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Gambier gets its protected area

Gambier Island's first protected area network is now complete with the transfer of 107 hectares from the Province of British Columbia to the Islands Trust Fund through the provincial FreeCrown Grant program. British Columbians' Crown land grant to the reserve is worth over \$1.1 million.

The new Mount Artaban Nature Reserve, when combined with neighbouring local, regional and provincial parks, creates a continuous protected area of 525 hectares—25% larger than Vancouver's Stanley Park.

The protection of Mount Artaban is a success for the entire Gambier Island community, population 313. To satisfy the province's conditions for the transfer, the Islands Trust Fund partnered with the Gambier Island Conservancy to fundraise over \$40,000 to cover the costs of the land survey and a management plan.

'We welcomed the opportunity to work closely with the Islands Trust Fund to establish the new nature reserve,' said Peter Scholefield, President of the Gambier Island Conservancy. 'The Island-wide response to the joint fundraising campaign was truly inspiring and there was a total of over 80 contributions from many private individuals, businesses, governments and community groups.'

The Mount Artaban Nature Reserve protects old-growth trees, a wetland, and several at-risk plant communities. The water flowing from this pristine mountain provides clean drinking water for the surrounding community and feeds aquatic habitats below. Bald eagles are often seen in the skies above the new reserve, and Steller's jays, rufous hummingbirds and blue grouse inhabit the forest.

The new reserve and adjoining protected areas offer an exhilarating hiking experience, visible from the Sea-to-Sky Highway. Island residents and visitors can enjoy trails that extend from the Long Bay and Brigade Bay waterfronts to Mount Artaban's peak. The trail system also extends south through Halkett Bay Provincial Marine Park.

'The Gambier Island community has worked tirelessly to preserve one of Howe Sound's notable landmarks,' said Kim Benson, Islands Trust Council Chair and Gambier Island trustee and resident.

The Islands Trust Fund and the Gambier Island Conservancy will work with the Gambier Island community to develop a management plan for the property. This plan will define short and long-term management goals for this new nature reserve, including conditions for public access. ✍

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