



ABALONE WATCH

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Haida Gwaii Abalone Stewards



Council of the Haida Nation
Haida Fisheries Program



Laskeek Bay Conservation Society



Haida Gwaii Marine Resources
Group Association



Skidegate Band Council



Old Massett Village Council



World Wildlife Fund Canada



Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve
and Haida Heritage Site



Fisheries and Oceans Canada



Environment Canada



Centre for Wildlife Ecology at
Simon Fraser University

1.800.465.4336



Haida Gwaii students learning about abalone through hands-on activities with educator Josina Davis. *Inset photo:* Linda Tollas of Parks Canada Gwaii Haanas talking about differences between the red abalone and local northern abalone. *Photo credit:* Parks Canada Gwaii Haanas.

Thank you for your part in Abalone Watch

~ a community effort to protect abalone in the waters around Haida Gwaii. This newsletter brings you the latest abalone news.



North Coast Abalone Seizure

By Juanita Rogers and Ivan Winther, Fisheries & Oceans Canada

On February 20, 2006, we assisted Conservation and Protection Officers with the care of a large 2,489-pound seizure of live abalone from the North Coast. We attended the Coast Guard base in Prince Rupert and worked with officers to set up “live tanks” in large fish totes. While arrangements were made to transport the animals back to appropriate habitat, they were transferred from mesh dive bags to recirculating water in an attempt to keep them alive – most animals appeared to respond favourably.

Coast Guard vessel *Kitimat II* returned the abalone to the ocean. Attempts were made to determine the origin of the abalone and officers were provided with the

locations and habitat types that would be suitable. The abalone were placed into mesh bags for transportation. Once on site, the dive bags were hung in the water while officers used an inflatable boat to shuttle small numbers of animals, placing them by hand in rocks and crevices in the shallow subtidal zone. The officers later reported that most animals continued to respond favourably to their new environment.

Plans are underway to return to the placement sites to review the transplant and document any evident survival or loss.

Charges are pending against three men from BC.

Volunteers Spot Little Suspicious Activity

AbWatch volunteers reported little suspicious activity in Haida Gwaii waters, according to a Haida Fisheries Program survey. Volunteer participants spent a total of 5,326 operator-days on the water in 2005. HGAbS started the AbWatch program in 2004. Forty-nine operators and businesses and five Haida Watchmen camps were registered for AbWatch in 2005. Volunteers suggested that AbWatch could be improved with more frequent newsletters and secure communications for Gwaii Haanas Haida Watchmen camps.

Volunteers are asked to keep an eye out for suspicious activities and report incidents to the Haida Fisheries Program or DFO. As part of the survey, 19 operators and business owners and 15 Haida Watchmen were interviewed. Although no one interviewed had made an incident report, two operators and two Gwaii Haanas Watchmen had observed suspicious activity. This

information could be helpful for identifying vessels or persons for further surveillance or supporting on-going investigations. Reasons given for not reporting were not having evidence, not being able to report in a timely way, unfamiliarity with the reporting form and lack of secure communications. HGAbS will be better communicating that even minor tips can be helpful for deterring abalone poaching.

Volunteers provided excellent coverage of Haida Gwaii waters from spring to fall, including the west, east and the north coasts. Most of those interviewed conducted eco-tours and fishing charters, with others involved in fishery monitoring, commercial fishing, fishing lodges and kayaking. Operators were on the water an average of 94 days. Volunteer effort was estimated to 4,606 operator-days, based on 49 operators. In addition Gwaii Haanas and Haida Fisheries Program Watchmen increase cover-

age by 720 camp-days. That's a lot of eyes and ears on the water!

We will continue to build our community surveillance network over the coming year. As well we will increase the frequency of newsletters to twice per year in spring and fall, and continue to focus presentations on abalone stewardship to organizations that have members or staff out on the water. We will also provide an improved handout on what to look for and report if you encounter suspicious activities. It is important to identify or describe vessels and persons including the date and time of the incident with details of activities observed.

Thanks to all AbWatch volunteers! For others interested in becoming involved, please contact the Haida Fisheries Program at 559-8945 or 626-3302.



“It’s a snail. There are not many left. It’s illegal to take them.”

These are some of the many comments from Grades 4 to 7 students for educators Josina Davis and Linda Tollas about abalone in a review class this year.

Ms Davis and Tollas have taught an abalone curriculum of 3 lessons to Grade 4 students in all Haida Gwaii elementary schools since 2002/03 with funding from the Parks Canada Gwaii Haanas and HGAbS. We believe that it is critical for the younger generation to know about abalone if we are to protect abalone over the long-term.

Lesson 1 is about the basic biology and ecology of abalone - what they need to live, what they eat and who eats them. Lesson 2 focuses on Haida use of abalone, with an introduction to abalone conservation. Lesson 3 explores abalone conservation and negative effects of poaching using *The Abalone Game* developed at Bamfield Marine Station on Vancouver Island.

This year’s review lesson confirmed that students did remember much that was taught in previous years - particularly that abalone were in

trouble and needed our help. Hands-on learning activities were found very effective in helping students understand and remember key concepts.

One of the more difficult concepts to teach proved to be abalone sex - the idea of broadcast spawning. For one student, it boiled down to this - “Broadcast spawning is where abalone set out eggs and sperm and if it touches the egg it becomes a baby abalone.”



Photo by Bart DeFreitas
Drawing by Lewis, Gr 4

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