



Georgia Strait Alliance

IMPACT REPORT

2021-2022

Developing long-term, climate-focused solutions to marine threats and habitat protection in the Canadian waters of the Salish Sea and its adjoining waters.

We acknowledge that the land where we do our work is the traditional and unceded territory of many Nations, and now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. The offices of Georgia Strait Alliance are located on the unceded territories of the x̱wməθkʷəy̱əm, Skwx̱ wú7mesh and sel̓íl witulh Nations (also known as Vancouver) and of the Snuneymuxw Nation (also known as Nanaimo). Our staff and volunteers also work on the unceded territories of many other Coast Salish Nations.

OUR MISSION

To protect and restore the marine environment and promote the sustainability of Georgia Strait, its adjoining waters, and communities.

What we do

- ★ **Advocate** for the protection of the diversity of marine ecosystems in the Salish Sea.
- ★ **Collaborate** with communities so they can organize and take action for local climate solutions and ocean health.
- ★ **Advance** solutions to mitigate pollution from oil spills, wastewater, open net-pen fish farms, and boats and boating facilities.
- ★ **Facilitate** regional climate-focused solutions that don't include new fossil fuel developments.
- ★ **Support** increased climate literacy and justice.
- ★ **Facilitate** increased awareness and stewardship of the Salish Sea's marine environment.



A message from the *executive director*

As an ecologist by training, the notion of interconnectedness is foundational to the way I see the world. The connection of different parts of the food web to one another flows in my mind into the connection of humans to the natural world. I tend to see the world in these kinds of connected maps, which is one of the many elements that drew me to campaigning in the first place; campaigns are all about mapping out the connections and paths to a desired positive change.

The Salish Sea watershed is a region of interconnected creeks, streams and rivers, including the mighty Fraser and its critically important estuary, which is very complicated to protect. But it's by using unique but interconnected levers of pressure that Georgia Strait Alliance has effectively advocated for positive change in the region.

As you read about the work your support helped to accomplish last year, you'll see the powerful connections between so many elements of our work. Our multi-strategy approach, which includes stewardship, legal action, policy analysis, advocacy, education, and community building – all work together to create this change. You'll also see how increasingly our team are working together to share the interconnectedness of our work, like how climate action impacts ocean health, and how our plans for increased community mobilization will increase our already effective ability to hold government to account, at all levels.

The “pandemic pause” of 2020 was challenging in so many ways, but it gave us time to start rethinking how we meet our mission to protect the Salish Sea and how increasingly crucial community voices are to the advocacy work we do. These discussions resulted in the hiring of two experienced community organizers who are helping us re-build our organizing muscle.



We strive to care for these waters in harmony and balance with the original stewards of the land, the Coast Salish peoples.



Tackling marine and climate challenges can seem overwhelming but change can be made when we work together – locally.



We're focused on integrating and elevating social justice into all of our climate and marine conservation initiatives.

Increasingly it's clear that governments at all levels are finding it easier to ignore the opinions and needs of communities of all kinds, leaving people feeling hopeless and powerless. But we know that the solutions to so many of the threats to this region are found in our neighbours, friends and people we haven't yet met. We just need to take the time to listen, learn and support them, giving them the tools to ensure they are not ignored.

And we know that effective advocacy is strengthened when a greater diversity of people are able to tell governments what they want.

With the re-launch of our outreach and organizing efforts, and making connections with the full diversity of communities in the region a core value in our organization, we're in the best position to build on our over 30 years of effective advocacy for the health of the Salish Sea. Our online training sessions and our broader education efforts on all things Salish Sea are just the beginning. We are so excited to build on this work and get out into the community in the year ahead!

Our advocacy work over the years has relied heavily on each of you, who took the time to raise your voices to stop threats to this region. That effort resulted in delays to the Trans Mountain pipeline, stronger provincial conditions around Trans Mountain permits, and further action to transition open net cage salmon farms out of BC waters. Thank you for being part of making real change for this ocean we all love.

Enjoy reading about the year that was, and we all look forward to connecting with you outside of our cocoons in the year ahead!



Christianne Wilhelmson
Executive Director



As of this year, the images of marine mammals that we feature in our digital and print communications are either taken from land or by photographers who adhere to the legally required distances.



The Denman Island Orca Bar is a scrumptious treat of dark, organic, fair trade chocolate and shredded coconut – and its sales benefit GSA. This year, the Orca Bar was available on BC Ferries crossing the Strait and at the Royal BC Museum to coincide with *Orcas: Our Shared Future Exhibition*.

OUR TEAM



The GSA team

Rebecca Adams, Graphics & Web Development (returned from leave in July 2021)

Gil Aguilar, Community Organizer (as of July 2021)

Cathy Booler, Data & Digital Systems Manager

Coralie Charland, Development Associate

Erin Edwards, Volunteer Coordinator

Lucero González Ruiz, Biodiversity Campaigner

Edna Jack, Operations Coordinator (as of August 2021)

Ananda Korchynski, Social Media Coordinator (as of June 2021)

Kirsten Mathison, Public Engagement Coordinator (until June 2021)

Allison Murray, Communications Associate

Mitchell O'Brien, Clean Marine BC Assistant (as of November 2021)

Cheryl Onciul, Director of Development

Andrew Radzik, Energy Campaigner

Dana Taylor, Community Organizer (as of July 2021)

Christianne Wilhelmson, Executive Director

Michelle Young, Director of Finance/Clean Marine BC Coordinator

Board of Directors

Kristin Street, President, Port Moody (as of September 2021)

Kathy Fletcher, President, Vancouver (until September 2021)

Sheldon Fernandes, Treasurer, Vancouver

Charlotte Fox Secretary, Vancouver

Ken Coach, Vancouver (until September 2021)

Angharad Davies, Vancouver

Christopher Hakes, Vancouver

Stephanie Schiffmacher, Vancouver (until March 2022)

Maya Stano, Vancouver (until November 2021)

Duncan Wlodarczyk, Vancouver

Advisory Council

John Cashore, Coquitlam

Dr. Larry Dill, Victoria

Dr. Robert Elner, Delta

(Dr.) Chief Robert Joseph, North Van/Hopetown

Dr. Donald McQueen, Nanaimo

Suzanne Siemens, North Vancouver

Mike Waites, Vancouver

Douglas White III Kwalasultan, Snuneymuxw/Nanaimo



In the Community

A mix of in-person and digital connections meant we returned to communities in person again, as permitted by public health restrictions – and we made the most of these opportunities.

We plogged for orcas. This fundraiser incentivized people to get outdoors to try ‘plogging,’ the Swedish eco-fitness trend that combines collecting litter with physical activity. Supporters pledged to pick up 75 pieces of litter, representing one piece for each Southern Resident orca. * At the time of publication in August 2022, there were 73 Southern Resident orcas and two calves.

We hosted a hybrid Campaigning 101 Workshop series. We shared tools, tactics and resources with supporters who wanted to learn ways to jumpstart their own grassroots campaigns for positive social change.



Arts & Design for Change workshop. Photo: Dana Taylor

We launched a Community Photo Contest. With upwards of 115 entries featuring beautiful birds, cunning coyotes, human-powered boats, stunning sunsets, and magnificent marine mammals.

CONTEST PHOTO GALLERY 

159

New donors

2,656

People who took
online GSA campaign
actions for the first
time

52

Ploggers



Gold: Derek Zandvliet's stormy sky in Davis Bay Beach, Sechelt



Silver: Daniel Lacy's otter with a rockfish catch in Clover Point, Victoria



Bronze: Ken Cheng's owl flying the West Dyke Trail, Richmond



Honourable mention: Erin MacKenzie's sunset, Victoria

We hosted digital forums:



To focus on everyday contaminants that are harmful to Southern Resident orcas, and facilitated conversations with environmental scientists from Environment and Climate Change Canada.



To hear from cross-border experts about clean boating practices and ways that boaters can reduce their impact on the water, while safely sharing the waters with wildlife of all kinds including whales.



To participate in an Indigenous tradition celebrated in Mexico – the ‘Day of the Dead’ (Día de los Muertos) – to remember the iconic species that we lost this year and to invigorate supporters with our initiatives to protect biodiversity in the Salish Sea.



To celebrate Black, Indigenous and People of Colour who are environmental defenders. The session was grounded in the book *One Earth: People of Color Protecting Our Planet* by local author Anuradha Rao, partnering with the David Suzuki Foundation.



To discuss cross-border environmental policy with White House insider Jayni Foley Hein, who serves in the Biden-Harris Administration as senior director for the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and counsel.



To bring spill training preparedness and response skills to marina, harbour authority, fuel dock and government facility representatives.

“

[At GSA, our focus centres on] why the Salish Sea is so important to communities and culture. We also talk about the threats to the region and what people can do to help alleviate these threats.”

Christianne Wilhelmson,
Georgia Strait Alliance,
Nanaimo Now News

BIODIVERSITY

Southern Resident orcas need safer spaces

Protection measures for Southern Resident orcas can only work when they are science based and are in effect when the orcas are around. And increasingly, Southern Residents are using the Salish Sea year round. This means that seasonal protection measures, in effect between May and November 30, are leaving endangered whales underprotected in Canadian waters for many months each year.

At GSA, we're making it clear that seasonal restrictions aren't sufficient.



Orca Action Team Delivery:
the latest orca news to your inbox 🖱️

54

Participants in the AFER
Network

1,107

People asked for advanced
treatment at Iona through our
campaign

2,221

People sent the federal government
input into orca protection measures
via our campaign

“

Each and every one of the protection measures are essential to increasing the population's recovery and survival chances – but they can only work when they're in effect.”

– Christianne Wilhelmson & Lucero González Ruiz
Georgia Strait Alliance
Vancouver Sun





photo: © scottshoots - Adobe Stock

The Lower Fraser River and the AFER network

We're playing a lead role in improving the environment in the Fraser River through our participation in the **Adapting for Ecological Resilience of the Lower Fraser River (AFER) Network**, while delivering our own activities to contribute to the health of the region. GSA brings strategic vision and expertise in convening to the establishment of the Network, and is guiding the conversation with knowledge gained from our experience leading the Waterfront Initiative in Vancouver and our organizational commitment to advocating for justice, equity, diversity and inclusion in the collaborative process.

What's the AFER Network? It is a group of 54 organizations and individuals who are working collaboratively to address the threats to the Lower Fraser River and estuary. The Network provides an open table for a diversity of voices to share their learnings, increase our understandings and coordination, and ultimately support work that aims to restore the ecological resilience of the Lower Fraser through a variety of lenses.

Delays and cost overruns for wastewater upgrades

This year, we learned the plan to upgrade the Iona Island Wastewater Treatment Plant, located in Richmond, B.C. on Musqueam First Nation territory, is experiencing cost overruns and a four-year delay pushing project completion out until 2034. These issues did not crop up overnight but they were a surprise to us. It shows there has been a lack of transparency with what Metro Vancouver has been leading the public to believe. However, after years of advocacy we got Metro Vancouver to approve the preliminary plans for tertiary treatment technology for the plant!

At GSA, we're still advocating for tertiary treatment to be operational by 2030 to stop under-treated effluent from being discharged directly into the mouth of the Fraser River. The longer Metro Vancouver waits, the greater the cumulative negative impacts there will be on local communities, the marine environment and its ecosystems.

Orcas are one of the most contaminated marine mammals on the planet. Contaminants in the marine food web build up in orcas' blubber. Because they're apex predators, they consume vast amounts of toxins.



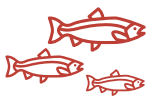
Photo: Miles Ritter

Rejecting a megaport expansion

We're in the latest phase of trying to stop Roberts Bank Terminal 2, a project that would put 177 hectares of intertidal and subtidal habitat at risk. Through our legal representative, Ecojustice, and in partnership with the David Suzuki Foundation, Raincoast Conservation Foundation and the Wilderness Committee, we argued as intervenors in 2019 that the Vancouver Fraser Port Authority (project proponent) failed to include new measures that could address the project's related shipping impacts that will:



Have permanent and irreversible effects on Southern Resident orcas;



Disrupt migration patterns of the population's main food source, Chinook salmon, and;



Have the potential to negatively impact the living cultural heritage of First Nations, whose territories overlap the expansion area.

“Even with all the changes [to further mitigate environmental impacts], it will destroy habitat for salmon, birds and orcas - and change the Salish Sea's ecosystem.”

- Christianne Wilhelmson
Georgia Strait Alliance
Radio Canada

The environmental costs

- > Scientists have identified 102 species of conservation concern in the Fraser River estuary, which would face further (and faster) decline should the port expansion go ahead.**
- > Environment Canada scientists warned of disastrous environmental impacts but this information was withheld from the environmental assessment.**
- > An increase in noise from the project's operations at the terminal and related shipping pose an imminent threat to Southern Residents' critical habitat, survival and recovery.**

A state of emergency for wild salmon

Wild Pacific salmon populations are in a state of emergency – and time is running out to restore their health and wellbeing. That's one of the reasons that alongside our legal representative Ecojustice, and several allies, we participated in the judicial review regarding the federal decision to close open net-pen fish farms.

At GSA, we're letting the new DFO Minister Joyce Murray know that the direction established by the previous Minister Bernadette Jordan needs to be upheld.

However, we were surprised and concerned that DFO's open-net transition plan engagement report, based on stakeholder engagement and released in mid-2021, included in-water and hybrid options. Facilities that are entirely on land, with proper waste treatment filtering, are the only way to eliminate industry's impact on the ocean.

In-water and hybrid systems for fish farms do not remove pollution, disease or waste from the marine environment.

Decisions about fish farming in B.C. must be grounded in free, prior and informed consent by First Nations, and by the social and traditional knowledge of Indigenous Nations where farms are operating or may operate on land.

“Today's dismissal of the injunction [by Judge Cecily Strickland] is a lifeline to struggling and migrating wild salmon and also a recommitment to respecting First Nations' concerns and leadership as the stewards of these lands and waters since time immemorial.”

Christianne Wilhelmson
Georgia Strait Alliance
Times Colonist

102 species

In the Fraser River estuary of 'conservation concern' are at risk from the Roberts Bank Terminal 2 megaport expansion




7 First Nations

The Homalco, Klahoose, K'ómoks, Kwíakah, Tla'amin, We Wai Kai and Wei Wai Kum have fish farms on their traditional territory in the Discovery Islands and oppose them

25+ years

Number of years GSA has been doing grassroots and policy work in coastal communities to support the removal of fish farms from the ocean

We were intervenors or participants

-  In both portions of the federal environmental review process for the Roberts Bank Terminal 2
-  In the federal judicial review, initiated by the aquaculture industry, regarding the shuttering of fish farms in the Discovery Islands
-  (A special thanks to our legal representative Ecojustice for their support and leadership in both cases)

CLIMATE & ENERGY

A new energy paradigm

Runaway climate change is a real threat and the local impacts are many: atmospheric rivers, floods, bomb cyclones, wildfires, heat domes, and heat-related deaths of humans and marine life.

The solutions include keeping fossil fuels in the ground – and that requires transforming energy systems and moving beyond talk into action.

At GSA, we are particularly concerned about climate impacts on oceans. The Salish Sea is working hard, trying to absorb increased amounts of carbon being released into the atmosphere. As a result, bodies of water across this region are getting warmer, more acidic, and less hospitable to the species that call them home.

“The [CleanBC climate] plan does not meet the requirements needed to match unprecedented events including the heat wave in the summer.”

Andrew Radzik
Georgia Strait Alliance
Global News

1,888

People used our digital tool to ask the Province to act immediately on 10 climate actions

1,773

People asked the federal government to cancel TMX through our campaign

39,200

People have used our digital tools to take action to stop the Trans Mountain expansion project since 2012

We can't have it both ways. B.C. and Canada cannot stabilize the warming climate while pouring billions into fracking, Tar Sands extraction, pipelines and LNG terminals.

Provincially, we called on the government to confront the climate emergency, and immediately undertake 10 actions in the BC Climate Declaration. We also responded to the Province's new measures for climate, intended to complete the Clean BC climate plan first launched in 2018. B.C. had promised a detailed roadmap to meet B.C.'s legally-binding emissions reductions targets, but instead put forward policies full of gaps and placeholders. It's unclear how it will meet reduction targets for 2025 or 2030. The climate plan is fatally undermined by the Province's commitment to expand fracking, in opposition to climate science.

We also fought for stronger shoreline protection from marine oil spills from the Trans Mountain pipeline and tanker project. In our submission to the B.C. Environmental Assessment Office, we focussed on how the Province could better protect human health and the environment.

These conditions were won by strong leadership from the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, the City of Vancouver, and tens of thousands of environmental supporters who all put immense public pressure on the Province to make shorelines safer.

THE PROVINCE HAS ADDED CONDITIONS TO:



Study the human health impacts of an oil spill



Collect baseline data for B.C. shorelines



Include consultation with local governments when studying the behaviour of diluted bitumen spills



BC CLIMATE
DECLARATION

Federally, we questioned why Big Oil will shoulder less of the carbon reduction load while the government pushes forward the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion, a project that will put dangerous amounts of carbon into the atmosphere for decades.

Throughout the year, we provided opportunities for supporters to tell the federal government to cancel the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion for the climate, land and water and to respect Indigenous sovereignty. The public should not be forced into creating billions of dollars in public debt to knowingly produce a carbon-intensive economic boondoggle when we're in a climate emergency.



If a spill happens, we've got better baseline data. So that's great, that's important. That's information that will inform spill response plans."

Andrew Radzik,
Georgia Strait Alliance,
Canadian Press



This year in Clean Marine BC, our voluntary marina and boating facility eco-certification program, we certified eleven new facilities for a total of 43. With estimates of a 300 percent increase in people who took up boating during the pandemic, our clean boating work with recreational boaters became even more critical.

We support boater education by:

- ⚓ Raising awareness around small fuel spills and how to prevent and report them;
- ⚓ Sharing and talking about whale watching rules;
- ⚓ Outlining ways to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species;
- ⚓ Providing locations for pumping out holding tanks; and more!
- ⚓ We also held a virtual Marina Spill Response Training. We trained marina, harbour authority, fuel dock and government facility staff to hone their planning and preparation skills so they are able to effectively respond to a small-scale marine oil spill – should one happen at their facilities.

“As watercraft users, we’re required to be aware of these regulations [protection measures for killer whales] and to follow them – it’s the law!”

– Michelle Young
Georgia Strait Alliance
Pacific Yachting



Our Guide to Green Boating has a handy list of pump-out stations and useful tips on everything from preventing spills to eco-friendly maintenance and fuel efficiency.

GUIDE TO GREEN BOATING

11

Newly certified facilities

16

Facilities awarded the top 5-anchor Clean Marine BC rating

73

Boating facilities participating in the Clean Marine BC program

10

Number of facilities in spill training session

Derelict Vessels

Complicated and challenging issues emerge when boats aren't properly disposed of at the end of their lifecycle. These issues are especially prevalent on the South Coast of B.C. This year, we had the opportunity to make a submission in support of the federal government's proposed Vessel Remediation Fund. We were supportive because it includes strengthening vessel licensing, charging fees to the owners of recreational and commercial vessels, and making it easier to track problem vessel owners. These are things we've been advocating for a long time.



In our submission, we also encouraged compassion and assistance for liveaboards who have found housing on problem vessels – whether as a last resort or by choice.

SUBMISSION

Photo: Alan Wilson



Pacific Oil Spill Prevention and Education Team (a working group of the Pacific States - BC Oil Spill Task Force): We continue our long standing position on the POSPET working group to reduce small spills from recreational boating and marinas.



Canadian Power and Sail Squadron: This year, we were invited to be a member of the CPSS environment committee.



Marine Education and Research Society: We continue to collaborate with MERS to increase awareness of the risk to both boaters and whales of boating in proximity to unpredictable large whales, such as the increasing number of humpbacks.



Boating BC Association: We have a long relationship on a number of clean boating issues, including educating boaters on their responsibility to properly dispose of a vessel at the end of its useful life in order to reduce the number of derelict boats on the coast.



Eelgrass working group: We collaborate with several organizations to raise awareness of impacts of boating and anchoring in eelgrass, and the need for anchoring out of eelgrass protection zones.



Invasive Species Council of BC: We continue to share the ISCBC 'Clean-Drain-Dry' message to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species when relocating boats to different bodies of water.



Parks Canada educators group: We collaborate with federal government agencies, non-profit organizations, and other educators to encourage boaters to follow evolving rules implemented for the protection of endangered Southern Resident orcas.



ORGANIZATIONAL SUPPORTERS

Sustainers (\$25,000 or more)

Bullitt Foundation, Canada Revenue Agency, Global Greengrants Fund, Trustees of the Bloom Canadian Alter Ego Trust, Province of British Columbia, Sitka Foundation, Vancouver Foundation, Victoria Foundation.

Guardians (\$10,000 – \$24,999)

BC Conservation & Biodiversity Awards Foundation, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Environmental Careers Organization Canada, McLean Foundation, Patagonia, Sustainable Elements.

Restorers (\$5,000 – \$9,999)

Natasha Aruliah - JEDdi Consulting, BNQ Management.

Navigators (\$1,000 – \$4,999)

C-Tow Marine Assistance, Denman Island Chocolate Ltd., Dennis and Kathy Meakin Family Foundation, DP World Vancouver, EcoAction Community Fund, Employment and Social Development Canada, Hairstory, Legends Haul, MakeWay (previously Tides Canada Foundation), Mandell Pinder LLP, Barristers & Solicitors, Pacific Coast Congress of Harbormasters and Port Managers Inc., Parallel 49 Brewing, Restore Human, Seaflora Skincare, SunCruiser, Vantina Holdings Ltd., Waggoner Cruising Guide, We Win Together.

Mariners (\$500 – \$999)

CloudControl CPA, Deep Cove Canoe & Kayak Center Ltd., Lighthouse Brewing Company Ltd., Zorbie Products Ltd.

OUR COMPLETE DONOR LIST 



Donate to protect the
coastal waters you love



Photo: James Wheeler, Pixabay

2021-2022

Financial HIGHLIGHTS

Year ended March 31, 2022

Financial Position as of March 31, 2022

Current Assets	\$790,813
Capital Assets	9,156
Payables & Accruals	(45,935)
Deferred Contributions	(447,015)

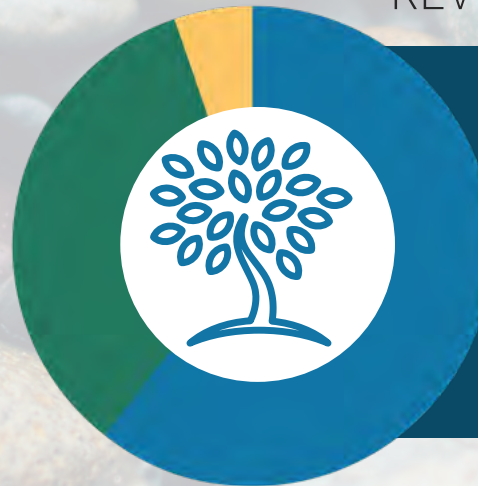
NET ASSETS **\$307,019**

In-Kind Contributions

In addition to the revenue above, GSA received an estimated value of \$34,023 in donated goods and services and \$13,752 in volunteer time during the year ended March 31, 2022 for a total of \$47,775.

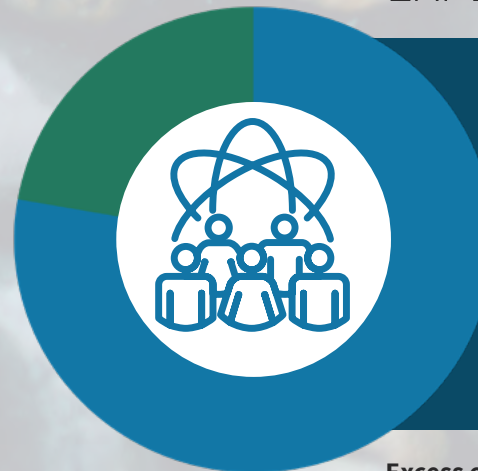
This report is a summary only and not intended to reflect the complete financial status of the Georgia Strait Alliance. Members who wish to receive the full financial statements should contact our Nanaimo office at 250-753-3459.

REVENUES: **\$969,090**



60%	Grants	\$586,133
34%	Donations	\$332,653
5%	Events, investment earnings & other	\$50,304

EXPENSES: **\$889,902**



78%	Programs	\$690,454
22%	Administration & fundraising	\$196,156
0%	Amortization	\$3,292

Excess of expenses over revenues for the year \$(79,188)

YOUR SUPPORT is needed and so appreciated as GSA works for a future that includes a clean and thriving Salish Sea teeming with life, where communities leverage their power to find local climate solutions and live in balance with nature.

At GSA, we are able to do this work because of your support. Please consider becoming a monthly donor – and be part of this powerful community all year long!

Thank you.

Become a monthly donor



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Photos: © Tom Nevesely - Adobe Stock (front cover), Sara Agnew (back cover)

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@GeorgiaStraitBC
www.GeorgiaStrait.org