

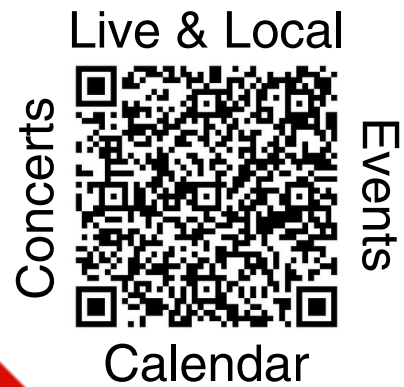
# Cortes Island **Resonance**

Written by Roy Hales

Friends of Cortes Island at  
Mansons Landing  
Provincial Park



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# Friends of Cortes Island at Mansons Landing Provincial Park



With its shallow watered tidal lagoon and long sandy spit, Manson's Landing Provincial Park is one of Cortes Island's most treasured tourist spots. It is also the home of several plant species not found in many places along the coast, as well as forage fish, biodiverse marine life and birds. Friends of Cortes Island (FOCI) have been helping BC Parks maintain this location since 2016.

There has been a long history of First Nations usage of what is now the park, and my understanding is that a large part of the Spit is actually midden. It has archaeological interest.



You can see all the shells embedded in the sand on the banks very clearly when you walk along the beach. We are working to protect the spit from erosion. A significant part of the erosion is caused by people climbing up and down the banks” explained Helen Hall, Executive Director of FOCI.

“If you go onto the beach, you’ll notice a grassy looking plant community growing there - it’s called a coastal sand ecosystem, which is actually quite rare in BC and it’s also very fragile. The grassy looking plant you see all year round, is called ‘Dune Wildrye.’ There’s also ‘Beach Pea,’ ‘Silver Burr’ Weed, and ‘Gumweed.’”

One of FOCI’s first concerns was an invasive species called Scotch Broom that had grown to be 7-8 feet tall and was crowding out the native plants.

In October 2016 Hall posted an ad in Cortes Island's online bulletin Board, **Tideline** ([www.cortesisland.com](http://www.cortesisland.com))

Mansons is home to a valuable area of coastal sand dune ecosystem growing along the top of the beach. Sadly it has become invaded by broom and is in danger of disappearing. We have been given a grant by BC Parks to help restore it."

"So we are organising four community broom removal events over the fall and spring to tackle the broom, and would love you to join us. Our first event is this Friday. If you would like to help, please come along! Please bring loppers if you have them (no chainsaws please) and wear suitable warm, wet weather gear, work gloves and sturdy boots.

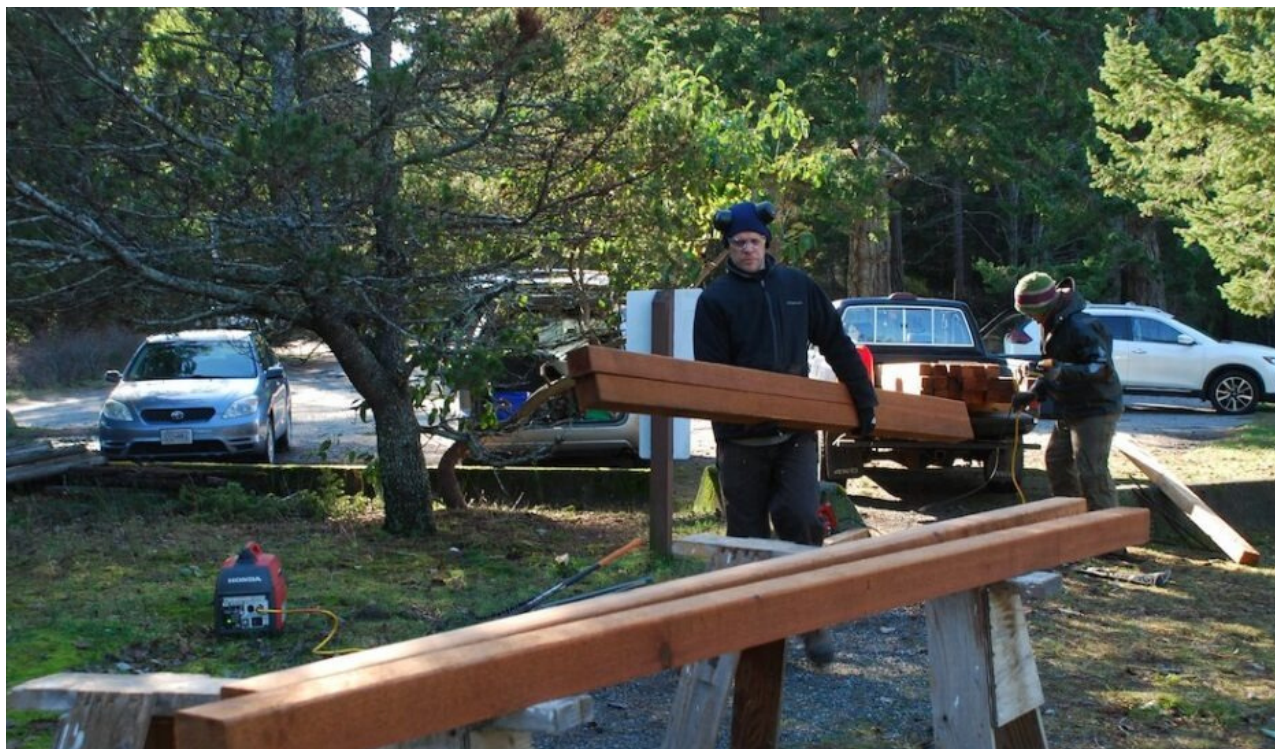
"Ryan Harvey, FOCI's Parks Coordinator, will be supervising the work. All volunteers will be covered by BC Parks insurance. Oh yes, we will be supplying yummy muffins and coffee to keep you going!"



Seven people turned out but they managed to clean the broom out from the entire coastal strip. Twenty-one people turned out to the next broom bash, which also included removing broom from the whole of the forested area on the Spit. By the third work bee, they cleared the shore of the lagoon.

The Broom Bash is now an annual event, which sometimes brings out whole families.

Hall recently remarked, “We are beginning to see a difference. The coastal sand ecosystem is starting to thrive and we’ve noticed a lot more native shrubs coming in on the Spit itself. It’s a good news story, but we have to keep on it because broom just keeps growing back. So it’s great to have volunteers coming out each year to help with this.”



Another concern was people climbing down the banks, causing them to crumble and big shelves to form. Some were even trampling on the sensitive plant life.

There was no fencing to protect these areas, so working with BC Parks, FOCI put up new split rail fencing at the end of the Spit and next to the parking lot. The pathway running through the centre of the Spit was rebuilt, and signs put up to tell people where they should not be walking (and why).

A series of signs have also been set up to help people learn about the rare plant species as well as the thriving marine ecosystem.



FOCI is carrying out a number of scientific research projects and one of them is in Mansons Landing Provincial Park; its **Forage Fish Monitoring Project**, which involves taking samples of sand over the winter months.

Microscopes are used to examine the sand collected for the eggs or DNA of spawning forage fish. Over the years they have found thousands of 'Pacific Sand Lance' eggs, a tiny key species that feeds on plankton and in turn is prey for larger fish, birds and marine life.

An article on FOCI's website explains:

“PSL spawn in the sand at the highest reaches of the intertidal (10–’14’ tidal range) over the winter months. The females literally ‘swim’ through the sand to deposit their eggs, which are then fertilized by large schools of males releasing sperm into the waters above. The fertilized eggs are sticky and attach to grains of sand which act like ballast to hold them in the sand; hatching occurs in 30 days.”



Mansons Landing is one of the core forage fish nursery sites, in a project area stretching southwards to Hornby Island and Baynes Sound. **Project Watershed Society**, in Courtney, coordinates monitoring groups, while the University of British Columbia and Fisheries and Oceans Canada provide technical expertise.

As part of FOCI summer events program, once or twice every summer, marine biologist Deb Cowper and Jane Newman, from

the Cortes Island Museum, lead a low tide exploration of the park called 'Gumbooting the Lagoon'. Newman describes some of the park's human history, while Cowper introduces people to the marine life.

"We often have lots of children who are really excited to take part. It's a bit like a marine treasure hunt for them. They look for marine life such as crabs and moon snails and Deb tells them all about what they are seeing," exclaimed Hall.

"It's a lovely time to be outdoors exploring. There is a mixture of locals and tourists. It's a good way for us to talk about the work we're doing too and people learn a bit more about us as an organization."

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### **Photo credits:**

- (1) Mansons Lagoon photo courtesy BC Parks;
- (2) Beach Pea - photo by Roy L Hales;
- (3) Mother and child at the 2025 Broom Bash - photo by Roy L Hales;
- (4) FOCI installing new rails along the trail on Mansons Spit - FOCI facebook page;
- (5) Pacific Sea Lance - photo by brewbooks, Wikimedia CC BY-SA 2.0
- (6) Gumbooting the lagoon - Roy L Hales photo



# **FRIENDS *of* CORTES ISLAND**

**For nature, for people, for life**

Friends of Cortes Island is the leading local conservation organization on Cortes Island with a remit to promote awareness and support for the natural environment by providing stewardship programs and educational activities.

We work tirelessly to preserve the natural wonders of Cortes that make the island so special. This includes our annual island wide beach clean-up; maintaining Regional Parks and Trails; developing creative conservation projects with the Cortes Island School; managing the Dillon Creek Wetland in order to prevent harmful nutrients from entering the Hague and Gunflint lakes; and working to prevent the highly invasive European Green Crab from devastating Mansons Lagoon.

We also run a host of community engagement events, from low tide and nature walks to nest box building workshops, wildlife coexistence education, and much more.

## **How you can get involved**

You can get involved in keeping Cortes wild, beautiful and sustainable by becoming a FOCI member, volunteering on one of our many projects, or donating to support our important work.

Visit our website [www.friendsofcortes.org](http://www.friendsofcortes.org) to find out more or contact us at [friendsofcortes@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofcortes@gmail.com)

## **Making a Donation**

Our work takes time, care, and resources. Your support helps us protect and nurture the natural beauty of Cortes Island for generations to come. If you're able, please consider donating:

Online at [friendsofcortes.org/donations](http://friendsofcortes.org/donations)

By cheque, payable to Friends of Cortes, mailed to: PO Box 254,  
Mansons Landing, BC V0P 1K0

Your generosity means so much—to us, and to the future of Cortes Island. Thank you.

# Cortes Island **Resonance**

Written by Roy Hales

Roy Hales has been a published author since 1982 and has been the editor and owner of the local news website and daily radio program *Cortes Currents* since 2014.

Roy is also a former President of the Cortes Community Radio Society (2017-2021)

*Visit Cortes Currents:* [www.cortescurrents.ca](http://www.cortescurrents.ca)

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The *Cortes Island Resonance Series* is a publication of the **Cortes Community Radio Society**, located in downtown Mansons Landing on beautiful Cortes Island.

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# Cortes Island Resonance

Written by Roy Hales

Amplifying local voices and environmental themes through eight original reports promoted and distributed at Cortes Island's Village Commons Summer Concert Series 2025.

## Environmental Reports

1. Restoring Life to Dillon Creek
2. Friends of Cortes Island at Mansons Landing Provincial Park
3. 30 Years of Foreshore Monitoring on Cortes Island
4. European Green Crabs Reach Cortes Island
5. Sabina Leader Mense and the Wolves of Cortes
6. Species at Risk
7. The Call That Changed Everything – Western Screech Owl
8. The Story of the Island's Streamkeepers

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