

# Vancouver Island Nature Viewing Region

## Comox Valley Area

### Union Bay and Hart (Washer) Creek



Common & Barrow's Goldeneye:  
Bill Heybroek drawing



Union Bay Shoreline: Krista Kaptein photo



Common Loon: Krista Kaptein photo

#### [Photo Gallery](#)

Bird watching, wildlife viewing and scenic seascapes are highlights of the quaint community of Union Bay, just a five minute drive south of Courtenay on Highway 19A. The shallow waters of the bay are ideal for shellfish harvesting, a major industry in Baynes Sound. The rocky beaches and sand flats also provide a wonderful habitat for many birds. Look for seabirds such as American Wigeon, Scoters, Harlequins, Northern Pintail and Horned Grebes. Shorebirds are also abundant here, such as Black-bellied Plovers, Black Turnstones and Dunlin. Watch for Bald Eagles soaring overhead, Kingfishers diving for fish and Pelagic and Double-crested Cormorants perching on old pilings. Sea Lions, Harbour Seals and River Otters can often be spotted in these waters also. Historically, Union Bay was a shipping place for coal mined in Cumberland. Today, the natural beauty of Union Bay, and other small communities on Eastern Vancouver Island attract tourists for outdoor recreation and nature viewing. Trails along Washer (Hart) Creek are on private property slated for development, with limited public access.

#### [Site Map](#)

<b>Geographical Description</b>	Along Hart (Washer) Creek to Baynes Sound.
<b>Area/ Trail Length</b>	300 m shoreline at 5 ha. boat launch area; approx. 25 ha. revegetating coal slack hills; 400 m. along Creek east of highway; 1.5 km along Creek west of highway; 2 km along shoreline at estuary.
<b>Habitat</b>	Cobble beach, riparian, 2nd growth forest, revegetating coal slack hills.
<b>Highlights</b>	Roadside viewing of waterbirds.
<b>Best Season</b>	Winter for waterbirds; year round for woods.
<b>Main Access</b>	At Union Bay boat launch.
<b>Secondary Accesses</b>	At Union Bay Hall, 5401 South Island Highway.
<b>Cautions</b>	Trails can be wet in winter. Some steep hills.
<b>Jurisdiction</b>	Private land (Kensington Island Properties) with limited public access. Intertidal zone: Provincial MOE; Fish & fish habitat: Federal DFO.
<b>Mammals</b>	Seals, sea lions.

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**Birds** Surf Scoter, White-winged Scoter, Common Loon, Bufflehead, Barrow's Goldeneye, Red-breasted Merganser, Mallard, Mew Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull, Bald Eagle, Northern Flicker, Black Turnstone, Chestnut-backed Chickadee, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Dark-eyed Junco.

[Bird List](#)

**Reptiles**

**Amphibians**

**Fish** Salmon sp.

**Intertidal Life**

**Insects** Darkling beetle.

**Trees** Bigleaf maple, red alder, Sitka spruce, Douglas-fir, western hemlock, redcedar, cottonwood.

**Shrubs** Red huckleberry, oregon grape, snowberry. Blue elderberry in coal hills area.

**Flowering Plants**

**Ferns, Lichens, Mosses** Sword fern, bracken fern, maidenhair fern. Antler lichen, lungwort. Step moss.

**Other Species**

**Invasive/Non-native species** Scotch broom, daphne laurel, holly, Himalayan blackberry.

**Seaweeds**

**Mushrooms** Witch's butter.

**Geology**

**Regulations** At boat launch: Dogs on leash. At coal hills & creek trail: Private property, limited public access, no motorized vehicles.

**Facilities** At boat launch: parking area, interpretive sign, picnic table.

**Other Features** Railway bridge over Hart Creek. Artifacts & infrastructure from logging railway. Water quality testing sites.

**Other**

**Connections**

**FMI**

[Hart \(Washer\)Creek Map](#)

[K'omoks Important Bird Area](#)

[Comox Valley Regional District Beach Accesses](#)

[Fish Species in the Courtenay River Estuary and Baynes Sound 2001.pdf](#)

[Tide Tables](#)

[eBird Hotspot](#)