

## Walkalong for Learning 2014

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### A Participant's Report

For all on our island who love hiking and who care about protecting its natural beauty, the Conservancy Walkalong for Learning on August 30th was a high point in the summer – literally!

A hint of rainy weather as the afternoon approached meant a measure of courage was needed; however, sixty of us met the challenge. Walkers showed up at the trailhead, got registered under a tiny umbrella at the Laughlin Trail and then launched off on our 6.7 km Coast-to-Coast hike. We travelled a trail that has long been dreamed of by the dedicated folks at the Galiano Conservancy as well as by many a hiker and nature-lover on this Island.

The route took us to the East side of the Island via Cable Bay and then, the first time for most of us, we turned south along the Great Beaver Swamp. Interpretive talks were planned about the two species of turtle that inhabit it as well as the many tree varieties located in a fine grove nearby. Next, we climbed carefully-constructed switchbacks up and over Galiano's central high ridge where vast tracts of vanilla leaf stretched above and below until finally, we descended a steep path (made safe with rope supports) to arrive at our destination, the Conservancy's Learning Centre. Maps of this route and a shorter 'family loop' are available at the Conservancy; it is sure to become one of the Island's great hikes.

Charmingly featured along the trek were nine or more musical groups. Imagine wending your way through the green-filled light of a dripping forest toward the ethereal sounds of harp or cello, flute or recorder beckoning you onward. And once you've reached the source of the music - a makeshift canopy in a clearing - a ballad, a folk melody or a country tune would be sung for you alone or perhaps to honour your small group or your family. Now picture a flugelhorn player astride a tree trunk riffing off a melody known only to him and the trees and the sky above and by now, you will know it was magical.

Of course there was a celebration; and with three different musical groups, each presenting a set and then joining together in a jam, even the rain didn't stop the extended dance session. There was Becky's delicious food, home-made ice-cream, thanks to the Wilkinson's and coffee courtesy of Serious Coffee in Sydney. Prizes for walkers and donors were awarded, these donated by: Bodega Gallery, Galiano Island Books, Gandharva Loka World Music, Hennessey Hammocks, Insight Art Gallery, Woodruff B&B, Laurie MacCallum, Rosemarie Umana and Leo Engelmann. Eric Higgs of Uvic spoke about the importance of the recent land acquisition and its ongoing restoration as part of the Conservancy's plans to protect Galiano's natural beauty.

Money was raised by those walking and by their supporters. While donations are still coming in (and may still be made to [www.galianoconservancy.ca](http://www.galianoconservancy.ca)) I am told the totals thus far have reached over \$7,000 for the Nature Education Programs campaign and almost \$9,500 for the Learning Centre Development campaign.

As an avid hiker and resident of Galiano I feel so pleased to have been a part of this event and am truly grateful to the folks who made it possible – those hard-working volunteers who stepped up to accomplish it all: the vision, the construction, the event-planning and the celebration. Who knew that doing a good thing could be so much fun?!

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