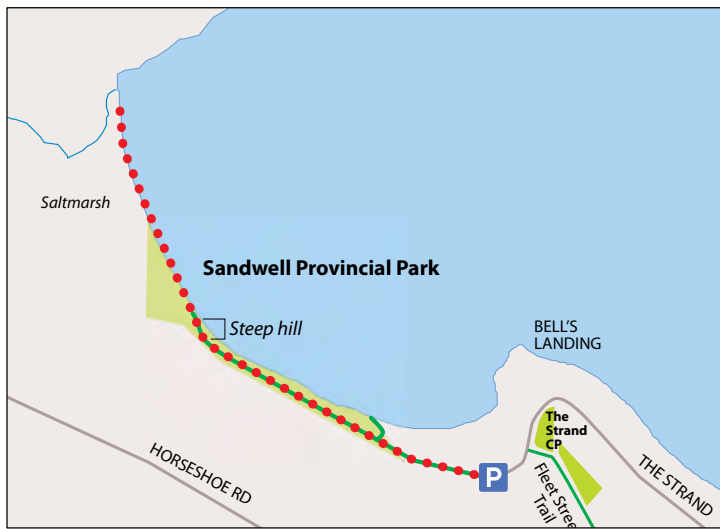


Walk #6

The Sandwell Climb



What To Expect

Approx Time: 45 mins

Approx Distance: 1.9 km

Difficulty: moderate—steep and rocky hill which can be slippery

Begin: Sandwell Provincial Park parking lot at the end of The Strand (for a longer hike, consider starting from Bell's Landing)

This walk travels through the cliff ecosystem of Sandwell Provincial Park with opportunities to enjoy the pebble and low-tide sandy foreshore at Lock Bay and views of the Strait of Georgia, Entrance Island and the Sunshine Coast.

Trailheads are marked with painted rocks (thanks to Gabriola's Grade 6/7 class!) and routes are marked with green flagging tape. Both will be removed in late March.

Trail Route and Tree Nominees



Looking up

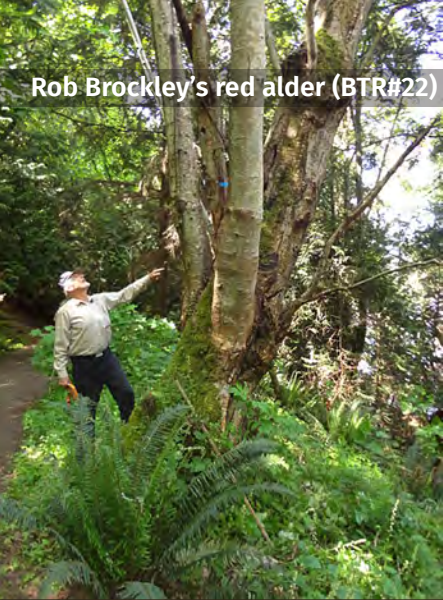
Follow the path—lined with red alder, western redcedar, bigleaf maple trees and Douglas-fir and their thick understory of sword ferns—from the Sandwell Provincial Park parking lot towards the beach. As you walk, enjoy views of the Park's cliff ecosystem.

Cliff ecosystems are regionally rare, making up less than 0.1 percent of the landscape in the Islands Trust Area. Cliff ecosystems are steep slopes, often with exposed bedrock. Very little soil accumulates in these ecosystems and only exceptionally hardy trees and plants maintain a precarious grip. The cliff ledges and fissures of these ecosystems offer isolated habitat protected from predators, making cliffs choice nesting sites for a variety of birds. Crevices are used by roosting bats, while deeper crevices serve as shelter and overwintering areas for snakes and lizards.



Winter Walkabout 2022: Trees

Rob Brockley's red alder (BTR#22)



Continue along the path and past the yellow gate that blocks car access as well as past the stairs down to the beach. Notice, near the top of the stairs, a red alder—with multiple forks below breast height—

that has been included in the Big Tree Registry by way of nomination by **Rob Brockley**.

Continuing along the path, you'll notice many nurse logs—several spectacular examples are old Douglas-fir stumps providing nourishment to younger western redcedars.



Leanne Hewlin's western redcedar



Take care walking downhill towards the beach—it is rocky and can be slippery. On your left as you reach the end of the downhill, you'll see an example of the hardiness required of cliff ecosystem trees in **Leanne Hewlin's** favourite western redcedar seemingly growing out of rock with its root system on full display.

Trish Dyck's Douglas-fir



Just past there sits **Trish Dyck's** nominee, a magnificent Douglas-fir, also on the left and set back from the path before you reach the pit toilets.

Enjoy views of Lock Bay, the Strait of Georgia, Entrance Island and the Sunshine Coast or spend some

time strolling the pebble and low-tide sandy foreshore before continuing along the path. Wild rose lines either side of this path flanked by Lock Bay and an extensive saltmarsh on the private land to the left. This saltmarsh provides important bird habitat in the winter and spring. It's fed by a substantial stream called Castell Brook, with a waterfall, and its tributary, McLay Creek. The freshwater pond on the forested hillside above the saltmarsh contains a beaver lodge.

Continue along the trail alongside the marsh until it ends with the piled mass of winter storm strewn logs. The return walk retraces its steps back to your starting point on the same path. As an alternative, check your tide charts for the best times and days to return by way of the beach and up the stairs on your return trip. At low tide, you can view a prehistoric petroglyph carved into the sandstone rocks, east of the day-use area.

