



# News Release

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## **CROWN GRANT CREATES PROTECTED AREA NETWORK ON GAMBIER ISLAND**

VICTORIA — Gambier Island's first protected area network is now complete with the transfer of 107 hectares (264 acres) from the Province of British Columbia to the Islands Trust Fund through the provincial Free Crown Grant program. The new Mount Artaban Nature Reserve, when combined with neighbouring local, regional and provincial parks, creates a continuous protected area of 525 hectares (1297 acres) – 25% larger than Vancouver's Stanley Park.

"Government is committed to helping support B.C. communities to preserve the environment and the beauty of our province," said Ida Chong, Minister of Community Services. "We are pleased to assist Islands Trust in protecting the natural legacy found in the Mount Artaban Nature Reserve with a crown grant sponsorship worth over \$1.1 million so that residents and visitors alike can continue to enjoy this area."

The Mount Artaban Nature Reserve protects old-growth trees, a wetland, and several at-risk plant communities. The water flowing from this pristine mountain provides clean drinking water for the surrounding community and feeds aquatic habitats below. Bald eagles are often seen in the skies above the new reserve, and Steller's jays, Rufous hummingbirds and blue grouse inhabit the forest.

The new Mount Artaban Nature Reserve and adjoining protected areas offer an exhilarating hiking experience visible from the Sea-to-Sky Highway. Island residents and visitors can enjoy trails that extend from the Long Bay and Brigade Bay waterfronts to Mount Artaban's peak. The trail system also extends south through Halkett Bay Provincial Marine Park.

The protection of Mount Artaban is a success for the entire Gambier Island community. To satisfy the province's conditions for the transfer, the Islands Trust Fund partnered with the Gambier Island Conservancy to fundraise over \$40,000 to cover the costs of the land survey and a management plan.

"We welcomed the opportunity to work closely with the Islands Trust Fund to establish the new nature reserve" said Peter Scholefield, President of the Gambier Island Conservancy. "The Island-wide response to the joint fundraising campaign was truly inspiring and there was a total of over 80 contributions from many private individuals, businesses, governments and community groups."

"The Gambier Island community has worked tirelessly to preserve one of Howe Sound's notable landmarks" said Kim Benson, Islands Trust Council Chair and Gambier Island trustee. "Thanks to their efforts this highly visible and environmentally important section of Gambier Island Crown Land is protected for future generations. The Islands Trust and the Trust Fund Board appreciate the support of Gambier Islanders and others, including the Gambier Island Conservancy, the Sunshine Coast Regional District, the Squamish Nation, and the Ministry of Community Services."

The Islands Trust Fund and the Gambier Island Conservancy will work with the Gambier Island community to develop a management plan for the property. This plan will define short and long-term management goals for this new nature reserve, including conditions for public access.

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"CREATING A LEGACY OF SPECIAL PLACES"

Bowen, Denman, Hornby, Gabriola, Galiano, Gambier, Lasqueti, Mayne, N. Pender, Salt Spring, Saturna, S. Pender, Thetis

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Launched by the Province of British Columbia in 2004, the Free Crown Grants Program enables government to provide Crown land to local governments, public agencies and community organizations to promote economic and social development. This is the second parcel that the Islands Trust Fund Board has acquired and protected through this program.

The Islands Trust Fund is a regional land trust established in 1990 to help preserve and protect the unique character and environment of the islands in the Strait of Georgia and Howe Sound. The Islands Trust Fund protects natural areas through voluntary land donations, conservation covenants, land purchase and stewardship education programs. With the generous support of island communities and landowners, the Islands Trust Fund has protected more than 984 hectares of natural and cultural values on 70 properties with a combined value of more than \$32 million.

The Gambier Island Conservancy was founded in 1995 to address mounting concerns about changes in Gambier's natural habitat. The Conservancy works to preserve and restore Gambier Island's biological diversity by enhancing public awareness and increasing environmental knowledge.

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