



THE CROW'S NEST

LADYSMITH YACHT CLUB

EDITION: 2025-03 (May)



Welcome!

In this edition of the Crownest, we have some interesting features:

- Boat show gizmos
- BC Marine Weather Guide
- Special Feature - Sea Otters
- Haida Gwaii Visit
- Recipe - Apple Fritters
- Telegraph Harbour Rendezvous
- 2025 Club Calendar

March was a bit rugged for me, and by rugged, I mean coughing and hacking like a poorly running outboard. By the end of March I felt well enough to attend the Edmonton Boat and Sportsmen's Show, which is a kind of spring ritual for Laurie and I, signifying that winter might eventually end. Keep in mind that we live in Northern Alberta. I know that many of you could probably describe your flowers blooming and so on - we are happy for you, really.

For me, the boat show is a bit like a trip to Costco, saving a few bucks on toilet paper and then buying some ridiculous thing that I didn't know I needed. So it was on this occasion, coming away with an inflatable stand-up paddleboard, which then needed to be carried back to the car, parked about six km away. Ah well, perhaps the SUP will make for some fun exploration in warmer anchorages this summer, although in terms of seaworthiness, I'm guessing the SUP would score about 1 on a scale of 10, since it does float, but that's about as high as I would go.

Would anyone care to guess how many sailboats I saw at the boat show? If you guessed zero, you are correct. I have recently seen advertisements for both the Sunshine Bay Yacht Club and the Edmonton Yacht Club, so perhaps sailing is in free-fall decline in Alberta?

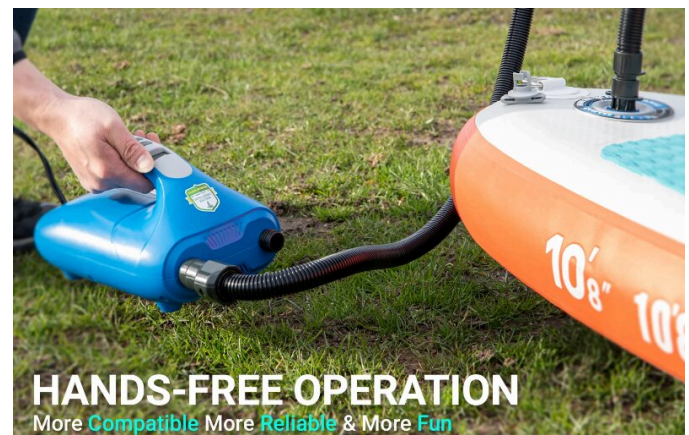
Don't miss the first of three special articles about marine mammals by LYC member Owen Thistle. In this edition of the *Crownest* we learn about sea otters. Gord Coulman, Editor.

Boat Show Gizmos

Battery Electric Inflators

Got something that needs inflating? Not near a power source? Don't feel like pumping for an hour or so?

Seamax Marine has the answer, with a range of electric air pumps for your SUP, kayak, or dinghy. Seamax is a Canadian company, headquartered in Burnaby. Seamax sells all sorts of other products too, inflatable boats, trollies, motors, T-tops, and more.



Electric Surfboards

Electrification is having a big effect on all aspects of boating, not least the personal watercraft. Several different kinds were on offer at the boat show, happily all of them powered by quiet electric motors. The world doesn't need another Jet-Ski (Editor's opinion).

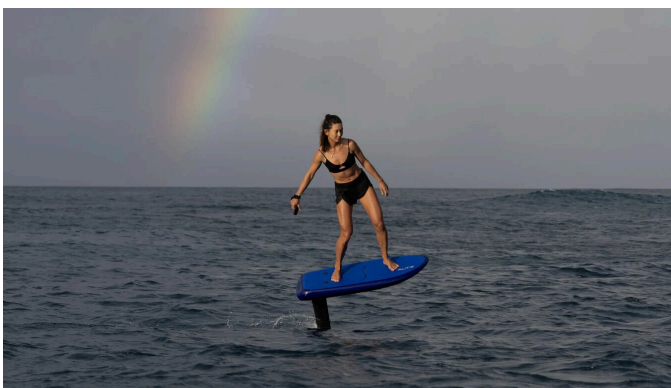
Some are hydrofoils, which makes a lot of sense with an electric motor, as the energy requirements drop considerably once the vehicle is "flying" on the foil.

Here is an interesting fact: **propeller-driven surfboards are currently illegal in Canada**, although this prohibition is under review, as Transport Canada conducted a public consultation during 2022 and found that the current rules were somewhat behind the times. Imagine, Transport Canada behind the times? Forsooth!

Anyway, the prohibition doesn't seem to be having much effect on sales. Transport Canada is also trying to come up with some safety rules for these craft, which should be ready about the time that flying cars arrive. For more information, see:

<https://tc.canada.ca/en/corporate-services/consultation/s/changes-small-vessel-regulations-allow-operation-propeller-driven-surfboard-type-other-similar-vessels-regulate-their-construction/what-we-heard-propeller-driven-surfboard-type-vessels>

In the meantime, it would be nice if manufacturers could at least have their riders wear PFDs in their photos. PFD and helmet would be even better.



Wait, the rider in the next photo does have a PFD and a helmet, so I retract my earlier comment.



Electric PWCs

A Montreal company called Taiga Motors offers a fully electric "Sea Doo" style personal watercraft, which promises low noise, no pollution, and minimal maintenance requirements. I'm 100% in favour, especially the low noise part.

Noise from gas-powered PWCs is less of an issue in the Salish Sea because there is a lot of space, but those of us who frequent smaller freshwater lakes know what a bane these devices can be. Some are even modified to produce (presumably) more power and of course exponentially more noise. Quiet, electric power sounds pretty good to me. Fair winds and following seas, Taiga Motors!



Garmin 86i Satellite Communicator

With a trip north being planned, I was searching for a way to stay in touch with my sail plan “responsible person”, and also be able to receive digital weather forecasts. I briefly considered Starlink, but despite that device’s obvious utility, I found myself unwilling to conduct business with them. Garmin provided a nifty little alternative, in the form of a handheld satellite communicator, the 86i.



This device uses the Iridium satellite network and various monthly plans are available. I ended up choosing a plan that provides 150 text messages per month for about \$40 CDN. A marine forecast request counts as one message. The plan can be suspended when you don’t need it. The plan includes unlimited tracking, which means that your responsible person can see where you are at 10 minute intervals, via a secure website.

The Garmin comes with a not-very-detailed base map of the world, although it is possible to add marine charts. I already have Navionics on my navigation tablet and phone, so I probably won’t bother. We used the device when hiking and found it pretty useful on land, especially if you are prone to getting lost. A covered emergency button will send a distress message to Garmin’s operations centre if something terrible happens. About \$750, including mount.

British Columbia Marine Weather Guide

As a former aviation weather expert, I thought it might be interesting to dig into the science behind the typical weather systems that affect the Salish Sea, with the notion of understanding these systems better. Fortunately, Environment Canada has an existing publication that describes exactly that. The only difficulty is the publication is a bit technical and my overly ambitious thoughts of condensing this publication into an easy-to-understand Crowsnest article have quickly evaporated, sublimated, and precipitated.

Here is my best effort in three bullet points:

1. Usually, the wind is from the northwest.
2. Sometimes, it is from the southeast. No one knows why.
3. If you are near an inlet during the winter, watch out for “arctic outflow”. You won’t like it.

For the more intrepid, here is a link to the full guide. Warning: you will encounter the term “pressure gradient” many times.

<https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/general-marine-weather-information/regiona-l-guides/british-columbia.html>

Special Feature

The World According to Sea Mammals Part 1: The Sea Otter, by Owen Thistle

Our yacht club exists because of our common desire to experience a marine life. What draws us here? After all, we don't really belong in the water and (except for some free-diving fanatics) we're confined to dabbling on the surface and shrouding ourselves in protective technology. Not so for some of our mammalian cousins who have returned to the water, adapting their physiology and behaviours to a level of mastery that we can only watch with envy and wonder.

This is the first of a series of essays about some familiar Salish Sea mammals. Rather than examine them from our human perspective, I want to give a sense of the water world as they perceive and model it. Under the waves the visible world is diminished by low light, suspended algae, clouds of silt and swaying kelp and eel grass and a good pair of eyes and a vision-oriented brain are not so effective. Our sea-mammal cousins have compensated with sensing organs and neural processing very different from ours; in fact, they have developed their own super-powers that are so foreign that their experience is hard for us to imagine.

Abandon your own super-power for a moment: close your eyes for a minute and try constructing a model of your world based on other senses. This is a good time to introduce the word *umwelt*, a German term adopted to mean the specific way species experience the world. Our human languages are geared toward our visual *umwelt* so we talk about "shedding light" on things and "seeing" someone's "point of view"; but in this article I hope to shed some compression waves on the topic to tickle your whiskers – a choice of words that would make more sense to some of our sea mammal cousins.

As you cruise past a kelp bed in Queen Charlotte Strait a sea otter floats on her back at the water's surface. Her belly is a dinner-plate of mollusks, crustaceans and echinoderms. She's been foraging, diving into the dark depths and swimming back to the surface to eat. She

needs to eat 25% of her body weight every day to fuel her relatively small, warm-blooded body.

Much of her prey is submerged in the mud, and as she explores the seabed a plume of silt rises and spreads. But her *umwelt* is not diminished by the darkness and turbidity. It is the touch of her whiskers and skin on her paws that guide her and model her surroundings. This may be hard to imagine because although we have a sense of touch it is crude and slow compared to hers. We might fumble in our jeans pocket trying to discern a keyring from loose change, but she can discern fine textures with quarter-millimeter resolution thirty times faster than we do with our fingers. She quickly combs the sea-floor and recognizes a meal as soon as she touches it. Her foraging *umwelt* is not darkness and cloud but a touch-scape of textures, particles and fluids.

Stay tuned for the next Crowsnest issue when we'll visit with a Dall's Porpoise.

Photo: Owen Thistle



Haida Gwaii

In early April, the Admiral and I reached our saturation point for Alberta winter (following a huge snowstorm) and headed out for some camping and some boat maintenance. Yes, even boat maintenance beats Alberta winter/spring. Perhaps you, dear reader, will enjoy some commentary and photos of this delightful and remote archipelago.

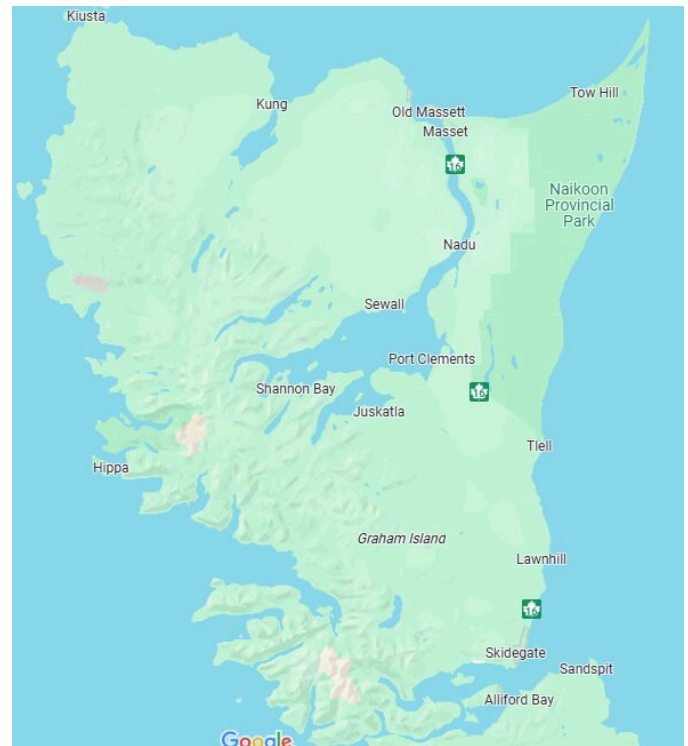
Getting there

The more intrepid may choose to visit by boat, but Haida Gwaii is a very windy place and the waters of Hecate Strait are very shallow for most of the crossing. Locals told me about conditions so rough that the ferry sometimes strikes the bottom. Even the ferry ride is substantial, taking about seven hours from Prince Rupert to Skidegate. The one-way cost of the ferry for two people, truck camper, and cabin was \$408 including tax. Despite the relatively short trip, the cabin was nice for a midday nap, as we had to be at the terminal two hours ahead of our 10 AM departure, which meant leaving Terrace at 6 AM. Most northern ferries require vehicles to back in, therefore loading takes longer.

The southern part of the archipelago is a protected area called Gwaii Haanas and can be visited via licensed tour operators. Independent visitors require both a reservation and an orientation briefing.

Climate

Haida Gwaii is exposed to the Pacific Ocean, so expect lots of wind and rain. Summer temperatures can get as high as 15 to 20C. During April, we had 9C during the day and 4C at night. We only had two really wet days out of 10, which wasn't too bad. At the summer solstice, there are nearly 17 hours between sunrise and sunset, plus an extended twilight. Locals told us that the west side of the archipelago can experience more severe weather than the east.



Places to Stay

For our first night on Graham Island, we stayed at Hyden Turner campground, which is just to the west of Daajing Giids. In April, the campsite was mostly deserted. The community of Daajing Giids has limited small motels and B&B type accommodation, but be prepared to rough it a bit. These motels are not the Holiday Inn, plus they book up quickly at any time of year with tourists and itinerant workers. In more remote parts of the island, accommodations may be "off grid", meaning solar power, composting toilets, and limited water. We stayed a couple of days at Chateau Norm, where we rented a fully equipped cottage with a hot tub. Hosts Norm and Laurie are fellow boaters, friendly and helpful.

Places to Eat

My son visits Haida Gwaii frequently in his capacity managing construction projects, plus he is a bit of a “foodie” so he gave me a list of the best places to eat. Some of these places are not open every day. Here is the secret list:

- **Jags Bakery**, coffee shop and nice B&B. Best cinnamon knots ever! Skidegate M-F 8:00 to 14:00
- **626** Fish and chips food truck with covered seating. Masset WeFrSaMo
- **Dockside Fish and Chips**, Daajing Giids. Open Sunday 17:00 to 20:00 only! On the dock. We missed it.
- **Axe and Anchor Pub**, Port Clements. Best calamari ever! Very good pub food. ThFrSaSu
- **Gather**, Daajing Giids. A bit fancier “modern Italianish” restaurant. We didn’t try it though.

Groceries

There are two modern Co-op stores, one at Skidegate and one at Masset. Port Clements has a friendly general store.

Things to do

Activities centre around the outdoors, with lots of hiking and fishing from rivers and even directly from beaches. We spent our time walking along the shore, where we often picked up fishing gear or plastic or metal items that washed ashore during the winter months.

The Haida Heritage Centre is well worth a visit and has many spectacular displays of art and cultural artifacts. There are numerous galleries and craft shops throughout, including an excellent gallery at Old Massett.

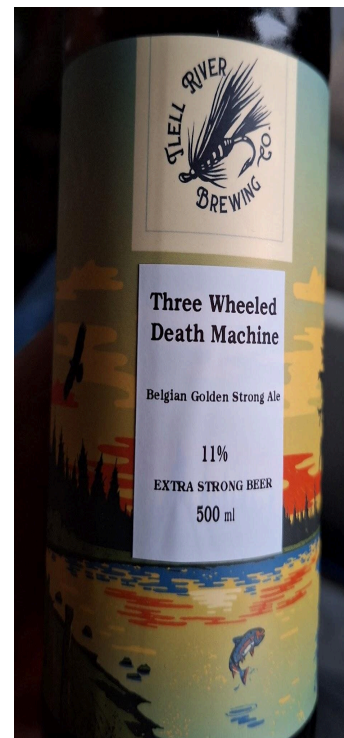
Getting Around

There is not a big road network in Haida Gwaii, but you can traverse Graham Island fairly well, except the west side (Rennell Sound), which requires adventuring via a steep and rough logging road.

Moresby Island is reachable by a short ferry from Skidegate and has even less road network. Gray Bay is reachable by logging road, but on the day we tried, it was pouring rain and the road was rapidly degrading, so we turned around.

Local Brew

The community of Tlell is about halfway up Graham Island on the east side and sports a tackle shop turned brewery called Tlell River Brewing. The description on the cans says “made by bored fishermen”, so I surmise this gives them a winter occupation. In any case, the beer was delicious and quite original. I had one called “Three Wheeled Death Machine” that was very unusual but delicious. To find the brewery, turn off the highway into the veterinarian’s yard at Tlell and look for the fishing tackle shop. The brewery is only open a few days per week during the off season.



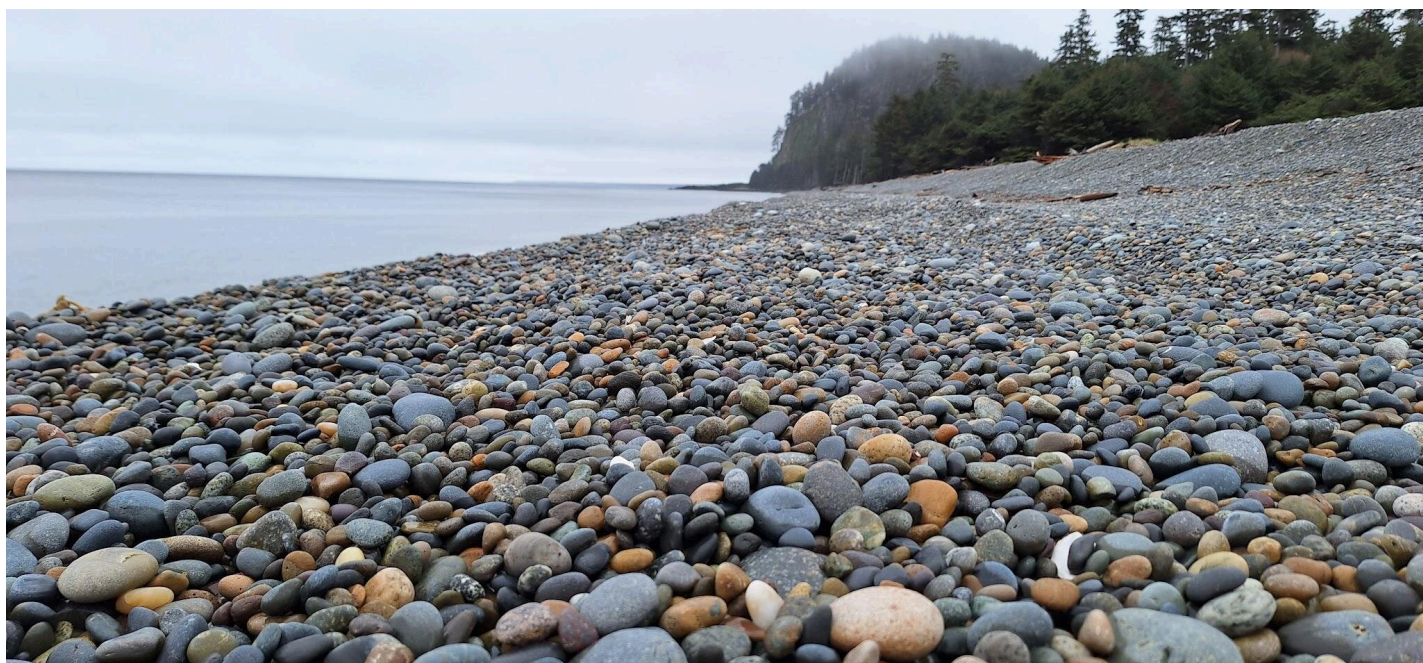


Photo: Agate Beach with Tow Hill



Photo: Dugout canoe west of Agate Beach

Recipe - Apple Fritters

While camping at Haida Gwaii, we had several apples that needed to be used. I started making apple pancakes, but ended up making the batter a bit thick, plus I hadn't cooked the apples in advance, so things were looking a little bleak. Would I end up with too-crunchy pancakes with uncooked batter in the middle?

The solution: I cooked the pancakes in more olive oil than I would normally use and voila! Apple Fritters, crispy and brown. A bit of maple syrup completed the dish, which was so delicious we made it again the next day.

Directions

I used 2 cups of Crustease pancake mix from Costco and water. Mix the batter a bit too thick and add one or two diced apples. Don't bother peeling them. Fry over medium heat in 2 or 3 tablespoons of olive oil or whatever cooking oil you prefer. Top with maple syrup and/or fruit.



Telegraph Harbour Rendezvous

The first rendezvous of the spring was highly successful, with 16 boats attending. 17 if you count my truck camper, as Northern Comfort wasn't quite ready to go.

The weather was perfect, and a highlight of the trip was the mosaic art class that many members attended. The pub dinner was very nice, with burgers and salads, along with some local musicians providing the entertainment.



Photo: A Commodore's work is never done!







LYC 2025 EVENTS

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Event	Dates	Location
Potlucks/BYOB Evenings	Robbie Burns – Jan 24 Feb 7, March 7, June 6, July 4, Aug 1, Sept 5 Oktoberfest – Oct 24 Christmas Social – Dec 6	Diamond Hall
Steak & Prawn & 40th Anniversary Celebration, Sailpast, Commodore's Gala	April 12, May 10, November 15	TBD
Rendezvous	April 25-27 May 16-19 June 20-23 Aug 25-28 Sept 15-18	Thetis Montague Harbour Port Browning Telegraph Harbour Newcastle Marina
Executive/Committee Lead Meetings	Jan 21, Feb 18, Mar 18, Apr 15, May 20, June 17 Sept 9, Oct 14, Nov 28, Dec 16	Via ZOOM*
AGM/SGM	AGM – TBD (March) SGM – Nov 25	Via ZOOM
Education Nights	Jan 14, Feb 11, Mar 11, Apr 8, June 10, Sept 23, Oct 7, Nov 4	Diamond Hall