

Glass sponge reefs

CPAWS-BC is urging for MPA status for the reefs

by Megan Baker

Following a highly successful speaking tour in November 2006, glass sponge reef specialist, Dr. Manfred Krautter recently returned to British Columbia to continue the quest for permanent protection for the globally unique glass sponge reefs.

Found nowhere else on earth, the glass sponge reefs are Canada's living dinosaurs. The four largest reef complexes are located in Hecate Strait and Queen Charlotte Sound and smaller complexes have recently been discovered in the Strait of Georgia and off the Sunshine Coast. These phenomenal reefs can form structures up to 25 metres (8 stories) tall and are made entirely of silica (glass).

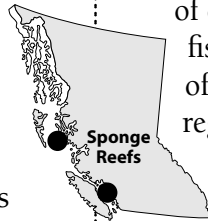
In March, CPAWS-BC and Dr. Krautter met with provincial politicians to highlight the need for provincial support for the permanent protection of the glass sponge reefs. At the federal level, we met with Paul Sprout, the Regional Director

General of Fisheries and Oceans Canada. With the announcement of 6 new Marine Protected Areas (MPA) in the 2007 Federal Budget, we are urging Fisheries and Oceans Canada to designate the glass sponge reefs as one of the new MPAs.

While Dr. Krautter was in Vancouver, we organized a gathering of owners and managers of fishing lodges along the coast of BC to ask for their advice regarding the protection of the sponge reefs. "I was really excited to learn about the glass sponge reefs and the fact that they exist nowhere else on earth. We can't wait to tell our clients about these incredible organisms," said Rupert Gale of The Ritchie Foundation.

Most recently, we attended the annual convention of the Association of Vancouver Island and Coastal Communities (AVICC) where we delivered a workshop on the glass sponge reefs to mayors and councillors from Vancouver Island and Sunshine Coast municipalities.

"Mr Stinky", a finger goblet sponge from the Strait of Georgia,



Dr. Krautter with "Mr. Stinky" a finger goblet sponge.

stole the show and contributed to the overwhelmingly positive and supportive response to our presentation. Comox-Strathcona Regional District put forward a resolution calling for the permanent protection of the glass sponge reefs. The resolution passed unanimously. It will now go forward to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities

(UBCM) for consideration at their meeting in September. View the resolution at <http://www.avicc.ca/newsroom/index.php?cmd=news&SUID=6d37b27a997e0b0574f12132d697b57d&id=71>

While in Vancouver, Dr. Krautter was interviewed by CFRO FM radio. You can listen to him talking about the glass sponge reefs at <http://www.ecoshock.org/DNocceans.html>.

While support is growing for the permanent protection of the glass sponge reefs, we still need to do more. You can help by sending letters to your MLA and MP, as well as Fisheries and Oceans Minister Loyola Hearn, telling them that the glass sponge reefs are the only ones in the world and that they need permanent protection. Ask your local town or city council to support the UBCM resolution.

Later this year, CPAWS-BC plans to hold more public presentations on the glass sponge reefs. Watch your local newspaper and the CPAWS-BC website for event dates and times. For more information, please contact Megan Baker at 604-685-7445 ext. 24 or megan@cpawsbc.org.