

This Place

The Beaver Pond

By John Millen

If you go down Pickles Road for about 700 meters from the junction (at the Graffiti Fence) with Denman Road, you come to the edge of extensive conservation lands. It's a patchwork of BC Parks land, Islands Trust Fund land and Denman Conservancy land. To understand how it all got that way you have to go back more than 40 years.

Our story starts in 1977 when Robert Filberg, formerly President of the Comox Logging and Railway Company, died and bequeathed his fortune to the Vancouver Foundation. Part of his bequest was land on Denman Island, including 160 acres that is the Southeast Quarter of Section 21. The Denman community immediately recognised that some of this property, the extensive Beaver Pond now crossed by the Pickles Road Bridge, was a valuable wetland and an important part of the Beadnell Creek headwaters. A brief to the effect that it should be conserved was prepared by the Denman Island Ratepayers Association (forerunner of DIRA) and submitted to the Vancouver Foundation by Glen Snook, Denman Island Trustee. The Vancouver Foundation agreed to donate 56 acres encompassing the wetland (Lot 1), to the Crown for a Conservation Reserve. The Foundation sold the remainder of the quarter section to Raven Lumber Company.

When Raven Lumber commenced logging, the community was again 'concerned' and Ratepayers negotiated some conditions that reduced the environmental impact of the logging on areas adjacent to Pickles and Central Roads. The boundaries of Lot 1 and Pickles Road isolated two parts of Raven's land on either side of the Beaver Pond totalling 21 acres. In 1992 the newly formed Denman Conservancy Association (DCA) raised funds and purchased these two parts and donated them to the Islands Trust Fund (ITF) to form Inner Island Nature Reserve. This was the first property owned by ITF which, at that time, resolved to also acquire both Lot 1 and the Crown land block to the East, (SW ¼ of Section 22). However this was not accomplished.

Heading north from the Pickles Road Bridge, through the maturing Douglas fir forest, we pass through Lot 1 then Inner Island Nature Reserve and then the Crown Block. In 2010 Lot 1 and this Crown Block became part of the new Denman Island Provincial Park. Continuing on Central Road we enter the DCA's Settlement Lands, another 157 acre area, on which a Conservation Covenant was recently granted to Islands Trust Fund. The Settlement Lands were obtained in 2006 by DCA in settlement of a court case in which DCA sued 4064 Investments Ltd. for damages resulting from their improper logging of Railway Grade Marsh.

At the Northwest corner of the Settlement Lands (Chickadee Road junction) we enter again the Denman Provincial Park. Turning left onto Lake Road, still in the Park, Chickadee Lake is visible through the trees. We soon reach Winter Wren Wood, a 6 acre conservation area on both sides of Lake Road and running down to the marshy shore of Chickadee Lake. It was purchased by DCA in 2000. At the time 4064 Investments owned much of the land surrounding Chickadee Lake, and DCA was trying to ensure the protection of the Lake and its surrounding forest.

Winter Wren Wood has a trail that visits both the wetland edges and drier interior forests of the site.

As we leave Winter Wren Wood we can note that we have travelled 2.5 kilometers from the Pickles Road Bridge entirely within Conservation and Park lands. With the establishment of the Denman Island Provincial Park in 2010 there is now a contiguous area of land protected for conservation stretching from the Natural Burial Cemetery on Denman Road to the junction of Northwest Road and Danes Road a distance of about seven kilometers as the Trumpeter swan flies.