

**FREE  
MAGAZINE**

Issue 4: 2011

# THE FOOTPRINT PRESS

**Passages from Silverdale, Mission,  
Abbotsford and beyond.**



# *Message from the Editorial Committee*

Tracy Lyster, Phyllis Young, Catherine MacDonald, Bruce Klassen, Nik Cuff, Don Mair, Mike Diener

Cover photo: Silverdale Black Bear, Bruce Klassen

This issue of the Footprint Press is dedicated to a celebration of life in all of its forms. From the tiniest bacteria to the tallest tree, in Nature, all life is sacred. Each creature serves a function and each is needed to ensure the balance and health of entire ecosystems. It is only when human beings interfere with this necessary complexity that the system breaks down and entire species, and the services they provide, disappear forever. Unforeseen consequences of extinction continue to occur, despite advances in science, when human beings stop caring about life. We fail to appreciate Nature's wisdom when we persecute some species and disregard their role based on our own ignorance, fears or preferences. Mission sadly, allowed Silverdale developers to label several local species including black bears, bobcats and cougars as "inappropriate" and therefore not deserving of consideration, opening the door to destruction, habitat loss and more extinctions. When we diminish the value of life in this manner, we also diminish ourselves. We become desensitized to disrespect justified by denial of obvious harms. Perhaps desensitization is why it was so easy for Mission council to label some of its human residents as inappropriate, and to subject them to invasive, demeaning government-sanctioned home invasions. Perhaps desensitization is why we have allowed corporations such as Walmart, with abysmal track records on the environment and human rights, to proliferate our towns. Perhaps desensitization is why we are willing to sacrifice the lives of others, human and nonhuman, for economic gain, and even hand over control of water, the essence of life, to corporate interests. Our salvation can only occur when we come to understand that all life is sacred including the moles, the voles, the bears, and the bats. Our own health is tied to the continuation of Nature, not her subjugation. Only when we acknowledge the delicate intricacies of all living forms and our own interrelationships with Nature can we hope for survival.

Our salvation can only occur when we care.







## The Bears in the Neighbourhood

Ken Macquisten D.V.M.

**B**lack bear sightings in the Mission area and many Lower Mainland municipalities are frequent, especially north of the Fraser River. Should we be concerned? Not as much as you might have been led to believe.

For years many outdoor magazines and other media, including brochures advising how to behave in bear country, have portrayed bears as dangerous and unpredictable. Their large size, formidable teeth and claws, and the occasional report of someone, somewhere, having been attacked by a bear, has served to make many people fearful of bears.

Fear, whether justified or not, motivates entire societies to take action, often completely disproportionate to the actual risk. Politicians, it seems, are particularly adept at using the concept of fear to move agendas, even to send us to war, but I digress.

People's attitudes towards co-existence with bears seem to depend on where you live. North Vancouver has a resident black bear population somewhere between 70 and 100 bears. These bears are frequent backyard visi-

tors, and to date there has not been a single incident in North Vancouver of anyone having been injured by a black bear. The community is well educated about how to behave around bears, and how to discourage them from being a nuisance.

Contrast that to the reaction in my community, Abbotsford, when a small 125 pound bear was seen on a residential street close to my house a few years ago, a rare occurrence. The police were called, and responded by sealing off the neighborhood with 12 patrol cars, and going door to door telling residents to stay inside. The incident ended badly for the frightened little bear as she tried to run out of the controlled area before the Conservation Officer could get there. She was shot by the police, before she could "hurt someone".

I am not aware of anyone having been injured by a bear in Mission. Unfortunately for bears everywhere in the Lower Mainland, a lady was attacked by a bear in Coquitlam in August 2008. This is the only case I have heard of in this part of BC in the 30 years I have lived here. Once again, the fear generated from this isolated incident was completely disproportionate to the risk.



But what is the truth about bears? Just how concerned should you be that there are bears in the neighborhood?

One place to find some great information is at the Whistler “Get Bear Smart Society” website [www.bearsmart.com](http://www.bearsmart.com) especially on Whistler’s efforts to co-exist with bears.

Perhaps you think you know about bears. Perhaps then you think that one of the most dangerous bears is a female with cubs. True for grizzlies, but not true at all for black bears. Defense of cubs is primarily a grizzly bear trait that people have generalized to black bears. An extensive study was done by Stephen Herrero and Andrew Higgins analyzing all reported bear attacks in BC over a 37 year period. When the incidents involved a grizzly bear, it was a female bear 74% of the time. When bear attacks involved a black bear, it was never a female. Black bears are inherently timid and shy animals, and females are particularly so.

Black bear attacks are exceedingly rare. Herrero and Higgins confirmed a total of 19 black bear incidents resulting in serious injury or fatality in BC in the 37 year study period. Less than 3 dozen people have been killed in all of North America by black bears in the last century, none by female black bears.

It turns out, the least dangerous bears are those that live in close proximity to people. The serious attacks are almost always in remote areas where bears had little or no previous contact with people.

We share several characteristics with bears, but the one in particular that gets bears in the most trouble is that we have the same food preferences. Black bears, given the choice of living with us or away from us, will always choose away, unless the lure of food makes the

risks worth it. Once a bear becomes comfortable in the presence of people, they are known as “habituated”. A habituated bear is not the same thing as a dangerous bear, but unfortunately many people, including wildlife authorities, take the attitude that they are. The end result of a lack of tolerance for the presence of the bear, coupled with a bear that is tolerant of our presence, is usually a dead bear.

Another popular term in bear circles is “food conditioned”. Those are the bears that have come to associate people with food, and are willing to take risks to obtain it. Unfortunately, some wildlife authorities think that a food conditioned bear is the same thing as a people “food addicted” bear. In other words, some think once bears have become accustomed to people food they cannot ever again be trusted to not “re-offend”. In fact, bears are opportunists, and they can adapt to different food sources. They will seek food that presents the greatest reward for the lowest risks.

Since bears aren’t as dangerous as you thought, can we share the neighborhood? Of course, but it is in our best interests, and the bear’s, to make our neighborhoods less desirable for them. If you want a bear to go away, simply remove what is attracting him there in the first place – food. Secure waste containers, compost piles, and remove bird feeders. If you want to keep feeding birds, or maintain a beehive, then simple, inexpensive electric fencing can be used as a well-proven deterrent to bears.

**Dr. Ken Macquisten** is a practicing veterinarian in Abbotsford. He is the founder of the Grouse Mountain Refuge for Endangered Wildlife and the Kicking Horse Grizzly Bear Refuge, lead vet for the Northern Spotted Owl breeding project, and is on the Recovery Team for the Oregon Spotted Frog.





## Artist Statement

Megan Sjogren

**B**ears are very close to my heart. The area I live in is next to a park where many bears and other wildlife live. From time to time I will see bears in my back yard looking for food. I worry for the future of bears. It seems as though we are developing so much land that there are not many places for them to go. I'm always hearing in the papers or from friends about how a bear was in their yard going through their garbage to find food. I've decided to do a reactive work about this.

I wanted to do 5 sketches with black and white charcoal pencils and each sketch will depict a bear looking lost and hungry in an urban area where they do not belong. By doing this I'm hoping to raise questions about how the wildlife in B.C. are being treated and protected. Is our rapidly increasing population putting more strain on the earth's resources and animals than it can cope with?



**Megan Sjogren**  
University of the  
Fraser Valley





# Welcome Bats to the Belfry

Sylvia Pincott

**T**he return of the Rufous Hummingbirds in mid-March is welcomed with great enthusiasm! Our several little bat species returning in April or May don't usually receive quite the same fanfare!

It is not certain where the various bat species spend their winters. Some migrate short distances to hibernate, while others may travel as far south as California. The Little Brown Myotis, one of the more commonly seen species of our area, likely hibernates in caves in uncertain locations. Their return ensures a nightly patrol in search of mosquito's and moths – with each bat consuming up to 500 insects an hour!

Much unfortunate folklore surrounds bats. Even though their list of contributions to our well-being is long, their history is one of relentless persecution and misunderstanding. The folklore has been easily accepted for a creature we can barely see in the dark, and know little about. Research and photography are now removing the mystery and revealing marvelous little creatures with much to be appreciated.

Bats are not aggressive, and they will not entangle themselves in one's hair! They are not "blind as a bat" and, in fact, have excellent eyesight. For their nocturnal aerial maneuvers, however, they rely on an incredibly accurate sonar navigation system that enables them to hunt accurately and to avoid all obstacles in darkness. They are not more frequently rabid than other mammals, but any bat found on the ground may be sick or injured, and it is best not to handle it. There are no vampire bats in Canada!

While bats are mammals, they are not rodents. They usually bear only one young per year, and often do not reproduce until they are two or more years old. Some British Columbia bat species mate in the fall, with fertilization being delayed until spring when the females emerge from hibernation.

Their wingspan ranges from 20 to 42 centimeters, with body weight in the 6 gram range. They are known to live up to thirty years in the wild.

The 16 species of bats in British Columbia rank as our most important predators of night-flying insects. Of these 16 species, it is sad to note that eight are listed as endangered or at risk. Even though they are protected under the Provincial Wildlife Act, they are literally disappearing before we have the opportunity to get to know much about them.

Pesticide use is a serious threat. If bats consume insects containing pesticide residues, poisons can build up in



their systems to levels toxic to the individuals or their young. The spraying of pesticides can also reduce or eliminate many of the flying insects on which bats feed.

Extermination of roosting bats is illegal, but removal of roosting sites is, nonetheless, a major problem. It is unfortunate that bats are often assumed to be "pests" and are not tolerated. During the few months that they are active they need secluded nursery roosts and daytime "hang-outs". The occasional attic, rock crevices, hollow trees and loose bark provide important shelter, but as old trees are removed so goes essential habitat.

We have felt honoured in the past two summers to have a blue-listed Townsend's Big-eared Bat (now known as Batty!) roosting in our carport storage cupboard. Males of this species roost alone and, unlike the Little Brown Bats, they prefer to hang from an open ceiling rather than roosting in a group within a narrow crack. We are hoping that "our" Batty will return to us again this spring!

As we gain understanding about the needs and plight of bats, and the role that they play in our environment, it is hoped that their presence will not be merely tolerated, but encouraged!

We say, "Welcome back, Batty, and all your friends!"

**Sylvia Pincott**

# A New Farmer Is Not Alone!

Amanda Smith

**S**ome farms in the Fraser Valley market their products through a socio-economic model called a CSA. A CSA, or a Community Supported Agriculture program, brings together farms and consumers to share the risks and benefits of a seasons' worth of food production. CSA customers pre-pay for a share of the farm's bounty early in the season and, in return, receive a weekly delivery of produce during the growing season. When the customer purchases a CSA share, they support the farmers in a financial way, but also take on the risks involved with seasonal food production by accepting that yield fluctuations and crop failures do happen! Most CSA customers elect to buy shares from farms that use practices they agree with and want to support.

In purchasing a share the customer has every opportunity to ask questions or visit the farm in order to learn more about how the food is grown and what it takes to be a farmer in today's climate. With the economy and weather ever changing, it is difficult to be a small-scale farmer, but with this support, it does help them feel that they are not alone.

Skeeter Farm, located in Yarrow, B.C. at the Fraser Valley Duck and Goose Farm, is in its third season of running a vegetable CSA program. In addition to farmer's markets, the Skeeter Farm CSA has been an integral part in bringing together Amy Suess and Amanda Smith (the farmers) and their customers. Knowing that others are involved in the farming process helps to motivate

the farmers and keeps them going through the ups and downs of learning to farm.

Skeeter Farm grows a large diversity of veggie, herb, and flower crops in order to maintain an interesting weekly CSA box for their customers from Chilliwack to Vancouver. They also offer a weekly newsletter and recipes to get the customer acquainted with their produce. A new recipe for beets is always welcome!

The CSA model is truly a great way for small farms which have a hard time competing against larger ones in the traditional marketing streams, to market their product within the Fraser Valley. The local food movement is very important. The need and the desire has grown for fresh local food from farms that offer diversity in its products.

Farms from California and around the world have taken over much of our local food markets in recent years. It is not too late however, to show your support to local farmers, whether it be through grain shares, beef shares, or vegetable shares. Visiting farmer's markets, local berry farms, or pumpkin patches is another great way to meet your growers and learn the importance of local food. Nothing tastes like an in-season juicy ripe tomato, dripping down your chin in the August heat!

For any additional information on CSA shares and how the program works, contact [skeeterfarm@gmail.com](mailto:skeeterfarm@gmail.com) or visit Farm Folk/City Folks listing of CSA Farms

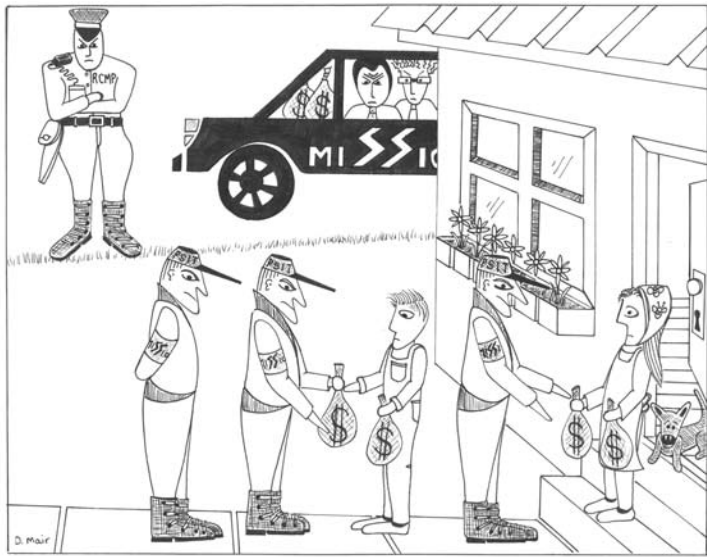
<http://www.ffcf.bc.ca/resources/kp/csa.html>.

**Amanda Smith, Owner/Farmer, Skeeter Farm**  
[skeeterfarm.blogspot.com](http://skeeterfarm.blogspot.com), [facebook.com/SkeeterFarm](http://facebook.com/SkeeterFarm)





# Digging themselves in deeper: Mission's Controlled Substance Property Bylaw



**M**ission council unanimously passed its Controlled Substance Property Bylaw and formed a Public Safety Inspection team (PSIT) in April 2008. The bylaw allows the PSIT team to enter and search homes that use more the 93 kwh/day of electricity. The PSIT performs a visual inspection of the outside of the home and if the three man team suspects the home may be a grow-op, a 24 hour notice of inspection is posted, and the home is searched the following day. The team then looks for “evidence” of the property having been used to produce controlled substances. Even if no grow-op is found and no criminal charges are laid, if the team decides evidence is there (e.g., potting soil) the home is charged \$5,200.00 plus a remediation order to fix things like mold. The fine is posted with the home’s property taxes, and interest of \$100/month can be charged if the fine is not paid immediately. In some cases, the remediation orders and fines have totaled over \$10,000. In addition to fines, Mission has authorized Notice on Title of 67 homes as a “possible controlled substance property”, thereby severely impacting the resale value of the home.

While Mission claims the PSIT program is revenue neutral, since its inception, 283, or just over half of 499 properties searched, have been charged the fee totaling over 1 ½ million dollars. The obvious conflict of interest inherent in a team that is paid by the fines it levies does not appear to be a concern for Mission council. Council ignored warnings from BC Civil Liberties lawyer Michael Vonn Dec.13/10 who described the process as “extortionate” and advised Mission that hundreds of innocent people were being harmed by the bylaw. Multiple delegations from distressed residents informed council that this process has resulted in serious damages, such as mortgages being recalled, being turned away from the USA border, and being denied em-

ployment. All these testimonies fell on deaf council ears. Only when Mission residents Len Gratto and Stacey Gow-anlock threatened Mission with legal action did council decide to review the bylaw which was put on hold Jan. 24/11 and reviewed in-camera by council and by their new communications firm on Feb.28/11. The review of the bylaw was conducted internally by Mission administrative staff and released March 7/11. Instead of canceling the program and apologizing to the hundreds of Mission families harmed by the bylaw, Mission council decided to dig itself in deeper and continue the program with a few minor changes such as hiring a communications firm, “Laura Balance media group” and changing the name of the bylaw. Council also voted to meet privately with editors of the local papers, Mission Record and Abbotsford-Mission Times. People who have not paid their fines will have their files reviewed (cost of review \$30,750) and fees reassessed! Why people who paid the fines are not being included in the review suggests Mission council is more intent on keeping the money already collected, than ensuring innocent people have not been harmed. Reduction of fees for some of the files would also severely weaken Mission’s legal position by demonstrating that the fines were based on unreliable, if not arbitrary, criteria. A highly biased survey designed to elicit support for the searches with leading questions such as “Do you support the District of Mission working with the fire department to take necessary steps to reduce the possibility of residential house fires? YES/NO” was posted on the Mission website but has since been removed.

On May 5/11, after all attempts to communicate with council failed, several hundred residents filed a class action lawsuit against the District of Mission. The lawsuit is supported by the BC Civil Liberties who state the lack of procedural fairness or recourse for residents to dispute the fees coupled with Mission disclosing the searches to 3rd parties is a serious violation of citizens’ rights. Indeed, the nature of damages to Mission citizens suggests the claim could exceed \$40 million.







## The Unfriendly Giant – Giant Hogweed

Jeanne Hughes

**G**iant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) may be described as ‘majestic’, ‘spectacular’, and ‘Brobdingnagian’. (Okay, maybe not that last one - I just needed a more ‘spectacular’ word than ‘gigantic’). Indeed, giant hogweed is all of these things, and it is easy to understand why it is admired and cultivated, but I’m telling you now, it is not a good idea. Many people heard about this plant for the first time in the summer of 2010 when the media caught wind of the fact that giant hogweed contains a toxic sap that is dangerous to people. This sap contains chemicals that can cause severe welts, rashes, and blistering followed by pigmented scarring when it contacts skin in the presence of sunlight (a process called ‘phytophotodermatitis’ for the word nerds out there). Scarring can persist for as long as six years. This sap is found in the leaves, stems, flowers, and roots of giant hogweed as well as in other plants of the Carrot Family, though not nearly to the same degree. Contact with sap can occur by brushing against any broken plant parts, handling plant material, or touching tools or mowing equipment used during giant hogweed removal. But before proceeding too much farther, I will provide some background on this plant.

Giant hogweed is an invasive alien plant that originates from the Caucasus Mountains in west central Asia where it grows in subalpine meadows and forest edges. It arrived in our fair region through horticulture due to its impressive size and appeal as a specimen plant in gardens. It can grow 2-5 meters tall, has large, deeply incised and pointed com-

pound leaves up to 3 metres wide, and large, flat-topped, umbrella-shaped white flower clusters up to 1 meter in diameter. Another identifying feature is the hollow stem with dark reddish-purple raised spots and stiff hairs (though don’t get close enough to this plant to verify the hollow stem). In the Fraser Valley giant hogweed grows in full or partial shade along streams, moist forests, and meadows. Blooming occurs from mid-May through early August. Two native plants are sometimes confused with giant hogweed: cow parsnip (*Heracleum maximum*) and palmate coltsfoot (*Petasites frigidus*).

Giant hogweed is not only a threat to human health and safety, but also to agricultural land and natural areas as it easily crowds out vegetation, reducing crop and wildlife habitat value. It is a highly competitive plant due to vigorous early-season growth, tolerance of full shade and seasonal flooding, and ability to co-exist with other widespread and aggressive invasive plant species. Relatively shallow roots do not hold the soil as well as a healthy complex of native species, and as a consequence infestations can result in increased erosion on steep terrain or along stream banks, particularly when winter dieback exposes soil to water erosion during our rainy season.

Controlling giant hogweed, like controlling any invasive plant you don’t want growing in your garden, is accomplished by understanding its growth cycle and then exploiting its weaknesses. Giant hogweed disperses and establishes by seed, which are moved by wind up to 4 meters, or longer distances by water along streams, ditches, or storm pipes. It grows for 3-5 years before flowering and dying in the last year. During the first years of growth it stores increasing amounts of energy in its roots to subsequently develop its flower stalk, flowers, and seeds. You may observe in an established population plants of varying ages – small first year plants, larger older plants, and fourth or fifth year plants in flower. Repeatedly cutting the flower stalk at ground level can be a method of killing giant hogweed. Removing the seed head in the summer can prevent the production and dispersal of new seeds – a useful short-term control technique. Of course, the last and perhaps most important step is monitoring the area to prevent reestablishment from seeds in the soil. If you have this plant on your property and are planning on controlling it yourself, make sure your eyes and skin are properly protected, cut off the seed head for a stop-gap measure, or cut the plant off at the base below the soil surface with a shovel. Any remnant plant parts should be bagged and thrown in the garbage, not composted. WorkSafe BC has prepared a fact sheet at: [http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/health\\_and\\_safety/bulletins/toxic\\_plants/assets/pdf/tp0602.pdf](http://www.worksafebc.com/publications/health_and_safety/bulletins/toxic_plants/assets/pdf/tp0602.pdf) If you would like further information on how to control giant hogweed, or have a ‘situation’ you would like to discuss, please contact me.

**Jeanne Hughes**, Coordinator for the Fraser Valley Invasive Plant Council, [fvipc@shaw.ca](mailto:fvipc@shaw.ca) or 604-615-9333.



# Getting to know our local Species at Risk

## Western Screech Owl

Val Pack

Owls have been described as “marvellous, mysterious, powerful and deadly.” Having large, lidded, eyelashed-eyes fronting their



round faces and beaks resembling noses, many people agree that they have a human-like facial appearance. Without the physical means to move their eyes, owls have the outstanding ability to rotate their heads 180 degrees.

Flapping short, broad wings in their nightly quests for unsuspecting prey, Western Screech Owls are small, with grey to grey-brown colourings. These little non-migratory owls, whose scientific name is (*Megascops Kennicottii*, aka Kennicott's Screech Owl), and standing only 9 inches tall, are 1 of 205 owl species, worldwide. Described as “masters of disguise”, unique to this bird species, is the ability to avoid predators by camouflaging themselves to blend into a tree's bark. They do this by using a combination of their feathered colouration, tufted ear feathers, and an ability to change the appearance of their body shape by stretching their feathers.

Although their vocalizations involve screeching to some extent, Western Screech owls also make “hoo...hoo” sounds, with further descriptions suggesting that, what begins as a series of one-pitched hollow whistles, becomes a “bouncing ball” episode of low whistles. Additionally, their other vocalizations have been described as whistles, purrs, clickings, snorts and hisses, earning them the reputation of being “versatile vocalists”. Considered a quiet bird, nevertheless, this specie's hooting is heard year-round in the coastal areas, but escalates in February.

The range of the Western Screech Owl extends from Southeast Alaska, along the Pacific Northwest Coast, to Baja, California. A sub-species, *Megascops kennicottii macfarlanei*, suffering rapidly declining populations, is estimated to consist of from 50-200 birds, and ranges from B. C.'s Interior to Central America.

B. C.'s Screech Owls, like some of the other coastal owls, prefer old growth or mixed forests and riparian areas close to water sources. Though they favour those latter locations, Western Screech owls now often dwell in fragmented woods, mainly out of necessity, due to the rapid disappearance of old



growth forested areas. These owl populations are located on Vancouver Island, some of the coastal islands, and the adjacent mainland coast. Further numbers dwell on the Fraser Valley Lowlands, up to Hope including a local population in Silverdale, Mission. Terrace is the most northerly B.C. area where Screech Owls can be found.

Travelling at ease through the night-darkened trees, and possessing both excellent vision and hearing, Screech Owls are silent, lethal predators of mice, rats, meadow moles, other small mammals, amphibians and birds, as well as insects and even fish.

Western Screech Owl nests often utilize natural cavities in trees, or those made by Pileated woodpeckers and Northern Flickers. The majority of nests sadly, are now being found in wooden nest boxes. Nesting and roosting also takes place in buildings, vines and crevices. The nests are usually found at heights of between 1.2 and 12.2 metres above ground level. Most nests are devoid of materials, though the more elaborate ones contain such things as small amounts of wood chips, feathers, moss, and animal fur. They are usually located at elevations lower than 540 metres.

Breeding in the coastal areas begins in early Spring, with the larger-sized female owls laying 1 to 5 eggs in intervals, from mid-March to the end of May. These spaces of time are necessary to ensure that each single chick hatched, is well fed, enabling its chances of survival, before its succeeding sibling is hatched. Incubation times vary from between 21 to 30 days, with fledging of the owlets beginning 35 to 42 days following their hatch.

Described as the largest threat to their populations, are the changes and destructions of critical Screech Owl habitat, due to human involvements: construction of buildings, roads, dams and other endeavours. The majority of these developments occur in areas of low elevations, those locations preferred by Screech Owls. Due to these changes, owl habitat has not only been altered, but has been fragmented as well. Another threat consists of current forestry methods, new forest plantations covering large areas with young trees offering few snags suitable for owl nests, and roosting opportunities.

Predation by other species consisting of mammals, snakes, and even larger owl species such as the introduced Barred and Great Horned owls, is another real threat. Both of those larger owls are known to be aggressive, and are also competitors for the same prey and nesting snags as the Screech Owls. While those larger owls are able to adjust well to “fragmented habitat”, the little Western Screech Owls require an area of at least 3 to 60 hectares for subsistence. Other dangers to this small bird and other owls, are injuries and deaths resulting from

collisions with vehicles. Due to their light weight, drafts from passing vehicles, draw owls into them. Often vehicle passengers throw unwanted food from the windows onto roadsides, which attracts rodents, a favourite prey of many owls, thereby enticing them to the dangerous roadways. Owls are prone to retinal tears to their eyes, which may impair their hunting successes, therefore their very survival can be affected.

The Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) lists the Western Screech Owl as a species of “Special Concern”. According to the Wilderness Committee, British Columbia has no Endangered Species law placing many plant and animal species at great risk of becoming extirpate (extinct in a specific area), or becoming extinct in a general sense. It is essential that B. C. bans further cutting of our remaining old growth forests, including the discontinuation of exporting old growth products, and instead focuses on well-regulated, and sustainable logging of second-growth forests.

Western Screech Owls are considered as a “flagship species for this ecosystem.” As such, they should be considered as the “poster child” to bring about public awareness of the immediate, critical need to consider the huge importance of conserving preferred owl habitat, “mature riparian” areas. Most owls need our help and support, particularly the little Western Screech Owl.

One practical, but important way to support Screech Owls is to build and erect nesting boxes. Excellent plans for these boxes are available on many websites (e.g., [www.avianweb.com/nestboxes](http://www.avianweb.com/nestboxes)). Another way of helping them, is to learn more about these owls, how to identify them, their nesting/roosting areas, threats facing them, what is being done to help them and other suggestions on how you can individually support them. An abundance of information is available at the public library, and online.

The bottom line is the Province of British Columbia still lacks an Endangered Species law. Letters or emails sent to Premier Christy Clark, and your local MLA encouraging the immediate creation and enforcement of habitat protection, is another important step in bringing about positive change for the little Western Screech Owl and other vulnerable species.

**Val Pack**  
Mission





## Create a No Mow Zone

Tracy Lyster

**H**ave you ever wondered about the environmental impact of the perfect lawn? Are green lawns really green? Since moving to Mission 12 years ago, I have been struck by the time and effort people exert in the endless pursuit of that artificial manicured look. It is not unusual for people to spend 2-3 hours and more on their ride 'em mowers every week. During this time the songs of the birds are obliterated by the endless

drone of the mower. Lately, gas powered leaf blowers have been added to the mechanical medley.

Add campaigns shame residents who do not drench their lawns with toxic chemicals underlying the social pressure people feel to conform to the pursuit of the perfect lawn. While industry's interest in marketing the lucrative lawn business is obvious, would citizens choose lawns if we knew the real impacts of turf?

Lawns are monocultures with no food or habitat value for native species. Virtually no wildlife is able to survive the weekly cutting ritual. Lawns leave a huge carbon footprint. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), a traditional gas powered lawn mower produces as much air pollution each year as 43 new cars each being driven 12,000 miles. The EPA states that 17 million gallons of fuel, mostly gasoline, are spilled each year while refueling lawn equipment. That's more than all the oil spilled by the Exxon Valdez, in the Gulf of Alaska. In addition to groundwater contamination, spilled fuel that evaporates into the air, and volatile organic compounds (VOCs) spit out by small engines, make smog-forming ozone when cooked by heat and sunlight.

Gas mowers emit hydrocarbons (a principle ingredient of smog), particulate matter (damaging to the respiratory system), carbon monoxide (a poisonous gas) and carbon dioxide (contributing to global warming). The health toll

Salmonberry (*Rubus spectabilis*)





includes cancer as well as damage to lungs, heart, and both the immune and detoxification systems. Plus smog inhibits plant growth. Besides their carbon footprint, large-scale turf farms consume vast amounts of water and occupy valuable land that could be used for food production. Fertilizers and pesticides used to artificially keep lawns green risk poisoning our precious ground water, springs and streams. Water consumption goes up dramatically in the summer months due to lawn sprinkling. With water restrictions becoming more and more frequent, the lawn is becoming less and less attractive.

Lawns are expensive. Besides the \$1000 or so it can cost to buy the mower and blower, yearly lawn maintenance can add up when one considers costs of chemicals (fertilizers, pesticides) energy (electricity, gas), mower servicing/repairs and water costs.

But there are alternatives to the traditional lawn. Push mowers are better for air quality but do not address the issue of water consumption or destruction of wildlife habitat. Some people have even argued for artificial lawns as a green alternative but this does not address the footprint of the plastics used to create artificial turf or the loss of habitat.

A more progressive step out of the box alternative is to get rid of the lawns altogether. There are alternatives to the traditional lawn such as creating an “ecolawn” using a diverse mixture of low growing perennials that do not require mowing, or planting a vegetable garden that provides healthy food for your family. Native shrubs and plants require no watering once established and provide food and habitat for birds, bees, frogs and other creatures. Additional benefits include time savings. Imagine what you could do to benefit your family or the community with the time you spend mowing and blowing!

It is possible for communities to live in harmony with the natural environment. Individuals feel empowered with the realization that they can make a positive difference to fight climate change in their own yards. The days of the traditional lawn are numbered. Imagine our community covered with a dense patchwork quilt of wildlife habitat and corridors. All it takes is to break free of the tyranny of the lawn and create your own no mow zone! For more information on how you can transform your lawn into a haven for Nature, see [Naturescapebc.ca](http://Naturescapebc.ca). and “Attracting Native Pollinators” at the library.

**Tracy Lyster**

Silverdale, Mission

## Local native plants that attract bees and hummingbirds

Indian-Plum  
(*Oemleria cerasiformis*)



Salmonberry  
(*Rubus spectabilis*)



Western Trillium  
(*Trillium ovalum*)



Red flowering currant  
(*Ribes sanguineum*)





### Concerned citizens protest Private “Sprawl Water” at Mission municipal hall April 11/11.

See CAUSS.ca for our position statement and updates on this \$300 million public bail-out for Silverdale and Abbotsford developers.

## Thinking differently

Kevin Francis

“I wish the world was a place where fair was the bottom line; where the kind of idealism you showed at the hearing was rewarded, not taken advantage of. Unfortunately we don’t live in that world.

-Funny...I always believed the world was what we make of it...”

This line is from the 1997 movie “Contact”, starring Jodie Foster. The beauty of this line is the simplicity with which it provides an explanation for what happens in our everyday lives. In a time where citizens feel they have no control over their future and a task which seems overwhelming the vast majority of us turn to cynicism and apathy.

It’s too big for me, I’m too busy, there is nothing I can do about it...we’ve all heard these before and many of us use them every day. When an event, especially a political one, doesn’t turn in our favour, we immediately withdraw from participating in changing the process and retreat to our cave where we seek comfort with televised entertainment. Down the line, we start complaining about our elected representatives, the system, how we

are powerless to change it, and the futility of attempting to do so. But are we?

Today we talk about elite elected leaders instead of representatives, funded think tanks instead of public intellectuals and experts in every domain instead of using common sense. We run to them to solve every problem instead of participating in the solution, only to return to the idiot box and to cynicism. The world has indeed become what we made of it.

The truth is that we have all the power in the world but choose not to use it. Millions face violence and death just to be able to cast a vote and have a say in their life. What excuse can we possibly have here in Canada? I know some of you are saying that nobody represents your interests. Really? Nobody? Then consider running yourself! Why let the world be run by people you believe are destroying everything you cherish?

Your vote is worth \$1.75 to whomever you give it to. If no party represents your interests, why don’t you give your \$1.75 to an independent candidate or (gasp!) a third party? But more and more we isolate ourselves in Hollywoodland and then approach things from a “Why should I participate?” point of view. It slowly erodes the democratic process because the citizen is absent by his/her own choice.



## WHAT CAN YOU DO?




I have lived in many towns but none are like Mission. I have witnessed a plethora of artists and intellectuals leave the town in order to learn something of value and return to implement it here. We have seen brilliant, young and energetic people reach the pinnacle of their dreams. A town that built its own hospital instead of asking for government handouts, one which chose to keep its iden-

tity and beauty, and one which is a true gem, unique and rare.

Mission can choose to follow faulty business models, destroy pristine land and rivers, remain glued to the tube, avoid participating in their government and wallow in apathy; but how would that be any different than any other town and every other year?

What if we decided to work together, follow the example of our young ones and try to think differently? Look at the future through their eyes and wonder where our imagination can lead us; the exploration of unknown possibilities. What if we actively took part in the running of our town, have a speaker's corner, debate pros & cons and turn off the TV? To reconnect with our neighbours, with nature, with our community and give up the endless expansion of the artificial concrete landscape designed for mindless shopping. To bring back lost values and traditions like talking to one another and decision-making with the next 7 generations in mind. To me losing this vision of Mission and its residents is the price we will pay if we remain apathetic. I choose to do things differently this year. I choose to stand for what is right not what is lucrative, for democratic values not autocracy, for the future not the next quarterly profit, for action and engagement not cynicism and apathy. I choose to believe that the world is what we make of it.

**Kevin Francis**, Cinema Politica, MyMission 





# Taking Back the Economy: Making the Economy work for People

Daniel van der Kroon

I know of a fellow with a bumper sticker that says, “Mall-Wart: Your Source for Cheap Plastic Crap”, and now that a Walmart is coming to Mission as well as a second one to Abbotsford, it’s definitely worth considering what the opening of two such department stores will mean for the eastern Fraser Valley.

Obviously, the Walmart Corporation feels there is enough of a market here to justify the opening of two new stores – in a region of less than 200,000 people that already has one Walmart. Who are all these people who will shop at the new Walmarts? It stands to reason that they are all the people who once did all their shopping at existing department stores, as well as in local mom and pop shops. Now they will spread their shopping dollars around further, and probably take on a little more debt because there are just so many more goods available.

Now, I’m probably not the most qualified person to comment on Walmart, since I’ve only set foot inside of the

Abbotsford location two or three times in the last five years, mostly to visit the insurance office, but it’s my understanding that the bumper sticker I referenced is more or less correct – that at Walmart you will get goods and products that would likely be more expensive if made here in North America, but have a tendency to break on arrival.

There will likely be citizen’s groups who argue that Abbotsford and Mission’s respective city councils should not permit Walmart to open two new stores. Such a position would give our councils a black eye because in no other case do they make rulings on the basis of a firm’s products. The good or ill they bring to a community is for the people to decide whether or not they will shop there. Council’s mandate is to protect the economic and environmental well-being of its people, and that is why the approval or rejection of a new Walmart is such a difficult choice.





On the one hand, inexpensive products should theoretically improve people's material lives, but on the other, the new Walmarts will take up a lot of land that is currently forested, providing habitat for wildlife. (This is deemed not significant in these cases because no fish-bearing stream runs near the proposed developments). Certainly rejection of a new Walmart on the grounds of preserving other wildlife habitat – deer, raptors, owls, etc. would be a departure from historic development patterns.

It is time that Abbotsford and Mission came to grips with the fact that limits do exist, and that with our rapidly expanding populations, we need to start to use space more efficiently. We cannot continue to expand at such a pace. Already, our urban streams no longer support salmon, the deer have no place to forage, and we have no good way of dealing with our waste. There are limits, and we cannot deny them forever.

I personally cannot wait for the emergence of a reasonable, steady-state economy, where we are content to have enough to live comfortably – not more, not less. A steady-state economy that does not permit extreme poverty in any of its citizens, does not give up on anybody as hopeless or incurable, and has enough for all its citizens to live healthful lives without dependence on incessant consumption.

We need to realize that we cannot expect our councils to make all the hard choices for us. We have to make some of the hard choices ourselves in our spending and consumption habits. In the case of Walmart, that may mean choosing quality over quantity, choosing local over distantly foreign, and choosing health and durability over convenience. If these choices do not present themselves, we could choose to save our money and spend more time helping each other instead. In sum, that means shopping at Walmart only if it provides local, durable products. Shopping at Walmart if it makes community friendly transportation – bicycle, public transit, pedestrianism a priority. Shopping at Walmart if it pays its employees a living wage and not if it pays them a poverty wage. Shopping at Walmart if it promotes minimization of the waste stream.

Let's stop being slaves to the global economy, and start realizing that we control the economy. The economy is not some abstract, mysterious, foreign entity that holds the key to happiness, but a malleable, flexible one that we have every power to control if we decide to do so.

We are the economy and it is our servant, not the other way around.

**Daniel Van der Kroon**

UFV Students for Sustainability





# Why Gravel Pits Matter to You (Excavating Democracy)

Walter Neufeld

**M**uch has happened since I last reported about the reckless scarring of the Fraser Valley. For decades BC citizens have attempted to stop the practice but it now threatens to get much worse, much faster.

***“Integrity is the lifeblood of democracy. Deceit is a poison in its veins.”*** Edward Kennedy

Some citizens had believed they were at fault for the government’s unresponsiveness: they’d somehow failed to explain their concerns adequately.

Critics soon discovered that both levels of government knew, or should have known, that the gravel industry had been *allowed* to run amok. That condition happened as a result of provincial manipulations which provided the industry with ever expanding impunity for negative impacts it foisted on communities, individuals and the environment. Making matters worse, the provincial government bullied local governments into a state of political impotence. The by-product of these policies left aggrieved citizens politically stranded and without remedy or recourse.

The public trust was further undermined by the fact that the ministry “responsible” accepted no responsibility for its policies which had caused the damages in the first place. Citizens were left to make tough decisions about what to do next. They chose to bypass standard responses when they rolled up their sleeves to help fix what was broken. First they re-wrote the Minister of State for Mining’s flawed Aggregate Pilot Project (APP) from a community-centric perspective. Their draft community-centric “Aggregate Supply Plan” proposes win-win-win solutions to Conflict Gravel mining practices by considering the interests of gravel miners and adversely affected communities. The ASP suggests strategies to substantially reduce the cost of gravel.

Next, the adversely affected communities formed the Fraser Valley Regional District Citizens Association (FCA) which mirrored the qualifications of the Aggregate Producers Association of BC (APABC). The APA-BC represents unelected commercial interests which were allowed three seats on the Aggregate Pilot Project committee for the purpose of promoting those interests. The citizen’s association recently asked for equal status so it could represent the interests of adversely affected residents. On March 8/11, the FVRD’s “Community &

Regulatory Services Committee” said “No” to supporting that request, apparently to please the former Minister of State for Mining, Randy Hawes. Without meaningful public input, the Aggregate Pilot Project is destined to become an industrial production strategy dedicated to serving the exclusive interests of gravel miners. Appalled citizens wonder why their “elected representatives” fought to promote the gravel industry’s narrow interests! Who actually governs us?

About ten years ago, the World Bank published a policy debate paper which sought to evaluate the threat posed by corruption on transitional governments like Central and Eastern Europe, the Baltics, and the Commonwealth of Independent States (see World Bank, ***Anticorruption in Transition: A Contribution to the Policy Debate, 2000***). “State Capture” is the term used to describe states whose governments have been compromised by private interests. The “Policy Debate” is simultaneously interesting and disturbing to B.C.’s gravel critics because of the similarity between the World Bank’s description of political corruption by special interests and the B.C. gravel industry’s “special rights” status. Let’s look at a short section of the World Bank’s actual analysis:

***“State capture refers to the actions of individuals, groups, or firms in both the public and private sectors to influence the formation of laws, regulations, decrees, and other government policies (i.e., the basic rules of the game) to their own advantage....”***

***... all forms of state capture are directed toward extracting rents from the state for a narrow range of individuals, firms, or sectors through distorting the basic legal and regulatory framework, with potentially enormous losses for the society at large....”***

Does that analysis sound familiar? B.C. constituents should be worried.

The Conflict Gravel issue is like a looking glass into a very corrupt system of governing that decent people find difficult to ignore and impossible to support. It’s not surprising then that about 50 percent of B.C.’s voting constituents no longer participate in a tricky political system that’s locked them out.

Will Premier Clark govern any better? I guess we’ll have to wait and see.

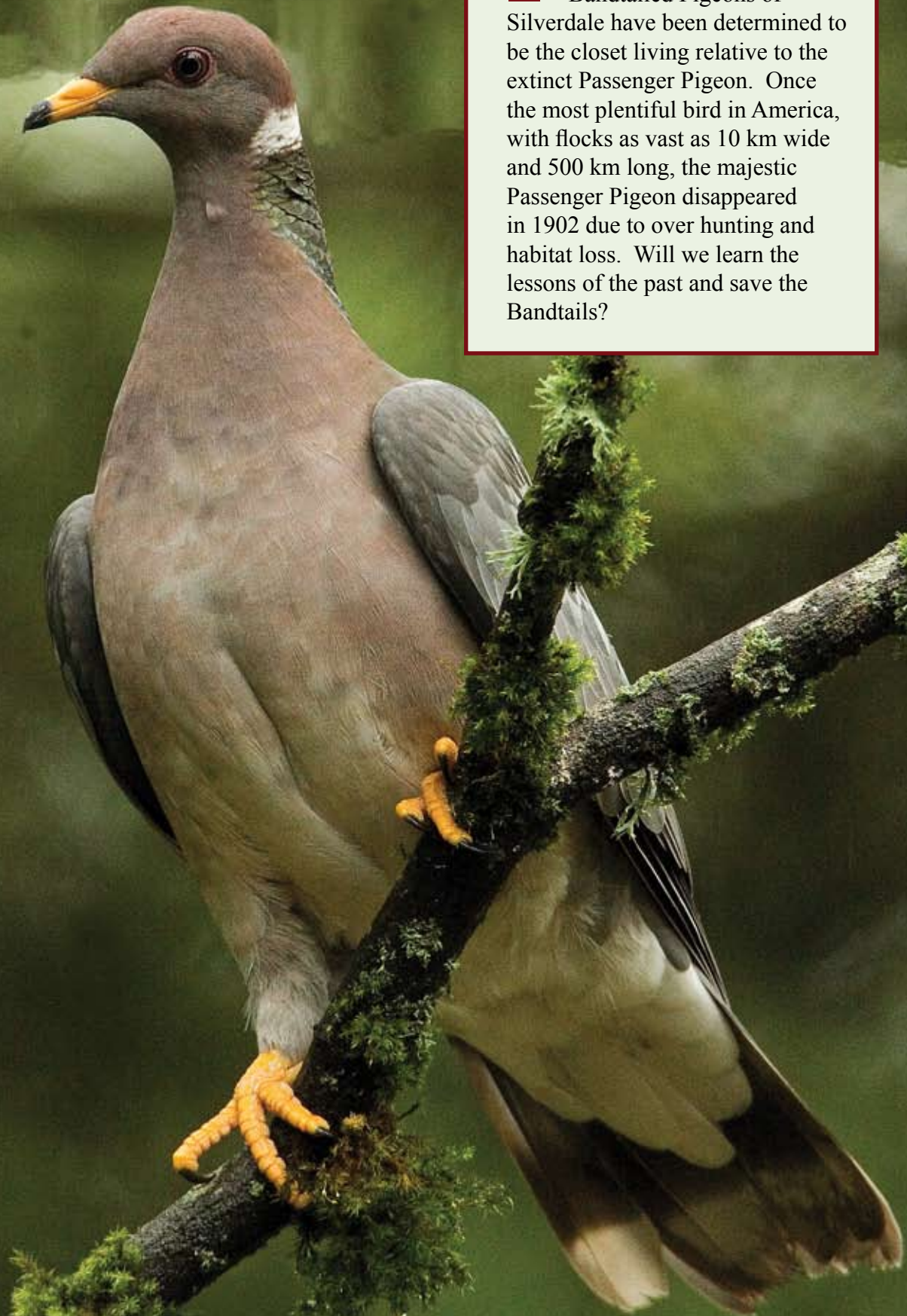
**Walter Neufeld**

Fraser Valley Citizens Association



# Breaking news: Silverdale's Bandtailed Pigeon is truest cousin of the extinct Passenger Pigeon!

**F**eatured in Issue 2 of the Footprint Press, the Bandtailed Pigeons of Silverdale have been determined to be the closet living relative to the extinct Passenger Pigeon. Once the most plentiful bird in America, with flocks as vast as 10 km wide and 500 km long, the majestic Passenger Pigeon disappeared in 1902 due to over hunting and habitat loss. Will we learn the lessons of the past and save the Bandtails?





# THE FOOTPRINT PRESS

**T**he Footprint press is published each season as a non-profit community newspaper. Articles are submitted by dedicated residents wishing to share their vision of a more sustainable and just society and who seek to live harmoniously with nature. Circulation is 2000+ on recycled paper. The paper can also be viewed on-line at [FootprintPress.ca](http://FootprintPress.ca) or call us at 604 820-7592. Your support is appreciated and your participation is very welcome. The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the publishers as a whole or individually.

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