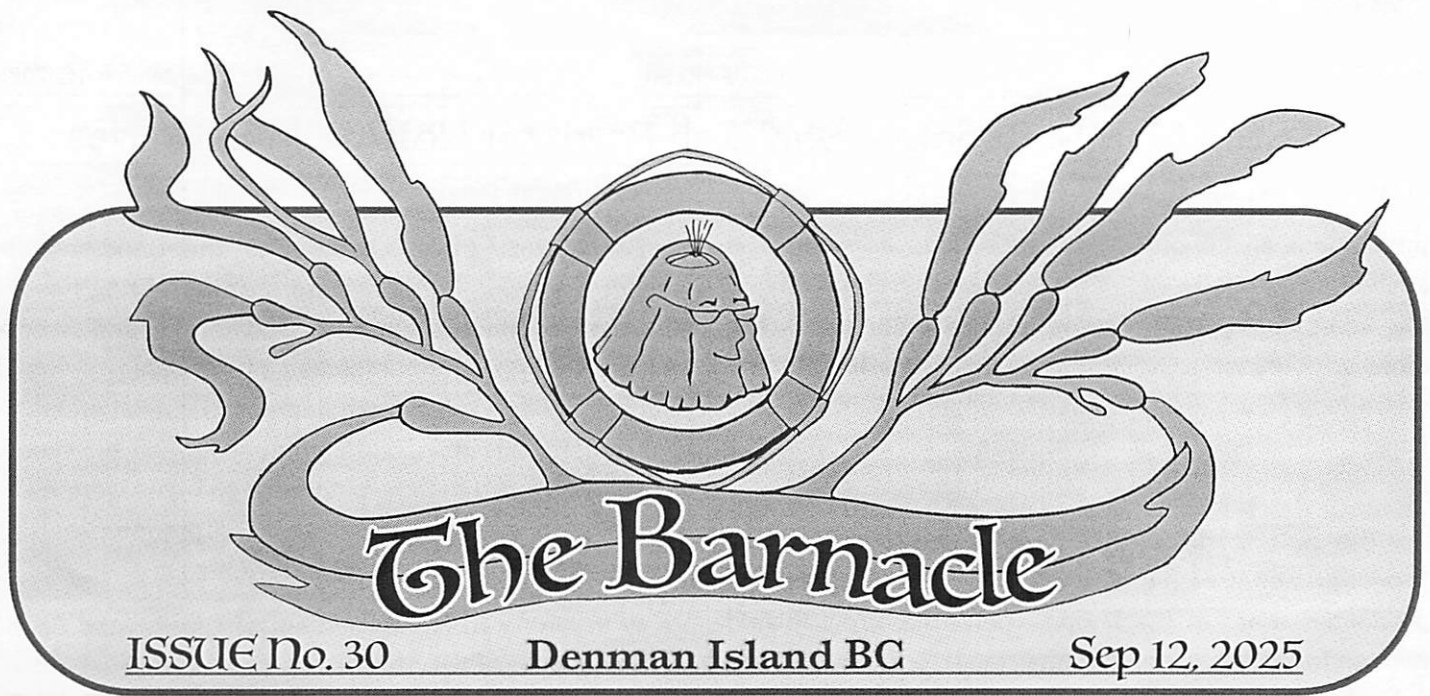




## One for ADIMS: Goodbye Shellfish Predator Netting in Estuaries

Tony Gregson

The website of ADIMS (Association of Denman Island Marine Stewards) puts the problem succinctly:

“Anti-predator netting degrades key habitat for birds and salmon.

Netting and thick layers of oysters (grow-out) from the shellfish industry cover over 56% of the feeding grounds of the diving ducks which overwinter in Baynes Sound. Netting covers the estuaries of salmon-bearing streams, degrading key habitat for salmon fry as they transition from fresh to salt water. Installing netting in these areas causes serious harm to fish and is contrary to Section 35 of the Fisheries Act. However, this industrial practice has been permitted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada.

Salmon-bearing streams have been channelized to protect shellfish tenures, making these streams inhospitable to salmon and their fry, as well as to invertebrates which feed the salmon. Channelizing streams causes serious harm to fish and is contrary to Section 35 of the Fisheries Act. However, this industrial practice has been permitted by Fisheries and Oceans Canada.”

Not anymore, at least, not in estuaries. Under the

2025 iteration of the Conditions of Licence for shellfish tenures in Baynes Sound, DFO (Department of Fisheries and Oceans) requires that anti-predator

netting must be removed by 2027 from the estuaries of the creeks and rivers that enter the Sound. Specifically, there can be no netting within 50 meters on either side of estuary streamlets. As streamlets braid out over the entire area of an estuary, that effectively excludes any netting. Licensees must also remove the channels.

It's a big deal because Baynes's Sound is estuarine. Declared in 2012 an Ecologically and Biologically Significant Area, the rich biodiversity of Baynes Sound depends to a considerable extent on the health of the more than fifteen salmonid-bearing creeks and rivers that flow into the Sound. They are prime shellfish and fish habitat. Clams love the wonderful sands in the brackish waters.

An ADIMS memo to DFO in 2023 pointed out that populations of waterfowl and shore birds in Baynes Sound were trending down compared to the same bird



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populations on the outer coast of Vancouver Island. The decline suggested "environmental stressors unique to the inner coast affecting waterbird populations." The most affected were overwintering seaducks, with longer migrations: Surf Scoters, White-winged Scoters, and Long-tailed Ducks. Surf Scoters are here in globally significant numbers.

The netting drives the birds away from the rich foraging habitat of the estuaries to more exposed, less productive areas of the Sound. There, the effort to find enough food saps the energy they need for migration and reproduction.

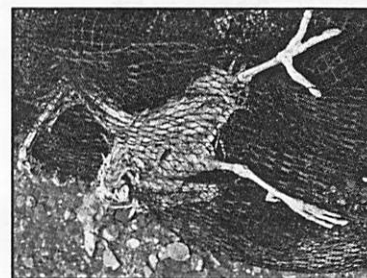
Predator netting is a widespread practice in shellfish aquaculture in Canada and the United States. On Baynes Sound, it is used to discourage predators like starfish, moon snails, crabs, or birds from feeding on clams and cultivated geoducks grown in tubing.

But there are also problems: wildlife entanglement, reduced biodiversity, microplastic pollution, and management of the netting itself. Nets can become clogged with seaweed or filled in with sediments creating an anoxic environment that smothers the clams below. The nets are heavy and unwieldy and take too much labour for growers to maintain. In places, they have been

found buried in layers, ruining the tidal habitat.

For ADIMS, these changes to the Conditions of Licence are a win in a long-term battle to bring holistic eco-system management to Baynes Sound whose biological complexity is matched by an equally complex political ecology of rightsholders and stakeholders in government, business, and community. Their briefing to DFO played a significant role where changes were by no means assured. Their advocacy for predator netting removal goes back at least twenty years.

With eighty to ninety percent of the Baynes Sound shoreline covered by shellfish tenures, there is still plenty of netting beyond the estuaries. A sustainable balance between environmental and economic concerns that take wildlife needs into proper account remains in question. But if ADIMS were to have a crest, the motto might read "Courage in Persistence," perhaps with an emblem of the Horseshoe Crab which has survived largely unchanged over two hundred and fifty million years, and moreover, has truly blue blood.



Bird Trapped in netting

## "DRAW THE LINE for People, for Peace and for the Planet"

Ron Wilson for DICAN



You may have seen this Logo as you have driven up the big hill, "DRAW THE LINE for People, for Peace and for the Planet" is the theme for a Global Day of Protest sponsored by a number of Climate and Justice focused groups. At time of writing many groups in BC are mobilizing for action. On Denman, DICAN (Denman Island Climate Action Network) is sponsoring a Climate Fair focused on Sustainability.

We are fortunate to have many local community members with expertise and experience in a wide range of areas pertaining to responsible stewardship of the earth's resources. They will be at a number of tables discussing different climate issues. These include

Alternatives to Plastic bags, all you need to know about Recycling, food sustainability, all things about water conservation and treatment, learning about heat pumps, creative ways to reduce our consumptive habits, living off the grid, being fire safe, what to do about reducing waste, and how to be an advocate for the climate.

Around 3 pm we will be serving up a very special "Vegan DRAW THE LINE cake" made by Lily Harned, baked in an oven using solar power. We will "Sing for the Climate" together along with the Ukelele group and many others around the world. Come and test your climate knowledge by taking a quiz. Join us as we work towards sustainability both for Denman Island and our Planet.

This event will be held on Sept. 20th, from 2-4 pm at the Covered area by the Community Hall. Hope to see you all there.