

ARE YOU READY FOR A MAN OVERBOARD?

Anchoring Wars | Installing Through-Hulls

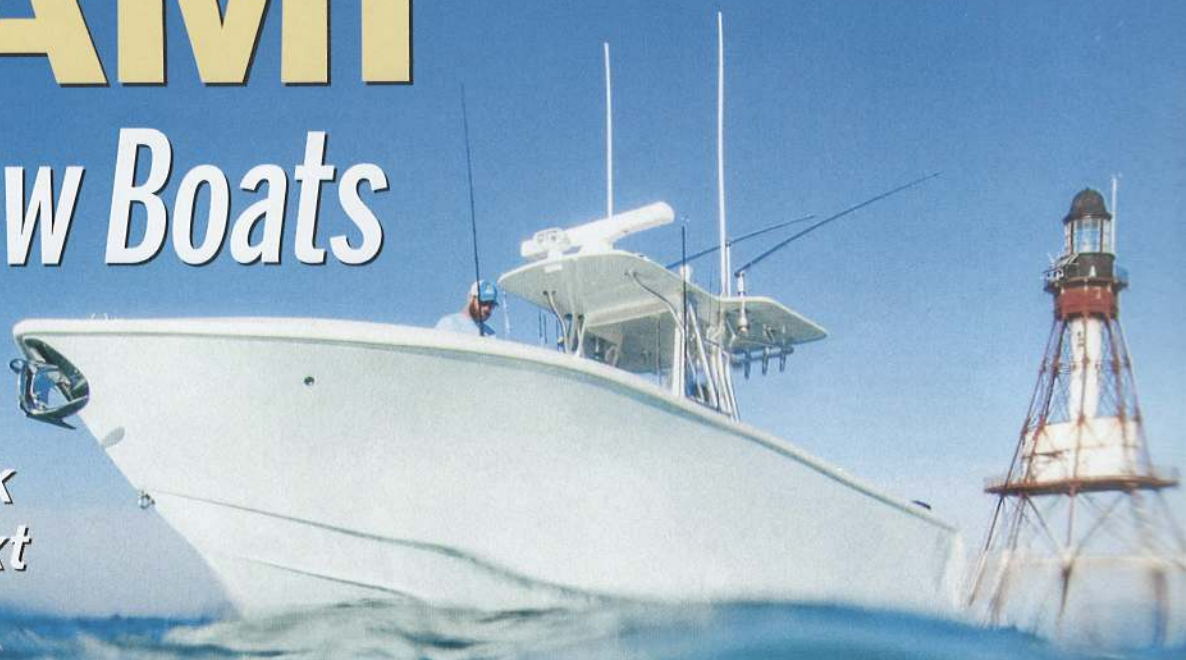
SOUNDINGS[®]

REAL BOATS, REAL BOATERS

MIAMI

16 New Boats

*including
a sneak peak
at what's next*



| SEA VEE 340-Z

LIFE ABOARD

a Woods Hole
research ketch

CRUISING

Haida Gwaii

March 2015

\$5.95US \$6.95CAN



soundingsonline.com

DISPLAY UNTIL MARCH 16, 2015



HAIDA

The best of Canada's

By STEPHEN BLAKELY

For most American cruisers, the Pacific Northwest stops at the U.S. border and the San Juan Islands, but the scenery and cruising only get better the farther you go up the British Columbia coast.

Among the very best of Canada's Pacific Northwest destinations is the Haida Gwaii archipelago, at the nation's farthest point both north and west. Once known as the Queen Charlotte Islands, they are closer to Alaska than the Canadian mainland and are packed with countless protected anchorages, mountain wilderness, spectacular wildlife and a unique native culture.

On many levels, there's no place on Earth like it. Biologists call these islands the "Galapagos of the North" because parts escaped glaciation during the last ice age, allowing many plants and animals to evolve in ways found nowhere else. Haida Gwaii's black bears are the largest of the species; its damp, verdant, temperate rainforests are known as the "moss capital of the world"; and just one corner of its incredibly rich waters has more marine biodiversity than anywhere else on the planet.

Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve covers the southern tip of Haida Gwaii, as well as the ocean 6 miles offshore, making it the only national park in the world protected "from mountain top to sea bottom." The wilderness park can be reached only by boat or seaplane — there are no

roads, airports or docks — and it boasts a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Gwaii Haanas and its surrounding islands are so remote, beautiful and unspoiled that National Geographic Traveler magazine ranked it No. 1 among Western Pacific U.S./Canada national parks as a travel destination, topping far more famous — and crowded — U.S. vacation spots such as Grand Canyon, Crater Lake and Volcanoes national parks.

Haida Gwaii is also the most seismically active place in Canada; it sits on a fault line of the Pacific Rim. The two strongest earthquakes in Canada occurred here, most recently a 7.7-magnitude quake in 2012.

The indigenous Haida settlements date back more than 10,000 years and are among the oldest in North America. Known for their dramatic art and complex social structure (divided into Eagle and Raven clans), the Haida have staged a political revival in recent years and are a First Nation to be reckoned with again: The national park was created only because they waged a shrewd campaign of civil disobedience in the 1980s to stop clear-cut logging of their ancestral lands and cultural heritage there. The outcome was a unique compact that made the Haida and the Canadian federal government fully equal partners — neither with majority rule — in running the park.

To mark the 20th anniversary of that landmark compromise, the

STEPHEN BLAKELY

Gwaii

Pacific Northwest



Haida and Parks Canada in 2013 raised a 42-foot-tall ceremonial pole at the site of protests that led to the national park, the first Haida pole-raising in that area in more than 130 years. Behind the symbolism, and the joint potlatch, or feast, that followed, is an extraordinary reconciliation between tribal nation and federal government.

Wild waters

In area, Haida Gwaii — “island of the people,” in the Haida language — is a bit larger than Delaware. Its main islands are Graham, in the north, where most of the 5,000 or so inhabitants live, and Moresby, in the south, which includes the national park.

Eco-tourism by boat has been growing since the park was created. Birding is among the best on the West Coast — 1.5 million nest on Haida Gwaii. Bald eagles abound, and on my recent trip we also saw such exotics as tufted puffins, sandhill cranes and rhinoceros auklets, among others. Humpback whales visited our boat almost daily, and we also met pods of orcas, Steller sea lions and Dall’s porpoise — favorite prey of the orcas — sharks and mola mola, which are huge ocean sunfish.

Fishing here is world-class, as Haida Gwaii sits on the migratory path of chinook, coho and chum salmon. Groundfish (halibut, lingcod and

rockfish) and shellfish (crabs and prawn) are also abundant. Of course, there are fishing guides and lodges.

Haida Gwaii is a boater’s paradise in many ways. Its southeastern side has lots of small islands, wonderfully secluded coves and sheltered coastline, but both the mountainous land and turbulent waters are serious and unforgiving. There are good reasons only experienced cruisers with well-equipped boats should come on their own; others should join a crewed tour.

The tidal range is extreme — as much as 26 feet between high and low — and currents can run 6 or 7 knots in the Houston-Stewart Channel, the main link between the Pacific side of Haida Gwaii to the west and Hecate Strait to the east. Tides are mixed semidiurnal, bringing two highs and two lows each day, and each high and low differs from the one before. Rain and fog are common even in the “dry” month of August, so visibility can be limited at any time. The few navigation aids that exist out here are small, dim and not easily seen.

Using the GPS requires skill with Canadian charts. Depending on your location and how close in or out the plotter is scaled, depths will be displayed variously in fathoms and feet, meters or just feet. Unless you know what to look for, there’s no warning that the units of measurement

shown on the screen may have changed. That's because the source paper charts by the Canadian Hydrographic Service that the electronic ones are scanned from vary in their units of measurement, and differently scaled charts of the same area often use different units of depth.

For instance, the most useful paper chart of Gwaii Haanas (No. 3853, Cape St. James to Cumsheewa Inlet) displays depths in both fathoms and feet for depths less than 11 fathoms: "4₃" means 4 fathoms plus 3 feet, or a total depth of 27 feet, reduced to the lowest normal tide. A "12" indicates 12 fathoms, or 72 feet. However, if you scale in closely on the GPS, the digital cartography will switch to a different large-scale source chart (showing a small area) that could use either meters or feet.

Haida Gwaii is a submerged mountain range, so water tends to be deep here, but recognizing what the numbers are telling you is essential to staying off the sharp volcanic rock. "With complex underwater topography, tides that ebb or flood more than 3 vertical feet an hour and the potential for rapid weather changes, it's critical that mariners here always know their precise positions and stay up to date on the latest weather forecasts and conditions," says Russell Markel, owner and captain of *Passing Cloud*, a classic 70-foot wooden schooner, who has run weeklong eco-expeditions to Haida Gwaii for more than 10 years.

A frequent threat close to shore is floating olive-green kelp fronds — the only visible sign of often huge underwater kelp forests — that easily foul the prop.

Prevailing summer winds are from the northwest, although in my week of sailing it came from every corner of the compass except due east, so even the "protected" eastern side of Haida Gwaii can get hammered. The western side is exposed to the Pacific and should



Passing Cloud's owner Russell Markel offers expedition cruises and educational programs; the saloon (right) is cozy and bright.



PASSING CLOUD

Cousin of Bluenose

By Stephen Blakely

Bluenose, Canada's most famous schooner, made its mark almost a century ago fishing and racing in the Atlantic off Nova Scotia. Today, a direct cousin of *Bluenose* is still sailing off Canada's other coast, in the Pacific Northwest: *Passing Cloud*.

Bluenose was the 17th William Roué design, and he went on to create more than 100 commercial vessels and yachts. One of them (No. 165 in his portfolio) was *Passing Cloud*, but Roué did not live to see her sail. She wasn't built until 1974, almost 30 years after he drew it and four years after he died at age 90.

Blame it on bureaucracy. Roué designed the boat for a 1945 contest sponsored by the new United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration as part of a program to help China recover from World War II. The design was to provide a simpler, stronger and short-handed alternative to the Chinese junk to revitalize coastal fishing and freighting.

Roué's plan won the design contest, but the agency dissolved two years later without financing a single boat. The drawings sat for almost three decades until Brian Walker, a commercial boatbuilder in Victoria, British Columbia, dusted them off to build a yacht he and his wife could sail around the world — the only boat ever built to Roué's award-winning design.

Smaller, tough and fast

At 70 feet overall and 50 tons displacement, *Passing Cloud* is less than half the size of *Bluenose*, at 143 feet and 128 tons. However, similarities

between the two are unmistakable. Both share the clean, beautiful lines of a classic wooden schooner — two masts, sails fore and aft, with both the main and fore mast stepped nearly amidships. Both were designed for strength and functionality to excel in heavy weather. And both proved fast, especially in powerful winds.

Bluenose won all of its four contests against the best U.S. boats in the International Fisherman's Trophy Race from 1921 to 1938. *Passing Cloud*, very fast to windward, dominated schooner races up and down the West Coast in the 1980s and won the 1984 Master Mariners Heritage Race in San Francisco — the only Canadian boat to win that event. Mounted in the boat's wheelhouse are 36 brass plaques of race and heritage show awards. (For more on *Bluenose*, search "Rebirth of an Icon" at [Soundings Online.com](http://SoundingsOnline.com).)

A boatbuilder's boat

As a commercial builder, Walker had the skills to modify *Passing Cloud* to his tastes. It took him five years to collect the white oak for the boat's frames because much of that hard and popular wood is used for furniture and whiskey barrels. He eliminated the bowsprit and changed the original gaff rig to a Marconi rig to simplify sail handling. Walker also designed and built the hydraulic windlass still used to handle thousands of pounds of chain and ground tackle. A striking stainless steel boomkin, arching up off the stern, raises the aft rigging off the deck and supports the massive main boom.

(FROM LEFT) STEPHEN BLAKELY (INSET); JAMES THOMPSON (2); STEPHEN BLAKELY

be visited only in calm weather. Conditions there can change fast, especially when strong tides oppose ocean swells and winds. Cape St. James, the very southern tip of Haida Gwaii, has measured 98-foot waves and 100-mph winds in winter. One Canadian Fisheries and Oceans report warns that the sea west of Haida Gwaii has one of the “most severe offshore wave climates in the world.”

Getting around

Because of the difficulty of reaching Gwaii Haanas National Park, the remote wilderness, and park licensing and visitor restrictions, most people come on crewed liveaboard tour boats (both power and sail) or on sea kayak camping expeditions. A park permit is needed, groups are limited to no more than a dozen at the Haida village sites, and an orientation session is required before you go ashore.

During my recent trip, it took two days and four airplanes from the East Coast to reach Markel’s boat in Haida Gwaii, the final leg being a delightful flight on a classic six-passenger de Havilland Beaver floatplane. Ten of us spent a week exploring the islands aboard the schooner *Passing Cloud*. Active, small-group wilderness excursions such as this tend to be self-selecting, so our crew meshed well.

Markel bills his expeditions as a “soft adventure” because they include physical activity — scrambling along rugged shores and hiking through thick woods, serious sailing and swimming in the Pacific — leavened with comfort: private two-person cabins, down duvets, a warm cast-iron stove in the main saloon, all meals prepared from scratch by a professional chef, and good wine.

Markel is a marine biologist and brings along a Ph.D. biologist,



“Chart chat”
at the end of
the day.

archaeologist or anthropologist to help identify the sea and bird life and interpret the cultural heritage while he runs the boat. Their deep knowledge of wildlife, traditional tribal practices and friendships with local Haida will open your eyes to a stunning world of strange creatures and amazing history. It is a fun, immersive and sometimes emotional experience, especially when visiting local Haida.

Of course, an adventure such as this is not inexpensive: A week’s journey runs about \$4,000 a person, including food, floatplane and park fees but not airfare, which is typically \$1,200 or more round-trip from the East Coast. Each passenger is limited to 40 pounds of luggage — so the

continued on Page 54



Walker’s most dramatic change to the Roué design is a classic West Coast pilothouse amidships, with a 180-degree view, to protect the helmsman from the rainy, cold and blustery weather of the Pacific Northwest. (A second steering station at the stern is used in good weather.) The pilothouse, gleaming with brass, has a spacious chart table, galley and dining area, and dry access to the stern cabin below deck.

The masts were cut from a single 71-foot Sitka spruce, and the rig can carry as much as 4,000 square feet of sail, spread among the main (1,000 square feet), foresail, two genoas, and large and small topsails. Part of the beauty of the schooner design is that the sail plan can be balanced for the conditions. On my trip, under occasional near-gale conditions, just the foresail and genoa drove the boat fast and comfortably.

The decking is 2-inch-thick Burmese teak recycled from a legendary British Columbia coastal steamer, the *SS Cardena*, scrapped in 1958. Below, the spacious and comfortable saloon of red and yellow cedar exudes warmth from new paint and varnish and a cast-iron diesel stove, brightened by natural light from a big hatch. Three private cabins — each

with hot-and-cold water vanities and fluffy duvets — are off the saloon, with additional guest quarters in the aft cabin (two double berths) and crew quarters in the fo’c’sle. There are two heads.

A 6-cylinder 140-hp Volvo drives the boat as fast as 10 knots, and with 1,600 gallons of fuel, *Passing Cloud* has a cruising range of as much as 9,000 miles. The engine room, directly below the deckhouse, is big enough for a built-in workbench. Three-inch-thick cedar bulkheads divide the hull into five watertight compartments, and the boat exceeds Transport Canada standards for stability and safety. *Passing Cloud* is certified to carry as many as 14 overnight passengers but typically carries eight guests and four crewmembers.

For a 40-year-old wooden boat, her hull is remarkably tight, quiet and leak-free, a testament to the quality of Walker’s construction. As a 2012 survey noted, *Passing Cloud* “is constructed from exceptional materials, is exceptionally well-built and is exceptionally well-maintained.”

Her new life

After Walker and his wife retired from sailing, they sold *Passing Cloud* to another resident of Victoria, who put the boat into sail training. That role has been continued by the boat’s current owner, Russell Markel, a marine biologist from Victoria who bought the boat in 2012 for his Outer Shores Expeditions (outershores.ca). He provides weeklong liveaboard “soft adventure” expedition cruises and for-credit educational programs through the Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve and several other coastal wilderness areas in British Columbia.

Markel has an ideal background for leading trips such as this, beyond the fact that he grew up here and has spent years diving and doing research. For nine years, he spent summers leading eco-tours throughout Gwaii Haanas National Park as captain of a similar sailboat, *Island Roamer*. In addition to being a patient and natural teacher, he tries to inspire others with his passion for this region’s unspoiled nature and the importance of protecting it — “sailing with a purpose,” as he calls it.

“When I saw this boat, I fell in love with it,” Markel says, “not just for what it was but for what it could allow me to do.”



Voyagers aboard *Passing Cloud* are treated to the region's diverse marine life.



sea urchins. My favorite was the bizarre sunflower star — the world's biggest (more than 3 feet wide) and fastest (4 feet per minute) starfish.

• **Windy Bay**, on Lyell Island, is a former village and the site of the 1985 Haida protests. More than 70 Haida blockaded logging equipment and were arrested, sparking a worldwide movement to save the forest and causing the federal and provincial governments to create Gwaii Haanas National Park Reserve. These events were commemorated in August 2013 with the raising of the Gwaii Haanas Legacy Pole, carved in the classic Haida style with 17 characters representing the life, legends and history of the islands.

Legacy Pole's tragic legacy

Part of what makes the Haida culture unique is that it has survived. The tribe was nearly exterminated twice — first by disease and later by the federal government. In the mid-1800s, the Haida population began to collapse from European diseases such as smallpox. Of the 10,000-plus Haida alive at first contact, fewer than 600 were left by 1900. Survivors consolidated in northern Graham Island, mostly in the present-day villages of Skidegate and Masset.

In the late 1800s a national "assimilation policy" forcibly took 150,000 native children across Canada, including Haida, from their families to be raised in boarding schools subject to white culture, language and religion. As a government investigation would later document, the children's "education" included rampant physical and sexual abuse, starvation and death.

After the scandal broke, the Canadian government closed the schools, paid \$2 billion in reparations — the largest class-action payout in Canadian history — and launched a national reconciliation effort to rebuild the shattered native cultures. But for the Haida, it was the logging protests near Windy Bay that marked the end of their "silent years" and the rediscovery of their legendary fighting spirit.

Unlike other tribes, the Haida never signed any treaty with the Canadian government ceding control of their homeland. Neither side could prove legal ownership of the islands, so the two sides "agreed to disagree about 'title' to Haida Gwaii," says Peter Lantin, president of the Council of the Haida Nation. They settled on a unique power-sharing arrangement to jointly protect the park, which is why Gwaii Haanas is called a park "reserve." Full national park status awaits settlement of land claims.

Today, the Haida are actively working to rebuild their culture, revive their native language, and regain possession of artifacts and human remains taken decades ago. A rediscovery program for young Haida teaches tribal history, legends, art and wilderness skills, including how to handle their ancestral canoes. They even started a cultural exchange with the tribe most like their own: the Maori of New Zealand, also a matrilineal, island-based society with a similar history of seafaring, warfare and art.

The Haida consider themselves children of the ocean, land and sky, and one of their core beliefs is to live in balance with nature. Since a Canadian Supreme Court decision gave the tribe control of logging licenses on Haida Gwaii, timbering has been sharply reduced and environmental protections added.

A key reason Haida Gwaii is such a beautiful place today — and is likely to remain so — is because the Haida have a say in its future once again. "Our way of life was our religion," says Sean Young, a Haida Watchman at the Ninstints UNESCO site on Anthony Island. "Live off the land. Live off the ocean. Take only what you need." ■

HAIDA GWAI from Page 51

floatplane can take off — so bring practical clothes you can live in for a while. Fresh water is limited, so don't expect a daily shower. And a level of fitness is essential; you must be able to climb in and out of the dinghy, bushwhack through rough woods and hills, and scramble about the boat.

What you'll see

Markel tailors his tours to the weather, so there is no set itinerary. But key attractions are never missed.

• **SGang Gwaay** (formerly known as Ninstints), once a major Haida village on Anthony Island at the far southwestern corner of Haida Gwaii, is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Remains of old long houses and a unique stand of original Haida mortuary and memorial poles provide a window into the rich culture that once flourished here.

• **Tanu** also was once a major Haida village on the eastern shore, its long house ruins now moss-covered and returning to the earth. This is the ancestral village and burial place of world-renown contemporary Haida artist Bill Reid.

• **Burnaby Narrows**, on the east side of Moresby Island, is a shallow tidal waterway (about a half-mile long and 160 feet wide) that has an extremely rich nutrient content and supports the highest known levels of biomass — 293 species — of any intertidal zone in the world. Among the examples Markel brought to the surface to show us: multicolored bat stars, several types of crabs, sea cucumbers, moon snails and squirming, bristling

The Haida canoe and the Vikings of the Pacific Northwest

By Stephen Blakely

Before the arrival of Europeans, the Haida were the dominant culture among coastal First Nations in Canada's Pacific Northwest, and their unique war canoes were a key reason.

With plentiful food and towering evergreens on Haida Gwaii, the natives there had the time and resources to develop a boat like no other in the region. Their canoes were the only ones capable of crossing the 60 miles of Hecate Strait between Haida Gwaii and the coast, allowing them to raid and trade with mainland villages — without fear of counterattack — and range from present-day Alaska to Vancouver.

The Haida also had a size advantage: Thanks to their protein-rich seafood diet, the average Haida man in the 1700s stood 6 feet tall and towered over mainland natives and most Europeans.

A lightning raid by a fleet of Haida canoes would have been terrifying. Each boat was filled with two dozen hulking warriors in wooden helmets and war coats of thick sea lion or elk skin, armed with painted war paddles (points sharpened to a spear, edges shaved to a blade), and chanting battle cries. Early European sailors called them the "Vikings of the Pacific Northwest."

Haida canoes were made from a single carefully picked cedar. Felled in the fall, the tree would be burned and carved over the winter into a dugout as large as 50 feet and 3/4-inch thick. The Haida design made two key changes to the traditional dugout canoe. The bow and stern were raised and given long overhangs, and the sides were flared outboard by filling the dugout with water, steaming it with red-hot stones and pushing the gunwales apart with branches.

The result was a graceful 1.5-ton canoe able to hold as many as 40 people and navigate large seas without swamping. Haida paintings added to a canoe's appearance. A singer/drummer in the bow kept time for the paddlers, and an oarsman in the stern steered. Each canoe typically carried a shaman or medicine man to catch and destroy the souls of enemy warriors in advance of battle.

Haida women also were skilled boat handlers and sometimes went to war alongside the men. Feared among mainlanders, they typically came for vengeance and fought more savagely than the men. "The land tribes, if they saw a Haida canoe with a woman in armor in front or a canoe full of Haida women, that's when they'd say, 'Let's run!' The women would be there for revenge," says Sean Young, a watchman at the SGang Gwaay World Heritage Site on Anthony Island.

The Haida had an oral culture, and the skills to build these canoes were lost during the smallpox epidemics that almost annihilated the tribe in the mid-1800s. Revival of the modern Haida canoe is credited to the contemporary Haida artist Bill Reid, who stud-

ied the original canoes in museum collections.

Reid carved the first modern Haida canoe, named *Lootaas* ("wave eater"), for the 1986 Expo in Vancouver, and Haida paddlers learned how to use the 50-footer by trial and error. The following year, the Haida paddled it 300 miles up the British Columbia coast and across Hecate Strait for an emotional homecoming — the first time in more than a century that a traditional canoe had landed on the shores of Haida Gwaii.

New canoes are now carved at the Haida Heritage Center in Skidegate as part of the tribe's cultural rediscovery program. Haida canoe races there are a regular event.

Reid saw the canoe as the single most important artifact to the native peoples of the Pacific Northwest. *Lootaas* inspired his largest and most famous work of art: a bronze sculpture called *The Spirit of Haida* — a near-life-size Haida canoe manned by 13 mythological figures of Haida legend.

Two castings were made. One, known as *The Jade Canoe*, greets travelers at the international wing of Vancouver International Airport. *The Black Canoe* is the only outdoor work of art displayed at the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., near the Capitol. ■



Bill Reid's sculpture *The Black Canoe* (left) and a modern Haida canoe.



STEPHEN BLAKELY



Scan this with your mobile device for video of the author's trip to Haida Gwaii and the Legacy Pole raising