

RBCM's MANAGER OF NATURAL HISTORY RETIRES AFTER 20 YEARS

This spring, the Royal BC Museum bids farewell to its longtime manager of natural history. A 20-year RBCM veteran, Jim Cosgrove has been more than a leader of scientific staff; he's been a leader in the research of underwater creatures — particularly octopuses (not 'octopi') and squids.



*Jim Cosgrove, RBCM
manager of natural
history.*



A female giant Pacific octopus.

Cosgrove's interest in these multi-armed animals was sparked when he started scuba diving as a teenager in BC. "One of the big challenges I set for myself was to see a giant Pacific octopus," says Cosgrove. "I eventually saw one. Then the questions started. How long do they live? How fast do they grow? The more I tried to learn about them, the more I realized that this is the biggest octopus in the world and nobody knew diddly squat about it."

So, at age 18, Cosgrove took it upon himself to start tagging octopuses to discover everything he could about them. Later, he earned his BSc and Masters degree (with a thesis on the giant Pacific octopus) at the University of Victoria.

But retirement won't stop him from collecting data – or scuba diving. Throughout his career, Cosgrove has been a diving instructor on the side. He also served as UVic's diving safety officer for 30 years; he was a founding member of the Canadian Association for Underwater Science; and for 25 years, he and his wife, Jeannie, operated J & J DIVERS, an underwater photography and marine animal wrangling business for film, TV, magazines and educational institutions.

"I love to dive," says Cosgrove, who dives 40 to 50 times a year. "Every time you put your head under water, you have the opportunity to see something nobody's seen before."

And when he's not under the surface studying sea life, he's chasing a puck at the bottom of a pool in "a very silly game called underwater hockey," something he's done for 27 years. "It's the world's worst spectator sport. From the surface, it looks like a feeding frenzy for piranhas."

So, what does retirement hold in store for this marine enthusiast? Cosgrove will have to spend some time on dry land, as he is planning to devote several months to writing a book and several scientific papers based on the octopus data he's collected during the past 36 years.

Looking Ahead

Replacing Jim Cosgrove as manager of natural history won't be easy for Kelly Sendall,



currently RBCM's senior collection manager for invertebrates, fish, reptiles and amphibians. In the next 10

years, two-thirds of Sendall's staffers are planning to retire.

"It will be interesting to see how the department evolves over the next few years," says Sendall.

"I see it as an opportunity for our section to further develop its role in the scientific and educational community, though."

RBCM PREPARES FOR MASS RETIREMENT

With phrases like “retirement revolution” echoing across the province, the Royal BC Museum is taking steps to keep a potential staffing shortfall under control. In addition to the internship, co-operative education and apprenticeship programs RBCM uses to find exceptional employees entering the work force, the organization has created two new programs aimed at professional development for existing employees.

RBCM’s mentorship program, set to launch in April, and a coaching program, scheduled to begin in the fall, will pair junior employees with senior staff members in a training setting. “We need to invent ways to facilitate a transfer of knowledge from senior to junior employees,” says Karen Fudge-Jensen, RBCM’s manager of human resources. “We have employees who have been with the museum for 30 years, for example – and they have a lot of information in their heads. We want to make sure they pass it on.”

With an average age of 49 years, about half of all RBCM employees are eligible to retire by 2010. Many of these staff hold senior positions and are often highly specialized in their fields – making them difficult to replace. For example, when Brent Cooke retired as director of exhibits and visitor experience in January 2006, after spending 33 years at the museum, it took the RBCM nine months to find his successor, Tim Willis. “These senior positions are not easy to fill,” says Fudge-Jensen. “They require a great deal of experience and well-honed skills that aren’t easy to come by.”

Updates

- From March 1 to April 9, art contestants in the **Robert Bateman Get to Know Contest** can visit the Royal BC Museum and sketch the *Birds of Prey* exhibition in the RBCM’s Clifford Carl Hall. Contest entry forms are available at www.gettoknow.ca and in person at the museum’s Info Desk.
- The Royal BC Museum and Royal Astronomical Society of Canada are teaming up to present a full day of family-oriented space activities on **Astronomy Day**, April 21. Activities will be held in the RBCM’s Clifford Carl Hall and include talks, multimedia presentations, displays of telescopes and real space meteorites, telescope views of sunspot activity and a variety of children’s programs. Visitors will also have the opportunity to talk to professional astronomers. Admission to the event is free. For more information visit www.victoria.rasc.ca/events.
- The Royal BC Museum is once again participating in **Be a Tourist in your own Home Town**. From Feb. 28 to March 4, the museum is offering 50 per cent off admission to each coupon holder. Visitors who want to reserve an entry time to the museum or an Imax film can do so by redeeming their coupon in advance, in person.

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Hours: 9 am to 5 pm, daily



Admission Pricing	
Family (2 adults, 2 youth)	\$37.50
Adult (19 to 64)	\$14
Senior (65 and over)	\$9.50
Youth (6 to 18)	\$9.50
Student (19 and over)	\$9.50
Child (3 to 5)	Free