

Pacific Rim National Park

Cover: Sea Lions

Introducing a park and an idea

Canada covers half a continent, fronts on three oceans and stretches from the extreme Arctic more than halfway to the equator. There is a great variety of landforms in this immense country and national parks have been created to preserve important examples for you and for generations to come.

This is an interim pamphlet on the Long Beach section of Pacific Rim National Park, located on the west coast of Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Presently under development, the park consists of three distinct areas and presents numerous contrasts — long, sandy beaches, quiet estuaries and lakes, surf-swept headlands, almost impenetrable

rain forests, rocky islands and the never-ending sweep of the Pacific Ocean. It consists of approximately 150 square miles, including water.

The Long Beach area, about 56 square miles in size and the first of the park's three development phases to be completed, and the Broken Island Group, which includes 98 islands and rocks at the entrance to Barkley Sound, will be turned over to the federal government in October 1972.

The final development area, which is scheduled for transfer in April 1975, includes a 45-mile-long section of coastline containing the historic Lifesaving Trail, built between the coastal settlements of Bamfield and Port Renfrew for the use of shipwrecked sailors.

View of Kennedy Lake



The park environment

Each national park has its own character, its unique story as a living outdoor museum. Long Beach tells of the complex inter-relationship between the sea and the land and the variety of living things that inhabit this environment.

The sea

From the western shores of Vancouver Island the vast, open Pacific stretches for several thousand miles to the coastline of Asia. Because cold waters from the ocean's depths upwell along the coast and recirculate nutrients, these coastal waters are quite rich in marine life.

Offshore banks support large quantities of halibut, sole, cod and salmon which feed on plankton, shrimp and smaller fish. Each summer Wickaninnish Bay becomes a feeding ground for 50-foot-long gray whales.

The edge of the sea

Numerous small organisms are found in the park's shore-line zone, which includes three vastly different habitats. The rocky shore with its tide pools, shaded sea caves and surf-swept rocks supports a tremendous variety of life, including barnacles, mussels, limpets, sea stars and red and brown seaweeds. Tide pools contain such animals as sea stars, sponges, spiny sea urchins and small fish as well as red, green and brown seaweeds.

Barren at first glance, the sandy beach contains beneath its surface razor clams, beach hoppers, colourful sea worms and other animals. Sea weed which litters the beach along the tide-line provides food for scavenging sea birds.

At low tide Grice Bay, in the northern section of the park, becomes a large mud flat teeming with tiny plants and animals. Thousands of geese and ducks stop here to feed during their yearly migrations.

Colonies of sea birds and sea lions seek the more inaccessible coastal areas and off-shore islands.

The land

The Long Beach section of the park consists of a narrow, coastal plain bordering on the Vancouver Island Ranges —

mountains that rise dramatically in the background to elevations of more than 7,000 feet.

Some 200 million years ago, this region formed part of a chain of underwater volcanoes which stretched along the North American coast.

After releasing vast amounts of molten rock into the sea, the volcanoes became inactive and ancient plants and animals formed a thick layer of limestone over the volcanic material. Again the volcanoes exploded, the surface rose above the sea and Vancouver Island was born.

The Ice Age, which began about one million years ago, changed the landscape, sculpturing the mountains and deepening the valleys. When the huge sheet of ice which covered Vancouver Island began to melt back, streams carried glacial debris of sands, gravels and silts down to the ocean, forming the coastal plain. Along the shore, the erosion of these loose deposits by the relentless pounding of the ocean has created extensive beaches of sand and gravel.

The plants

The west coast of Vancouver Island experiences a maritime climate with heavy precipitation, prolonged cloudiness, and little variation in temperature. Influenced by these conditions, a dense, fast-growing forest dominates the landscape.

The shore regions, where wind-driven saltspray lashes the forest, produces a mixed growth of spruce, hemlock and fir. Behind this, in the more protected regions, the forest is dominated by the large, grotesque western red cedar.

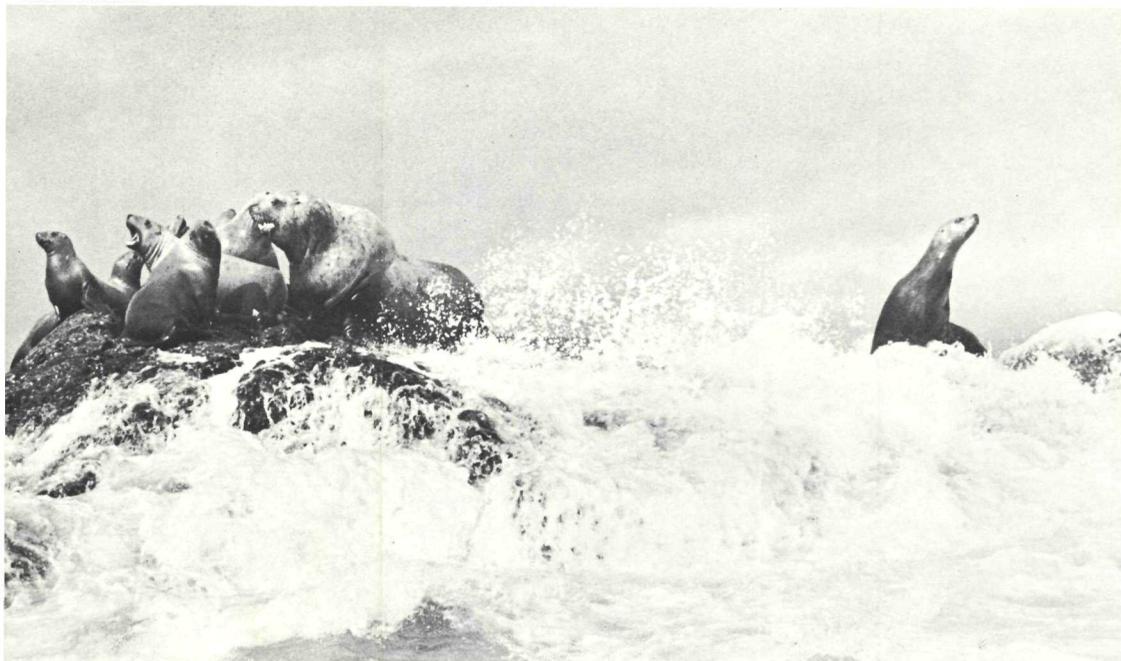
The moist, muskeg-like areas scattered throughout the park support stands of shore pine, a small conspicuous tree that grows in contorted, tufted forms.

Usually the forest floor is concealed by a thick, almost impenetrable growth of underbrush, and ferns grow in the deeply-shaded areas where the canopy of trees is heaviest. The flowering season in this moist and temperate climate is over six months long and wildflowers are common in forest openings and along the shoreline.

The animals

Mammals are not plentiful in the deep forest although the

British Columbia



Long Beach

Bottom left: Surfing at Long Beach
Bottom right: Family explores tide pool at Long Beach

red squirrel, mink, marten and raccoon can occasionally be seen there. The black-tailed deer seeks logged-over sites and glades along the shoreline. Although the black bear and the cougar inhabit the park area they are rarely seen.

Bird life is scarce in the deep forest where the most common species include Stellar's jays, crows, wrens, and warblers. Sparrows and the bald eagle prefer the shoreline forest.

The park is located on the Pacific flyway and during the fall and spring, thousands of migrating geese and ducks stop to feed and rest at lakes and estuaries.

Kennedy Lake and some of the larger streams offer trout fishing.

A brief park history

Hundreds of years before the first white man visited the area, Vancouver Island was peopled mainly by the Nootka Indians, a group whose needs were abundantly supplied by the wealth of the forest and the sea.

In 1778 Britain's Captain James Cook visited the island and returned home with several sea otter hides. Soon the luxurious pelts were in great demand. Although the pursuit of the sea otter was responsible for much of the early exploration of the area, the animal was hunted almost to extinction.

Captain George Vancouver explored and charted the island in 1792. However, unrest along the coast, generated by unscrupulous trading with the Indians, prevented permanent settlement for a number of years.

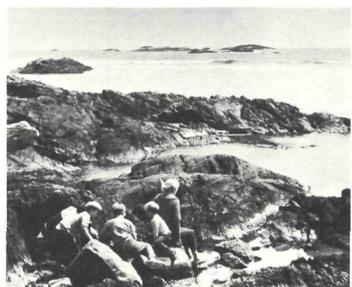
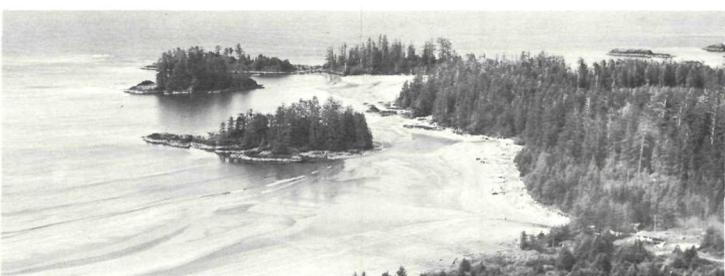
A prosperous lumbering industry was eventually established on the island and the discovery of minerals, including gold, sparked brief rushes. But it was to the sea and its bounty of fish that most of the inhabitants looked for their livelihoods and the fishing industry is still the mainstay of some coastal communities near the park.

Once known as the "Graveyard of the Pacific", the treacherous waters off Vancouver Island's west coast have accounted for some 240 shipwrecks since 1803. The famous Lifesaving Trail between Bamfield and Port Renfrew was constructed to aid sailors shipwrecked along this especially dangerous 45-mile-long stretch of coast. Although modern navigational aids have made these waters safer, lifeboats are still based at Tofino and Bamfield.

The Long Beach area was settled in the late 1800's. During World War II a large airfield was built there. Following the construction of the highway linking the area with Port Alberni, Long Beach was discovered by tourists and public opinion pressed for the establishment of a national park there.

How to get there

The Long Beach section of the park is situated between the communities of Tofino and Ucluelet and is directly accessible by Highway 4 from Parksville on the eastern coast



of Vancouver Island. Distance between the two points is approximately 100 miles and although the major portion of the highway is paved, parts of it are still rough and unpaved.

Ucluelet and Tofino can be reached by boat and offer sheltered harbours. The Tofino airport provides facilities for light aircraft.

How to enjoy the park

Season — The park is open all year although many services are only seasonal and most visitors come between May and September. Although summer in this area is usually warm and sunny, periods of rain and fog are not uncommon and visitors should bring suitable clothing and camping equipment.

Some don't's

National parks are selected areas set apart as nature sanctu-

aries and special care is taken to maintain them in their natural state. For this reason everything including intertidal animals, trees and rocks are to be left undisturbed. Feeding, touching or molesting wild animals is not permitted.

Please protect your park for future enjoyment. It is part of your heritage.

Fires

Campfires may be set in fireplaces provided for this purpose or in outdoor portable stoves. Barbecues may be used only in campgrounds or picnic areas, and all coals must be dumped into existing park fireplaces. Fire permits must be obtained for open fires.

Anyone finding an unattended fire should try to extinguish it, or if it is beyond his control, report it at once to the nearest park employee.

Hiking — Hiking is the best way to explore a national park.

The system of hiking trails planned for the new park has not yet been completed but visitors can enjoy fascinating walks along the beaches or the rocky shores where sea caves, tide pools, rock arches and blow holes can be viewed. Short trails lead through the woods and around steep sections of the headlands.

Hikers should watch the level of the tides and surf which could leave them stranded or provide an unexpected dunking.

Camping — Camping brings you into the closest contact with the natural environment of the park. A semi-serviced, 90-unit campground is located above Green Point, a rocky bluff bisecting Long Beach, and two gravel pulloffs two miles beyond the campground are ideally suited for camper and trailer use. There is a small daily fee for camping and space is allotted on a first-come, first-served basis. The maximum allowable stay in a campground is two weeks.

Other facilities

Although Long Beach is open to the public, the park is still under development and many facilities have not yet been installed. Three miles from the information centre a short road leads to a sandy beach, Kennedy Lake, which is popular with swimmers and picnickers.

Commercial accommodation, service stations, laundromats, stores and post offices are located at Ucluelet and Tofino. Tofino is also the site of a small, modern hospital.

How to get the most out of your visit

To help you understand and appreciate the park's complex natural environment, you are urged to take advantage of the free interpretive program, conducted by a professional park naturalist and his staff. Information on this program, which includes conducted hikes and illustrated talks, is available at the park information centre, campground, and park administration office at Ucluelet.

Where to get information

Detailed information may be obtained at the information centre near Kennedy Lake and at the administration office in Ucluelet. Uniformed staff will answer questions, provide maps, outline travel routes, and refer visitors to various areas and facilities in the park.

Park wardens, though not primarily responsible for general information, will help visitors whenever possible.

Additional information can be obtained by writing the Superintendent, Pacific Rim National Park, Ucluelet, British Columbia. For information on other national parks, write the Director, National and Historic Parks Branch, Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Ottawa K1A 0H6.

