

# PROJECT

## Cowichan River Estuary Complex



**BC COASTAL** East coast of Vancouver Island, adjacent to the City of Duncan and 50 km north of the City of Victoria.



*Trumpeter Swan*

### COMMON WILDLIFE

- Osprey
- Trumpeter Swan
- Dunlin
- American Wigeon
- Steelhead
- Mallard
- Canada Goose
- River Otter
- Western Sandpiper
- Great Blue Heron
- Pink, Chum, Sockeye and Chinook Salmon

## Highlights

The Cowichan estuary is one of the top BC coastal sites for wintering and migrant waterfowl. Conservation projects now encompass over 300 hectares (740 acres) of farmland and intertidal areas or nearly 75% of the estuary.

Pacific Estuary Conservation Program projects in this area are excellent examples of cooperative partnership approaches of government and non-government conservation agencies working with landowners and local industries to develop workable habitat conservation solutions that support the community.

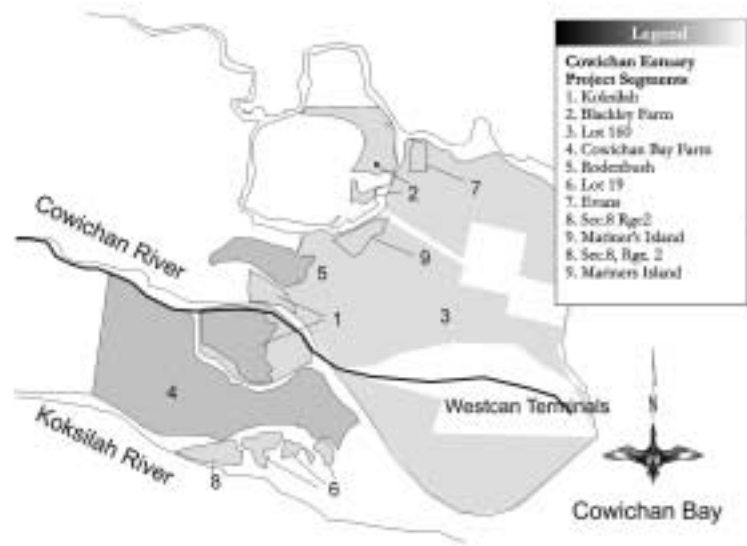
The Cowichan valley merges into a coastal lowland plain with some of the most fertile soils of Vancouver Island and a network of marshes and streams which drain into the Koksilah and Cowichan Rivers just upstream of the estuary. These waterways produce Vancouver Island's largest stocks of Chinook, Coho and Chum salmon, and Steelhead trout.



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Ducks Unlimited Canada conserves, restores and manages wetlands and associated habitats for North America's waterfowl. These habitats also benefit other wildlife and people.

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## IN PARTNERSHIP WITH:

- Environment Canada (Canadian Wildlife Service)
- Fisheries and Oceans Canada
- BC Ministry of Water, Land & Air Protection
- BC Habitat Conservation Trust Fund
- Ducks Unlimited Canada
- The Nature Trust of British Columbia
- The Nature Conservancy of Canada
- Wildlife Habitat Canada
- CN Rail
- BC Hydro
- Westcan Terminals
- Doman Forest Products

## Background

The Cowichan estuary is one of BC's top coastal waterbird wintering areas and is located at the head of a sheltered marine inlet dominated by logging and shipping industries. Most other higher marsh areas were dyked and have been farmed since the turn of the century. In spite of this, the Cowichan Estuary and its surrounding lowlands are home to over 200 species of birds, and over 16,000 waterfowl daily during peak migration. Estuaries with extensive lowland floodplain areas are of particular significance along the Strait of Georgia and support high concentrations of birds, as they provide sheltered inland freshwater habitats, pastures and remnant crops, as well as the energy-rich foods of the marshes and mudflats of the estuary.

In the early 1980's conservation agencies began a campaign to set aside and restore as much of the estuary landscape as possible. Land purchases, conservation covenants, tidal restoration projects, farm improvements to optimize forage, and innovative land negotiations with landowners, the logging industry, port authorities and government agencies have all been used to set aside and manage important habitats in the estuary. Nearly all marine intertidal areas and most of the adjacent farmland are now owned and managed by conservation interests.



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Ducks Unlimited Canada, founded in 1938, is a private nonprofit charitable organization dedicated to the conservation of wetlands for the benefit of North America's waterfowl, wildlife and people.