

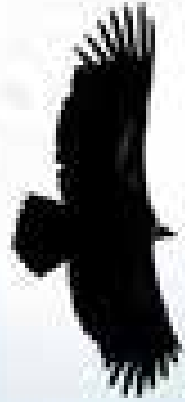
# Celebrating Success 2016-2023

**EIS**  
ECOFORESTRY  
INSTITUTE SOCIETY

**Wildwood**  
ECOFOREST

# Land Acknowledgement

The Ecoforestry Institute Society acknowledges, with respect and gratitude, the Stz'uminus and Snuneymuxw Coast Salish Nations, on whose unceded homelands Wildwood and its surrounding lands are situated. We recognize and honour all the diverse Indigenous Peoples of Vancouver Island, British Columbia and beyond, and acknowledge their connections to and care of their lands and waters since time immemorial. We recognize that their long-standing historical relationships with the forests and other habitats of their homelands, and with our non-human relations who support all of us, continue to this day.



# Table of Contents

---

The Ecoforestry Institute Society.....	4
Wildwood Ecoforest.....	5
Celebrating Our Successes .....	6
The Importance of Old-Growth Forests .....	7
The Legacy of Merv Wilkinson .....	8
The Founding of the Ecoforestry Institute Society.....	9
Saving Wildwood.....	10
Harvesting Wildwood.....	11
Educational Programs .....	12
The Outdoor Classroom .....	13
The Homestead Restoration.....	14
Increasing Mobility Access at Wildwood .....	16
The 2023 EIS Board. ....	17
What's Next?.....	18
In Closing.....	19
What Can You Do?.....	20

# The Ecoforestry Institute Society



**E**IS is a registered nonprofit, charitable society run by a volunteer Board and a strong core of community volunteers. Together, we are dedicated to the principles and practices of ecoforestry - that is, demonstrating that we can harvest trees and plants from the forest while maintaining healthy ecological systems and modest economic gain.

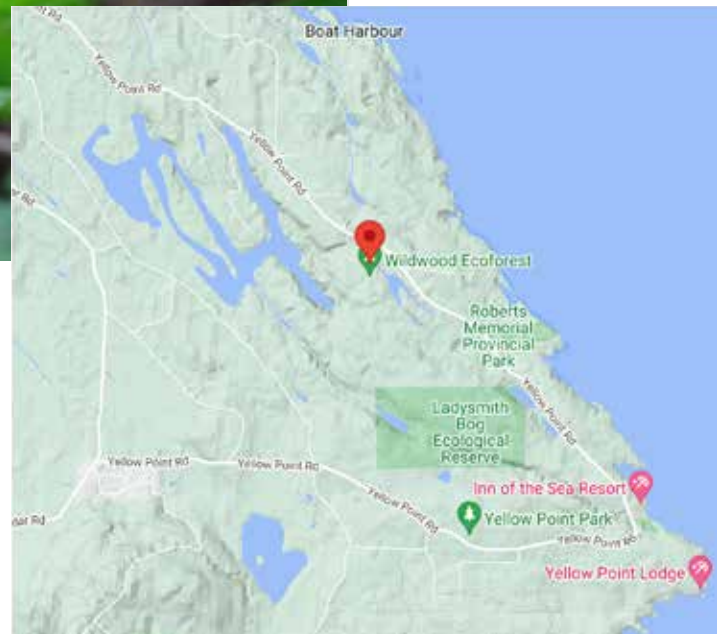
We place value on the services provided by nature such as the provision of the air that we breathe, hydrological systems that filter and distribute water, carbon sequestration, the nutrients that feed the forest through natural decaying processes, and wildlife habitat.

# Wildwood Ecoforest



PHOTO CREDIT: Dr. Nancy Turner

The name Wildwood evokes a chord of recognition and reverence among those in the know. Wildwood Ecoforest is a long-standing (by colonial standards) ecoforest located in the Ladysmith/Yellow Point area on Vancouver Island. This 83-acre forest stands as a monument to an alternative method of forestry - one that embraces selective tree harvesting rather than clearcutting, retaining biodiverse and intact ecosystems rather than tree plantations, and working within ecological parameters rather than profit maximization principles. Wildwood is home to a variety of ecosystems, from wetlands to old-growth, from lake shore to upper meadows,



from deep ravines to mossy banks, all of it treasured for its very being and essence.

The forest is held in trust by the Ecoforestry Institute Society (EIS) on behalf of the people of British Columbia. EIS gained the property in 2016 through a BC Supreme Court decision and with the strong backing of the community.

# Celebrating Our Successes



EIS has much to celebrate! From the acquisition of Wildwood in 2016 to present day, EIS is a testament to the power of a small organization with a big dream.

This publication tells the story of the history and successes achieved by EIS:

- strong stewardship of Wildwood that has provided a solid financial footing for the society;
- the many educational programs that reach out to the local Stz'uminus First Nation, the kindergarten to grade 12 students of the regional schools and to all nature lovers;
- strong community partnerships.

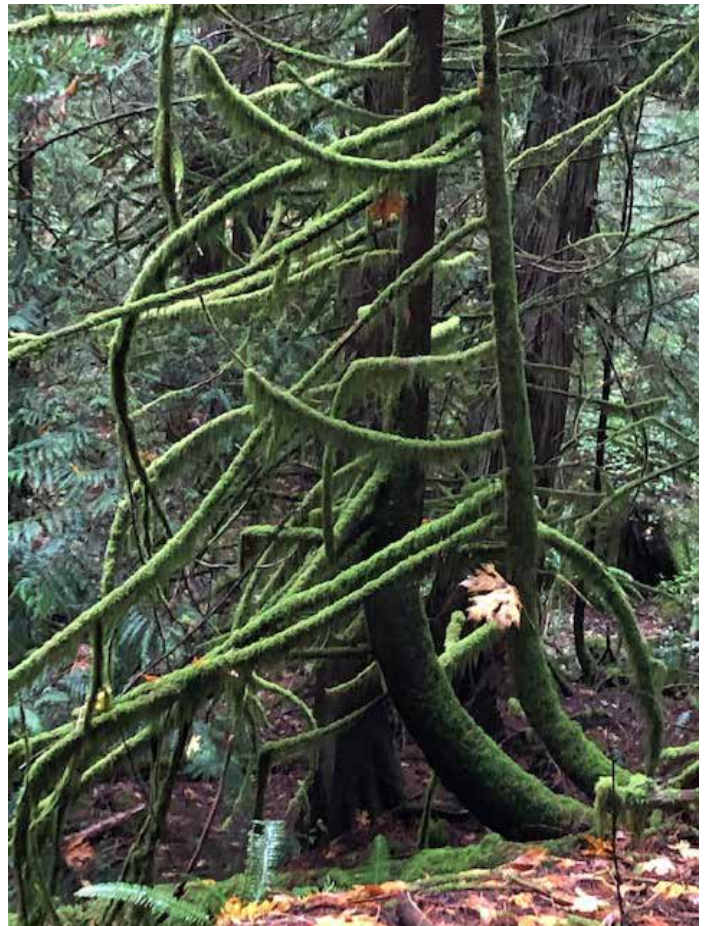


**We are a part of nature,  
not apart from it.**

We believe it is essential to work within the capacity of nature, and that we can develop a viable economic framework built on the stewardship of an ecologically sound forest. Economic value can be gained through the production of value-added wood goods and services, educational programming, ecotourism and related activities.

# The Importance of Old-Growth Forests

- Old-growth forests are more resilient to wildfires than tree plantations due to the diversity of the forest, the giant elevated canopy and the moisture retention that helps reduce the overall temperature of the forest.
- Old-growth forests provide a wealth of natural services, including air and water purification, complex hydrology, carbon storage and sequestration, and wildlife habitat.
- The intact mycelium that forms the underground network retains more moisture than tree plantations and transfers nutrients between trees.
- Mature Douglas fir trees have a bark layer as much as 8 inches thick that offers protection against wildfire.
- First Nations used wildfire to manage forests, clear the understory and stimulate forest growth. Their practices were lost with the onset of colonial forest practices.
- Old-growth forests are critical for Indigenous culture and practices, offering food, medicine, spirituality and construction materials. First Nations regard the forest as their relative.
- Less than 0.3% of old-growth coastal Douglas fir forests remain.



# The Legacy of Merv Wilkinson



Our story begins in 1938 when Merv Wilkinson bought Wildwood with the intention of farming the land. He attended agricultural classes at the University of British Columbia, but when his professor understood the type of land at Wildwood, he persuaded Merv to consider practicing a Scandinavian model of ecoforestry.

Merv embraced this new concept and began to put it into practice in 1945. Rather than clear cutting the forest, he would selectively choose trees for harvesting, but only after an analysis of the surrounding area for light, biodiversity, species, wildlife habitat and other criteria. Merv also considered the market log prices by species, ensuring he was maximizing the value of each cut.

He never planted a tree, relying instead on Mother Nature to develop the ecosystem. He always tried to harvest in a way that benefitted the forest and ensured the functioning ecosystems remained intact.

Merv's forest-management plan was to ensure the overall health, diversity, resilience and sustainability of the forest. He harvested trees approximately once every five years, rather than annually, to reduce the impact on the Wildwood forest. He learned to leave logs and woody debris to decompose on the forest floor, as the logs offer habitat to forest creatures and their decomposition adds nutrients for the future forest. He encouraged birds and other wildlife by leaving snags as "hotels" for cavity nesters, and areas of

brush as habitat. Merv never used chemical pesticides; the birds that he encouraged, and the balance he maintained in his forest ecosystems, were his main form of pest control.

He retained some of the large prime trees to serve as sources of seed and always depended on natural regeneration, rather than on growing and planting tree seedlings. He had lumber milled on site that was often used in the local community. He also cut Christmas trees in multi-year cycles, as well as wood for fence posts, firewood and other specialty goods.

Merv made a practice to never harvest more than the annual growth rate so as to not deplete the forest. He sometimes used an analogy of a bank account, noting that if you only draw on the interest of your bank account, you never deplete your savings. Over time Merv's theories and selection methodologies evolved.

Merv's wisdom was recognized by others. Representatives of 21 countries have visited Wildwood to study his ecoforestry methods. David Suzuki called Merv a Canadian hero. Primatologist Jane Goodall visited Merv at Wildwood and applauded his work. Merv was a keen observer and constantly refined his practices over the decades to produce a healthier and more sustainable forest. He won many awards for his pioneering work in ecoforestry, including the Order of British Columbia and the Order of Canada.



# The Founding of The Ecoforestry Institute Society

The Ecoforestry Institute Society (EIS) is comprised of a volunteer Board and a strong core of community volunteers. It was incorporated as a Society in April 1992, and received official Charity Status (a federal designation) on January 1, 1993.

EIS grew out of a movement in the mid-1990s as a number of academics from the University of Victoria and local environmentalists sought a better way to manage the rapidly depleting ecosystems. Founders include well-known luminaries:

- Dr. Alan Drengson (1934-2022), a contributor to the deep ecology movement and now UVic Emeritus Professor of Philosophy;
- Ray Travers, RPF (1942-2021), a lifelong defender of forests and sustainable forestry practices;
- Dr. Duncan Taylor, a contributor to the deep ecology movement and now UVic Emeritus Professor of Environmental Studies;
- Dr. Nancy Turner, an ethnobotanist, now UVic Emeritus Professor of Environmental Studies, Order of Canada, Order of British Columbia; and
- Sharon Chow, Sierra Club Director for 20 years.

Dr. Nancy Turner and Sharon Chow continue to serve as directors.



PHOTO CREDIT: J. Gibbs



# Saving Wildwood

As Merv aged, he felt that the Wildwood property and its legacy should be saved as a publicly donated property. His second wife, Grace, owned three quarters of Wildwood due to her family's money. With the help of Merv and Grace, the community raised \$1.1 million to allow The Land Conservancy (TLC) to take on the property. Grace kindly donated the final \$150,000.

Unfortunately, TLC fell on hard times and decided to sell Wildwood to a private interest. Fearful that Merv's ecoforestry work and the property would be lost to the public forever, EIS decided to act. The society had become the official forest managers of Wildwood in 2001 and had deep ties to the property and to the community. In November 2016, backed by strong community support and with donations in hand, EIS asked the BC Supreme Court for the right to buy Wildwood.

Based on a sealed bid process, EIS won the day. EIS made a cash offer of \$800,000, just \$30,000 more than the other party. A good portion of this (\$450,000) was a mortgage granted by Vancity Credit Union. The remaining costs were covered by donations from generous community supporters and TLC creditors who donated their outstanding

debts. EIS remains grateful to all those who supported the financial plan. In addition to the funds, EIS was able to present the court with a package guaranteed to protect Wildwood in perpetuity. The winning bid included:

1. A land trust deed, a ground-breaking tool that ensures that Wildwood will forever remain in the public domain. Placed on the title of the property, it ensures Wildwood can never be sold to a private interest and must always be stewarded by a charitable like-minded entity.
2. A detailed Ecoforestry Management Plan and inventory of Wildwood and its natural assets. The Plan was reviewed and approved by renowned BC ecoforester Herb Hammond.
3. A covenant to be placed on the property once the rezoning process is completed.

To ensure operational funding, three EIS Directors put up \$115,000 in personal loans. So far, \$72,000 has been repaid, leaving an outstanding debt of \$43,000 as of August 2023.

**EIS is proud to be the Trustee of Wildwood Ecoforest and remains committed to stewarding the property in perpetuity on behalf of the people of British Columbia.**



# Harvesting Wildwood

Since acquiring Wildwood, EIS has conducted two harvests.

In Fall 2017, we completed the first Wildwood timber harvest in almost 20 years, using ecoforestry principles as developed by Merv. The harvest took place during four days in October when the fire danger was low, the soil not saturated and outside the nesting season for the resident bird populations. Sixty-three trees were felled with 24 (38%) of them classified as danger trees situated near buildings and along the main roadway. The selection of the non-danger trees was based on a criteria-ranking developed by the EIS Forest Management Committee, of which the overarching principle is to support the ecological integrity and functions of the forest. The harvest netted 35m<sup>3</sup> of merchantable timber.

The fall of 2019 saw the second tree harvest at Wildwood with a focus on “danger trees.” This harvest netted 16.4m<sup>3</sup> of merchantable timber. The wood was milled on the property and used for on-site construction and the production of value-added wood products.

These harvests are small and suited to our needs at the time. The milled wood from the 2017 harvest was used as part of the restoration of the Homestead and that of the 2019 harvest was used to build small structures on the property and as firewood for Homestead guests.



The Forest Management Committee continues to balance the needs of the forest with operational EIS needs and is in the process of developing a comprehensive Harvesting Plan.

# Educational Programs

Along with advocating for and practicing ecoforestry, a primary goal of EIS is to provide educational programming and opportunities for a wide range of audiences. Following Merv's legacy, we host everyone from school children and students to seasoned professionals, academics, ecotourists and the general public, welcoming thousands of people to Wildwood every year.

We have been fortunate to attract a team of first-rate naturalists skilled in presenting interactive and engaging ecoforestry programs tailor-made for each audience.

## Events include:

- educational classes for K-12 in cooperation with the local school districts.
- summer camps for kids.
- monthly public tours, held every third Sunday of the month. Registration required.
- workshops on edible plants, mushrooms, lichens, bats, just to name a few.

## Innovative programs include:



- Ecoforester for a Day
- The Secret Life of Trees
- Clapper Making
- Cedar and Me, developed and presented by Stz'uminus knowledge keepers, Snuneymuxw, Snaw'naw'as and Quw'utsun.
- Healing Canoe: hosting the ceremony and construction of a cedar canoe by renowned Indigenous carver, Beau Wagner.

A special point of pride is our partnership with the Stz'uminus and Snuneymuxw nations to present programs that explore the edible and medicinal plants of Wildwood and the connection with the Hul'q'umi'num language.

Each year, our naturalists welcome thousands of students to Wildwood, sharing with them the magic of the forest.

# The Outdoor Classroom



A great source of pride is the construction of our Outdoor Classroom and fire pit. An open platform soon to be sheltered with a sail, this classroom in the woods allows for an extraordinary educational experience in a natural setting. It's also perfect for events, such as music and family and community meetings.



# The Homestead Restoration

In April 2017, the EIS Board prioritized the restoration of the Wilkinson Homestead as a key project both to meet the society's educational mandate and provide a revenue stream to help pay down the EIS debt. The Board designated \$50,000 to begin the project, but it soon became obvious that the Homestead required far more renovation than anticipated. Fortunately, EIS was awarded two large grants to help with this project: \$150,000 from the Regional District of Nanaimo and \$65,000 from the Province of BC Capital Project Gaming grant program. Again, our thanks for those grant funders.

As a result, the Homestead has undergone a full restoration, inside and out. The renos were completed in July 2018, and the 14-month project produced stunning results. The Homestead now features a charming rustic décor supported by new plumbing, electrical, water and septic services. There are all new wood floors, doors, and double-paned windows. Many features, such as the heat pumps, insulation, and solar panels ensure a more energy-efficient operation.



The living room is equipped with a roll-top desk, stereo, projector and screen. A new well was drilled providing potable water for the first time, a large cistern was added for water storage, and rain barrels collect water to be used for the new native plant and herb garden in the entryway. All asbestos has been removed, as were some rats that had taken up residence after Merv had left. The colony of rare, protected Little Brown Bats living in the attic of the Homestead was gently rehoused in their very own, brand-new bat condos in several locales outside the house.

The renovated Homestead now provides a space for lectures and events and is also rented for ecotourist overnight stays. The resulting revenue covers the mortgage and operating expenses.

# Before and After

*Before*



*After*



# Increasing Mobility Access at Wildwood

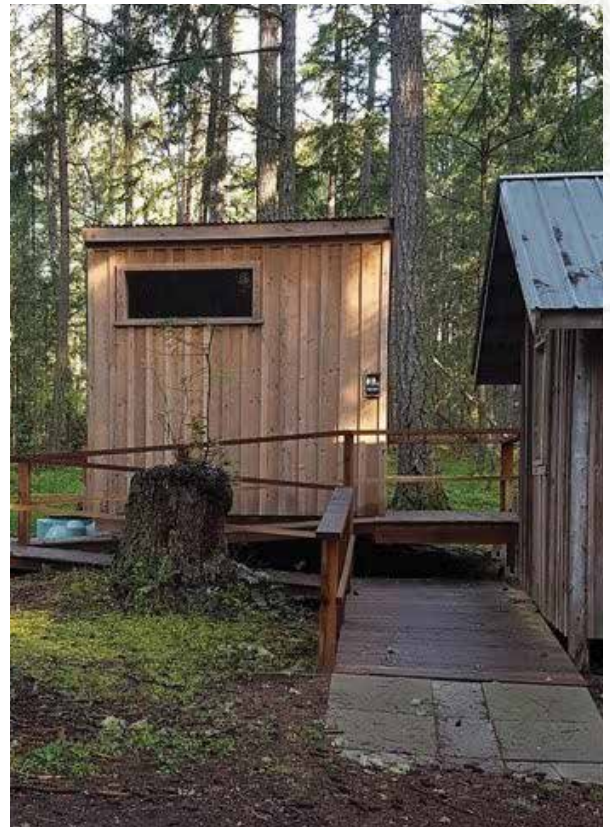
## The Accessible Outhouse

It's important to us that as many people as possible come to Wildwood and enjoy the forest. This means ensuring we address mobility issues.

In 2021, we built an accessible outhouse near the Visitor Centre. The structure features a long wheelchair ramp covered with chicken wire and a large interior that allows room to turn mobility devices.

## The TrailRider

We have also purchased a TrailRider, a unique and secure mobility device that allows a person with a disability to be wheeled through forest trails. Users have told us of their delight in being able to take part in excursions and learn about the forest with the rest of their group.





# The 2023 EIS Board

---

**Kathy Code**

Chair; Communications Director

**Vacant**

Vice-chair

**Sharon Chow**

Treasurer; Education Committee Lead; Grant Writer

**Dr. Nancy Turner**

Education Committee Lead; Ethnobotanist, First Nations Liaison

**Cheryl Bancroft**

Homestead and Property Manager; Fundraiser

**Barry Gates**

Ecoforester Manager; Forestry Management Committee

**Peter Jungwirth**

RPF; Forestry Management Committee

**Chris Walther**

RPF; Forestry Management Committee

**Dr. Hans Tammemagi**

Writer; Photographer; Grant Writer

For more information, visit:

**[www.ecoforestry.ca/board](http://www.ecoforestry.ca/board)**

**Special thanks to our 2023 team of Naturalists!**

Our team is adept at planning and leading educational programs at Wildwood and beyond.

**Kali Brauckmann**

**Alex Smith**

# So What's Next for EIS and Wildwood?



The overall goal of EIS, with Wildwood as a model, is to fundamentally change the way in which forests are managed. We believe in promoting ecologically sustainable forestry that recognizes the true, full values of forest ecosystems, recognizing that all economies and communities are ultimately dependent on the natural world.

Over the next few years we intend to:

- become a centre for truth and reconciliation and partner with Indigenous peoples as we intertwine Indigenous traditional knowledge with Western eco-based science.
- become a centre of excellence for ecoforestry education and programming.
- expand our public outreach so that anyone who has stewardship of a forest or ecosystem understands how to maintain and restore healthy and intact forests.
- acquire public donations to purchase the 21 acres (once part of Wildwood).
- develop new revenue streams to pay for our educational programs, property operations, and pay down our mortgage.
- continue to welcome delegations from all over the world to Wildwood.

**OUR JOURNEY WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE  
WITHOUT OUR SUPPORTERS AND DONORS**



We cannot thank you all enough!  
For more information, visit  
[www.ecoforestry.ca/partners-donors](http://www.ecoforestry.ca/partners-donors)

## In Closing

The Board members of the Ecoforestry Institute are clear proof that a small, hard-working and passionate team can make a difference, especially when backed by strong community support.

It has not been an easy journey. It's taken a lot of sweat, elbow grease and just plain stubbornness imbued with a "never give up" attitude. The EIS Board is very much a working Board and directors have literally harvested trees, milled lumber, dug trenches, painted the clawfoot bathtub and served as general contractors for major projects.

And through it all, we have all hung in there with each other and all the contractors and volunteers who came along to help us realize the dream. We have respected Merv's legacy and Grace's generosity, always remembering there is still much to be learned, particularly in partnership with Indigenous knowledge keepers.

It is clear that the Ecoforestry Institute Society has developed a winning strategy. In just a few short years, we have:

- acquired Wildwood and built on the legacy of Merv Wilkinson.
- developed a sound financial footing with the restoration of the Homestead.



- attracted an amazing team of naturalists who design and operate innovative educational opportunities.
- acquired 6 acres of prime old-growth that used to belong to Wildwood and are working on the next 21 acres.
- improved accessibility at Wildwood for those with mobility issues.
- partnered with Indigenous peoples to present events and educational programming.
- conducted harvests and milling on the property.

The future for EIS and Wildwood is bright and even more important now in view of the extreme climate change events taking place. Our work and vision are needed more than ever.

# What Can You Do?

## DONATE

You can specify where your funds go: the 21 Acres; the mortgage; operational funds. Big or small, every donation, one-time or monthly, is treasured and well-spent.

## BECOME AN EIS MEMBER

Join a winning team and support us with your annual membership.

## VOLUNTEER

Come for the fun, unique experiences and meet the most amazing people. Volunteer to help out with our social media, events and planning, property maintenance. Always room for you and your talents.

## SUBSCRIBE

Subscribe to our eNewsletter to learn the latest scoop on what's new at EIS and Wildwood.

## BOOK THE HOMESTEAD OR FAMILY EVENT

Wildwood is the perfect venue for your retreat, wedding, birthday party or forest tour.

## CONSULT

We have the experts and connections if you want advice on your property and ecosystem. Consulting fees apply.



PHOTO CREDIT: Hans Tammemagi

You can do it all here!  
[www.ecoforestry.ca/  
connect](http://www.ecoforestry.ca/connect)