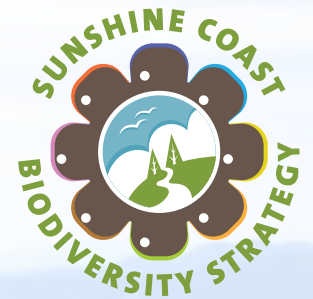
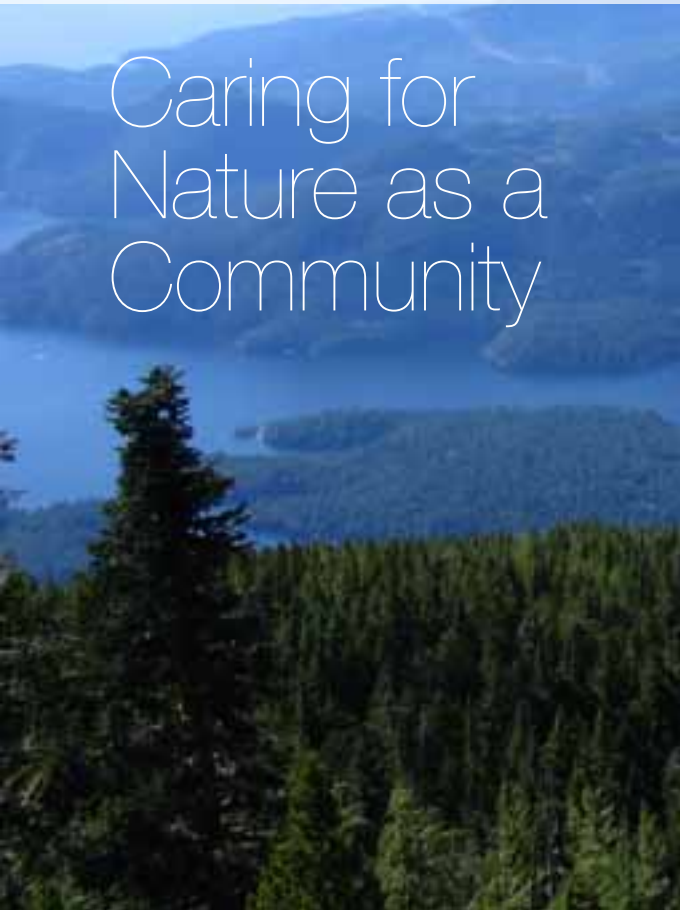


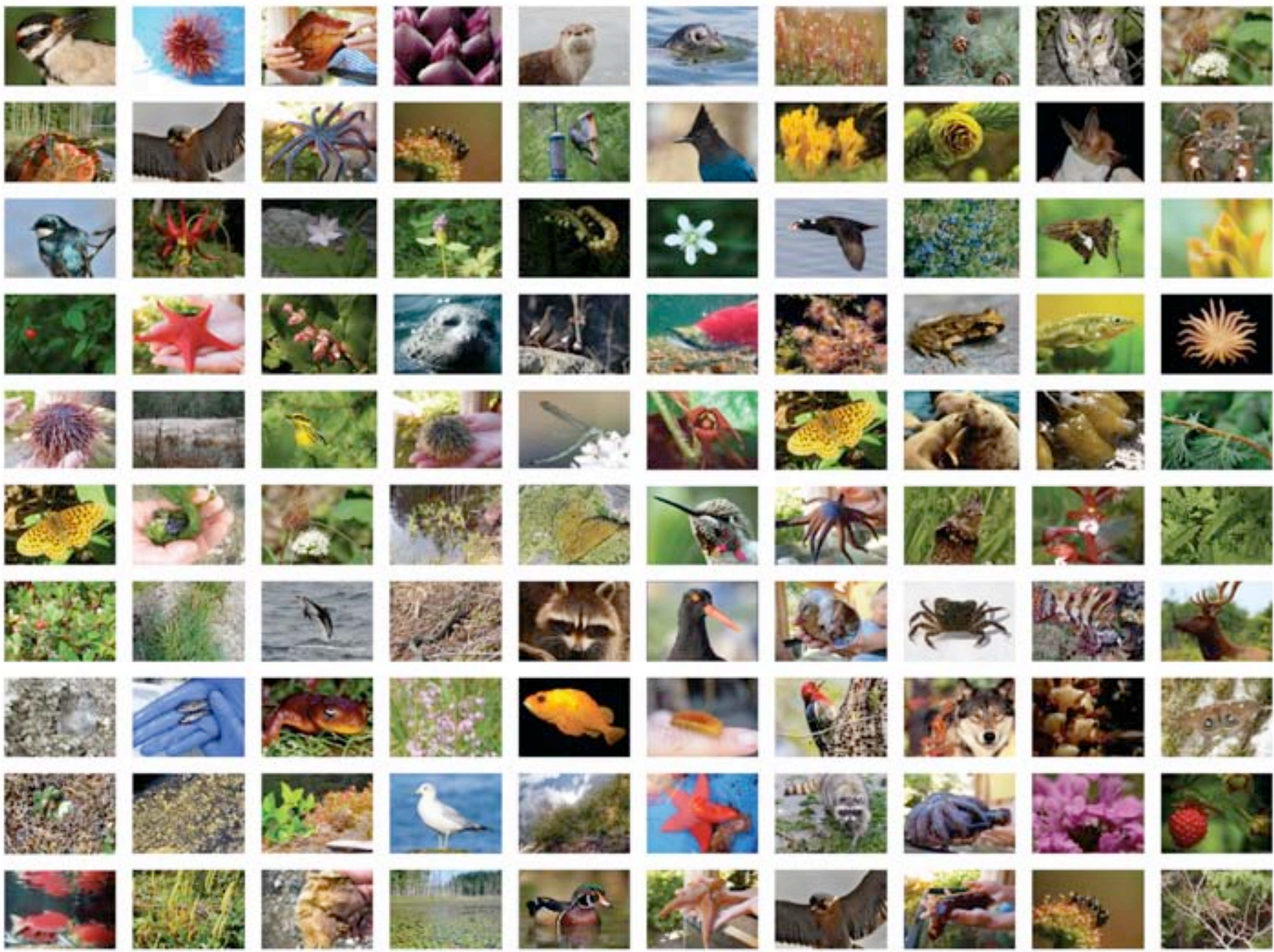
the Sunshine Coast Biodiversity Strategy



Caring for
Nature as a
Community







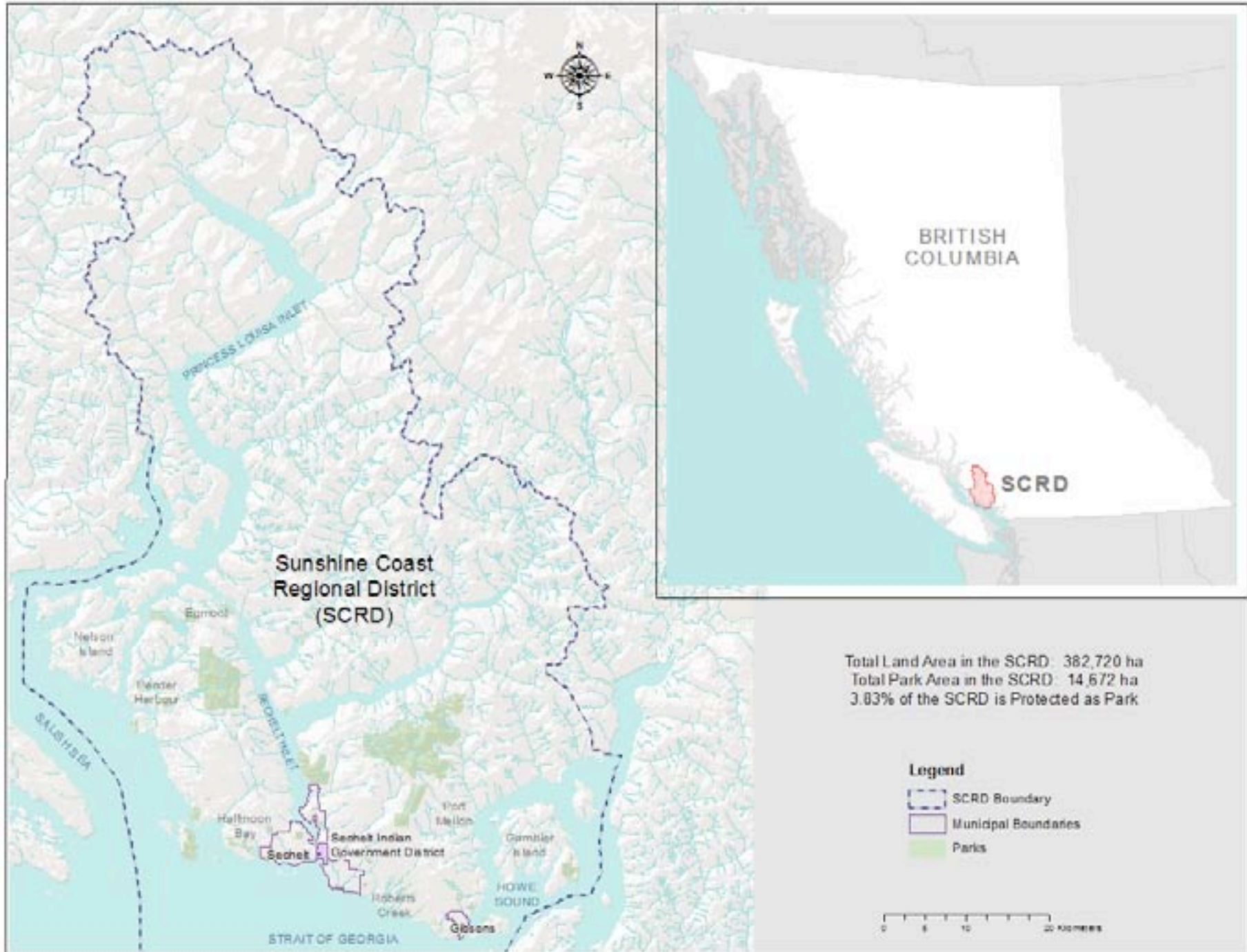
Imagine a coast... together
where we believe that
we can make a difference



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**Sunshine Coast
Regional District
(SCRD)**

BRITISH
COLUMBIA

SCRD

Total Land Area in the SCRD: 382,720 ha
 Total Park Area in the SCRD: 14,672 ha
 3.83% of the SCRD is Protected as Park

- Legend**
-  SCRD Boundary
 -  Municipal Boundaries
 -  Parks

0 5 10 20 KILOMETERS

Executive Summary



From vast forests to microscopic bacteria, biodiversity incorporates the full variety of life on Earth, including genes, species and ecosystems, and their relationships with one another. Together this diversity of life underpins countless essential services that we all rely upon but often take for granted. Everything from food production, to clean water, fertile soil and fresh air are the result of working ecosystems filled with species that perform these tasks.

Our beautiful Sunshine Coast is world renowned for its outstanding natural features, including spectacular mountains, ancient forests, lush wetlands, crystal clear lakes and rivers, and rich estuaries and coastal waters, all home to a great diversity of habitats and species. As development in our region increases, now is the critical window of opportunity to ensure that we take positive action to protect our precious natural heritage. To this end, we have created this Biodiversity Strategy to guide our community's action to conserve and sustainably manage biodiversity on the Sunshine Coast.

Developed by the **Ruby Lake Lagoon Society** in collaboration with partner groups and community stakeholders, **the Biodiversity Strategy** includes the following six main goals:

- Goal 1** All segments of our community are *inspired and empowered* to value and protect biodiversity, with citizens, governments and businesses actively involved in caring for biodiversity as a part of their daily lives and operations.
- Goal 2** Governments, land managers and resource users have developed *collaborative strategies* and enacted *far-sighted policies* to conserve biodiversity and ensure that natural ecosystem services on both land and water continue to provide maximum benefit to our community.
- Goal 3** *Comprehensive knowledge and access to scientific information* about biodiversity enables governments, resource users and interest groups to make informed decisions and take responsible action to manage and conserve biodiversity.
- Goal 4** The *economic value* of biodiversity and ecological goods and services is known and appreciated and incorporated into decision making and planning.
- Goal 5** A *network of protected areas* conserves a rich variety of interconnected ecosystems, ecological communities, habitats, species and populations.
- Goal 6** Action has been taken to *protect, restore and enhance habitats*, and mitigate threats to biodiversity, ensuring that healthy ecological communities and viable populations of all native flora, fauna and other organisms survive and thrive across their ecological ranges.



This **Biodiversity Strategy** document fully describes these goals, provides specific objectives for each goal, and outlines key strategies for achieving our goals and objectives. The Strategy represents the first step towards implementing a community-led and community-enacted plan for the whole Sunshine Coast. In the coming months, we will further refine the Strategy into a comprehensive Action Plan, including detailed itemized and prioritized actions, with specific targets, timelines and lead organizations, to help us **achieve our vision** of:

“A Sunshine Coast community which cherishes and understands the diverse benefits of healthy ecosystems and biological processes to everyone, and thus practices responsible coast-wide stewardship of biodiversity.”





Imagine a coast...

where we all recognize the
vital role that nature
plays in our
lives

Background

What is Biodiversity?

From vast wetlands to tiny insects, biodiversity encompasses all living things on Earth. It includes life at all scales, from ecosystems, to species, to the full range of genetic diversity contained within each species, and includes interactions between different organisms, and between living things and their environment.

What is the Current Status of Biodiversity?

Unfortunately the planet is undergoing a serious biodiversity crisis, with current extinction rates hundreds to thousands of times historical levels. According to the 2013 IUCN Red List, 56% of plants, 41% of amphibians, 36% of crustaceans, 31% of sharks and rays, 26% of insects, 26% of reptiles, 25% of mammals, 25% of bony fishes, and 13% of birds assessed so far are threatened with extinction. Many interacting drivers of biodiversity loss have been identified, chief among them are habitat loss and degradation, overexploitation, pollution, alien species and climate change.



Biodiversity on the Sunshine Coast

The Sunshine Coast boasts a fantastic diversity of landscapes and wildlife, from oceans and estuaries that teem with sea life, to productive wetlands and low-elevation forests which provide refuge to wildlife at the very northern limits of their ranges, to lofty alpine meadows and high-elevation forests that are home to mysterious and elusive mountain creatures. The Sunshine Coast provides sanctuary for many threatened and endangered species whose populations have been decimated in more developed areas of the province.

This remarkable biodiversity is now at increasing risk. One of the fastest growing regions in the province, the human population of the Sunshine Coast is expected to increase by 65% between 2001 and 2031. Wildlife researchers and land managers have already noticed the degradation of habitats and decline of local species. Now is the critical window of opportunity to take positive action to conserve biodiversity on the Sunshine Coast as our community grows.

Why is Biodiversity Important?

The biodiversity of the Sunshine Coast provides countless essential ecological goods and services that benefit our community. Everything from food production, to clean water, fertile soil and fresh air are the result of healthy, functioning ecosystems filled with species performing these tasks. Our marine, freshwater and terrestrial natural assets provide a way of life for many of our community members, from natural resource industries such as forestry, fishing and shellfish harvesting, to real estate, recreation, education, and ecotourism.



What does this Strategy Include?

This Biodiversity Strategy outlines a plan for action to conserve and sustainably manage biodiversity on the Sunshine Coast. The Strategy includes the following elements:

GUIDING PRINCIPLES	Core values and beliefs that influenced the strategy development
VISION	Ideal future state we aspire to achieve once strategy is enacted
GOALS	Desired outcomes once the strategy is fully enacted
OBJECTIVES	Changes that must take place to realize the goals
STRATEGIES	Actions to be taken to achieve the goals and objectives

How was the Strategy Developed?

The Strategy was created with input from the [Biodiversity Strategy Steering Committee](#), scientists and experts from other regions, and community stakeholders. Strategy development was informed by a review of local, regional and national biodiversity strategies from other jurisdictions across the globe, along with a '[Meeting of Minds](#)' workshop held in October 2011 and attended by representatives who have developed or are developing biodiversity strategies in BC and who shared best practices for strategy creation.

Development of the Biodiversity Strategy continued at the [Sunshine Coast Biodiversity Summit](#) held in June 2012. The 3-day long Summit brought together close to 100 community stakeholders, including representatives from dozens of local organizations, and all levels of government, to share their desires and aspirations, identify goals, objectives and priority actions, and work collaboratively on the content of the Strategy.



What Will Happen Next?

The Biodiversity Strategy represents the first step towards implementing community-led and community-enacted solutions to conserve and sustainably manage biodiversity on the Sunshine Coast. Following further consultation with our partners and our community, the ideas in the Strategy will be refined and focused into a comprehensive [Biodiversity Strategy Action Plan](#), including detailed, itemized and prioritized actions, with specific targets, timelines and lead organizations.

In the long run, implementation of the Sunshine Coast Biodiversity Strategy will ensure that our remarkable region maintains a connected, biologically diverse network of healthy, resilient ecosystems and ecosystem services for the benefit of us all.



Guiding Principles



Biodiversity Values

We recognize and appreciate the multiple values provided by biodiversity, including economic, ecological, social, cultural and intrinsic.

Inclusiveness

We believe that all segments of our community must work collaboratively and cooperatively, and share in the responsibilities and benefits of protecting biodiversity.

Respecting First Nations

We embrace the view that our efforts to conserve biodiversity must acknowledge and respect the culture, values, practices and knowledge of First Nations peoples.



Guiding Principles

Prioritizing Native Biodiversity

We believe that efforts to conserve and enhance biodiversity must focus on native species and ecosystems, rather than introduced species.

Guided By Science

We appreciate that biodiversity conservation planning, policies and actions must be guided by sound, unbiased science.

Including All Landscapes

We recognize that biodiversity conservation efforts must take place in all types of landscapes, From parks and protected areas, to rural landscapes and urban zones, including both public and private land.

Our Vision

A Sunshine Coast **community** which cherishes and understands the diverse benefits of **healthy ecosystems** and biological processes to everyone, and thus practices responsible **coast-wide stewardship** of **biodiversity**.



Our Goals

Goal 1: Engaging with Biodiversity

All segments of our community are *inspired and empowered to value and protect biodiversity*, with citizens and businesses actively involved in caring for biodiversity as a part of their daily lives and operations.

Goal 2: Prospering with Biodiversity

Governments, land managers and resource users have developed *collaborative strategies* and *enacted far-sighted policies* to conserve biodiversity and ensure that natural ecosystem services both on land and in water continue to provide maximum benefit to our community.

Goal 3: Understanding Biodiversity

Comprehensive knowledge and access to scientific information about biodiversity enables governments, resource users and interest groups to *make informed decisions* and *take responsible action* to manage and conserve biodiversity.

Our Goals

Goal 4: Valuing Biodiversity

The *economic value of biodiversity and ecological goods* and services is known and appreciated and incorporated into decision making and planning.

Goal 5: Protecting Biodiversity

A *network of protected areas* conserves a rich variety of interconnected ecosystems, ecological communities, habitats, species, and populations.

Goal 6: Caring for Biodiversity

Action has been taken to *protect, restore and enhance habitats, and mitigate threats to biodiversity*, ensuring that healthy ecological communities and viable populations of all native flora, fauna and other organisms survive and thrive across their ecological ranges.

Imagine a coast...

where nature is our children's

playground





*“Look! Look!
Look deep into nature
and you will understand
everything.”*

Albert Einstein

Goal 1 Engaging with Biodiversity



To facilitate community participation in, and support for, biodiversity conservation on the Sunshine Coast, we must ensure that residents understand their connection to, and dependence on, the biodiversity that surrounds us. Innovative and engaging public education, engagement and capacity building programs will help to increase knowledge, connect citizens with species and habitats, and motivate and empower action. We must work to make education fun and convenient, to promote the small steps that inspire people to get involved.

Goal:

All segments of our community are inspired and empowered to value and protect biodiversity, with citizens and businesses actively involved in caring for biodiversity as a part of their daily lives and operations.



Goal 1 Engaging with Biodiversity

Objectives:

- ❖ Increase public awareness, understanding and support of biodiversity conservation.
- ❖ Increase the number of community members, organizations and businesses actively participating in biodiversity conservation efforts.

Strategies:

- ❖ Develop and deliver effective biodiversity education and awareness programs targeting all segments of the community.
- ❖ Encourage, celebrate and support personal action by residents to protect, maintain and restore biodiversity.
- ❖ Use partnerships, mentoring programs and demonstration projects to deliver outreach, build community capacity, and enable residents to protect biodiversity.





Imagine a coast...

where intelligent policies and
innovative solutions safeguard
our natural environment and build a
positive future for our
community



*“Biodiversity is the greatest treasure
we have... Its diminishment is to be prevented
at all cost.”*

Thomas Eisner

Goal 2 Prospering with Biodiversity

Sound policy will be essential to direct coordinated and strategic action to conserve biodiversity and maintain ecosystem services. To protect our natural assets and prosper as a community, we must enact forward-thinking and creative policies, planning processes, management practices, programs, and legislation. We must work together to ensure that our entire community continues to share in the myriad benefits provided by the biodiversity of the Sunshine Coast.

Goal:

Governments, land managers and resource users have developed collaborative strategies and enacted far-sighted policies to conserve biodiversity and ensure that natural ecosystem services both on land and in water continue to provide maximum benefit to our community.



Goal 2 Prospering with Biodiversity



Objectives:

- ❖ Increase the number of policies, programs and legislation that protect biodiversity.
- ❖ Increase economic incentives for good practices that support biodiversity.
- ❖ Increase monitoring and enforcement of appropriate environmental legislation.

Strategies:

- ❖ Identify, adopt, implement, and promote best management practices, planning processes, policies, programs, incentives and legislation to protect biodiversity.
- ❖ Embed biodiversity protection, restoration and enhancement in all government decision making.
- ❖ Maintain or develop incentives that encourage and support the conservation of biodiversity.
- ❖ Identify and promote sustainable economic alternatives to activities that threaten biodiversity.
- ❖ Enhance the monitoring and enforcement of biodiversity-related legislation.



Imagine
a coast...

where decision-making is informed
by **sound science**
and a comprehensive
understanding of
our **natural assets**



*"Discovering a **new stickleback species** pair on the Sunshine Coast was thrilling! This region is blessed with amazing biodiversity and we are only just starting to understand what is out there!" Dr. Jen Gow*

Goal 3

Understanding Biodiversity

In order to make responsible, intelligent decisions about the use and protection of biodiversity, we must first understand it. To improve our knowledge, sound science and research must be carried out to identify, map, and evaluate all aspects of Sunshine Coast biodiversity from genes and populations, to species, habitats and ecosystems. To facilitate decision-making and planning, comprehensive data must be brought together and made available to government, land managers, resource users, and stakeholders.

Goal:

Comprehensive knowledge and access to scientific information about biodiversity enables governments, resource users and interest groups to make informed decisions and take responsible action to manage and conserve biodiversity.



Goal 3

Understanding Biodiversity



Objectives:

- ❖ Improve the range and quality of knowledge and information about Sunshine Coast biodiversity.
- ❖ Strengthen capacity to collect, analyze, and distribute data and information about biodiversity.


Strategies:

- ❖ Bring together existing data, studies, mapping and information to establish what is known, identify knowledge gaps, and prioritize research needs.
- ❖ Undertake research studies to fill knowledge gaps.
- ❖ Select indicators to monitor trends in biodiversity and support the management of wild populations, species, habitats, ecological communities, and ecosystems.
- ❖ Create comprehensive and fully accessible Sunshine Coast biodiversity database which includes both historical and current data.
- ❖ Create an inviting research environment, including resources and facilities, to attract and partner with university researchers and graduate students.



Imagine a coast...

where we appreciate and value
the natural systems that ensure our wellbeing
and enable our community to prosper



*"...we depend on
the gifts of nature
but these gifts must be
received with gratitude
and not exploited or abused."*

Satish Kumar

Goal 4

Valuing Biodiversity

Nature provides countless benefits to our community. Everything from provision of food and resources, to purification of air and water, to regulation of climate and erosion control, are the result of healthy ecosystems filled with species performing these tasks. The species and ecosystems of the Sunshine Coast nourish us, supply us, provide employment, and ensure our health and wellbeing. Yet the substantial economic benefits of our natural bounty are typically underappreciated and rarely included in our decision making. It is essential that we recognize and assign a value to these essential ecological goods and services in our planning processes so that we recognize and incorporate the economic benefits of conserving and better managing biodiversity.

Goal:

The economic value of biodiversity and ecological goods and services is known and appreciated and incorporated into decision making and planning.



Goal 4

Valuing Biodiversity



Objectives:

- ❖ Increase knowledge of the economic value of Sunshine Coast biodiversity and ecological goods and services.
- ❖ Substantially increase the extent to which valuation of biodiversity and ecological goods and services is included in decision making and public policy.

Strategies:

- ❖ Collect existing economic valuation data related to natural resources (fisheries, forestry, farming, non-timber forest products, hunting and fishing licences, IPPs, etc.), tourism, real estate and research.
- ❖ Conduct research to assess values of other ecological goods and services on the Sunshine Coast.
- ❖ Compare the value that natural ecosystem services provide to that required of the equivalent manmade infrastructure.
- ❖ Collect data and information from leading ecological economics groups and researchers around the world.
- ❖ Communicate the results of the economic valuation to our community.
- ❖ Incorporate economic valuation data into public policy and processes.

Imagine a coast...

frolic in where your grandchildren
the same wild spaces
that you enjoyed as a
child



A hiker with a backpack is walking away from the camera through a field of tall, golden-brown grass. In the background, there is a calm pond reflecting the surrounding forest. The forest is dense with tall, dark evergreen trees. The lighting suggests a bright, sunny day, with some shadows cast on the grass.

*“Everybody needs **beauty**
as well as bread, places to play in and pray in,
where **nature may heal**
and give strength to body and soul.”*

John Muir

Goal 5 Protecting Biodiversity



Protected areas are an obvious and essential biodiversity conservation tool. These wild spaces can provide refuge to countless species, protected within intact ecosystems subject to relatively little human disturbance. At present, formal protection within the Sunshine Coast Regional District is far below the provincial average .

To increase the amount of parkland, a protected areas network should be established, including a full representation of ecosystem types and ecological communities, and incorporating connections and corridors between reserves to facilitate wildlife movement. Parks, reserves, and other protected areas are not only essential to wildlife and biodiversity conservation, they are also the treasures, the jewels, the natural heritage we leave for future generations on the Sunshine Coast.

Goal:

A network of protected areas conserves a rich variety of interconnected ecosystems, ecological communities, habitats, species, and populations.



Goal 5 Protecting Biodiversity

Objectives:

- ❖ Substantially increase the number, extent and connectivity of protected areas across terrestrial, aquatic, and marine environments.
- ❖ Increase conservation of biodiversity in areas outside of officially protected spaces.

Strategies:

- ❖ Identify a potential network of protected areas, based on ecological principles, including a full representation of ecosystem types and ecological communities, that will enable the movement and reproduction of wildlife, protect biodiversity values, and support the health and resilience of natural systems.
- ❖ Recognize, respect and include diverse stakeholders (e.g. First Nations, industry, government, tourism, recreation, etc.) to develop interim protection strategies and management plans for these high priority areas while more protected areas are being created.



Imagine a coast...

where we take action
to ensure that native species
survive and thrive in their natural
habitats





"Act as if what you do makes a difference. It does." William James

Goal 6 Caring for Biodiversity



To ensure that our native ecosystems and species flourish, we must take direct action to reduce threats, and protect, restore and enhance native habitats. Emphasis should be placed on highest priority elements of biodiversity, including rare, threatened, endangered, endemic, unique and keystone native species. Restoration, enhancement and threat mitigation efforts must take place in all areas, including, and especially, within our urban and rural neighbourhoods where humans and wildlife must find positive ways to coexist.

Goal:

Action has been taken to protect, restore and enhance habitats, and mitigate threats to biodiversity, ensuring that healthy ecological communities and viable populations of all native flora, fauna and other organisms survive and thrive across their ecological ranges.



Goal 6

Caring for Biodiversity

Objectives:

- ❖ Improve the conservation status of listed threatened and endangered species and ecological communities.
- ❖ Prevent additional species and ecological communities from becoming threatened.
- ❖ Increase the area of protected, restored and enhanced native habitats.

Strategies:

- ❖ Undertake projects to assist with the recovery of species and ecological communities at risk.
- ❖ Undertake projects to protect, restore and enhance native habitats.
- ❖ Identify underlying causes of biodiversity loss and take action to mitigate these threats.





Acknowledgements

This document was written by *Michelle Evelyn* and *Michael Jackson*, with graphic design by *Victoria Gazeley*. We are extremely grateful to all of the participants in the *Sunshine Coast Biodiversity Summit* for their thoughtful comments, discussions, and meaningful contributions to crafting this Biodiversity Strategy.

Our very special thanks to *Vince Verlaan* for his awesome facilitation of the Summit, and to our fantastic Summit presenters and speakers for sharing their knowledge and insights: *shishahl Nation xwamtsut*, *Garry Nohr*, *Diane Srivastava*, *Michelle Clark*, *Ron Tanasichuk*, *Tom Sheldon*, *Colin Campbell* and *Candace Campo*.

Our gratitude to the *Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden Society* for kindly donating the use of their wonderful new building; to *Soundwerks* and *Soundattraction* for providing the audio visual equipment and services; and to the *Simon Fraser University Centre for Coastal Studies* for helping to organize the Summit.

We appreciate the dedication and hard work of the Biodiversity Strategy Steering Committee: *Patricia Gallagher*, *Emanuel Machado*, *Michael Jackson*, *Michelle Evelyn*, *Dave Lasser*, *Tony Greenfield*, *Jim Rossi*, *John Field*, *Wendy Gilbertson*, *Cynthia Bendickson*, *Cheryl Trent* and *Julie Clark*.

We gratefully acknowledge generous funding support from the *Real Estate Foundation of BC, Vancouver Foundation, Mountain Equipment Co-op, Environment Canada, Gencon Foundation* and the *Sunshine Coast Regional District*.

The beautiful photographs in this document were provided by *Alan Sirulnikoff, Michael Jackson, David Stiles, Michelle Evelyn, Jim Rossi* and *Rick O'Neill*.

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Michael Jackson: *Front cover (landscape), pages 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 20, 23, 24, 28, 32, 33, 37, 38, 40.*

David Stiles & Michelle Evelyn: *Pages i, 6, 14, 15, 16, 17, 30, 34, 35, 36, 37.*

Jim Rossi: *Pages 21, 25.*

Rick O'Neill: *Front cover (owl).*

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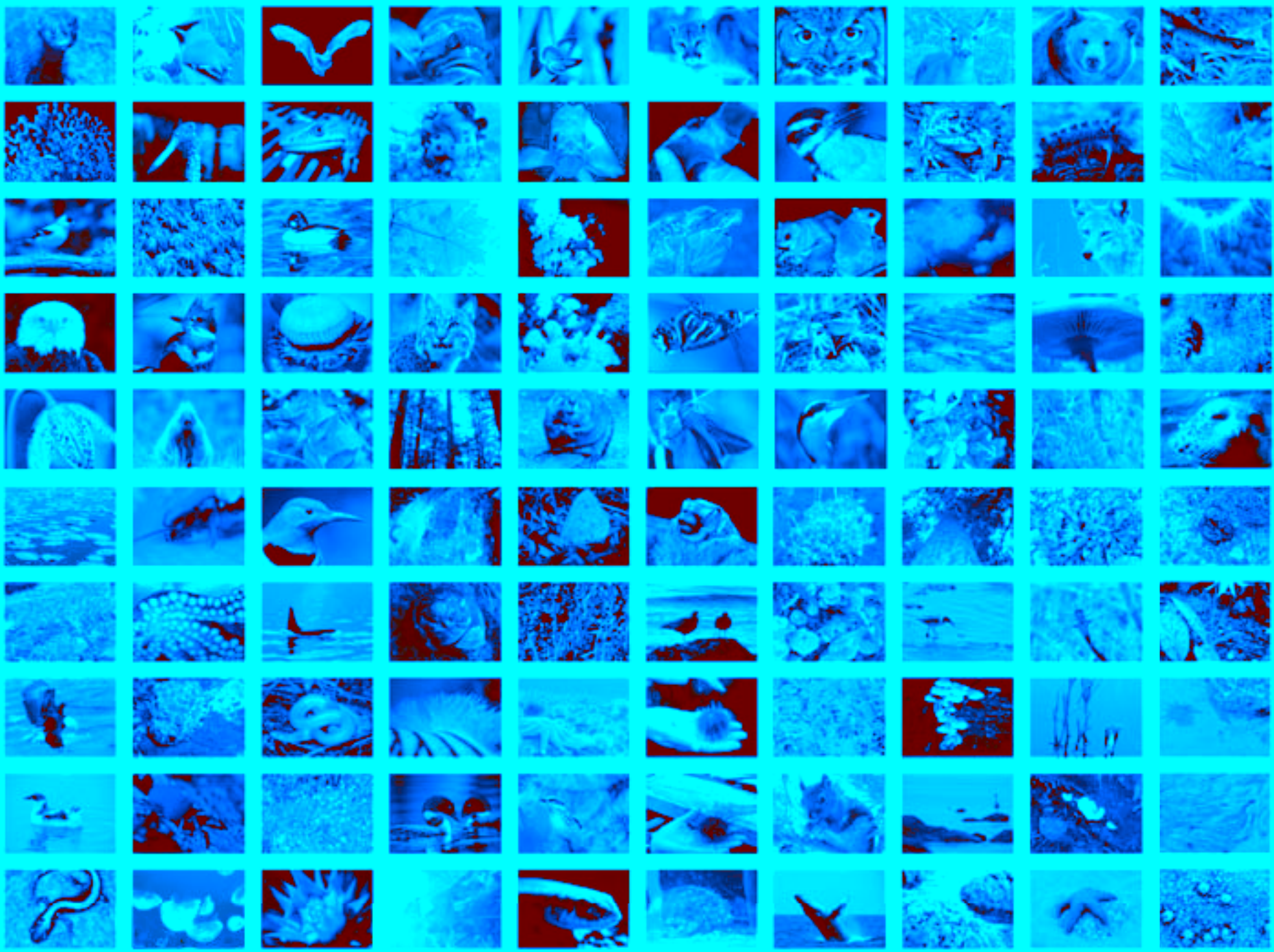
This project was undertaken with the financial support of:
Ce projet a été réalisé avec l'appui financier de :



Environment
Canada

Environnement
Canada







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