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- While we were in Shearwater preparing to head south, a strong storm began brewing. For once, we were safely tied to the dock while the wind howled and the rain poured in huge bucketsful. In rare form, the storm generated bright lightening and thunder roared through the night. Some weather stations reported winds of 57knots (Force 11).
- We had planned to take a long leg the next day, but when we woke up, the rain was still coming down hard and there was still some occasional lightening.
- We decided to take a shorter trip that day, mostly just to get away from the marina and anchored in Fancy Cove.
- Fancy cove isn't really fancy, but after beating against the rain, strong winds, and choppy seas in Lama Passage, we were happy to find this calm spot for an anchorage.
- We kept an eye out for bears, but despite the tons of salmon jumping all night around our boat, there were no bears to be seen. These Canadian bears are shy buggers.

Where?

Bella Bella/
Shearwater

Fancy Cove

Fitz Hough
Sound

Pruth Bay

Goose Bay

Cape Caution

Blunden Harbor

Vancouver
Island

Telegraph
Cove



Turnbull Cove

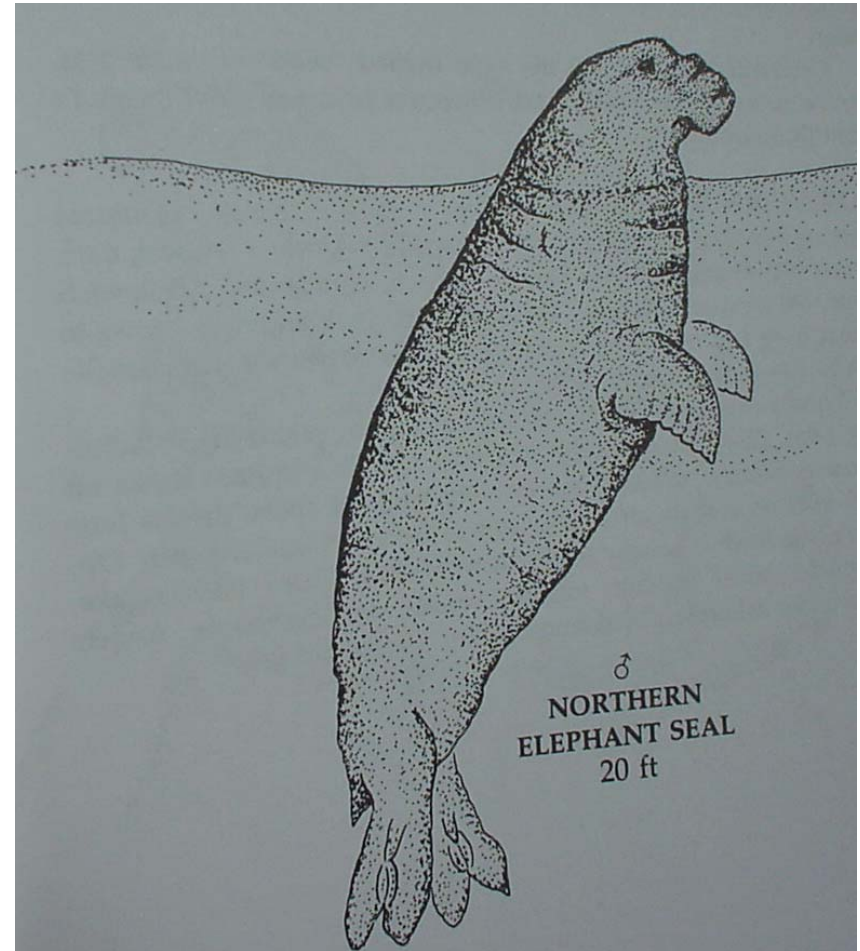
Sullivan Bay

Kwatsi Bay

Lagoon Cove

Fitz Hugh Sound

- “Look at that Dead Head!”, Sherrell said pointing in the direction I had been staring at for sometime. I had been staring at this brownish lump in the water puzzling over what it was and why I hadn’t seen it before.
- Dead Heads are dangerous logs that float vertically in the water. If you run into one, better break out the bucket and start bailing because it is like smashing into a rock.
- I stared carefully at the top of the dead head. It was unusually curved and about the size of a large beach ball.
- Suddenly the log turned and looked at us. “Oh my god! What is that?! What is that?!”, Sherrell shouted in my ear, like I was suddenly deaf.
- “Umm, I don’t know. Maybe a seal of some sort. It sure is massive”, I replied. It slowly slipped down into the water and disappeared while Sherrell ran and got the wildlife book.
- Northern Elephant Seals are fairly rare. They were almost hunted to extinction but now number 100,000 or so. They grow to 2.5 to 4.0 tons! (the same size as an Orca). This truck sized mammal can dive 2,500 feet and stay under water for 20 minutes.
- They are solitary creatures and we saw one in Fitz Hugh Sound after leaving Fancy Cove and another outside of Pruth Bay on our way out.



Pruth Bay

- Pruth Bay is the head of a long inlet with a fancy fishing resort and a short hike to the beach on the other side of the island.
- Tired and cold, we unloaded our dinghy in the pouring rain and rowed about 1 mile to the park. We had to pump the water out of the dinghy as we went because the rain kept filling it up.
- As we reached the dock at the fishing resort, the rain let up a little bit and we were able to do a little hiking around the island without feeling like we were on a POW march in some poorly funded movie.
- We bumped into the resort's manager who looked us up and down and spoke out the side of her mouth, "Ah, the trail to the beach is over there". We asked her if the restaurant at the resort was open to the public. She smirked and said "Yes, but we, uh, aren't taking reservations right now." I thought about buying the resort and then firing her for excessive "snooty-ness", but the moment passed and we headed off for the trail in our zany waterproof clothes.



Beach God

Pruth Bay

- Anyway, we were happy that our trip was back on schedule and since we weren't far from Cape Caution, we decided that a nice relaxing time on the beach is what we both needed.
- This beach faces the open Pacific and the weather has beaten the rocks into golden sand.



Sunbathing Pacific NW Style

- Unfortunately the same weather was still busy whipping up storms. We spent a bumpy night in a poor anchorage because all of the good spots were taken by other boaters who arrived before us.
- We walked along the beach which was surprisingly free of trash.
- Sherrell's sharp eyes spotted tracks in the sand that looked like wolf or cougar paw prints - We kept a careful eye out for large stalking cats.



Goose Bay

- We stopped at Goose Bay before rounding Cape Caution since we read that there are a lot of birds and it is a quiet anchorage. Also we know that not many boats stop here so we were sure to have the place to ourselves.
- As we watched Herons, Mergansers, King Fishers, Geese, Ravens, Crows, Sand Pipers, Seagulls, Loons, Grebes, Plovers, Eagles, and Teal Ducks, a River Otter was busy catching fish.
- He was swimming in circles around our boat with a fish in his mouth, looking for a way onboard so he could rest while he ate his dinner. Sherrell wanted to put the dinghy down so he could climb in, but before we could do anything, the little guy got tired of looking for a way on and swam back to some nearby rocks where he could eat his fish.



Cape Caution

- With light breezes and a “Rolly-Polly” 3 foot swell, we rounded Cape Caution. The last major Cape on the Inside Passage. It’s all downhill from here.
- The amazing thing is, we were ahead of schedule!
- We had a nice sail for about 3 hours and traveled a long 52nm to Blunden Harbor.



Summer

- Rounding Cape Caution felt like the end of the trip, even though there's a few hundred miles between us and Seattle.
- We had a Minke whale sighting off Cape Caution and a pack of Dal's Porpoise lead us unto Blunden Harbor. A good send off I thought.
- The fireweed's blossoms are climbing to the top and the fall fog is starting to grow thicker and thicker.
- We've even started our list of modifications to the boat for this winter and musing about our next destinations.
- But to delay our melancholy, we focused on some of the cool places we still have to check out on the way back home.



Blunden Harbor

- After rounding Cape Caution in the roly-polly swell, we continued south to Blunden Harbor. The wind filled in with a fury and we found ourselves sailing fast downwind.
- Blunden Harbor used to be a thriving First Nation Site. There are ruins of an old big house where they used to have celebrations and ceremonies.
- Also the beach is littered with shells forming a midden. A midden is a pile of white shells on the shore that had a double purpose. First it was a trash pile of discarded shells, secondly, it acted as a marker for navigation. (Notice the white shells on the shore – that's not sand).
- We hung out here for a couple of days doing some engine work, and rowing around the harbor. We were all alone for about 2 hours, time enough to take these pictures with no other boats or people around.
- But soon the anchorage swelled with 7 other boats. We felt claustrophobic compared to the last 3 weeks of our trip where we were usually the only boat.



Sullivan Bay

- We waited until late in the morning for the super thick fog to clear, and headed out for a small float community in Sullivan Bay.
- All of the homes in this ex-logging community are on log or concrete floats. Their streets are docks and their only recreational escape is the public ping-pong table.
- Some whimsical artist has added street signs to all the piers and painted cutesy murals around the community.
- Strangely enough, the town was pretty empty. There was only one other boat at the marina with us and most of the homes looked like they were locked up for the winter.
- Some of the locals who live here year-round shrugged and said, "September is the best month, but everyone leaves."
- Lucky us. Our plan was to explore this area in September on the rough theory that everyone would be getting the kids back to school or considered summer vacation over by September.



Turnbull Harbor

- Back in cruising mode again, we took a short trip to a small cove 6nm north of Sullivan Bay. This little cove is hidden behind several islands and narrow passages.
- It's completely land locked and one of the locals said there's a great hike to a lake.
- One of the islands we passed is Sherrell's Family's Name Sake: Watson Island!
- Here it is off our starboard bow.



Turnbull Harbor

- The anchorage is beautifully calm with large forested trees all around.
- The hike was a short uphill climb where we met super toad. This guy was probably half the size of our cat. Good thing she stayed on the boat.



- The hike led to a massive fresh water lake!
- Nothing beats skinny dipping on a hot summer day!

Roaringhole Rapids

- There are many areas along the coast where inlets or bays empty through narrow openings. Some of the fastest salt water tidal streams in the world occur along this coast.
- Roaringhole Rapids by Turnbull Harbor is one of the fastest. It ebbs and floods a massive amount of water through a shallow opening. These photos were all taken an hour from slack water, which means the current is nearing its weakest point. The vertical drop across this opening was about 2 feet and water was rushing out.
- The following photos show how turbulent the tidal stream gets. Imagine how it would look during the maximum tidal current flow!



Roaringhole Rapids



Mars

- The lack of light pollution out here opened up the skies at night to sights I haven't seen in a long time.
- Since the moon was only half full, the darkened sky revealed hundreds of stars and constellations that I vaguely remember from my short stint in astrophotography.
- The milky way's ominous white streak of stars and nebula contains millions of stars and practically lights up the land at night.
- I do know that Mars has never been so close to the Earth's orbit. We can see it rise over the horizon at about 120° magnetic every night. The orange glow is so bright that we can see its reflection in the water.
- It was bright enough to capture with my digital camera with its high speed shutter rate and poor luminance sensors.
- The planet is so bright, I'm sure that even some of the people in Seattle, who take the time to look up, can see it. It should remain quite visible throughout the month of September. Just look SE after twilight. As the month wears on, it will move further and further south.

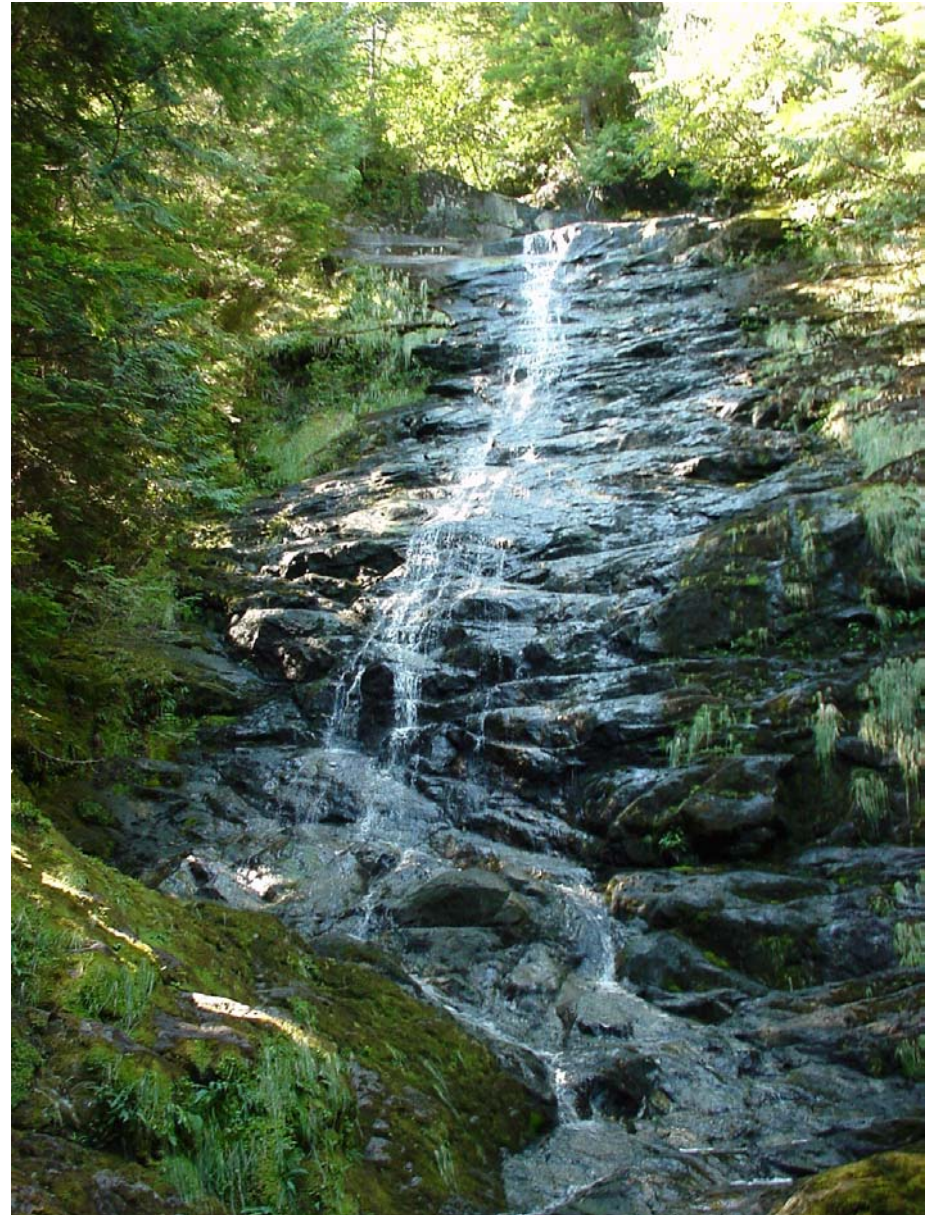


Kwatsi Bay

- Exalted by our guide book and some of our cruising friends, we made a trip up Tribune Channel to see Kwatsi Bay. Since the bay is deep beyond imagination, anchoring here is tough and we expected the bay to be empty.
- However as we crept through the narrow entrance, there appeared a newly built dock (4 years old) complete with a full accompaniment of boats – 8 total.
- We headed for the end of the bay and tried to pretend they weren't there. We anchored in 70 feet of water, and about 100 feet from the shore with a stern tie to keep our anchor from slipping into the deep.
- Then the parade of boats started. Large power boats came in all trying to squeeze in at the dock. One of them even sounded their horn. Before it was all over, 12 boats were in the bay and two boats anchored by us.
- The bay was probably less popular without the dock (and power boats running generators during most of the day) because of the difficulty in anchoring safely.
- While relaxing on the bow, we were treated to a porpoise show as they swam the deep waters off our bow looking for fish. They rarely come into water that is less than 100 feet, so seeing them while anchored in a bay is rare. I guess this deep bay has its advantages.
- Also we witnessed “Ghost Fish” at night. Ghost Fish are regular fish swimming in water filled with creatures that are phosphorescent. The leading edges of their fins glow bright green and they swam in large schools around our boat in the dark water. With every turn they sent out brilliant green swirls of light. Ghost Fish are hypnotic to watch and despite the chilly air we stood on the boat silently watching them for quite a long time. Most of the schools were comprised of Dog Fish which are a close relative to the shark and they have cool looking mini-shark bodies.

Kwatsi Bay

- We rowed to the dock for happy hour (some people actually spend months tied to this little dock) and to tour the 300 foot tall waterfalls.
- The hillsides were covered with large trees and the sea life was lively. We tried to shake the initial shock of seeing a dock filled with boaters and hearing the generator running and enjoyed the sunny anchorage.



Lagoon Cove

- From Kwatsi, we headed West. This is the time of year when the Orcas are very active in Johnstone Strait and Lagoon Cove is a good stop in that direction.
- In our never-ending quest for Bears, we passed through two areas that were promised to have Grizzlies. But no bears.
- Lagoon Cove was a surprise though. We joined in a potluck that had mostly vegan dishes (many boaters become vegetarian by force, because it's hard to keep meat and dairy products fresh). The party was full of stories about bears, orcas, whales and anchorages. Being fresh from Alaska, everyone had lots of questions.
- The lagoon was artistically laid out with hiking trails around the island. They even had an "exercise station" (chopping wood for caretaker). We didn't get a chance to stay long or chop his wood, but we had a great time telling wildlife stories and hearing about other places for cruising.



Porpoise Ho!

- Crossing into Johnstone Strait to our next stop, we found another school of porpoise! I managed to get some great video clips too because the water was so clear!
- I'll spare you from the 15 other photos.



Porpoise of Coursus



Telegraph Cove

- On the North part of Vancouver Island at the North end of Johnstone Strait is Telegraph Cove.
- It's a strategic launching point to transit the entire length of Johnstone Strait, notorious for rough seas and Orcas.
- The town is the closest thing to civilization since Prince Rupert and there's probably only 30 people who live here.
- They have a great Whale Museum and you can listen to the Hydrophones that are placed all around the islands for picking up Orca calls.
- You can see our boat tied up in front of the red museum. The tourists keep asking us questions about our boat and where we're from. We feel like part of a show. Maybe we should sell tickets.



Orcas!

- We went for a walk out on the point and suddenly saw two Orcas in the currents off shore. We snapped some photos and hiked back to tell the museum curator.
- She said she heard about it on the radio and said she missed them. But within a few minutes we spotted them from the dock and pointed them out again to her and the others in the office.
- We can't believe we saw them right from shore. We're very excited about our trip down the Strait tomorrow! We might even be able to take a photo where you can actually see the Orca.



Next

- Our immediate plan is to head down Johnstone Strait, and see a boatload of Orcas.
- We'll probably stop at Port Neville, then on to the Octopus Islands and Desolation Sound.
- If time allows, we might visit Princess Louisa Inlet before heading over to Nanaimo. From there we keep going down to the Gulf Islands, San Juans and then Bellingham.
- Once in Bellingham we'll start the search for a place to keep our boat for the winter (hopefully somewhere in downtown Seattle again).
- If all goes as planned, we'll be back in Seattle at the start of October.