

Explore local waters with the Gorge Waterway Discovery Centre

By Jennifer Blyth
Black Press

Explore the wonders of the Gorge Waterway ecosystem each Sunday at Esquimalt-Gorge Park, where staff and volunteers open the doors to the Gorge Waterway Discovery Centre.

Take in displays, get to know the animals in the touch-tank Seaquarium, learn about the Gorge Waterway through the centre's 3D watershed model and more.

The displays focus on the ecology of the Gorge, promoting marine stewardship and environmentally sustainable living.

Watershed and urban development issues such as non-point source pollution, storm drain effluent and the use of pesticides and fertilizers that enter the Gorge waterway are graphically demonstrated using these models.

The Gorge Waterway Discovery Centre opened in 2008, when Esquimalt Parks approached the SeaChange Marine Conservation Society to create an educational centre in an empty park building. Several not-for-profit groups came together, and with financial aid from Esquimalt Parks and Victoria Foundation, the centre opened.

Currently operated by World Fisheries Trust and West Wind Sealab Supplies, the not-for-profits operating the *Seaquaria in Schools* program, the centre also offers a more in-depth experience tailored to the age and learning styles of school, daycare and community groups.

As part of its mandate, the centre participates in the Care of the Gorge Monitoring Project, a new



Photo courtesy the Gorge Waterway Discovery Centre

Learn all about the Gorge Waterway and its surrounding ecosystem with a 3D model, touch tank, displays and more.

program designed to create community interest in the water quality of the Gorge Waterway and to monitor some of the animals living in and around it, including the native Olympia oyster, a species at risk on the West Coast.

The nature centre, located in Esquimalt-Gorge Park's former concession stand, is open to the public every Sunday from 11

a.m. to 4 p.m., and for special events in the park.

Admission is by donation (suggested: \$1/child; \$2/adult), which helps keep the centre open, keep displays and resources up to date and subsidize participation by groups with financial challenges.

For more information, visit <http://worldfish.org/gwdc.html> or call 250-380-7585.

coming up at...

Gorge Waterway Discovery Centre

- Join the Gorge Waterway Discovery Centre Sunday, April 11 from 1 to 3:30 p.m. to kick off this year's National Environmental Education Week. Find special educational displays and programs from the centre, Sierra Club, Galiano Conservancy Association, Compost Education Centre and more.
- Visit the centre Sunday, June 6 for the annual celebration of World Oceans Day in Esquimalt Gorge Park. Enjoy special activities and displays from 1 to 3 p.m., including canoe trips, interpretive walks, face painting, crafts, items for sale and more!