

BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE 2023

Impact Report



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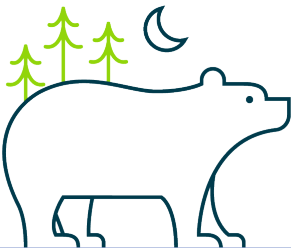
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Our impact at a glance

\$1B

funding for conservation through tripartite Nature Agreement, thanks to public pressure



22K+

letters were delivered to B.C. government officials calling for old-growth protection, biodiversity legislation and climate action

7.5K

registrants for our seven webinars with topics including old-growth policy, Indigenous solidarity and nature-based art lessons

7.9K

learners reached through our outdoor education programs

126

people joined us for forest walks and live events



3

cohorts representing networks of 4,000 people completed our Mother Tree Local Leaders Program



225

organizations across diverse sectors wrote in support of the United for Old Growth declaration

835

news items metioned SCBC

241K+

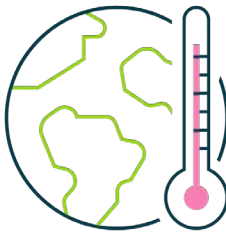
people reached through social media ads

63.5K

followers of our email list and social media

2

court cases with Ecojustice and Sierra Club BC calling for accountability on climate action and migratory bird protection





Message from the Executive Director

IT'S INCREDIBLE TO LOOK BACK AND REFLECT ON WHAT A REMARKABLE YEAR 2023 WAS.

We started off strong with commitments from both the provincial and federal governments to protect 30% of lands and waters by 2030. And we hit the ground running in February with a huge rally for old-growth forests that saw thousands come together in Victoria to hear important words from Indigenous leaders and land defenders, scientists, and a surprise musical appearance from Neil Young.

We ended the year with a string of announcements, from conservation financing commitments to a tripartite nature agreement between the First Nations Leadership Council and the governments of B.C. and Canada, to a long-awaited Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health framework draft.

Communities across B.C. have worked so hard to get here, but there is still much work to be done

to ensure these commitments uphold Indigenous jurisdiction and translate to immediate change on the ground, starting with interim solutions for at-risk species and ecosystems.

But this message is not only to talk about all the great strides we've made together, it's very much about the future. I write this as I prepare to go on maternity leave, thinking about my role and all our roles in ensuring a thriving, healthy and sustainable world for the many generations to come.

As I prepare for this great new chapter, rest assured that the SCBC team will continue calling for climate solutions and working to make sure we go further than 30 by 30. To do so, our team, with the support of an interim executive director, will continue advocating for the protection of old-growth forests. While much remains to be done, this work has contributed to logging deferrals for about half of the most at-risk old-growth forests. It's also led to the

Nature Agreement which committed to permanently protecting up to 1.3 million hectares of high-priority at-risk old-growth by 2025.

We will continue raising our voices for the web of life, through initiatives like our federal court case for the protection of migratory birds and their habitats across Canada. Protecting habitat important for biodiversity also means safeguarding ancient and threatened ecosystems like old-growth forests.

We will also continue to learn from and engage with Indigenous legal orders and support Indigenous-led conservation solutions like Indigenous protected and conserved areas (IPCAs), which show huge potential to contribute to 30 by 30.

It's going to take all of us to create a paradigm shift in the way we value the lands, waters and health of all living beings. And every action matters, from planting pollinator gardens in your front yard to meeting with your city councilor or MLA. I will continue to do my

part and hope you will continue to support our team. I am sure they will have accomplished so much more when I return.

In hope,




Hannah Askew
Executive Director



Old Growth & 30x30 Campaign

Keeping our eye on 30×30 commitments

In the fall of 2023, the First Nations Leadership Council and the governments of B.C. and Canada ratified a long-anticipated Nature Agreement intended to protect 30 percent of lands in B.C. by 2030, including at-risk old-growth forests, and supporting implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP).

This is happening in part because of years of public pressure from people like you. Thank you for speaking up.

The Nature Agreement includes new and existing government funds totalling over \$1 billion to support First Nations and other communities’ efforts to restore ecosystems, improve stewardship, and create Guardian programs.

Some important features of the Nature Agreement include:

- Interim targets of protecting 25 percent of lands by 2025, helping us to stay on track for 30×30.
- Implementation of the Old Growth Strategic Review recommendations and permanent protection for up to 1.3 million hectares of the most at-risk old growth by 2025.
- Following through on the Boreal Caribou Protection and Recovery Plan, and actions to protect Spotted Owl habitat.

Sierra Club BC will continue to track progress on these commitments, especially how the money will be spent and criteria to ensure the most at-risk ecosystems and habitats are prioritized for protection.

These major funding announcements are incredibly important for old-growth and ecosystem protection. SCBC continues to track government progress on 30x30, support new protected and conserved areas, and foster community engagement through webinars, petitions, media hits, social media campaigns, and more.

30th anniversary of the historic Clayoquot Sound mass arrests

On the 30th anniversary of the historic Clayoquot Sound mass arrests, we released a new map contrasting the state of forests in the intact valleys of this region with the sobering trend across the remainder of Vancouver Island. Sadly, about a third of the productive old-growth rainforests that were standing on Vancouver Island in 1993 have been destroyed in the last 30 years.



Raising funds for Kanaka Bar’s Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area (IPCA)

The T’eqt’aqtn’mux IPCA (pronounced “cluck-cluck-tin”) proposal is in development and will ultimately require provincial legislated protection and greater financial support to be fully realized. We are helping raise funds for this important IPCA and will continue to find ways to support this project.

As part of this work, our team joined Kanaka Bar Indian Band’s Chief Jordan Spinks, retired Chief Patrick Michel, and Lands Manager Sean O’Rourke to see old-growth Ponderosa pines in T’eqt’aqtn’mux. This region is south of Lytton in the Fraser Canyon and is one of the most biologically rich and ecologically diverse areas in B.C.



Bringing forest policy to the general public

To make conversations around old growth more accessible, during 2023 Sierra Club BC hosted webinars busting forestry myths that reached thousands, we shared videos on social media de-mystifying policies and technical jargon, we reported on provincial government actions and policy updates, and we garnered hundreds of media hits on old growth.

Photo credits: (Right) photo by Wayne Barnes-Tofino Photography, (Centre) TJ Watt/Ancient Forest Alliance.





Staying United on Old Growth

Thousands of people took to the streets for old growth at the February United for Old Growth Rally and September's B.C.-wide day of action.

The United For Old Growth march and rally was a huge success thanks to everyone who showed up in the cold, offered support, and made art in their communities. We also used the gathering to announce the United We Stand for Old Growth Declaration, which has over 225 signatory organizations.

It was moving to see so many people come out to speak for all the beings that can't speak for themselves. Our call for action was so strong, even Neil Young heard about it and joined the rally.

Since the rally, we've continued building momentum. We've met with key Ministers and MLAs, and supported our members in doing the same to make sure that politicians know old-growth action is a priority. We've also worked with community leaders from around the province to foster deeper relationships with their local forests and learn how to better care for these ecosystems.



Logging is the biggest threat for southern mountain caribou and spotted owls in B.C.

We released an independent case study written by biologist Jared Hobbs that assessed wildlife decline in B.C. for six different species and the provincial and federal legal gaps responsible.

Among other findings, the report found that there are no requirements to conduct pre-clearing surveys for spotted owls prior to commercial logging of suitable habitat. This continued destruction is especially worrying considering that only one spotted owl remains in the wild.

This work spotlights the limitations of the current system. It's a patchwork of laws that prioritize industrial resource extraction over the health of the land, air and water. This existing framework also undermines Indigenous legal orders and governance which have maintained biodiversity for centuries.

There's a clear solution to help chart a better path forward: An overarching provincial law co-developed with Indigenous Nations that prioritizes biodiversity and ecosystem health.

The good news is that the B.C. government has committed to enacting this legislation and we plan to hold them to this promise in 2024.



An endangered spotted owl looks out over their forest home. It's not too late to help heal the web of life and return back to a place of abundance (Photo by Jared Hobbs).

SCBC went to Federal Court to advocate for the protection of migratory birds and their habitats

Ecojustice lawyers, on behalf of Sierra Club BC and Wilderness Committee, were in Federal Court in November to advocate for the protection of migratory birds and their habitats across Canada.

We are suing the federal government for failing to protect the critical habitats of at-risk migratory birds across the country. This includes the threatened marbled murrelet, a seabird that relies on coastal old-growth forests in B.C. for nesting.

Our main contention is that a “protection statement” issued by federal Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault too narrowly interpreted the Species at Risk Act (SARA). We argued that the minister has unlawfully limited the federal government’s protection of bird habitat by protecting only their nests and not the wider habitat they need to survive and recover.

If the case succeeds, it will force Minister Guilbeault to take steps to protect the critical habitat of at-risk migratory birds. This would help ensure the survival and recovery of the marbled murrelet and many other at-risk migratory bird species.

Photos by Deborah Freeman (top) and Aaron Allred (bottom).

Welcoming a Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health framework draft

SCBC welcomed the B.C. government’s Biodiversity and Ecosystem Health framework draft, which has the potential to transform how B.C. addresses the biodiversity crisis. With the right commitments and timely change on the ground, the Framework could finally resolve significant gaps in legislation and policy that have left many species and ecosystems threatened or endangered in B.C.

While the draft framework is a step in the right direction, we also cautioned that immediate interim measures are needed to stop the ongoing loss of at-risk habitat and ecosystems while work on legislation co-developed with First Nations continues.

Sierra Club BC developed feedback and an online letter-writing tool to help interested community members in B.C. provide input on the draft. Thousands of people have now spoken up to help strengthen the framework.



B.C. Supreme Court hands down precedent-setting ruling

In January, the B.C. Supreme Court ruled on the landmark 2022 climate case brought by Sierra Club BC, represented by Ecojustice. Our goal was to require adequate reporting by the B.C. government on its progress to reach its climate targets, as required by the province’s own climate law.

The ruling was a mixed bag: it contained good and bad news.

The good news is that the Court agreed with us that people in B.C. have a right to go to court to hold their government accountable for following its climate law. This means that, in a first-of-its-kind milestone for climate accountability in Canada, the Court ruled that the reporting requirements of B.C.’s climate law are enforceable by the court. This sets an important legal precedent not only for B.C., but also across Canada, as it means that climate change

accountability legislation can be interpreted and enforced by courts when governments fail to meet reporting requirements.

The bad news is that the Court found the B.C. government’s reporting to be sufficient to meet the law’s requirements, even though that reporting does not tell us whether B.C. is on track to meet all its climate targets.



SCBC Campaigner Jens Wieting speaks at a press conference launching the climate case (Photo by Gabrielle Vacheresse).

New framework to cap emissions from oil and gas announced during COP28

During the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, Canada announced a new framework seeking to cap 2030 emissions from oil and gas production at 35 to 38 percent below 2019 levels, forcing oil companies to ratchet down their emissions which are currently the single largest source of greenhouse gases in the country. But with built-in “compliance flexibilities” in the framework, the actual cap will be 20 to 23 percent below 2019 levels.

Canada and B.C. have allowed high-carbon projects to export fossil fuels, including fracked LNG, for far too long. We know we cannot meet our climate goals, and maintain a livable future, without reducing oil and gas emissions.

Uncertainty and risks to meeting provincial and federal 2030 targets, particularly those for the oil and gas sector, require more action to amend frameworks and close loopholes. The B.C. government now has an opportunity to swiftly enact its own provincial cap to support global efforts to phase out fossil fuels as a necessary step for a livable climate. We plan to continue work on this file in 2024.



Pulling together to stop TMX

In June, Tsleil-Waututh Nation (TWN) Sacred Trust and Sierra Club BC hosted a water ceremony at Whey-ah-Wichen (Cate’s Park) in North Vancouver. Sacred Trust is an initiative of Tsleil-Waututh Nation focused on stopping the Trans Mountain Expansion Project (TMX), a project approved by the Canadian government without the consent of the Nation.

This ceremony invited the public to deepen their relationship with water and recognize the threat posed by TMX.

SCBC has stood with Tsleil-Waututh Nation in their fight against TMX since the beginning. From supporting the Pull Together campaign, which raised funds for legal challenges against TMX, to practicing ceremonies, we were honoured to be in this work together and participate in this ceremony.

In an incredible gathering of solidarity, hundreds of people witnessed and joined in the day. In three 35-foot oceangoing canoes, we paddled towards the Burnaby TMX Westridge Marine Terminal. On the waters, next to the terminal, matriarchs voiced powerful words, songs, and prayers to their ancestors and offered sacred earth to the waters. We moved as one, paddling and singing together.

Over 30 billion taxpayer dollars are being spent on this dangerous pipeline and tanker project that puts the water, salmon, orcas and human health in peril. The TWN’s assessment of the proposed project, in collaboration with leading risk assessment experts from Simon Fraser University, estimated up to 87 percent likelihood of a spill over a 50-year period. The expansion is a direct threat to the Tsleil-Waututh community and way of life. TMX is not a done deal, and we are not giving up. Stay tuned for updates on this important initiative.



Empowering Local Leaders

We launched the Mother Tree Local Leaders Program (MTLLP)

MTLLP brings local leaders into a rich learning environment where participants learn from experienced teachers, connect with one another and draw from their own traditions and wisdom. Its main purpose is to equip community leaders to catalyze their networks and step into powerful action.

Participants represented networks of over 4,000 people across the Lower Mainland and Northern Vancouver Island. This year we piloted three cohorts representing faith leaders, youth, and Indigenous community members.

The program participants are now working on projects ranging from planting pollinator gardens, to helping collaborate with local Indigenous Nations on watershed protection, to donating to Indigenous Protected and Conserved Areas, to attending the UN climate talks, and everything in between.

In December, one of our faith cohort participants, Deb Walker, wrote an op-ed about the important role faith leaders play in the environmental movement and her journey to COP28 Dubai.

The extraordinary people who are helping facilitate MTLLP workshops include best-selling author and forest ecologist Suzanne Simard, renowned Indigenous legal scholar John Borrows, and many more.



The first MTLLP meeting at St. Andrew’s Wesley United Church. This Christian faith cohort launched the program with us in February 2023.

Communities across B.C. are taking action for the lands and waters.

We know that acting in the face of the climate and biodiversity crisis can feel overwhelming. But you are not alone in this work. That's why SCBC supports local leaders creating positive change in their communities. We connect communities with resources to help people step into meaningful action. Here are some of the local leaders we've worked with who are finding creative ways to build a brighter future.



315
local leaders supported through SCBC since 2020!



BIRDING TO HELP SAFEGUARD OLD-GROWTH FORESTS

Led by avid birder Royann Petrell, a dedicated group of birders and bio-blitzers through Friends of Carmanah Walbran have worked tirelessly during the last three years to monitor and document old-growth dependent species at risk on Vancouver Island. Their documentation of birds, including threatened marbled murrelets and Western screech owls, is helping to inform proposals for increased protection in areas proposed for logging.



ART FOR OLD GROWTH

In the lead up to the United for Old Growth Rally, we had the pleasure of working with Tim Gosley (featured on the far left), a puppeteer known for his work with the Muppets. Tim opened his home for community art sessions making signs and forest-themed masks. He also worked around the clock to create a giant Mother Tree that held a key place in the march that brought old growth to the streets of Victoria.

Photo credits: (Top) Royann Petrell, (Bottom) Mya Van Woudenberg/Sierra Club BC.

We launched our Move the Dial workshops and mentorship program

These collaborative sessions give residents effective tools for approaching their city councils to act for the lands and waters in B.C.

Thanks to the excellent work of SCBC's 'dial movers' and their success in five municipalities, Resolution EB32 'Supporting Biodiversity in Local Communities' was endorsed by the Union of B.C. Municipalities.

This resolution calls for the B.C. government to create a Local Natural Areas Protection Fund that would provide a mechanism for the province to allocate money to municipalities, regional districts, and First Nations to support land acquisition for ecosystem health. In other words, consistent funding to protect and restore biodiversity.

This is a major win for healthier ecosystems and communities across the province and the many plants and animals that call our neighbourhoods home.

The next phase of this program is focused on activating and expanding SCBC's 'dial movers' network to support councillors and mayors to connect with provincial government officials and facilitate the creation of the fund.



Re-storying our relations with the natural world

In this six-session workshop, participants engaged with the practice of "re-storying" through writing and illustration exercises. They re-imagined narratives that encourage reciprocal relationships with the natural world and those who inhabit it. We hosted two cohorts with 12 participants each for a total of 24 people.

Here's what one participant, Victoria Marie, had to say: "The Re-storying Workshops broadened the way I see nature and my relationship with the more-than-human world. I am now more aware of our kinship and that all beings, including those that are considered inanimate (rocks, water, air, fire, soil) are active participants in life and not just categories of things. All beings are connected and our future, for good or for ill, is entwined."



Education Program

We connected with thousands of youth this year

Our environmental education programs are designed to offer experiential learning opportunities that centre diverse ecological and cultural knowledges. They are deeply rooted in the principle that empowering and educating youth is vital to stewarding abundant ecosystems and a stable climate — as well as building resilient, equitable communities. As we respond to deepening environmental crises, our programming becomes increasingly important.

Our education staff also continues to work towards decolonizing the learning process by respectfully incorporating invited local Indigenous knowledge into the workshops and materials we offer. By working with Indigenous partners to incorporate traditional ways of learning and knowing, and meaningfully engaging with place, our workshops are hands-on, experiential, interconnected, support healthy childhood development and cultivate care. This helps ensure that future generations are

well versed in stewarding abundant ecosystems, equitable communities, and a stable climate.

For the 2022/23 school year, we focused on delivering programs in mid/north Island communities, Metro Vancouver, the CRD, and Powell River. In addition to our workshops for children and youth, the education team has also been providing valuable learning opportunities to educators and community leaders.

During the year SCBC's education team:

- Organized over 360 workshops, resulting in more than 7,900 learners reached through our outdoor education programs!
- Facilitated workshops at 106 schools in 20 different school districts.
- Organized four professional development workshops totaling 76 participants.
- Saw over 3,000 people of all ages sign up for the four Learn to Draw webinars we organized in 2023. Participants learned to draw raccoons, kelp forests, spiders and river otters.



SCBC co-hosted a multi-day workshop on Indigenous legal orders

The workshop facilitated by the Indigenous Law Research Unit (ILRU) was part of a year-long project to explore how the environmental sector can develop more respectful relations with Indigenous legal orders.

Housed in the University of Victoria's Faculty of Law, ILRU is an academic research institute dedicated to the revitalization of Indigenous law and governance. Sierra Club BC is committed to learning from their work and building our understanding of the role Indigenous legal orders plays in our organization.



Hear from teachers we've worked with!

“Having others share their knowledge and perspectives on nature helps me and my students grow in our own understandings and builds on our connection with the place where we live and learn. It was so amazing to sit on the ground with my students, not caring about the dirt and learning along with them.”

“One of the best presentations I have seen in a very long time. Super engaging, uplifting and inspirational for all age levels.”

“This was a wonderful experience for our learners to be a part of. Most children love being outdoors and often as non-Indigenous educators, we are not comfortable with teaching Indigenous lessons or taking the risk to be outside of the classroom due to time constraints and having to cover “curriculum” in the traditional sense. This experience opened my eyes to a new pathway that I can structure my teaching so that learners are still learning the lessons they need to with a place-based focus.”

This work wouldn't
be possible
without you.



SCBC Local Leader Awards

We are so grateful to our large network of local leaders who are helping build a brighter future for all. Every year, we honour four community members and groups for their exceptional service with our Sierra Club BC Local Leader Awards. Thank you to all our award recipients, past and present!

GERALDINE IRBY AWARD FOR VOLUNTEERISM

The Geraldine Irby Award for volunteerism recognizes those who work behind the scenes and lay the groundwork for the organization's success.

In 2023, this award was given to Tracey Scott. Tracey is a bridge builder who is always looking for ways in which Sierra Club BC and Greater Victoria Acting Together (GVAT) can collaborate on shared goals like the Move the Dial project. She never shies away from grunt work and is always keen to offer her expert skills in facilitation and project management.

Past award recipients:

- 2022 Laura Kozak
- 2021 Dr. Julius Csotonyi
- 2020 Gabe Davis and Rob Calder
- 2019 Braedan Drouillard
- 2018 Lola Rabinovitch
- 2017 Karli Mann
- 2016 Morag Keegan-Henry
- 2015 No award recipient
- 2014 Dana Peng and Andre Holdrinet
- 2013 Carla Stein
- 2012 Meaghan Dinney
- 2011 Martin Golder
- 2010 Jamie Biggar
- 2009 Diane Pinch

- 2008 Gordon Hawkins
- 2007 Janet Brazier
- 2006 Judy Leicester

JACK HEMPHILL EXCEPTIONAL VOLUNTEER SERVICE AWARD

His memory is honoured with this award, which recognizes individuals for their valuable contributions and commitments as volunteers.

In 2023, this award went to Laura Briggs. Laura has volunteered countless hours to educate the public about ecosystems and shine a light on the life of all sizes within them. She started the Field Naturalists of Vancouver Island Facebook group as a small project five years ago, and now it has over 32,000 members! Laura is also an exceptionally talented artist who volunteered her time to grow our Sierra Club BC Facebook artists group.

Past award recipients:

- 2022 Jean Chisolm
- 2021 Sierra Quadra
- 2020 Jane Welton
- 2019 Diane Pinch
- 2018 Finn Kreischer
- 2017 Rolling Justice Bus
- 2016 Terry Dance-Bennink
- 2015 No award recipient
- 2014 Caspar Davis

- 2013 Esther Dyck, Myrtle Creek Stewards and Sierra Malaspina
- 2012 Judy Leicester
- 2011 Ruth Zenger
- 2010 Betty Zaikow
- 2009 Brian Pinch
- 2008 Jack Hemphill

ROSEMARY FOX CONSERVATION ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

Sierra Club BC developed an award in her name which recognizes individuals for significant achievement in protecting the lands, waters and beings who call them home.

In 2023, we acknowledged a very special group of people, Elders for Ancient Trees. They work hard for younger generations to have a future with more intact ecosystems and all the benefits they provide. They are Susan Gage, Jackie Larkin, and Bill and Jan Johnston. They have spoken to thousands with thoughtful words at rallies, and they brought together hundreds of organizations to sign the United for Old Growth declaration.

Past award recipients:

- 2022 Old Growth Birders and Bio-Blitzers
- 2021 Marion Cumming
- 2020 Paul Spong and Helena Symonds
- 2019 Ric Careless

- 2018 Eagle Eyes and FightC
- 2017 Ken Farquharson
- 2016 Tom Lane
- 2015 No award recipient
- 2014 NorthWest Watch
- 2013 Geraldine Kenny and Sierra Quadra
- 2012 Douglas Channel Watch
- 2011 Patricia Molchan
- 2010 Andrew Wright
- 2009 Judy Leicester

YAAHGUDANG AWARD

Meaning "respect for all beings" in the Haida language, this climate justice award recognizes individuals whose work lies at the intersection of climate action and transformative justice.

In 2023, this award was given to Kerry Baisley who participated in our inaugural Mother Tree Local Leaders Program faith cohort. He has been active in supporting the creation of an Indigenous Protected and Conserved Area in Kanaka Bar that includes thousands of hectares of unique fire-resistant old-growth forests. His work shows a beautiful synthesis of working towards Indigenous sovereignty and climate action.

Past award recipients:

- 2022 Stewards of Sc'ianew
- 2021 K'aayhlt'aa Haanas (Valine Brown)

Thanks for your support!

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Estate of Margaret May Pahr
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Britt Adams-Lowe	Katherine Nielsen
Britton Jacob-Schram	Kevin Barlow
David Quigg	Kristin Pulles
Flossie Baker	Maureen Yao
Gabrielle Vacheresse	Mya Van Woudenberg
Hannah Askew	Liz Reed
Haya Aldoori	Shelley Luce
Jaimie Smythe	Sophia Kooy
Janice Kalin	Todd Biderman





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