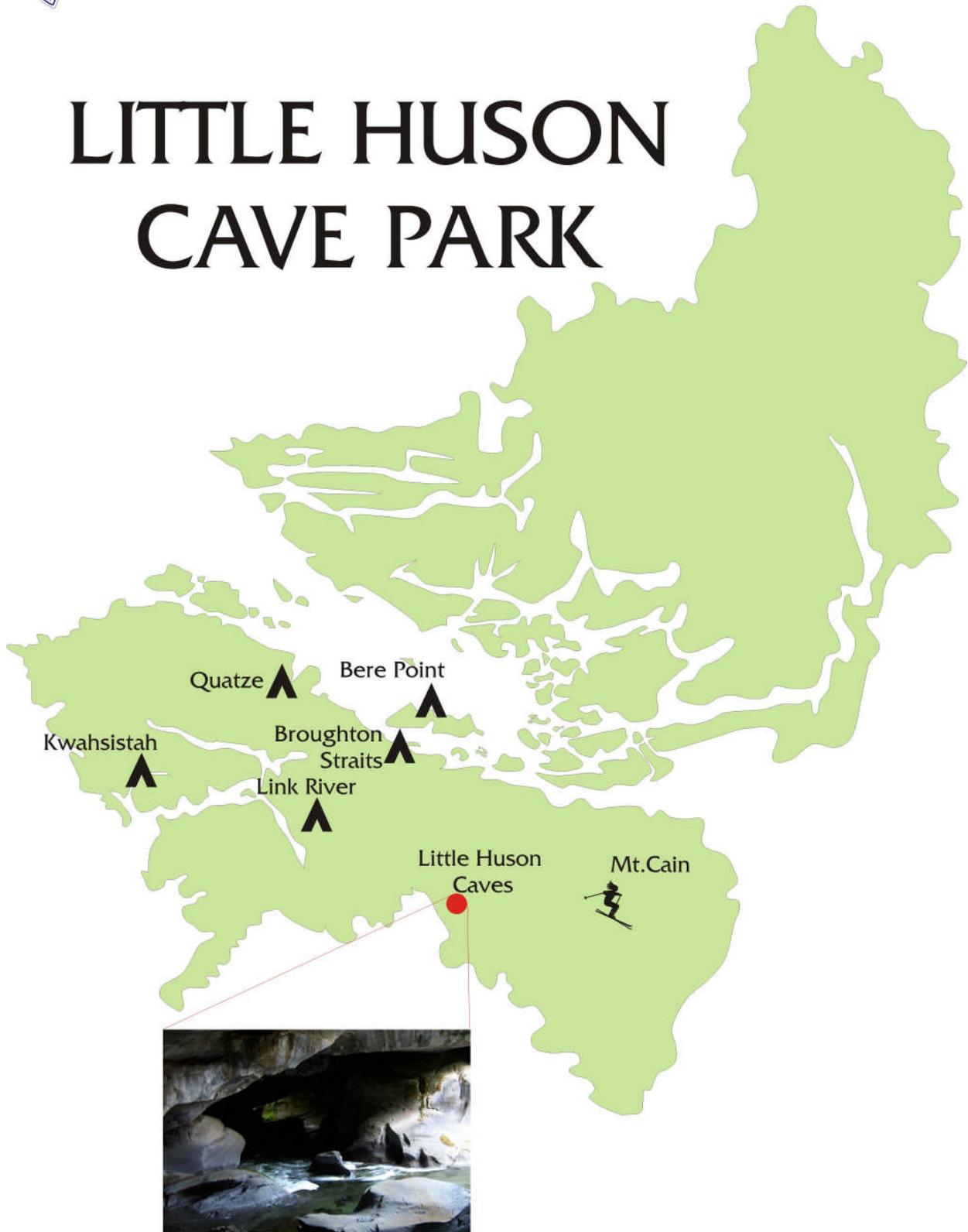




# RDMW PARKS SYSTEM:

## LITTLE HUSON CAVE PARK





## **Little Huson Cave Regional Park**

Location:	On Atluck Creek where it leaves Little Huson Lake
Map Reference:	NTS 92 1/7
Air Photo Reference:	B.C. 5264 #37
Size:	4.9 hectares
Elevation:	75 metres
Status:	S.U.P. #11693, Lease under application
Vegetation:	Predominately fir and cedar with scattered yew along the creek.
Understory:	Salal, huckleberry, ferns, (a great deal of monkey moss) moss and lichen on rock faces in the canyon.

### **INTRODUCTION**

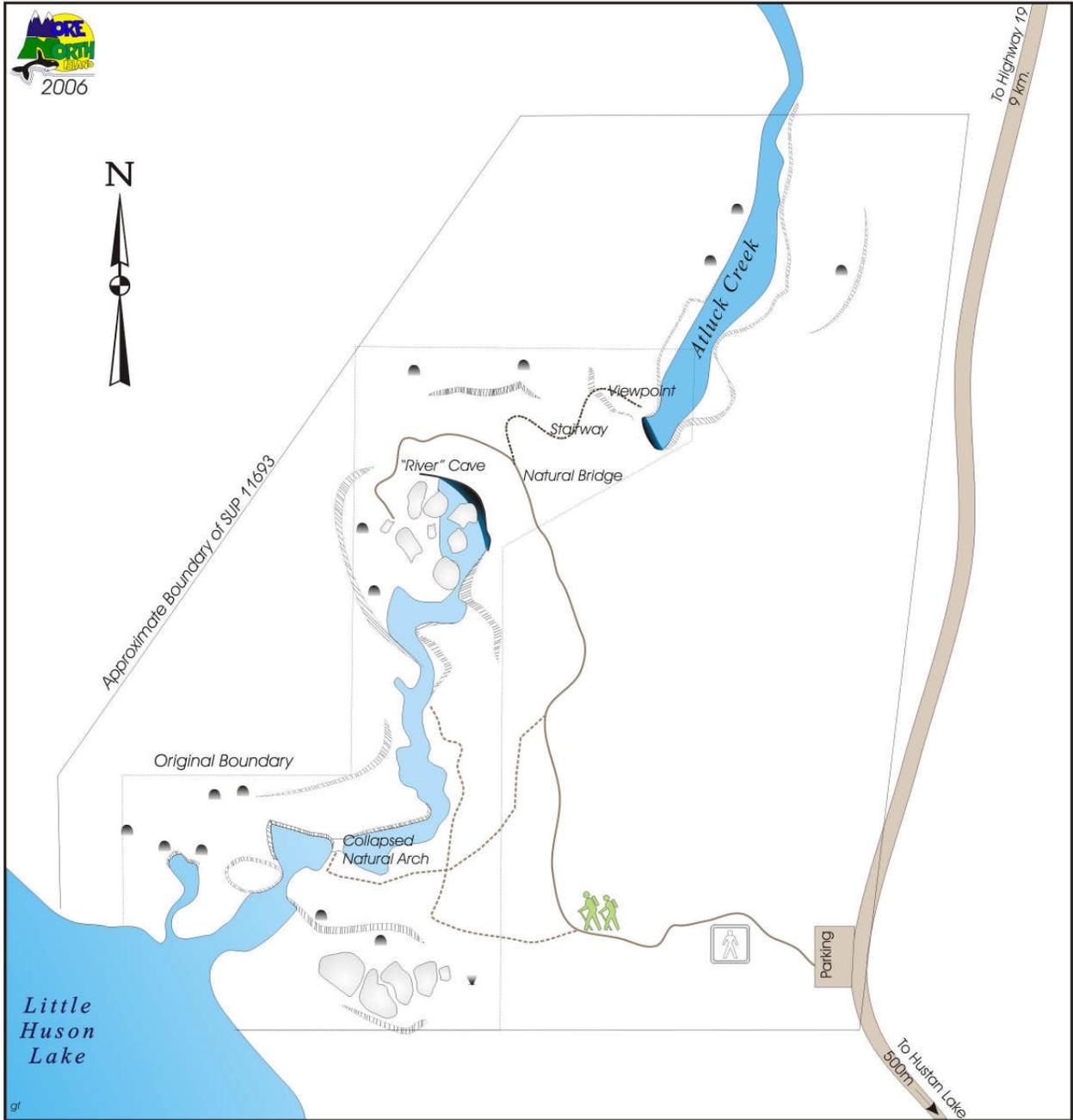
The Regional District of Mt. Waddington identified the need for this park in a study undertaken in 1978. This report has been updated from the original proposal for the Park which was first provided protection in 1984.

Vancouver Island, especially the northern half, is an area rich with karst topography. There are over 1,000 known caves on the island and possibly just as many waiting to be discovered. Few people, however, have ever been inside a cave. The Little Huson Lake Cave Park offers a unique opportunity to introduce the public to caves and other karst features. Although the park contains 15 caves, it was chosen for development mainly because of the superficial rock formations within the Atluck Creek canyon. The site is good for the inexperienced caver; no special equipment is necessary and there are no delicate features that can be destroyed by a careless or unknowledgeable visitor.



*The Cathedral "River" Cave*

# LITTLE HUSON CAVE PARK



### Features

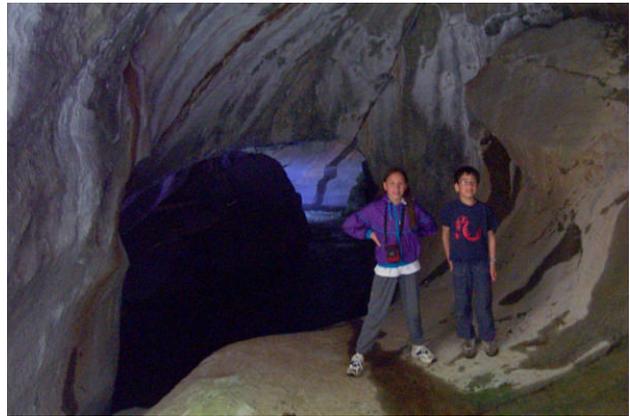
- |                               |          |              |
|-------------------------------|----------|--------------|
| Cave With Horizontal Entrance | Boulders | Hiking Trail |
| Cave With Vertical Entrance   | Cliff    | Outhouse     |

### Scale

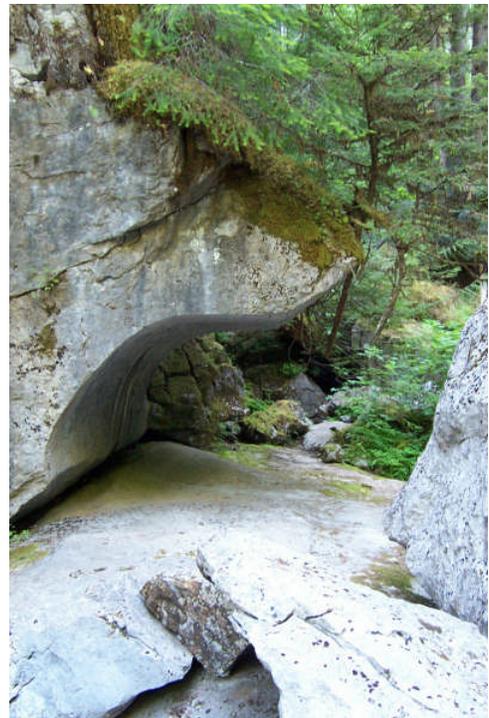
0 25 50 meters

## BIOPHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The Little Huson Lake Cave Park is an area of spectacular natural beauty, containing karst features which are unique to Vancouver Island. All exposed bedrock is Quatsino Formation limestone, which occurs to a depth of 300 meters at this location. The limestone bed has a gentle 10 to 15° slope to the northeast. The form of local karst features is dictated by the slope of the limestone. This type of karst formation is referred to as "bedding controlled", as caves tend to be formed along the bedding plane rather than in joints or cracks. This type of cave tends to be flat. The Little Huson area has a few joint-controlled passages running off from the main canyon and cave system.



The Cave Park is centered on the Atluck Creek Canyon. This canyon has a number of interesting karst features, including a natural bridge, and a large "cathedral" cave entrance where the creek flows underground for 60 metres. The bridge feature is considered unique to Vancouver Island.



The canyon itself was probably formed by a down-cutting surface stream which then, as now, flowed underground only briefly. Large limestone boulders around the entrance to the underground river cave indicate that the cave has collapsed a bit. The (collapsed) arch and bridge were created by eddies where the stream meandered which eventually wore through the rock face. As the stream cut further into the highly soluble limestone, one rock "bridge" was left above water. Many of the 15 other caves in the area are joint-controlled features formed by groundwater in a process unrelated to stream action.



The park has a number of other minor karst features which could be of interest to visitors; for example "grykes" shallow cracks in the ground; and "scallops", rippled rock surfaces created by high pressure water flow. The park requires a well planned system of interpretive signs to draw attention to these minor features of karst topography as well as the more obvious and spectacular formations.

## PARK PHILOSOPHY

The Little Huson Lake Cave area will be developed as a day use recreation area and an interpretive area for local residents and tourists. Camping and picnicking will not be encouraged on the site. Visitors wishing to camp can do so at the nearby Canadian Forest Products campsite on Atluck Lake and Anutz Lake.

In the past, the Regional District has conducted cave tours, but this is not the intent at Little Huson. Here, the visitor can take a self-guided tour using interpretive signs that have been erected at strategic sites. The Regional District's goals in establishing the cave park was to give the public at large an initial awareness of karst processes, as well as providing a chance to view and photograph the spectacular arches, canyon and cathedral cave entrance at the Little Huson site. *Parking, Signage* →



Trail development is rudimentary for three reasons; first, keep the park natural in appearance; second, to make the trail somewhat challenging; and third, to keep construction costs low. For example, stairs are only be provided in a few areas with grades of 50% or more. At two points the trail is close to dangerous, sharp drop-offs with unstable edges. Railings and warning signs are provided in these instances. For the most part, however, the Regional District will only warn visitors that the site has inherent dangers, and then rely on people to use common sense.

The site is located only 9 kilometers off the Island Highway within Western Forest Products' (WFP) T.F.L. #37. With the exception of the last 200 m, the road provides access to active logging areas and is fully maintained by WFP. Western Forest Products has recognized the significance of this Park and works closely with the Regional District on ensuring that there are minimal conflicts between Park use and forestry operations.



The Regional District developed and continues to maintain signage, the parking area, outhouses, a visitor information booth, a 150 metre trail from the road to the canyon and 200 metres of trail along the perimeter of the canyon. Initial improvements were completed in 1985. In the late 1990's a natural arch rock formation in the upper canyon collapsed and the portion of the trail leading to that feature was closed. A stairway was then constructed to a cave entrance, half way down the east side of the large cathedral cave that Atluck Creek flows through. This trail

provides visitors with one of the most spectacular and unusual views of the entire park.

At a later date, the cave park could be developed further by constructing a trail with two bridges right inside the canyon, along the creek from the rock bridge to the cathedral cave entrance. The bridges would have to be suspension bridges. Any developments are given careful consideration before they are implemented, to ensure that man-made "improvements" do not detract from the natural beauty of the canyon.