stars Return, by Barb Brooks

Sea Star Wasting Syndrome, first observed in June 2013, is the biggest mass die off of this top predator documented. In just days the sea stars get lesions, deflate, limbs fall off and they die. In areas of high population the healthy sea stars detect the bodies of the wasted sea stars, come in for a meal and also succumb to the syndrome. Quickly a whole area can get wiped out. The whole western coast from Baja to Alaska has been affected.

Scientists don't know how this disruption of the ecosystem will change things, but they expect mussel populations to expand and sea urchins have been observed in abundance where sea stars were.

Scientists think a virus is to blame, but many factors such as overpopulation and natural cycles likely contribute. It is difficult to determine the exact cause; however aquarium sites that treat their ocean water with a UV light have no die offs in their displays. The Vancouver Aquarium amongst others that do not UV treat have had the Sea Star Wasting Syndrome. Viruses are killed by UV light. They think the culprit might be "Densovirus".

Recent observations, April and May 2015 note that sea stars are coming back, including here on Lasqueti. Some areas, such as Santa Cruz, Ca. note more babies than in the previous 15 years combined.

The Vancouver Aquarium welcomes citizen observations. <http://www.vanaqua.org/act/research/sea-stars> Noone knows how this is going to affect our aquatic environment. Maybe we can add Lasqueti to some of these observation maps.

**Join us for our Annual Squitty Bay Day,
Saturday, August 22nd, 2015, 10:00 am
Squitty Bay:**

pancake breakfast, walks & more!

Current LINC Directors:

Chair: Gordon Scott, Vice-Chair: Andrew Fall,
Secretary/Treasurer/editor: Sheila Harrington, at large:
Wayne Bright, Sheila Ray, Bonnie Olesko, Daniel Ayers,
Barb Brooks