

# CLIFF ECOSYSTEMS

## NORTH PENDER ISLAND DEVELOPMENT PERMIT AREA

### What Are They?

Cliff ecosystems are found on the Island's steep, vertical or overhanging rock faces where sparse vegetation is limited to cracks and crevices.

Cliff ecosystems typically form as a result of erosion or collapse of rock features. The plants and animals that can survive there are influenced by the steepness of the slope, the amount of sunlight they receive, exposure to weather, and the presence or absence of moisture. Soils may form only in the bedrock crevices and fissures, and on ledges, where they support stunted trees and shrubs in addition to grasses, mosses and lichens.

These sparsely vegetated ecosystems offer a variety of highly specialized habitats, supporting a unique association of animals, plants, and plant communities. Overall biodiversity is low as relatively few plants and animals are able to adapt to the harsh and specialized conditions.

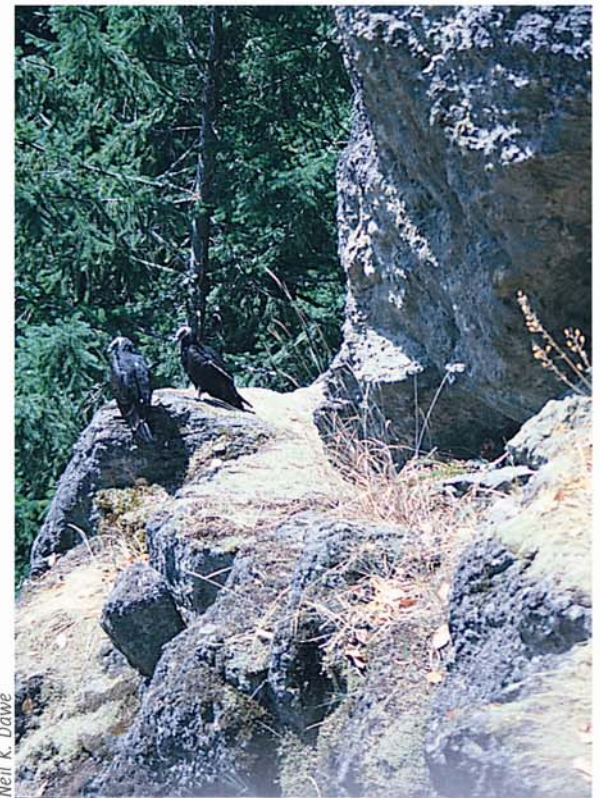
Turkey vultures nest in caves and crevices on cliffs and bluffs, and Peregrine Falcons nest on the open ledges. The rare Townsend's big-eared bat uses cliff crevices for roosting, and the deep crevices provide shelter and hibernation for garter snakes and alligator lizards. Bees and other insects travel to sun-warmed rocky outcrops as a meeting place in preparation for reproduction.



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### Why They Are Important

Cliff ecosystems are regionally rare making up less than 0.1% of the landscape of Southeast Vancouver Island and the Gulf Islands. They are considered to be the rarest of the sensitive ecosystem types. Many of them have been impacted by development, trails, and introduced species. Unmodified examples of this ecosystem are extremely rare.



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*Cliff ecosystems make up only 0.8% of North Pender Island*

### Their Purpose

The purpose of the Cliff Ecosystems Development Permit Area (DPA) is to offer protection to the remaining cliff ecosystems on North Pender Island by guiding any new development that might occur within them. The areas covered by this DPA are indicated in Schedule M of the North Pender Island Official Community Plan (OCP).

### What Does This Mean?

If you have a property that is partially located within a Cliff Ecosystems DPA you will need to obtain a development permit from the Islands Trust before undertaking certain new land-altering activities identified in the North Pender Island OCP.

The regular maintenance of existing buildings and landscaping, as well as any development that takes place outside of the DPA does not require a Development Permit.



Islands Trust

# Extent of Cliff Ecosystems DPA Areas on North Pender Island



## How to Protect this Ecosystem

### Establish a Surrounding Buffer or Barrier

A protective vegetated buffer or fence around a cliff area will help protect it from potentially harmful outside disturbance and access. Fences can also be used to protect the public from entering these steep and potentially hazardous areas.

### Control Invasive Species

The open nature and thin soils of cliff ecosystems makes them vulnerable to the establishment of non-native species such as Scotch broom and gorse. If already established carefully remove invasive plants, limiting disturbance of the soil.

### Limit Access

Human and domestic animal access can damage the thin soils and sparse, and often rare, vegetation of these sensitive and very dry ecosystems.

### Prevent Disturbance During Nesting and Breeding Season

Prevent disturbance of nesting bird species during the early spring and summer.

### Consider Establishing a Protective Covenant

Properties with cliff ecosystems may qualify for the Natural Area Protection Tax Exemption Program. This program provides landowners who permanently protect natural features of their land with the opportunity to receive a 65% exemption in property taxes on the protected portion of their land. [www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/naptep.cfm](http://www.islandstrustfund.bc.ca/naptep.cfm)



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## Associated Species

### Animals

*Turkey vulture, peregrine falcon, swifts, northern alligator lizard, garter snakes, double-crested cormorant*

### Plants

*Stunted Garry oak, broad-leaved stone crop, saxifrage, hoary moss*

### Rare Species

*Sharp-tailed snake*

***Ecosystem DPAs guide  
development in identified  
ecologically sensitive areas***

## For More Information

To determine if your land has a Cliff Ecosystems DPA on it consult the North Pender Island Official Community Plan (OCP). Copies of the OCP are available from Islands Trust offices in Victoria and Pender Island, and on-line at:

[www.islandstrust.bc.ca/ltc/np](http://www.islandstrust.bc.ca/ltc/np)

If you have any questions about DPAs please contact Islands Trust staff by phone by dialing 1.800.663.7867 and requesting 250.405.5151 or by email at [npi@islandstrust.bc.ca](mailto:npi@islandstrust.bc.ca).