



# *Friends of Semiahmoo Bay Society*

www.birdsonthebay.ca



## **FIELD TRIP OVERLOAD! PLEASE TREAD LIGHTLY ON THE CRABS**

March 25, 2011 Beecher Place – Crescent Beach, South Surrey, BC

Every kid loves to turn over rocks and chase shore crabs. It's instinctual with prey of that size and speed and harmlessness- like a game of cat and mouse. Johnny has a great day at the beach and on the bus home compares how many crabs he caught with Melvin. Without realizing it, while enjoying the day on the beach, their visit harmed or killed many crabs and other beach creatures.



The problem is that crabs die in buckets without plenty of water. They have gills- they breathe water. Between March and June crabs are also molting and breeding making them very vulnerable. Every year they are innocently decimated over only 5 weeks when thousands of kids visit the Beecher Place section of Crescent Beach.

### **FIELD TRIP OVERLOAD...SEE BELOW**

It is easy to care well for CRABS and other beach creatures. Here are some tips on how to make your trip enjoyable for your students and less harmful for the beach creatures.

### **Crabs breathe water with gills.**

**Even with water in your bucket, a crab will only last for 20 minutes before it begins to suffocate and die.**

Crabs need to be returned to their home, where they were found, after about 20 minutes.

- Collect no more than 6 crabs per bucket.
- They need about 1 inch of water per crab to breathe for 20 minutes.
- They also begin to fight when overcrowded and trapped in the scary exposed container.



### **No bigger than a Twoonie**

- Crabs that are larger than the size of a Twoonie are not shore or hermit crabs.
- They are most often juvenile Dungeness or Red rock crabs which are legally protected.
- It is against wildlife regulations to remove protected crabs from the ocean for more than the few minutes it takes to ID, size and sex them.

## Moulting

Did you know that many of the “dead” crabs that wash up on the beaches aren’t dead at all? They are moulted shells like a snake’s shed skin. Crabs climb out the back of their shells-even pulling out their eyes- when they need more space to grow. They puff out their soft new shell like an over-sized shirt and need to hide, and be left alone, when they are soft. Crabs dig themselves down into the sand when they moult.

We ask every visitor to the beach to please learn, follow and pass along this rule: “Lift, dont *rock* the rocks” and replace them when you are done just as you found them. To learn why this is crucial, view the video on our site and download the beach etiquette poster from

<http://www.birdsonthebay.ca/crabs.html>

## FIELD TRIP OVERLOAD

On Thurs June 10, 2010 on Crescent Beach there were 7 school buses: 3 marked Abbotsford, 2 unseen by me, 1 Chilliwack, 1 Surrey. This volume repeats daily from Wed to Fri over 5 weeks, weather dependent of course, between the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of May and the end of the school year. estimate 400 kids daily and 6000+ annually deluge the Beecher Place section of Crescent Beach at this most vulnerable breeding and hatching time for the beach creatures.



On the same day Carolyn Prentice, coordinator of the Beach Hero program 2010 encountered 9 buses at a remote and relatively unknown(or so we thought!), pristine location in South Surrey. There is no parking for cars let alone buses, so we were shocked to find well over 400 kids down there on a single day. Some of them were from Abbotsford and Langley.

We take classes and groups out through our Educational and Beach Heroes programs. Unfortunately, we can only reach a fraction of those thousands of field trippers. Because these beaches are not parks, they receive no city or government protection or limitation of access. There is no coordination of beach trips at the school or district level, and they come from as far out as Abbotsford and North Vancouver. In 2009, there was a letter to the Now Editor regarding the destruction of White Rock beach by the same cause.

We hope you will take a few moments to view our website. Learn about our resident crabs, how to care for them and how to move rocks without crushing or exposing the crabs, small fish, and others that inhabit the rocks and sand and eelgrass of the beaches of Boundary Bay.

<http://www.birdsonthebay.ca/crabs.html>

Yours sincerely,

Jesa Alford, Naturalist

Education Outreach & Beach  
Hero programs



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