

The North Island EAGLE

Celebrating 'True North Island' Life

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Photo — Kathy O'Reilly

Learning Some Firefighting Techniques

Port McNeill Fire Rescue hosted an Open House Oct. 8 as part of Fire Prevention with youngsters keen to try their hand at hitting targets and putting out fires with help from department members. The theme of this year's Fire Prevention Week, Oct. 4 -10, Charge into Fire Safety: Safe Charging Is a Superpower.

Doctors back 24-7 Hardy ER consolidation

By Kathy O'Reilly

A letter from North Island doctors recommending that emergency treatment be consolidated at Port Hardy Hospital 24-7 did not go over well with local leaders. Currently, Port Hardy's emergency room is closed at 5 p.m. daily with patients diverted to Port McNeill Hospital. "The burden of overnight emergency coverage has fallen disproportionally on the Port McNeill physician group," said the letter, signed by 11 physicians.

"Longstanding physician, nursing and allied health staffing challenges have led to alternating closures and diversions of both Port McNeill and Port Hardy emergency departments for decades. The stress of closures/diversions has negative consequences on staff morale, which affects staff retention and quality of patient care," they wrote.

Continued on Page 2



Doctors pen letter supporting Hardy as primary emergency centre

Continued from Page 1

"It has become clear to the local physicians that the safest and most sustainable long-term solution is to designate a single ER as the overnight site for the region permanently," the letter stated.

"We believe that forming a regional call group of physicians to staff this ER overnight, as well as consolidating allied health resources including imaging and lab services, will lead to improved staff wellness and retention, stability, and ultimately safer patient care," the letter continued.

"The data is unequivocal – Port Hardy has a significantly greater population, volume of patient visits and level of acuity of BCAS (BC Ambulance Service) calls. We believe the best long-term solution is to designate Port Hardy ER as the single overnight ER for the Region."

"The recent leak on social media of a letter written by physicians regarding Port Hardy Hospital is very unfortunate. The resulting confusion has added stress and anxiety for the dedicated hospital staff in Port Hardy and Port McNeill, who work tirelessly to provide care for our communities," said Port Hardy Mayor Pat Corbett-Labatt.

"The concerns raised by physicians should be heard through the appropriate channels," Corbett-Labatt said.

All three North Island hospitals - Port Hardy, Port McNeill and Alert Bay - depend on "an incredible team of professionals, including doctors, nurses, X-ray and laboratory staff, and the many other employees whose contributions are essential to keeping our health-care services functioning. These dedicated professionals deserve our respect, support and understanding as they navigate an already challenging health-care environment," she said.

"As Mayor of Port Hardy, I want to reaffirm that we have consistently advocated, and will continue to advocate, for the restoration of 24/7 service at the Port Hardy Hospital Emergency Department. At the very least, we want to see the hours extended further into the evening to improve access to emergency care for Port Hardy and the surrounding communities," she said.

"We will continue to work with Island Health, our regional partners and provincial representatives to advocate for improved emergency services across the Mount Waddington Regional District. Our goal remains clear: to improve access to care while supporting the dedicated professionals who make that care possible," Corbett-Labatt stated.

"Our communities are strongest when we work together, listen to one another and focus on solutions rather than allowing uncertainty to divide us. The people who live and work here deserve nothing less."

"I do not like that idea at all. It adds another additional layer of stress to the individual who is being transferred off of the island. Not only Cormorant Island but also Malcolm Island," said Alert Bay Mayor Dennis Buchanan.

"In the winter you can then add additional time for road conditions. There is also the additional time added for those involved in traffic accidents on the highway around the Woss area. That extra time is going to cost someone their life," Buchanan said. "Time is of the essence when they are critically injured. That extra 35 to 40 minutes is too long."

"It is a challenging situation, ultimately the only solution that satisfies the needs of the North Island is for both the Port Hardy and Port McNeill ERs to be open around the clock. We know this is achievable as it was the standard for decades," said Regional District of Mount Waddington board Chair Andrew Hory.

"One or the other being closed is an issue for the communities impacted by whichever one is. Obviously as is being stated by the doctors there is a very strong argument for Port Hardy ER being open," Hory said.

"Having said that, I know that there would be very serious concern from residents of Sointula and Alert Bay and the First Nation communities even further out to see the Port McNeill ER closed at any time as it would compound the emergency travel time from those communities even further," he continued.

"If the local ER doctors in Port Hardy, then decided to send those patients further down island to larger hospitals they would have spent 30 minutes traveling in the wrong direction and adding an hour to their travel time on their way to urgent and/or lifesaving care. Given those realities I believe the only viable solution is for Island Health to finally find a way to staff both hospitals again."

The upcoming Port Hardy Hospital expansion, hopefully followed by the Port McNeill Hospital expansion, is also a factor in the equation.

"Starting this fall, funded by the Province and by RDMW, the Port Hardy Hospital will be a worksite for an extended refit and expansion which will need to be managed both for staff stress and public access to services - emergency health care on the North Island and the professionals who provide it have been under stress for a decade - while the rebuilt hospital will be a great step forward to providing those services in a much better environment, all of the effort and disruption inherent in achieving that are still to come," Hory said. "It is a difficult and complicated reality but ultimately the needs of the people needing urgent care need to come first, and if the conversation/argument is stuck on which one - instead of both - that is not happening."

"The doctor letter situation appears to be alarming the alarmists and not drawing much attention otherwise," said Port McNeill Mayor James Furney.

"I'm questioning the veracity of its presentation and wonder whose names aren't on the list. Seems a bit like electioneering 101," Furney continued.

"I'll keenly watch as things develop but I'm probably a poor observer to add any intelligent perspective."

VINTA hosts All Candidates Forum in Port McNeill

The Vancouver Island North Teachers Association is hosting a provincial All Candidates' Forum at Sunset Elementary School (gym) on Wednesday, Oct. 21 starting at 6 p.m. The forum will feature those vying for election as North Island MLA.

Running for office are Incumbent Conservative Party candidate Anna Kindy, Independent Richard Lambert, BC NDP Sara Lopez, and BC Green Party Benjamin Olsson.

"So far I have a confirmation from Richard Lambert, an 'I'll be there but maybe a couple minutes late' from Ben Olsson, a 9/10 chance we'll be there from Sara Lopez, and I have an email in to Anna Kindy's office asking for confirmation," said VINTA Local 85 President Shawn Gough Oct. 14.

Regional District of Mount Waddington

NOTICE OF MEETING CHANGE

PUBLIC NOTICE is hereby given in accordance with the Regional District of Mount Waddington Board Procedure Bylaw No. 875, 2014 that the dates for the upcoming Regional District of Mount Waddington Board meetings and the Mount Waddington Regional Hospital District meetings originally scheduled for October 20, 2026, November 17, 2026 and December 15, 2026 have been rescheduled. Meeting times and location will remain the same. The meetings will now take place as follows:

October 21, 2026, at 2044 McNeill Road, Port McNeill, BC
Mount Waddington Regional Hospital District Meeting: 11:30am
Regional District of Mount Waddington Board Meeting: 2:00pm

November 18, 2026, at 2044 McNeill Road, Port McNeill, BC
Mount Waddington Regional Hospital District Meeting: 11:30am
Regional District of Mount Waddington Board Meeting: 2:00pm

December 16, 2026, at 2044 McNeill Road, Port McNeill, BC
Mount Waddington Regional Hospital District Meeting: 11:30am
Regional District of Mount Waddington Board Meeting: 2:00pm

Electronic Access: Members of the public may also view or participate in the meeting online via Zoom.

Purpose of the Meeting:
The Board meets to consider general corporate business.

Agenda & Public Inspection
The full meeting agendas, including background materials will be available for public review no later than 12:00pm on the following days:

- **October 16, 2026**
- **November 13, 2026**
- **December 11, 2026**

Online: The Regional District's portal at www.rdmw.bc.ca
In-Person: The front reception desk at the Regional District of Mount Waddington Office, Monday to Friday 8:30am to 4:30 pm, excluding statutory holidays.

Barbra Mohan
Interim Chief Administrative Officer
Regional District of Mount Waddington

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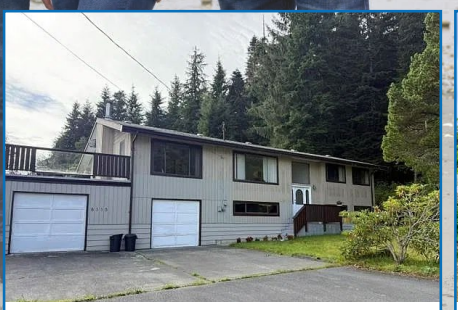
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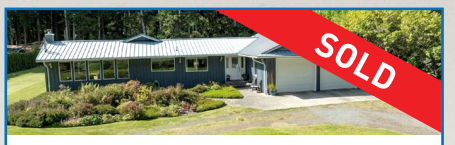
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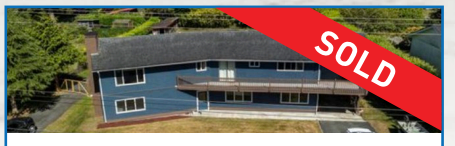
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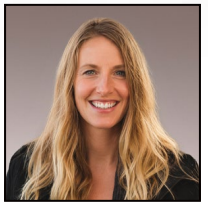
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editorial



Photo — Robin Quirk, Robin's Eye Photography

Steller Sea Lions are named for Georg Wilhelm Steller, the German surgeon and naturalist on the Bering expedition who first described and wrote about the species in 1742.



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New cenotaph arrives in Port McNeill

By Kathy O'Reilly

Port McNeill Legion Branch #281 new cenotaph should be in place by Remembrance Day Nov. 11.

A cenotaph is an empty grave, tomb or a monument erected in honour of a person or group of people whose remains are elsewhere or have been lost.

The granite for the cenotaph was quarried, milled, carved and engraved at a facility in Quebec and shipped by truck to Vancouver Island. An installation team has begun setting up the cenotaph on its new foundation in Rotary Park.

"The plan is to have everything completed ahead of the 2026 Remembrance Day service, which coincides with the 100th Anniversary of the Royal Canadian Legion," said Secretary Kathy Slack. The Port McNeill Legion plans to hold a dedication ceremony during the Nov. 11 program.

The project represents over 13 years of planning and execution, originally envisioned by a local veteran and Legion member, and brought to fruition by a dedicated planning committee. Funding was provided through donations and a grant from Veterans Affairs Canada.

"The old cenotaph was relocated to the front lawn of the Legion. The old cenotaph cannot be destroyed, it has a history for our community, and it holds very precious service medals left by the stone mason Bob Bowes who built it in 1985," Slack said.



Photo —Kelsea Taylor

Royal Canadian Legion Branch #281's new cenotaph begins to take shape on Oct. 14



Photo — Submitted

Branch member Bob Bowes built the cenotaph in 1985.

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Fresh food, community connection at Port Hardy Farmers' Market

By Jeanne James-Hory

Another season of the BC Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program has wrapped up in Port Hardy, bringing fresh local food to North Island households while supporting the farmers who grow and produce food in our communities.

This summer, Mount Waddington Family Literacy Society once again partnered with the Port Hardy Farmers' Market to deliver the BC Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program and offer food literacy activities throughout the market season.

Thirty-seven local households signed up for the program, with 24 households ultimately receiving coupons this season. A total of $4,158 in coupons was distributed for participants to spend directly with participating market vendors.

For some households, the coupons made fresh, good-quality produce more accessible at a time when rising food costs have made it difficult to include as much as they would like in their grocery budgets.

Participants also told us that simply getting to the market could be a challenge. Some shared that they walked because the cost of gas was too high.

Through additional food-security funding, we were able to provide gas cards to help with transportation, and participants were very grateful for the extra support.

Throughout the summer, our market table also became a place to learn, share ideas and connect.

We offered simple recipes featuring some of the less familiar vegetables available from local growers, along with menu-planning sheets and nutrition information to help people make the most of the food they brought home.

We also brought along conversation cards with questions such as, "What's the strangest food you've ever eaten?", "What food reminds you of home?" and "What's your favourite way to cook Swiss chard?"

The questions sparked some wonderful conversations.

People swapped recipes and cooking ideas, talked about favourite foods and shared memories around the table.

These simple interactions helped make food literacy social, welcoming and fun.

The program creates a circle of support – participants gain greater access to fresh, nourishing food while the coupons are spent directly with local farmers and food producers.



Photo — Submitted

It was another successful year for the BC Farmers' Market Nutrition Coupon Program that saw 24 households receive $4,158 in coupons to spend at the Port Hardy Farmers Market.



Photo — Kathy O'Reilly

Biking Around A Bend

The Tri-Port Motocross and ATV Club hosted its annual Thanksgiving weekend 2026 VIMX Championship Series – Round 10 event at its track located across from across from the 7 Mile Landfill and Recycling. Families and racers from all over Vancouver Island took part in the event.



Port Hardy Legion back open for business

By Bruce Lloyd

The Port Hardy Legion is open again – just in time for Remembrance Day! The old wooden building recalls a terrible, yet somehow better time, wherein Canada and its people played its biggest part on the world's great stage.

This old Legion Hall is actually the old Officers' Mess from the Port Hardy Airport. The base was built in a big hurry as the threat of Canada's demise at the hands of a war-bent Japanese Empire, a frightening feudal force, threatened without mercy, yet made it only as far as the Aleutians. Nevertheless seriously threatening invasion of BC and beyond.

Our totally unprepared nation hurriedly threw together an airbase in what was once a swamp alongside the old Panama Clipper base at Tsakis /Jokerville.

They then matched that with a float plane base at Coal Harbour and a tiny detachment in Telegraph Cove. Farther south a big naval gun was mounted at Yorke Island at the end of Johnston Strait to blow from the sea any ships flying the Rising Sun from their stern.

This old wooden Legion Hall (worthy of heritage status now that they are for the most part gone though once they were spread throughout the Commonwealth) being the last remnant of an entire war base. It was moved and repurposed as Fort Rupert's Legion Hall years ago by many volunteers who watched as it came off its skids in transit half way to Storey's Beach I'm told.

Not being discouraged by mishap, the good fellows planted the big wooden edifice there and over time it became the centre of a sort of downtown with the Old School House Store across the street becoming "Downtown" Fort Rupert's "second skyscraper" so to speak.

The old building in most recent days sat mouldering and forlorn with a simple closed sign posted upon it. There it sat with a weedy lawn and an old picnic table in the field for passers by.

With a little imagination one could see the phantom airmen marching down the stairs of this big "modern" mess fresh with their flight plan near 80 years ago. Since the war the plain old building did its duty hosting picnics, celebrations, weddings funerals and the like for three quarters of a century and then sadly fell into disarray.

As I gazed upon it, I realized this old bastion deserved one more round of life. This forsaken Legion I speak of, though at risk of closing for good, had one last chance and the only thing I and others could do about it was to restore the old dilapidated building so that those who might be out there and "just needed a spark" - would find their strength once again and rally around to restore the spirit of the old "regime."

And so it happened. Slowly but surely over a few months the paint went on - a "5 Gallon Overhaul" as we laughingly called it in my logging days.

The encroaching brush was trimmed back and much junk removed. Paint and a few supplies from both Home Hardware and Hardy Builders' was given graciously once our own ran out.

The fine folk as always at Macandale's lent the power washer and offered "Anything else you need".

As I explained to the retired Navy Lt. Colonel in charge of the trusteeship "Warren - it was like putting lipstick on a pig - but she somehow kind of looks as good as Miss Piggy now!" We laughed and admired the now bright old building.

To finish the job, a 60 folk work party showed up as a woman named Florence Nelson (now President) and her many helpers - too many to mention - organized a new executive and a multitude of work bees small and large. I finished up my share of the job.

Flo and her husband, and dozens of others, showed up in force and finished transforming the old mess inside and out.

Donors Brian Texmo, Island Foods, JM's Welding, Fox's Disposal, Teeta Lawn Care and Boris Mobile Mechanic all generously donated goods donations and services to the cause.

Thanks to all who grabbed a torch and ran with it. The Port Hardy Legion's CLOSED sign has come down as it starts a new era. The Hardy Legion's back!



Photo — Kathy O'Reilly

Port Hardy's Royal Canadian Legion Branch #237 is back open for business after a facelift was completed and new executive formed.



Photo — Submitted

Free Books Capture Attention

The Mount Waddington Family Literacy Society team celebrated Literacy Month at the Mount Waddington Regional Fall Fair, Sept. 12-13, with a free book for 71 children and teens. They sold fund-raising Literacy Socks from Blue Sky Clothing, had a creative station for button-making, a Spin to Win game, and their booth won a prize! Total funds raised was $434.80 for local literacy programs. "We are so grateful to the Port McNeill Parent Advisory Committee for lending us their Spin and Win game, the Mount Waddington Regional Fall Fair organizers for putting together a wonderful fair, and Port Hardy Recreation for hosting the event. We also deeply appreciate the gracious community support, donations, and fund-raising," said Jessica Brown, executive director at MWFLS.

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Photo — Robin Quirk, Robin's Eye Photography

Humpbacks Pass In Front Of Alert Bay

Two Humpback Whales pass in front of Alert Bay Oct. 4 - White Out (BCZ0579), sex not known and Introvert (BCX1260) female.

Commercial cardboard fee introduced at Seven Mile

By Kathy O'Reilly

To address the increasing volume of commercial cardboard, the Regional District of Mount Waddington has made changes at Seven Mile Landfill and Recycling.

At their monthly meeting Sept. 22, the board of directors agreed to charge $60 for commercial clean cardboard loads over 500 kilograms.

"Currently, we receive approximately 350 tonnes of commercial cardboard annually, which is about 100 tonnes (28 per cent) more than in 2023. Processing this volume costs the Regional District approximately $25,000–$30,000 annually, including grinding, machinery, fuel, transportation, and other associated costs," wrote Operations Project Manager Nishesh Poudyal in his report to council. "Therefore, charging $60 per tonne for commercial cardboard will help recover these costs while allowing us to bale the cardboard when feasible and grind the remaining material," Poudyal said. "The outstanding question is some of it can be bailed. If it's bailed, then that means it goes into revenue stream. But not every part of the commercial cardboard is liable to be recycled that way," said Chair Andrew Hory. "I'm not opposed to the imposition of a fee at a certain rate. I think it gives people the opportunity to still bring anything under 500 kilograms, which is a pretty big load, But I think I lack clarity as to what's in our best financial advantage in terms of just putting it into the general cardboard stream," he said.

"I talked with one or two vendors. They can provide us at least $45 per tonne if we send those cardboards down," Poudyal said, adding shipping costs would be borne by Seven Mile.

"I don't think there's any intention to reduce the amount of cardboard" that is recycled. "It does have a financial benefit. It is paid out per tonne," said Hory. "We're definitely still in that business but I think staff are bringing forward a recognition that some of the handling costs are not certainly being covered under the existing model and they are costing the operation and there's a suggested way to offset that cost to the local taxpayer, to a degree, by engaging the commercial sector for their waste which is currently not happening," Hory continued.

"It would be people delivering it to the landfill that would be the person incurring the bill," said Hory.



lifestyles&leisure

Tiller's Folly returns to North Island after 18-year absence

By Malcolm Fleeton

The North Island Concert Society is proud to announce the return to the North Island after an 18-year absence, of Tiller's Folly on Saturday, Oct. 24, at 7 p.m., at the Port Hardy Civic Centre.

For over thirty years, Tiller's Folly have served as modern-day storytellers, bringing the pioneer history of the West to life through song. From the beginning, the band set out to create acoustic music that is both progressive and timeless - rooted in tradition, yet reflective of their Pacific Coastal home.

Blending Scottish, Irish, and Maritime folk influences, Tiller's Folly have developed a distinct sound they call Pacific Canadiana. Over time, they've continued to expand and refine this style, preserving the stories of the West while exploring new creative horizons.

"As one of the tightest, and unflinchingly focused, folk bands in the nation, Tiller's Folly continues to produce music that is both distinctly Canadian and firmly rooted in the Celtic tradition. Stirring Up Ghosts confirms that Tiller's Folly is a national treasure"

- *Peter North/Edmonton Journal*

Drawing inspiration from the deep roots of folk and Celtic music, Tiller's Folly weaves together a tapestry of sound that pays homage to their heritage while embracing contemporary influences. Their fusion of traditional folk, Celtic, Americana, and bluegrass elements creates a distinctive sound that is both timeless and refreshing.

Tiller's Folly is led by ISSA Male Vocalist of the Year Bruce Coughlan, whose soulful vocals, captivating stage presence, and finely crafted songwriting breathe life into every performance.

Band members Nolan Murray, a world champion fiddler, and producer/bass player Laurence Knight contribute exceptional instrumental prowess, stirring melodies, and driving rhythms.

Together, they combine musicianship, storytelling, and an unwavering commitment to authenticity. Their songs are steeped in Scottish, Irish, American, and Canadian roots traditions, creating concerts that feel both deeply rooted and alive in the moment.

With nine albums and over 30 years of music-making, Tiller's Folly have united communities around the world through songs filled with history, heart, and a genuine love for the traditions that shaped them.

Tickets are available from Guido's in Port Hardy, Essential, Refillery in Port McNeill and Gail Neely in Port Alice or at the door the evening of the show (cash or e-transfer).

A concession sponsored by Port Hardy Secondary is available as well as a raffle. Tickets cost $35 for Adults and $10 for students.

For more information, please contact Malcolm Fleeton at 250-956-0452 or fleeton@telus.net.

Come out for an evening of great entertainment and support the live arts on the North Island!



Photo — Submitted

The North Island Concert Society is proud to announce the return to the North Island after an 18-year absence, of Tiller's Folly on Saturday, Oct. 24, at 7 p.m., at the Port Hardy Civic Centre.

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People may have excess fungus in their bodies

By Susan Holbrook

Most people don't realize how dangerous excess fungus is in our bodies. Many symptoms are ignored or misunderstood. Some of the symptoms of fungus infestation are fatigue, toenail fungus, dry mouth, stubborn weight that won't budge, and so MANY more.

On their own, they seem like random, unrelated annoyances… but may not be random at all?

Honestly this is a little unnerving because fungus can surreptitiously take root in your body and cause a whole slew of symptoms most people would never trace back to fungus as the cause.

Because many of the signs look nothing like what you'd expect from a fungus problem, they can go undiagnosed for years.

So, what's the difference between bacteria and fungus.

Both are minute organisms that are found in almost every ecosystem on earth, and both can associate with other groups of living things. Both can either be harmless and necessary in biological processes, or they can be highly dangerous.

The main difference between fungi and bacteria is their cellular structure. Bacteria are prokaryotic organisms, meaning they do not possess a nucleus, while fungi are eukaryotic organisms, meaning they have a very well-defined nucleus. While both organisms have cell walls, what makes up these walls is different. Fungi mainly have long hollow tubes that form networks (hyphae).

Each of these tubes is bordered by a strong wall made from chitin which is the same substance that forms the exoskeletons of insects. Hyphae grow from their tips and reach out in a branching manner to form a network called mycelium. As the mycelium grows, it produces fruiting bodies and other structures that are rich with reproductive spores.

Bacteria multiply by binary fission when parent bacterium divide to make the same sized daughter cells. Fungi reproduce both sexually and asexually by a process of branching fragmentation and budding (like yeast).

Fungi are scavengers, feeding off dead material akin to the buzzards you see cleaning up roadkill. Bacteria, on the other hand, are more sophisticated in the fact that they can manufacture their own food.

While both beasts can be dangerous, fungus is quite sneaky and therefore, watch your back or toes!

Here are some examples or fungus that can cause us health issues.

Aspergillus fungi can be inhaled through the mouth or nose and can cause fever, cough and wheezing, Cryptococcus neoformans is found in the soil or in bird droppings and enters the body through the mouth or nostrils and can cause a lung infection resulting in a cough or chest pain.

One famous fungus, known as Candida albicans, is a type of fungus that is present in all humans. The fungus is found on both the skin and mucus membranes.

In small amounts, it is harmless to the body. However, when the growth of yeast increases dramatically, the results can be absolutely devastating.

Surprisingly, yeast overgrowth is one of the most prevalent, yet unrecognized conditions to man? There are ways to combat fungal infections with diet and supplementation.

I would recommend seeing an MD or ND for diagnosis and recommendations.

Contact me for more information. 778-788-4325



Photo — Submitted

Some of the symptoms of fungus infestation are fatigue, toenail fungus, dry mouth, stubborn weight that won't budge.



Photo —Kathy O'Reilly

Sweet Selection

There were plenty of goodies on sale at the annual North Island Farmers and Artisans Pie Market held Oct. 10 at the Lions Hall in Port McNeill.

Run Club off the ground in Port McNeill

By Kathy O'Reilly

Did you know a run club recently took off on the North Island? Now you do!

The North Island Run Club is based in Port McNeill and runs every Wednesday.

"Our first run was Sept. 16," said organizer Jillian Holly.

"I had been thinking about starting one for a couple years and finally just went for it. I enjoy running and I know there's lots of other people who do too and thought it would be fun to create a time and space to run together," Holly said.

"Right now, we run 5-7 kilometres but as it (the club) grows that might change. We run on Wednesday nights 5:30/6 (usually six but might be 5:30 with the days getting shorter)." Everyone is welcome regardless of skill or experience.

Follow the club on Instagram @northislandrunclub



An autumn morning in the Nimpkish Valley



It was an outstanding autumn morning as the sun slipped above the Hankin Mountain Range. Under a cloudless sky Christine, Rosie, and I sat on a mossy knoll overlooking a lightly wooded area of the Nimpkish Valley. The serenity of harvest colours and the remoteness of these wild surroundings is a welcome retreat to calm a restless heart… a place to relax, take deep breaths of simplicity, and embrace nature. We journey here often to view wildlife, elk, deer, bear and the habitat they depend on. The air carries a cool, soothing freshness that added to our enjoyment. Behind us, tall evergreens older than Confederation stand guard, their roots embedded deep into nutrients rich, dark soil.

Above, a hawk circled gracefully. One moment the raptor was hunting low over Fireweed, rose hips, and wilted brown bracken; the next it ascended an invisible thermal, rising effortlessly to lofty heights. Then the silence was broken by the unmistakable call of a Red-tailed Hawk… an iconic raptor that lives year round in these woodland settings. Was he calling out to Rosie, who was curiously looking up, or was the hawk simply enjoying the morning as we were?

The Red-tailed Hawk is one of the most recognizable and defining presence of hawk on Vancouver Island and in the wilds of the Pacific Northwest. Exceptionally adaptive, these hawks thrive in open fields, wetlands, forest edges, wide valleys, and coastal environments. Vancouver Island hosts two subspecies: the Alaskan Red-tailed Hawk and the Western Red-tailed Hawk.

The Alaskan subspecies, featured in this article, is typically slightly smaller, darker, and more common along the coast. It has a heavily streaked breast and deep overall coloration suited to the wet temperate rainforests, with a rich cinnamon red tail in mature birds that catches the light and one's eye dramatically. The Nimpkish Valley, to our wildlife viewing pleasure, lies squarely within this subspecies' breeding range, which extends from southeastern Alaska through Haida Gwaii and down the length of Vancouver Island.

Distinguishing the two subspecies at a distance is a challenge, as both share behaviours and general structure. However, the Alaskan is more compact, darker, and more boldly marked, with a saturated cinnamon tail. In contrast, the Western Red-tailed Hawk is generally larger and paler, with lighter chest markings and a more brick red tail; subtle but intriguing differences.

Both subspecies have hunting styles well suited to our Pacific Northwest. Small mammals make up much of their diet. Near wetlands, flatlands, forest edges, and shorelines, menu possibilities change as local area inhabitants change. This broad appetite helps explain the bird's success. It is not tied to a single landscape or food source. If one area becomes less productive, the hawk simply changes location to hunt suitable alternative prey. When it comes to nest sites, Red-tailed Hawks generally prefer prime real estate: older growth conifers that offer height and a good view of surrounding small mammal habitat… open expanses. They seem to know mature trees provide strong, wind proven branches affording nesting protection. The nest is robust mass of sticks and branches and lined with softer materials such as bark, grass, moss, and lichen. Over the years, a pair may reuse the same nest, adding volume with new material each breeding season. Some nests can be surprisingly large and may look like an untidy bundle of branches. But inside… a comfortable protective nursery and lookout all in one.

During courtship, a pair may soar together high above their territory, calling and circling in broad, graceful loops in a sky dance. They may excite onlookers with a thrilling free-fall clenched together, releasing at the last moment. Mating however does not occur in the air, rather later back on earth. Afterwards two to three eggs are generally laid. The female often handles much of the incubation while the male supplies food, although duties can be shared. Chicks hatch after several weeks and begin life entirely dependent on their parents. One parent generally stays near the nest to guard the young while the other hunts. When food arrives, the adults tear it into smaller pieces that the chicks voraciously devour.

The first flight is an important moment, but it does not mean the young hawk is suddenly independent. Fledglings, like all raptor species, still need their parents for food and protection for up to another two months or more while they learn how to fly and recognize suitable prey. Some young stay loosely associated with their attentive parents for up to six months.

Most Red-tailed Hawks on Vancouver Island remain in the area year round. Our Island's temperate climate and bountiful prey make migration unnecessary. Other hawks from northern British Columbia may migrate and pass through the Pacific Northwest during their travels.



Photos —Christ Patterson

Vancouver Island hosts two subspecies: the Alaskan Red-tailed Hawk (pictured) and the Western Red tailed Hawk.



In Canada, the Red-tailed Hawk is not generally considered endangered. It is widespread and protected under wildlife Federal laws. Active nests and young receive additional protection under provincial regulations. Still, populations can be negatively affected by industrial and forestry practices, destruction of grasslands and forest edges, disturbance near nests, and exposure to pollution. The Wild Kingdom indeed faces a host of challenges, especially young birds. Many Red-tailed Hawks do not survive their first year even under their parent's tutelage as they learn to fly, and hunt. Those that do reach adulthood may live for ten to twelve years or longer. Some individuals have banded evidence of living over three decades! Good-conservation practices and responsible stewardship include protecting habitat, preserving open hunting grounds, reducing disturbance near nests, and safeguarding clean, intact ecosystems. Working together we can give these remarkable hawks a better chance of thriving for future generations.

Continued on Page 13



Photo — Kathy O'Reilly

Skatepark Barbecue

The Port McNeill Skate Park Committee held a fund-raising barbecue outside the Lions Hall on Oct. 10. A $380,000, 5,000 square foot skateboard park is planned for the Cenotaph area. The Town of Port McNeill is prepared to contribute up to $200,000 to cover any funding shortfall.

Red-tailed Hawk one of most recognizable raptors

Continued from Page 12

From a distance it is easy to confuse a Red-tailed Hawk with a Peregrine Falcon (a subject of an earlier article). However, a Red-tailed Hawk is more broad winged, heavy bodied, and designed for soaring and hunting near the ground.

The Peregrine Falcon is slimmer, with long pointed wings and a more streamlined shape. Peregrines are famous for their spectacular stoop… a high speed dive used to strike birds in flight. They are the fastest animals on Earth when diving.

Red-tailed Hawks can certainly dive however, they generally rely more on patient observation, soaring searches, perches, and controlled descents. They hunt small mammals on the ground; voles, rabbits, mice rather than fast flying birds.

The nesting choices of the two species also differ. Red-tailed Hawks often choose tall trees near open ground, while Peregrine Falcons traditionally favour cliffs and ledges.

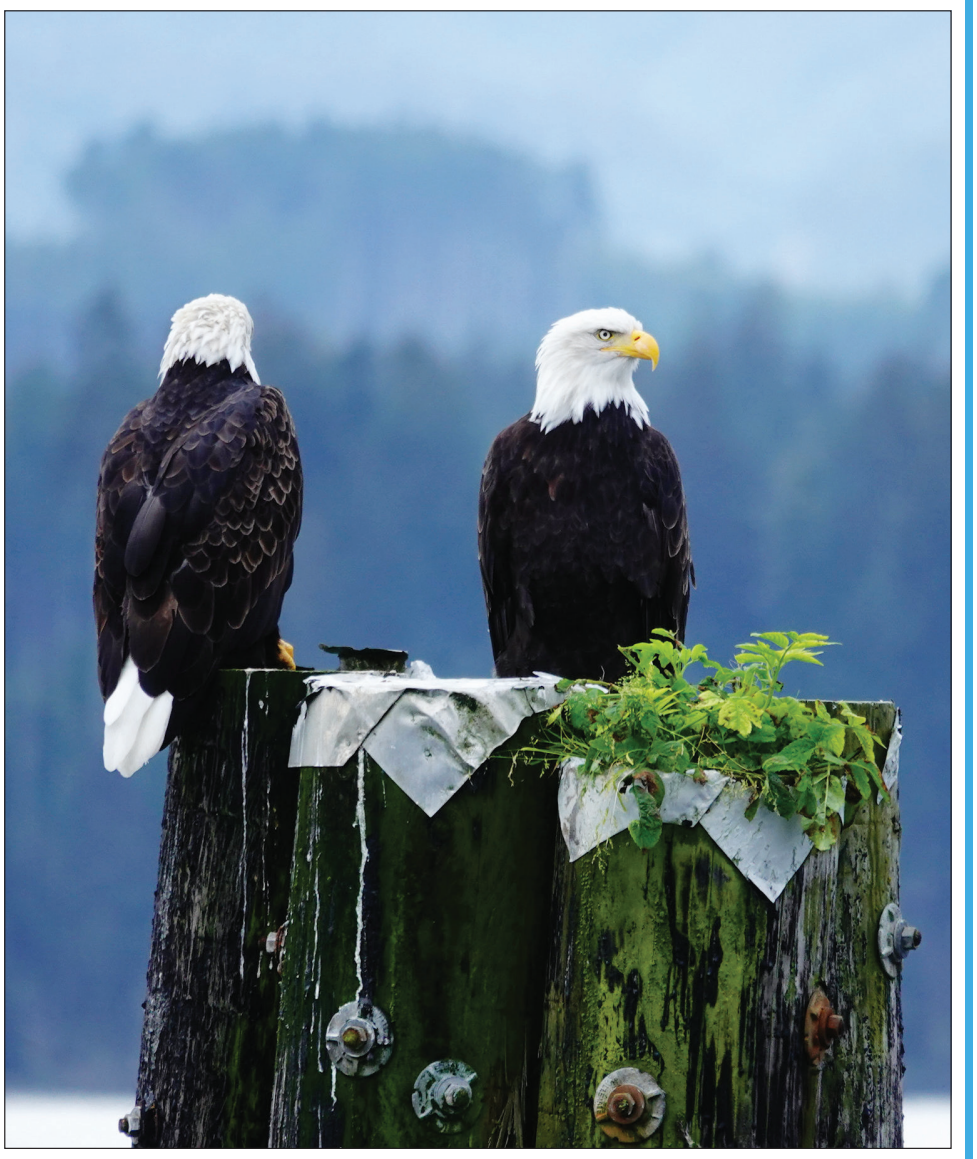
Both species are year round residents on Vancouver Island. They share the same broad region, yet Mother Nature has assigned each a different ecological role: the Peregrines often rules the open sky, while Red-tailed Hawks keeps watch over fields, forest margins, and valley floors.

So, the next time you see a Red-tailed Hawk circling above Vancouver Island, take a moment to watch. Notice how little effort goes into the flight. Listen for the bold, screeching call. Look for the red tail of an adult, or the barred brown tail of a youngster. The Red tailed Hawk is not merely a familiar shape in the sky… these remarkable birds of prey are a part of the living conversation between forest and field, wind and mountain, predator and prey.

Our sighting this morning as the sun rose above the Hankin Range reminded Christine and I that wildlife in the valley does not always arrive with loud applause or magnificent antlers. Sometimes it circles quietly overhead, riding the warm air, watching, waiting, and calling…. making these wilderness surroundings feel a little more alive.

Safe travels,
Gord

North Island Reflections



Heads or tails? A pair of Bald Eagles. Photo by Robin Quirk, Robin's Eye Photography. If you have a photo you would like to share with our readers please email publisher@northislandeagle.com.

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250-956-3300

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250-306-4417

Canoes

Sportspal 14-foot, square stern canoe. Weighs 47 pounds. Custom rod holders, side motor mount, and outriggers. Asking $2,000 firm.
250-230-5290

Fishing

Vintage Daiwa sealine Model SL24RS 7-foot fishing rod with 7 eyes, two of them are broken. Comes with an Alvey fishing reel, nine-inch spool, Model number 925-A52. $150.
250-949-0118

Alvey knuckle buster fishing reel. Has a five-inch spool. $50.
250-949-0118

11ft3in. Lamiglas steelhead fishing rod. Mint condition. $225 firm.
250-902-8413



Fishing

Vintage aluminium p.f. lueger, Pakron, model number 3178 fishing reel with a 5-and-a-half-inch spool. Works excellent. $75.
250-949-0118

For Rent

Twoceans Coal Harboour, 2 Bedroom townhouse. Stove, fridge, washer, dryer, microwave. Clean quiet rural location. Professional working singles or couples. References required. $1,400 + hydro Oct. 1.
250-949-8855

Furniture

Massage chair. Paid $3500 for it. Want $2000. Like new.
250-284-3261

Power recliner, approximately five years old, seldom used, brown. Like new. Paid $1,300 will sell for $450.
250-949-7504

Lost

Lost in Port Hardy area, key and fob for GMC.
250-902-7938

Miscellaneous

2 running boards from F150, good condition, $50.
250-956---3601

Motorhomes

2015 Jayco Jay Flight 32 RLDS elite. Front bedroom, electric fireplace, ac, no leaks. Only used about a total of a month. Been stored under cover. Needs new awning cloth and motor. Some cabinet doors are defective from factory have been replaced with tension rods but do have the doors also. Sewer hookups, BBQ and cleaning supplies included. $23,000 OBO.
250-949-1744



Coming Events



Motorhomes

Everlite travel trailer, 8x26 foot, 1 slide out, excellent condition inside and out. Everything works. New awning. Asking $18,500 or will trade for Ford F150 of equal value.
250-510-7799

Services

Red seal journeyman electrician looking for small, residential jobs. 30+ years experience. Reasonable rates. All quotes are free. Call Jesse.
236-255-2238

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Photon Lightspeed Kayak with all the extras: $1200.
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Sporting Goods

2 new oars for a rowboat. Approximately 6.5 feet long, with swivels. $100 for pair.
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250-230-0745

Advance Element inflatable double Kayak, asking $375.
250-973-6294

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Tires

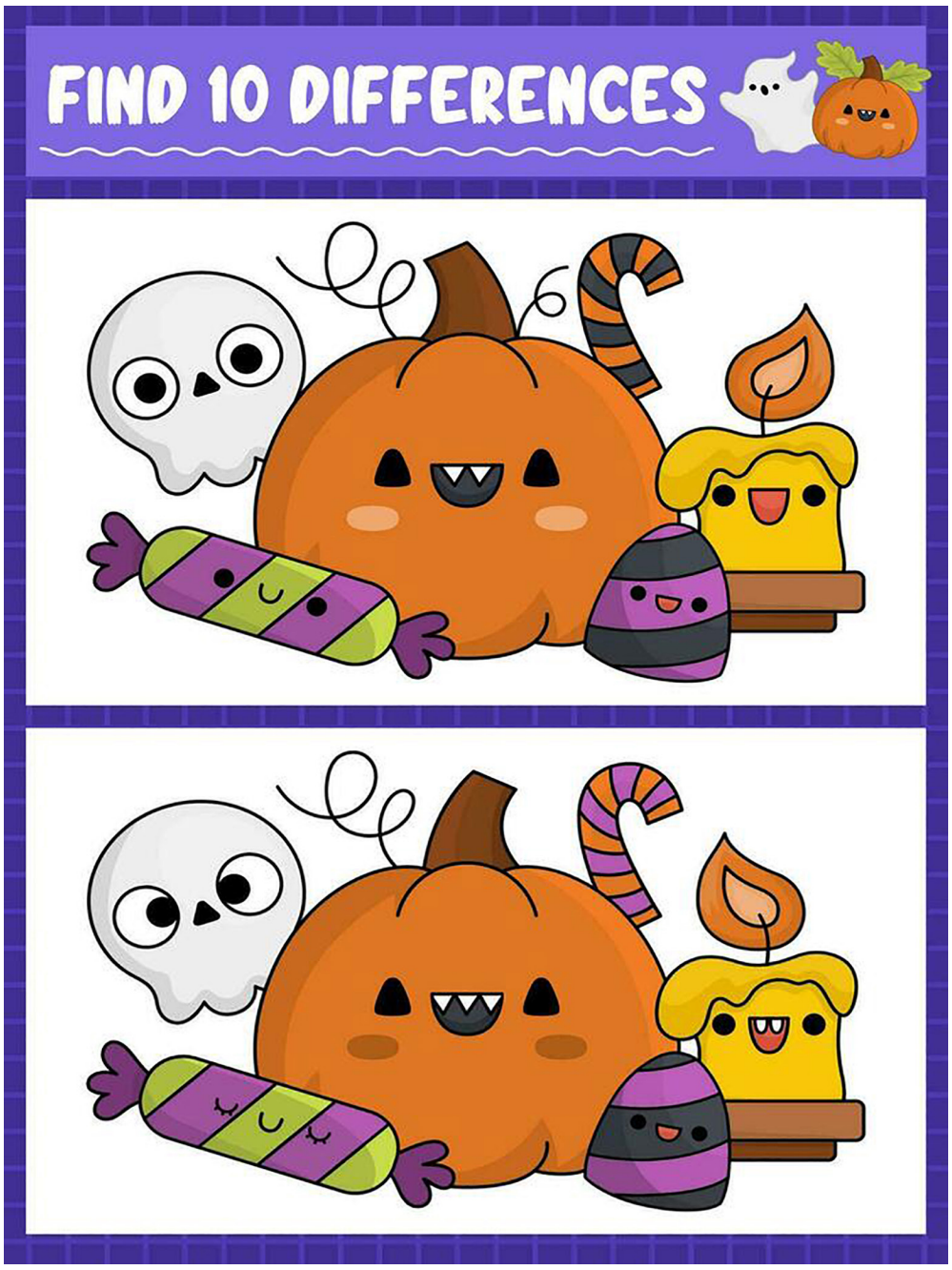
4 Altimax tires – Arctic, M+S, with snowflake. 265/75R-16. Radial, tubeless, 6-ply tread, balanced, on rims, no leaks, and at least 50% tread life left. Came off a 2007 Nissan Xterra. $50 each.
250-949-0118

4 matching winter tires for 16-inch rims, used one season, 235/65R 16 103H, tubeless steel belted radials. $300.
250-974-8336

Tools

Black and Decker 3-inch by 21-inch Dragster belt-sander. Never been used. Cost $125. Sell for $60.
250-949-0118

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2403 Chelohsin Crescent, Port McNeill MLS® #1051909









Property being sold as is- bare land. The mobile either needs to be completely demolished or completely refurbished. The property itself has great potential as it offers a view and is not on strata land. Being offered as assessed value for the land $70,300. Priced for a quick sale and open to reasonable offers.

202 Haida Avenue, Port Alice $349,900 MLS® # 1051972









Fully renovated 3 years ago, this 3 bed, 2 bath townhouse in Evergreen Estates is move in ready. Open concept main floor with fireplace in living room, flows out to deck with ocean view. Stainless appliances with gas stove in the beautiful kitchen. Upstairs offers 3 bedrooms and main bath. Downstairs is a walk out basement with family room, laundry and 3 piece bath, with private patio area under the above deck. Well run strata offers seasonal outdoor pool for owners and guests only. Some furniture is negotiable.



Ronnie (Veronica) Sam
Cell: 250-527-0036

245 Quatsino Road, Quatsino $650,000 MLS® # 1044235









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Sandra Masales
Cell: 250-902-9271

SOLD — 92403 Chelohsin Crescent, Port McNeill!

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