

by Joe Foy

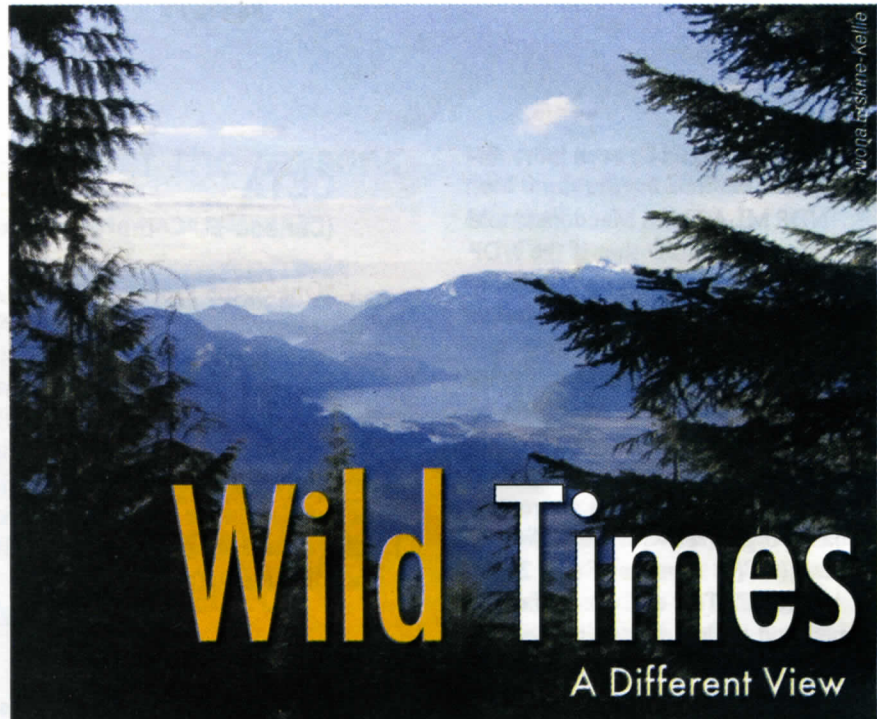
If you want to know about someone, you have to come inside their home and hang out. It's the same with Mother Nature. You can't just stand out on the front porch – you have to come inside nature's home and stay a while.

That's what brought a friend and me to the wilds of Garibaldi Provincial Park this past August. We had sought a valley with no park trails or direction signs. With a pencil we circled the map at Snowcap Creek on the east side of the park.

Our first day of backpacking brought us to a good place to camp beside the creek on a sand bar. Fresh bear tracks meandered down the riverside. In the evening the howling started. Wolves – calling to each other. They sounded mighty close to us. Several hundred metres perhaps. We didn't know. Whenever I have tried hollering in the forest my voice pretty much disappears amongst all that wood, moss, stone and rushing water. Those wolves sounded clear and close – like they were just beyond the tree line that bordered the sand bar. We stared into the darkening forest trying to discern any movement. Eventually the howling stopped and the stars came out.

We were less than a day's travel from our city homes – but our camp was a room with a different view.

A couple of days later, while crossing Snowcap Creek on a log, I slipped and fell in. I remember thinking before I started the log crossing that if I fell into the torrent, swollen with summer snow melt, I'd risk being swept over a waterfall just a bit downstream. To be extra careful, I had decided to crawl across the log. However, I had almost made it to the other side when my left hand sud-



denly slipped, and pushed down by my pack, I toppled over into the creek on the upstream side of the log. I clung to the log for a split second, but the current tore me loose and forced me under.

Time slowed right down. I kicked down hard and hit bottom. When my head broke the surface I could see I was close to the river bank, so I kicked bottom again and grabbed a hold of the shore. Six seconds. From the moment I fell in to the moment I grabbed the shore was six seconds. I had thought I was a goner. I hauled my pack onto the shore, and celebrated being alive.

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For eight days, my friend and I backpacked the Snowcap Creek Valley. We wandered amongst huge old growth Douglas fir and red cedar trees. We drank from quiet mountain streams and were awed by thundering falls and rapids. While in the high country we sheltered in our tent as lightning flickered and flashed and thunder boomed, echoing from peak to peak.

Only a couple of weeks earlier I had made a presentation to the BC gov-

ernment's Timber Supply Review Panel – a committee made up of MLAs from both the governing Liberals and the opposition NDP. The panel was looking at ways to deal with a timber supply shortfall brought about by the record breaking pine beetle epidemic of the past few years.

I and other conservationists had recommended that the amount of logging be decreased, that raw log exports be banned, and that the protection of wilderness and old growth forests be increased, to protect both the environment and woodworker jobs.

However the panel didn't see it that way and came out with a recommendation to allow logging in some previously protected old growth forests.

So what did my Snowcap Creek experience teach me? I believe we are going to have to kick like hell to get that recommendation quashed so those old growth forests, and the wildlife that depends on them can survive.

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