

# Priest gets Cal Woods award

By **QUENTIN DODD**  
Courier-Islander reporter

Officially Father Charles Brandt is a hermit priest who derives his living from paper conservation and restoration.

But when Brandt is not restoring valuable documents, he's involved in an extensive variety of other conservation programs which led to him receiving the top environmental award from the Steelhead Society of B.C. last week.

Brandt, who lives alongside the Oyster River in a secluded house which is also his laboratory and workshop, was presented with the Cal Woods Award at a special ceremony at his home Friday.

The conservator was scheduled to receive the honor at the Steelhead Society's annual convention in Richmond Feb. 5, but he wasn't available at the time. He was one of numerous volunteers helping to clean up a major oil spill which spread along the west coast of Vancouver Islands from a sunken barge off the coast of Washington State.

So instead, B.C. society president Rory Glennie and Comox Valley valley Steelhead Society chapter president Martin Lamont made the presentation at Brandt's home.

He received the Cal Woods trophy and a framed print of a steelhead being released for him to put on his wall to mark his achievement.

Brandt has been particularly active with the Comox Valley chapter of the Steelhead Society and is a member of a task group set up through the chapter to tackle concerns regarding the



Puntledge River.

He is also chairman of the chapter's Tsolum River enhancement committee, which spearheaded local pressure for a government cleanup of acid mine drainage from the former Mount Washington Copper Mine. The acid drainage and elevated levels of copper associated with it have been identified as the cause of

the obliteration of fish stocks in the Tsolum River and a number of its tributaries on the past 20 years or so.

Glennie also noted that Brandt, who was nominated for the honor

from the Lower Mainland, is also a director of Campbell River's Haig-Brown Kingfisher Creek Society, the local environmental council, the Vancouver Island Resources Society based on Campbell River, and the Oyster River Enhancement Society.

He is also chairman of the environmental committee of the Social Justice Commission of the Catholic Church on Vancouver Island, is involved with the museum societies in Campbell River and Courtenay, and is active with the Comox-Strathcona Natural History Society.

Glennie said shortly before the presentation that Brandt has shown "a long-standing dedication to conservation going right back to when the Pacific Playground marina was being proposed (in the Oyster River estuary in the early 1970s)".

Brandt said he and his supporters did not win the battle against the marina development, but he noted some aspects of the proposal about which they had been particularly concerned did not go ahead.

And he indicated he feels there are signs of cause for optimism that struggles for environmental conservation are now shorter and have a better chance of success.

Brandt told *The Courier-Islander* he found the award "very humbling", especially since he had a great deal of respect for the late Woods, who died about four years ago and whom he knew personally.