

WESTERN CANADA
**WILDERNESS
COMMITTEE**

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0055-01

BC OUGHT TO HAVE AN

Endangered Species Law

March 19, 2009

Dear Mayor and Council,

ATTACHMENTS
AVAILABLE FOR VIEWING
IN LEGISLATIVE SERVICES DEPARTMENT

Last year, many people told us how shocked they were when they read our educational paper called **Why doesn't BC have Endangered Species Legislation?** One of the main surprises for a lot of people was that British Columbia is one of only two provinces in Canada that has no endangered species law, despite the fact that recent polling shows that over 80 percent of British Columbians want one. People asked what they could do to help. We replied with the enclosed Endangered Species petition paper.

Since our founding in BC in 1980, the Wilderness Committee has been one of Canada's main champions of wildlife protection, with wilderness campaigns designed to protect wildlife by identifying and safeguarding critical habitat – the habitat species need to live and raise their young. Our first wildlife-specific campaign was in 1986 when we co-published a report on the need to protect grizzly bears. The result was the identification and eventual protection of the Khutzeymateen Grizzly Sanctuary on BC's mid-coast – a giant step forward.

After the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity in Rio de Janeiro, we urged the Canadian government to adopt strong endangered species legislation at the federal level. Ten years later Canada finally passed its own Species at Risk Act – another giant step.

But much work remains. Since 1991, one of the Wilderness Committee's main wildlife focuses is the Northern spotted owl. Destruction of old-growth habitat has been the leading cause of the owl's population decline, yet the BC government has continued to carry out and allow clearcut logging in owl habitat. The BC government's mismanagement of the spotted owl is a prime example of the need for a provincial endangered species law. While the BC government has set aside 27,000 hectares for the owl, much more habitat is needed for them to be able to rebound.

Despite court cases, research papers, rallies and publications, the status of spotted owls has continued to deteriorate and the BC government seems intent on its course of inaction until the owl completely disappears from our landscape. Ironically, scientists have forecast 2010, the year the Vancouver-Whistler Olympics come to spotted owl habitat, as the year when spotted owls will become extinct in BC.

If there is any silver lining to this, it's that the spotted owl has helped raise awareness of threats faced by all of British Columbia's 1,600 species at risk. Since we can't fight this battle one species at a time, the Wilderness Committee continues working to educate British Columbians on this issue and how they can encourage the implementation of endangered species legislation focussed on identifying and protecting critical habitat so that the spotted owl and the rest of BC's endangered wildlife receive adequate protection.

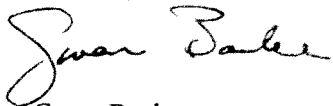
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The future of BC's remarkable wildlife depends upon people like you - people in leadership positions who love nature and feel passionately that BC's wildlife are worth protecting. We hope that you will be inspired and motivated to take whatever steps you can to help ensure that BC is no longer 'the Worst Place' in Canada for species at risk.

Thanks for taking the time to read this letter. Together we can make sure BC gets the best endangered species legislation in Canada. Please let us know what you will do to ensure BC introduces world-class endangered species legislation so our province can truly live up to being the best place on earth!

Sincerely,



Gwen Barlee

Wilderness Committee Policy Director

