Marine Birds and Mammals of the Salish Sea
Sponsored by the Pacific Wildlife Foundation

Date: Sunday, 19 August, 2011
Time: 08:30 – 22:00
Cost: $165.00 per person plus 12% HST
Min & max #s: 40 participants max. (minimum 25 pax)

Transport: Coach UBC - Tsawwassen (30mins); ferry Tsawwassen to Galiano Island (40mins); cruise (7hrs); ferry from Swartz Bay to Tsawwassen (1hr45mins); coach Tsawwassen – UBC (30mins).

Meals: Brown bag lunch is included; supper not included (we will gather to eat in the Pacific Buffet on the ferry, ~$20/head).

Tips: Weather can be variable, and even on warm days can be cool on the water, so bring layers and a waterproof, sunscreen and a sunhat.

This full day trip will tour the convergence zone where cold Pacific water funnels into the warmer Strait of Georgia providing the basis for a rich marine ecosystem, partly protected within the Southern Gulf Islands National Park Reserve. We will take the 10am ferry from Tsawwassen to Galiano Island, to join a customised cruise exploring the Belle Chain Islets and Boiling Reef for sea lions, harbour seals and rocky shore specialists including North-east Pacific endemics like Black Oystercatcher, Surfbird and Black Turnstone, turning west into Boundary Pass and Haro Strait to look for marine mammals including Dall’s and Harbour Porpoises and Orcas, which regularly pass through during summer, then circle Mandarte Island’s seabird colonies (Glaucous-winged, Pelagic and Double-crested Cormorants, and Pigeon Guillemots), attempt to fit in a landing on Sidney Spit (part of the National Park, with coastal douglas fir ecosystem and rare dune plants) before finishing the tour in the channels north of Sidney Island, hoping to encounter Rhinoceros Auklets, Marbled Murrelets, and Heerman’s Gulls among others. A brown bag (packed) lunch will be provided, and you’ll need to dress warmly. We will return on the 7pm ferry from Swartz Bay, and expect to be back at UBC by 10pm. The ferries (including the dining lounge) offer good opportunities for wildlife watching, including sea ducks and marine mammals, and we will be keeping a watch.