

As most members are aware, the Sunshine Coast Conservation Association (SCCA) has a long history of working successfully to protect old growth forests, species at-risk, wildlife habitat and various ecosystem services within the 2.5 million hectare area of the greater Sunshine Coast region. With our current effort, the Habitat Area Nomination Project, the SCCA is moving on formal nominations of specific areas for either Wildlife Habitat Area (WHA) or Fisheries Sensitive Watershed (FSW) designation. We are also designing an educational program about what biodiversity is and what is needed to protect this region's biodiversity.

Priority Number One: Marbled Murrelets.



Our first priority is to assemble the best currently available scientific information about the locations of Marbled Murrelet nesting habitat within our region and nominate those areas for WHA status through the BC Ministry of the Environment. At this point, we are in the data-gathering phase of the project. We already have critical information about population densities in all the region's major watersheds and we also have a wealth of information about the specific habitat qualities that characterize the bird's nesting habitat.

For those of you that are not familiar with this magical species. The Marbled Murrelet is a small seabird that nests in old growth forests. It needs very old trees (more than 250 years old) and the trees need to be tall. It builds its nest on mossy platforms that sometimes grow in the crook between branch and trunk. The birds need a relatively open old growth stand structure, but they also need their nests to be well away from human disturbance, such as clear cuts. Loss of nesting habitat is the major cause of population decline among murrelet populations. The decline of forage fish populations is also a contributing factor.

About Fisheries Sensitive Watersheds (FSR).



Historically speaking, the major rivers of our region produced a landed salmon catch measuring in the 100s of millions of kilograms annually, until the fishery began to decline sharply in the 1970s. As well, this region's rivers supported First Nation populations, very similar in size to the Sunshine Coast's current population, for at least 10,000 years. The salmon fishery, along with forestry, provided the foundation of wealth that built our contemporary society. The fisheries declined for several reasons: overfishing, hydroelectric dams and logging. Both the extent of logging and specific logging practices were responsible for massive environmental damage. Today, we urgently need to restore our fisheries.

When the Province of British Columbia implemented the new Forest and Range Practices Act in 2006, it also created a new designation, the Fisheries Sensitive Watershed. Unfortunately, government still hasn't actually designated any watersheds so we are going to prod them into action. With our project, we are moving decisively toward recognition of the work that needs to be done in order to restore the region's salmon rivers. The fisheries sensitive designation mandates consideration of the cumulative hydrological impacts of forestry and it results in changes to the pace of logging so that logging does not destabilize fish bearing streams. The designation itself will not restore the fisheries, but it's a necessary step along the path of ecologically responsible management and incremental recovery of populations.

Fisheries Resources on the SCCA Website.



Where did all these fish come from? As part of the HANP, we have been collecting historical information about fish spawning escapements in each of the region's major rivers. This information gives us a rough idea of both the ecological potential of a watershed for producing salmon, and the benefits that society received in the past and might anticipate in the future. [An interactive map here on the website](#) allows you to see historical records of the size and diversity of salmon returns in each of the region's major rivers.

Conservation Education: Understanding Biodiversity in Coastal Forested Landscapes

[A new educational presentation](#) about the need for conservation of forested ecosystems in the greater Sunshine Coast region is now up and running. The presentation discusses how much land needs to be protected and where this protection needs to be applied.

This presentation, funded by the Mountain Equipment Co-op, is part of the educational component of our Habitat Area Nomination Project (HANP). We've put a lot of effort into illustrating the concepts of general biodiversity protection with short texts, stunning photos, and a variety of specialized maps. The presentation is multi-layered so you can go into as much or as little depth as you wish. It's also linked to the Fisheries Sensitive Watershed section of the website. We anticipate adding layers to this program as time and circumstance allow.

Our goal is to inform and empower people to pursue biodiversity protection in whichever circumstance they find appropriate. We hope you enjoy the show!