

▼ Business

Sooke Whale Watching has a sleek addition

Tim Collins
Sooke News Mirror

The boat is sleek and silver and not your typical whale watching boat, but Paul Pudwell of Sooke Whale Watching is sure that the new boat in his whale watching fleet is going to be a hit.

“We had the option of getting another RHIB (rigid hull inflatable boat) built in Sidney, but we became aware of a boat that Andy Berry had built right here in Sooke and it was perfect for what we needed,” said Pudwell.

The boat in question is a sleek aluminum boat that was originally built by Berry some 20 years ago for the express purpose of participating in the Coast Guard Auxillary race around Vancouver Island.

“In 1999 we got second place in that race and, when we entered again in 2000, we won,” said Berry.

At that time, the silver coloured boat was powered by twin outboards that sent the sleek craft skimming across the waves at up to 52 knots (that’s 60 miles per hour for the non-nautical types out there).

“We’re refurbishing the boat now for whale watching and putting in some low-noise props and twin 300 horse-power Yamaha outboards, so it will be capable of going even faster,” said Berry.

Of course, as a whale watching boat, there will be little call for that sort of speed, but Pudwell is excited about the low-noise propellers and the low emission engines that will

drive the boat.

“The engines are more fuel efficient and the propellers will reduce the noise by 25 per cent,” said Pudwell.

“It’s a far more environmentally friendly way of watching the whales.” Pudwell spoke about the popularity of whale watching in Sooke and the value of the activity as a tourist draw.

“Last year we had about a 98 per cent success rate in seeing whales on our outings and, despite the decline in the southern resident killer whale populations, what we are seeing is a drastic increase in the sightings of humpbacks and transient killer whales. We used to see maybe two humpbacks a week but now we have seen up to 40 in a day,” he said.

“This boat is going to be perfect as it’s going to give us a viewing platform where people can see all around them as opposed to the RHIB configuration where the passengers are basically stuck looking forward only.

When it’s finished, it will seat 12.”

Berry’s crew at Silver Streak Boats is currently finishing the refitting of the craft and anticipates that the completely reconfigured and refurbished boat will be in the water by April—ready for the peak whale watching season.

Last year was the best year for Canadian tourism on record, with arrivals reaching 21.13 million, breaking the 21 million mark for the first time ever.



An existing champion is being given a new life as a whale watching boat.

(CONTRIBUTED)

Events celebrate Garry oak habitat

Swikar Oli
News Staff

Nature Conservancy Canada invites volunteers to more than 30 events across southern Vancouver Island to help restore and maintain endangered Garry oak habitats.

Less than five per cent of the Garry oak habitat remains in near-natural condition, according to a Conservancy release. Much of the historic range of the habitat, spanning woodlands and open meadows, has been lost to development, they add.

Scotch broom, English ivy and spurge-laurel and other invasive species threaten the remaining portions of Garry oak habitat, according to the land conservation organization.

“Garry oak habitats are home to a greater diversity of plants than any other terrestrial ecosystem in British Columbia.”

The conservancy adds the free workshop, held by leading Garry oak ecosystem restoration experts, is “perfect for anyone interested in honing their skills in restoring and maintaining Garry oak habitats.”


Events are hosted by CRD Regional Parks, Parks Canada, Habitat Acquisition Trust, Saanich Parks, Saanich Native Plants, Swan Lake Christmas Hill Nature Sanctuary, Greater Victoria Green Teams, the Friends of Uplands Park, Salt Spring Island Conservancy and the Nature Conservancy of Canada, according to the organization website.

TIDE TABLES

Day	Time	HT	Time	HT	Time	HT	Time	HT
14	05:49	9.2	14:41	3.3				
15	06:47	9.2	15:48	3.0				
16	07:57	9.2	16:52	2.6				
17	00:17	7.5	02:40	7.2	09:09	9.2	17:48	2.3
18	00:43	7.9	05:31	6.9	10:22	9.2	18:38	2.3
19	01:14	8.2	06:38	6.2	11:37	9.2	19:22	2.3
20	01:45	8.5	07:34	5.2	12:52	9.2	20:01	3.0
21	02:17	8.9	08:26	4.6	13:59	8.9	20:38	3.6

TIMES ARE IN STANDARD TIME, HEIGHTS IN FEET

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Evergreen Centre above Bosleys

DOORS OPEN **12:00 pm - 7:00 pm**
Registration fee **\$20 Per act**

Please download and fill out all required PDFs. Read the Talent Show rules and information. Bring your registration fee, filled out forms and your headshot or group photo on registration day.

Sookeharbourplayers.com

Winter Driving Tips

1. **Maintain a safe following distance.** The posted speed is the maximum speed under ideal conditions. In winter, it is safer to drive below the posted speed. No matter how much experience you have, the way your car will move on snow or ice always has an element of unpredictability. It takes longer to stop on a slippery road. Look ahead and keep plenty of distance between you and other cars (at least four seconds).







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SOOKEFOURCAST

Your weather forecast for the next **FOUR DAYS!** What you need to know about the weather to plan your weekend.

THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
			
Chance of a little p.m. rain High 9 Low 4	Rain and drizzle possible High 9 Low 2	Rain and drizzle possible High 11 Low 2	Cloudy High 11 Low 3

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