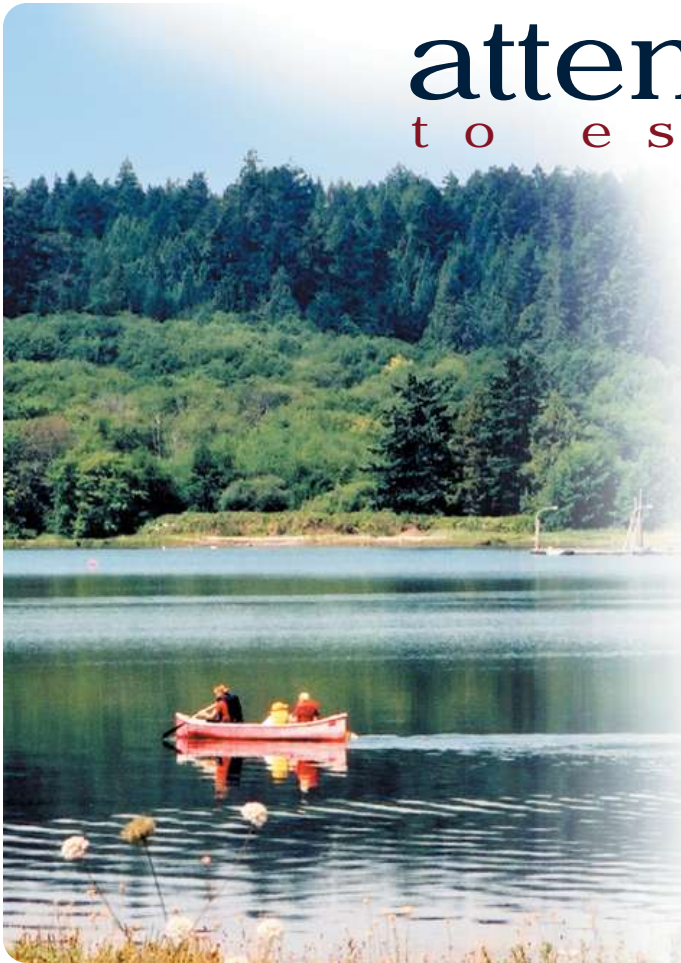


attentionvisitors to esquamalt lagoon

The natural beauty and unique ecology of Esquamalt Lagoon, and its proximity to Colwood and Greater Victoria, make it a popular destination for residents and visitors to the area. The calm protected lagoon waters and the exposed sandy beach provide a multitude of recreation opportunities for visitors and diverse natural areas provide habitat for a variety of wildlife.

Esquamalt Lagoon is a great place to visit, whether you are strolling along the shoreline, enjoying the view, observing the wildlife, kayaking or walking your dog. Unfortunately, the magnitude of human uses has resulted in the degradation of important habitats and the disturbance of wildlife.

see inside for a map of the ecological values of Esquamalt Lagoon and tips on how you can minimize your impact when you visit the lagoon.



stewardship begins with you! *Here are some simple things you can do to help protect the lagoon and its wildlife*

Protecting Lagoon Wildlife

Esquimalt Lagoon is home to a variety of wildlife and is an important resting area for migratory birds. By understanding and respecting wildlife, you can visit Esquimalt Lagoon without impacting its inhabitants.

Keep an appropriate distance from birds & other wildlife. Some wildlife are sensitive to disturbance from people and pets, particularly when behaviours critical to their survival, such as feeding or nesting, are disrupted. Migrating shorebirds need food energy to recharge for long flights and disturbance of their feeding can be very harmful, particularly when there are lots of visitors. It is best to observe birds and wildlife from a distance and avoid any human contact. If wildlife behaviour changes as you approach, you are getting too close.



Keep wild birds wild!

The healthiest diet for birds is supplied by nature. Bread has low nutritional value, affects birds' digestive systems and can make them sick. Repeat feeding of birds is also detrimental as it lowers their ability to survive on their own. If you must feed the birds, please feed them grain.

Protect our fine-feathered friends from Fido.

The lagoon shoreline is highly important bird habitat and migrating shorebirds are particularly sensitive to dogs - please be aware of where you walk your dogs and keep them on a leash while in the Migratory Bird Sanctuary, which encompasses the lagoon and adjacent lands within 100m.



All dogs, regardless of size, should be kept on leash when in the Migratory Bird Sanctuary

Watch where you walk.

Beaches and shorelines are fascinating, especially when the tide goes out and the intertidal life is exposed. Intertidal plants and animals are vulnerable at low tide and can be damaged or killed if trampled. Please be respectful of marine intertidal life and avoid walking on mussels, clams, barnacles and sensitive fringe marsh plants.

Beachcomb with a conscience.

Although it is better to look than to touch, if you do handle any intertidal animals, be gentle and put them back exactly where you found them, fill in any holes that you may have dug and carefully place all rocks back to their original position. Marine life should not be collected - it is best observed in its natural habitat.

Protecting the Lagoon Environment

Esquimalt Lagoon is a popular recreation area. When visiting the lagoon, try to leave little or no trace of your presence; this will ensure that others have the same opportunity to share an unspoiled experience.

Pick up your litter, don't leave it for the birds.

Garbage and litter take away from the beauty and enjoyment of the Esquimalt Lagoon. Litter can also be harmful to wildlife if ingested or if they become tangled in it. Please remember to clean up after yourself and place garbage in the containers provided.

Enjoy beach fires responsibly.

Where beach fires are allowed, keep them small and build them below the high tide line. Remember to keep fires away from driftwood and make sure the fire is completely out before you leave. Fire permits are mandatory and can be obtained for a \$10 fee from the Colwood Fire Department.

Clean up after your puppy.

The Esquimalt Lagoon is a popular recreational site - help keep it clean by picking up after your dog. There are garbage cans at the lagoon for your convenience.

Be aware of the natural habitats you are walking through.

The intertidal, fringe marsh and dune habitats are very sensitive to trampling. Be aware of where you and your dog may be walking and stay on the existing pathways on the lagoon side.



Walking in shoreline areas, such as fringe marsh, can harm or kill plants and animals. Please watch your step and stay on existing trails

Slow down and enjoy the ride.

Speeding on Ocean Boulevard is not only illegal and dangerous to pedestrians, it also disturbs and sometimes kills birds. Please take your time driving across the spit - you may be able to catch sight of some of the lagoon's natural treasures!

Cars and sand don't mix.

Driving on the beach or lagoon shoreline is illegal, causes serious damage to sensitive habitats and impacts wildlife. It can also damage fish habitat and may result in charges under the Federal Fisheries Act. Please park only in designated areas along Coburg Peninsula.

SEE
MAP
ON
OTHER
SIDE!
Showing the
ecological values of
Esquimalt Lagoon

esquimalt lagoon stewardship initiative

The Esquimalt Lagoon Stewardship Initiative (ELSI) is a coalition of community and environmental groups, government agencies and First Nations working together to protect, enhance and restore the health of Esquimalt Lagoon for present and future generations of people, plants and animals.



For more information on how to reduce the impact of your visit, protect this area or the initiative, please contact:

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Who lives at Esquimalt Lagoon?

Esquimalt Lagoon receives marine water from Juan de Fuca Strait and freshwater inputs from Colwood, Selleck and Bee creeks, which creates an environment teeming with life. Diverse marine and upland habitats, which include forests, wetlands, dune grasses, fringe marshes and eelgrass beds, provide food and shelter for an array of wildlife. The lagoon supports about 15 ha of eelgrass and populations of sea-run Cutthroat trout, Coho and Chinook salmon, mussels and clams. Esquimalt Lagoon is a federally designated Migratory Bird Sanctuary and is home to a wide variety of wildlife. The lagoon is an important resting and feeding area for migrating birds.



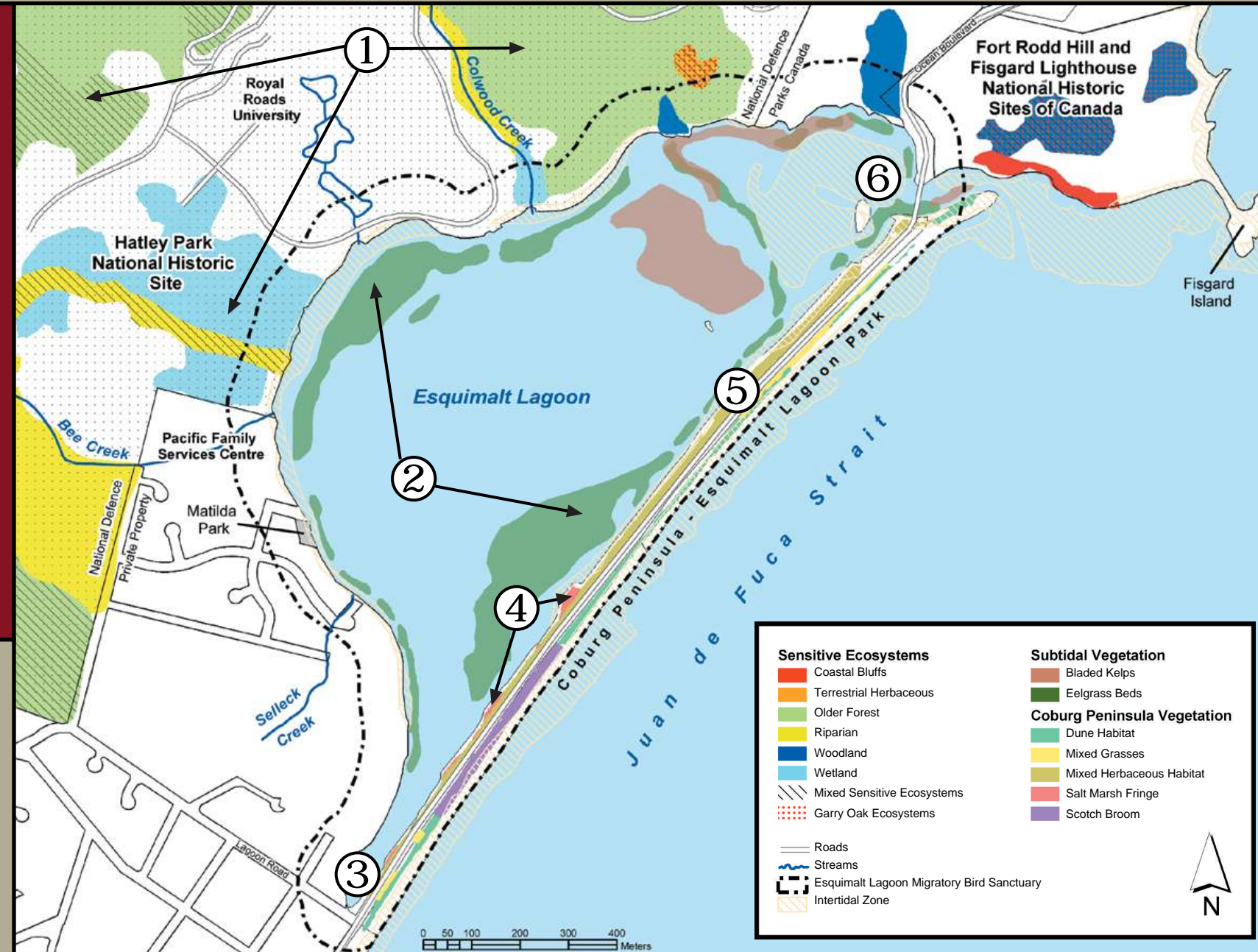
the ecological values of esquimalt lagoon



1 The upland areas surrounding the lagoon contain a number of sensitive ecosystems, including woodland and riparian forests, Garry Oak meadows and wetlands. These diverse natural areas provide important habitat for a wide variety of birds and wildlife. They also buffer the lagoon by filtering contaminants from surface water before they enter the lagoon.



2 Beneath the protected lagoon waters, fifteen hectares of eelgrass beds provide important habitat for many marine plants and animals. Eelgrass provides cover for sea-run Cutthroat trout and is excellent rearing habitat for Coho smolts and juvenile Chinook salmon. Historically, herring used the eelgrass in the lagoon for spawning.



3 Waterfowl congregate at the south end of the lagoon where fresh water inputs and minimal flushing result in lower salinity. Many of the birds that congregate in this area, like Mute swans, have been introduced and compete with native species for food and other resources. Please do not encourage them to make the lagoon their home.



4 Important fringe marshes that run along the lagoon shoreline provide wildlife with food, shelter and nesting habitat. Succulent fringe marsh plants like sea asparagus (*Salicornia spp.*) are damaged by trampling. Please stay on existing paths.

6 Mussels, clams and other filter-feeding marine animals flourish among the bladed kelp in the high current created by the narrow channels and gravel bars at the lagoon entrance. At low tide, many of these species become exposed, providing a ready food source for a variety of migratory and resident birds. Please be considerate of wildlife in this area.



5 Coburg Peninsula, the long sand and gravel spit that runs the length of the lagoon, supports various dune-type habitats including dune grasses, mixed grasses and mixed herbaceous habitats. The dune plants provide important habitat for wildlife and their root structure helps to hold the soils in place and maintain beach-dune stability. Please try to minimize walking in these areas. Along a portion of the spit, introduced Scotch broom has taken hold and is outcompeting the fragile native plant species, resulting in a loss of diversity and natural functioning of these areas.

