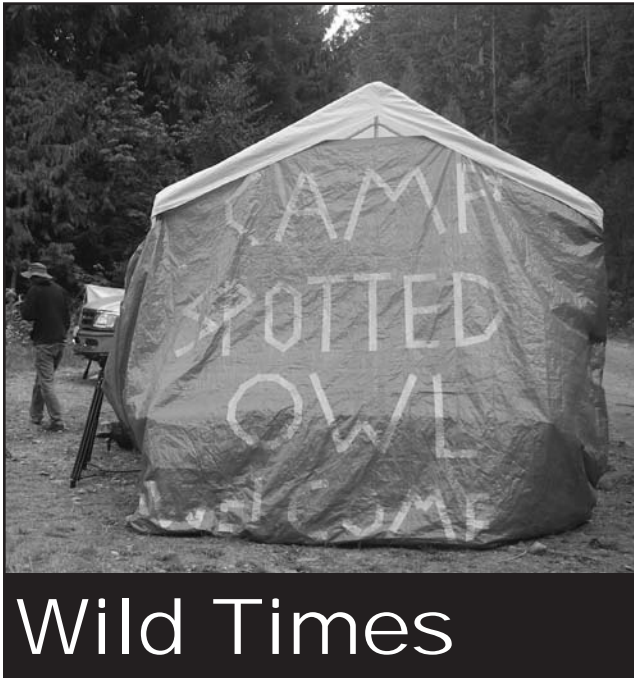


The Owl and the Lumberjack Meet at S&M Creek



Wild Times

by Joe Foy, Campaign Director, Wilderness Committee

I write this Wild Times column whilst stationed in a Wilderness Committee research camp which is located up a logging road just east of Pemberton. Our little home away from home was set up in the bush in early September in response to a logging operation found to be felling trees right next to one of BC's few remaining spotted owls. It's not much of a research camp really. Just a large tent with some banners strung between the trees next to a little mountain stream with the strange name of S&M Creek. The banners say things like "Stop BC's Chainsaw Massacre – Endangered Species legislation Now!" and "Ancient Forests Forever." Our goal is to shame BC's Minister in charge of endangered species, Pat Bell, into ordering a halt to the logging. But so far Minister Bell has no shame.

Our research consists of photographing the loaded logging trucks as they pass by with their cargo of endangered species habitat. After the logging crews have finished for the day, we head up with cameras and document the damage with photos and video to be posted on our web site, and sent to media outlets here and abroad.

In the hours before dawn sometimes the lone female owl that lives here can be heard calling. Our staff scientist Andy Miller tells us she's calling for a mate. She never seems to get an answer – which is understandable, given

that her species is Canada's most endangered. Where once a thousand spotted owls ruled the night in southwest BC, now slightly more than a dozen hang on while logging rips their remaining old growth forest habitat to shreds.

But someone was taking notice. On two nights since we set up the camp she did get an answer. The government of BC has sent up someone to capture the owl and haul her away to a zoo somewhere. The government figures that if they can set up an experimental owl breeding program, maybe folks won't notice that the last of the owl's habitat is being logged. Fake owl calls echo through the night forest. The plan is betting she will succumb to her loneliness and fly in to answer the fake calls, coming close enough to be captured. But so far she's been too wily to catch. So for now the owl keeps calling and her trees keep falling. We continue to witness, mindful that many other at-risk creatures also depend on these wilderness forests for their survival.

The funny thing is that all this logging, and log hauling, is taking place during a full-on strike of coastal logging operations by the Steelworkers' union. These workers work for a company that is non-unionized. They are part of a trend that has seen fewer and fewer forest workers employed amidst worsening and downright dangerous working conditions. Many of the lumber mills along the lower Fraser and up in Squamish have been closed and the land sold off for fancy waterfront condo developments.

Instead of being cut up in BC mills by BC workers, logs are increasingly shipped to offshore mills where lumber can be made with lower wages and worse working conditions. It's a race to the bottom, with those companies who can hammer their workers and the environment the hardest being the winners, and the rest of us the losers.

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But there is hope. The Wilderness Committee has actively supported the Steelworkers' Union strike call for better and safer working conditions in the bush, as well as an end to log exports to offshore mills. And we have also called for an end to old growth logging in southern BC, with a shift to second growth logging and

an emphasis on home-grown wood-products manufacture. More and more people are understanding that owls and lumberjacks need the same thing – a healthy forest governed by strong laws to keep the companies in check.



To help protect the spotted owl and other creatures of the forest check out the Wilderness Committee web site at www.wildernesscommittee.org