

Having a strong connection to the land can lead to informed and effective ecosystem management and conservation. Wendell Berry, a famous sustainability activist, once wrote: “You can’t know who you are until you know where you are.” I would like for you to get to know a place, periodically visiting this place and observing it on different scales and senses. The goals of this assignment are to: 1. Develop a sense for a place in coastal BC, 2. Strengthen your skills of natural observation, 3. Apply concepts and knowledge to an ecosystem, 4. Quantify the phenology of an area. Pick a place that you can visit periodically--you can pick any natural or semi-natural area.

Read: Mayer 2010; Friess et al. 2011 (first page only)

Part 1. Initial site visit and description. Due: Jan 26

- Pick a place and visit it. The place should be safe and accessible.
- Spend at least 30 minutes at the place. Listen for five minutes. Look at close range. Look far. Listen. Smell. Intensely observe. Take notes—what did you sense? Describe the place. What plants are there? What animals use this area? How many of things did you see?
- Use GoogleEarth to examine your place. Gather information about your site using this tool. What is the elevation? What is the approximate distance to a road? What is the approximate size of the natural patch? How far away is the nearest other natural patch?
- Create a 3 page (double-spaced) document. This document represents your initial site description. The document should have the following components:
 - Paragraph: description of where the site is and why you chose it.
 - Paragraph: Conditions of initial site visit: weather.
 - 1 or 2 paragraphs: What plants did you see? What animals did you see evidence of or do you think might use the area?
 - Paragraph summary of your personal reaction to this site. How do people use this site? What is the role of this site in the ecosystem?
 - 2 paragraphs about information gathered from Googleearth.
 - Screenshots of Googleearth pictures from near (eye altitude ~1000 ft) and distant (eye altitude ~10000ft), embedded in text (these should take one page total).

Part 2. Site visits. Visit at least 4 additional times (for a total of 5+ times; approximately every 2-3 weeks). Each time you visit, spend at least 30 minutes there and intensely observe. Each visit note the date, time, weather conditions. What do you sense that is the same? What do you sense that is different? Have the plants changed? Which plants? How many crows did you see? Take notes on your visit. These notes will be turned in at the end of the semester, so can be handwritten as long as they are readable. Aim for approximately 2 pages of handwritten notes per visit.

Part 3. Synthesis. At the end of the year, your sense of place portfolio will be due. This portfolio will consist of the three parts mentioned here. I will provide more information about the synthesis as the semester progresses. In this synthesis you will be asked to reflect on the place--What was the seasonal progression of your place? How is the place used by people? How is the place used by animals?