



# Ancient forests *Forever!*

*There is no solution available, I assure you, to save Earth's biodiversity other than the preservation of natural environments in reserves large enough to maintain wild populations sustainably. Only Nature can serve as the planetary ark.*  
—Harvard biologist E.O. Wilson<sup>1</sup>

## New Laws Needed to Save BC's Forests and Jobs

**T**wo-thirds of BC's land base – 60 million hectares – is covered in trees.

Only about 22 million hectares of this vast forest was ever suitable for logging, and much of this has already been logged.<sup>2</sup> These logged forests once harboured the biggest trees and the best wild life habitat in BC. Now big stumps mark where the great giants once stood tall.

Plantations, where second-growth trees were planted after the original wild forest was logged are now growing throughout much of BC and some areas are being logged for the second time.

Fortunately, some wild, never-logged forests remain. Approximately 60% of BC's original wild forests are still with us today.<sup>3</sup> Known by many names including old-growth, natural, frontier, ancient, first growth or original, these forests were tended by nature, not people. In British Columbia, a debate is raging about what to do with these precious remaining wild forests. Globally, only a little over 20% of the world's original wild forests still exist.<sup>4</sup>

These natural forests provide for fish, wildlife and people in many ways, including clean water, climate stabilization, as a spiritual and cultural refuge for First Nations people, and a recreational retreat for everyone. Wild forests, with their

multi-aged trees, make better habitat for many species. In fact, many plants and animals cannot survive in the tree plantations with their younger, even-aged trees.

British Columbia is Canada's most biologically diverse province and has the most species at risk of extinction. In BC, 64% of reptiles and turtles, 58% of ferns, 46% of (dicot) plants and 45% of amphibians are at risk.<sup>5</sup> BC is home to about half of Canada's grizzly bear population, and to more bird species than any other province in Canada with over 500 bird species including more than 300 breeding species.<sup>6</sup>

The sad fact is that over 1,900 species found in BC are "at risk"<sup>7</sup>, in many instances because of the continued logging of their wild forest habitat. Making

matters worse, climate change has also impacted our forests. More than 9 million hectares<sup>8</sup> of forest lands mostly on BC's central plateau have been hit by the pine beetle epidemic and other pests due to warming winters and forest mismanagement.

Near the rain drenched Pacific coast of BC, unlogged valley bottoms are home to giant rainforest trees such as Sitka spruce and Douglas-fir that can sometimes reach over 80 meters in height while red cedar trees can be as much as 18 meters in girth<sup>9</sup> and live well over 1,000 years. Unfortunately, on Vancouver Island, over 90% of these valley bottom ancient wild forests have already been logged.<sup>10</sup>

The dry rainshadow wild forests of ponderosa pine in the south Okanagan are some of the rarest wild forests in BC. Yet less than

5% of this kind of forest have any kind of protection from logging or development.<sup>11</sup> Then there are the wet Inland Rainforests of spruce, hemlock and huge red cedars in the Robson Valley and Kootenay country, which support the mountain caribou, an

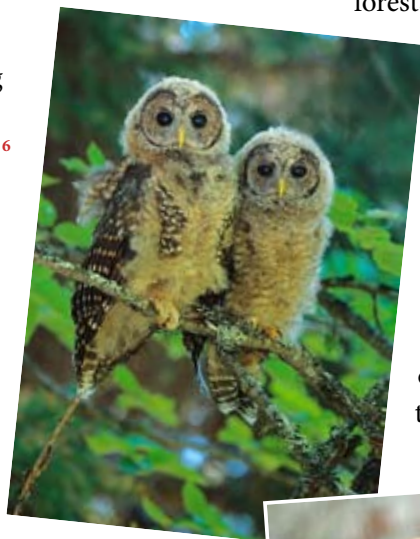
endangered species that relies on these wild forests for survival. Even here, some of these critical wild forests continue to be open to logging.<sup>12</sup>

You would think that with all this logging going on that woodworkers and their communities would at least be prospering. But nothing could be further from the truth. That's because since 2003 the big logging companies in BC, who used to be obligated by the provincial government to operate lumber mills within the province are now no longer required to do so.<sup>13</sup>

Log exports from public and private forestlands in coastal BC have been going up – way up. Between 2000 and 2007 annual log exports to mills in other countries have risen 75%! This increase amounted to 57,714 highway truckloads of logs, enough wood to keep two sizeable BC sawmills supplied for a whole year.<sup>14</sup>

It's time to take action to ban the logging of wild forests and ban log exports, so logs from the tree plantations can be milled right here in BC. Other countries have done it. We can do it too.

Read on to learn how you can help get the laws we need to ensure that BC's precious ancient forests and forest jobs survive into the future...



Photos this page: Goat River Valley, Inland Rainforest (by Jeremy Sean Williams)

Bottom shots:

Endangered spotted owllets (by Jared Hobbs); Mountain lion (by Gordon Court)



# Boreal Forest

## Climate stabilizer under attack

The Earth's boreal forest extends like a great green belt around giant portions of northern nations including Canada, the USA (Alaska), Russia and the Nordic countries of Europe. This international forest is the largest land-based storehouse of climate altering carbon on the planet<sup>15</sup>, which makes it a major climate de-stabilizer if cut down.

BC's portion of the boreal forest is principally found in the Peace River country in the northeast region of the province. It's an expanse of rolling plains and foothills that extends from the northern Rocky Mountain trench east to Alberta.

Wildlife including caribou, grizzly bear and wolf live in the lowland forests, while mountain goat and wild sheep roam the higher country. In the

Fisher (by Leslie Degner); Great gray owl (by Roberta Olenick)

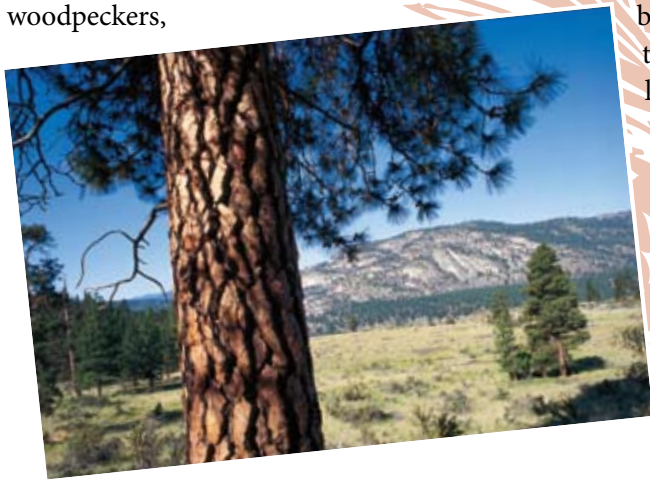


# Rainshadow Forests

## Barely holding on

The same high, coastal mountain ranges that rake the clouds and produce the drenching rains that water the giant rainforest trees on the coast create an empire of dry forests and grasslands in the "rainshadow" on their eastern slopes inland.

In the south Okanagan and throughout the southern interior, an epidemic of tree-killing beetles and other pests has hit this dry area hard due to warming winters and forest mismanagement.<sup>21</sup> Despite this, rare rainshadow forests of wild old-growth ponderosa pine still exist. These fragrant forests are found only in the hottest, driest southern valleys. They are home to yellow-bellied marmots, western bluebirds, white-breasted nuthatches, California bighorn sheep, cougars, and species-at-risk like white-headed woodpeckers,



river valleys, white spruce forests up to 500 years old are home to an incredible diversity and quantity of small mammals and birds.<sup>16</sup>

In 1997, the BC government announced the creation of about one million hectares of new parkland in the region.<sup>17</sup> Sadly, outside of parks, British Columbia's wild boreal forests are being mowed down by logging, the same as wild forests throughout the province. What's worse, the

*"We are not alone in believing that these (coal mine) permits are a death sentence to the caribou. Both our Elders and the government scientists are on the same page. They all agree that coal mining in the caribou's critical habitat will result in significant adverse effects."*

—Chief Rolland Wilson, West Moberly First Nations.<sup>20</sup>

wild forests of the Peace River country are also under threat from energy production.

Every year (on average) throughout the late 1990s, the oil and gas industry cleared 8,000 to 10,000 kilometres of right-of-ways through the fields, grasslands and wild forests of the Peace River country for seismic testing. Moreover, each

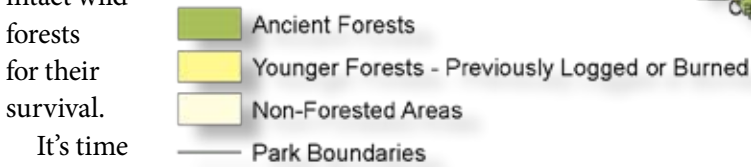
year, 1,900 to 3,200 kilometres of new roads were built, and up to 750 hectares of wild forest were leveled for new well sites.<sup>18</sup>

Then in the 2000s the energy industry really got going. Since 2000, companies have drilled more than 10,000 oil and gas wells in the region.<sup>19</sup> Altogether, this represents a massive fragmentation of the Peace country's wild boreal forest.

Plans for several new coal mines, which would require even more wild forest to be clearcut, have the West

Moberly First Nation in court trying to stop one of the proposed mines. At stake is an endangered herd of caribou, which rely on the area's intact wild forests for their survival.

It's time to protect what little remains of the wild boreal forests.



# Coastal Douglas Fir Forests

## Down to a remnant

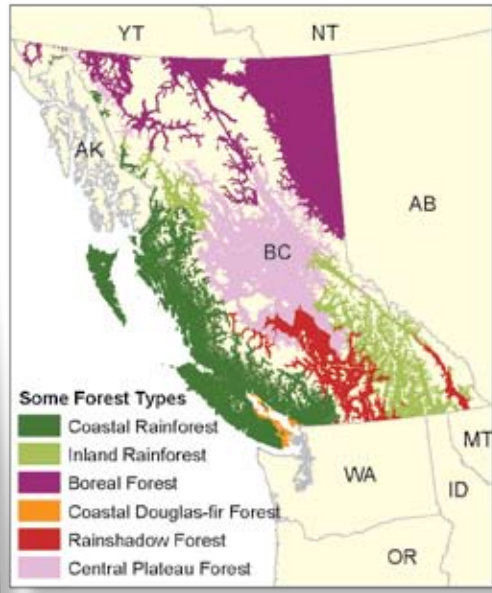
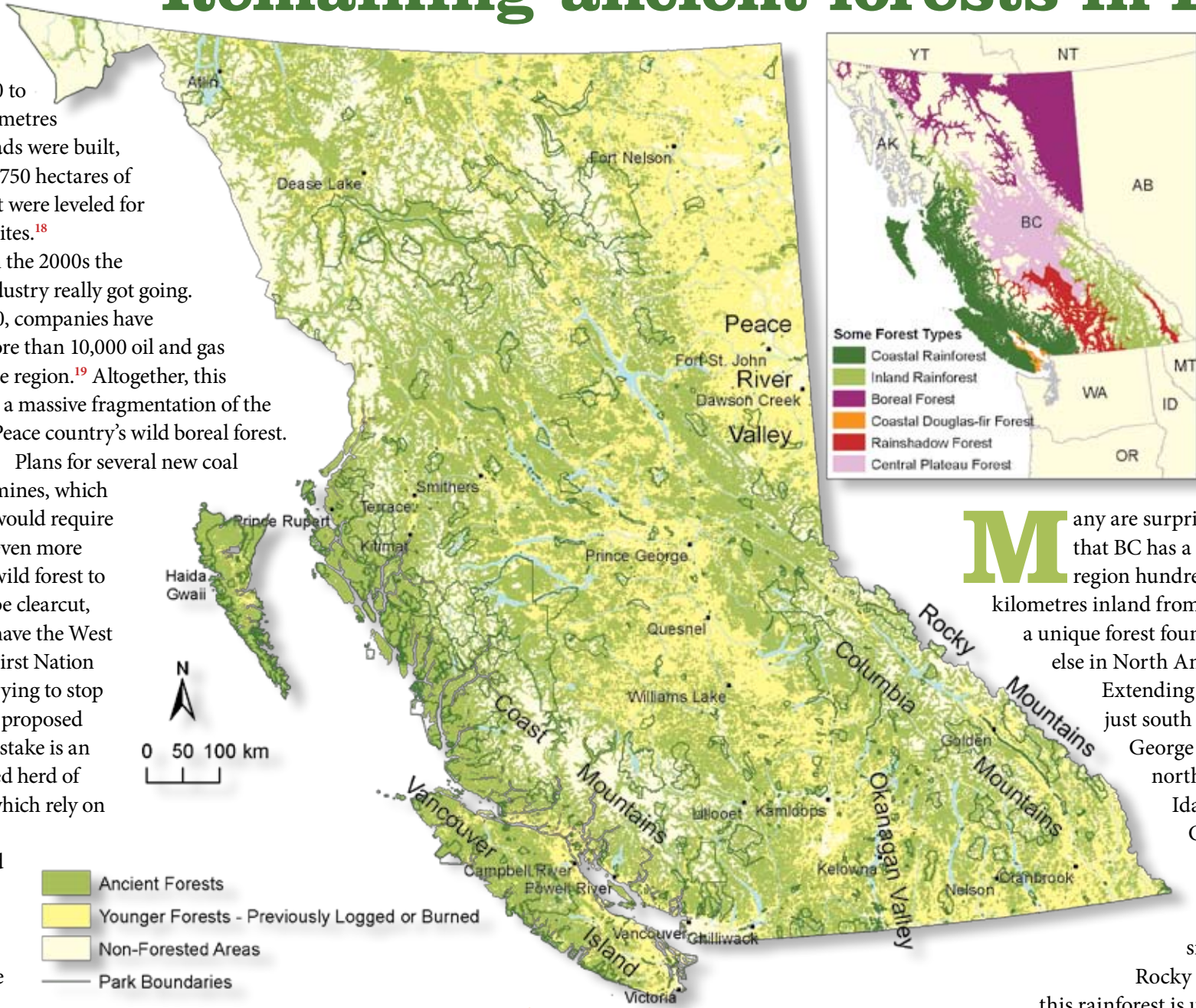
On eastern Vancouver Island the ancient forests have been so heavily logged they are just a remnant of their former glory, with 99% of the low elevation old-growth coastal Douglas-fir forests in the area already having been felled.<sup>25</sup> Yet the BC government still allows logging in the pitiful amount that remains.

Eastern Vancouver Island forests like the 320 hectare Linley Valley forest in Nanaimo, the 100 hectare forest at Nanoose Bay, the 600 hectare Little Qualicum River Forest near the town of Qualicum Beach, and the 900 hectare forest near Bowser Bay



Left: Ponderosa pine (by Adrian Dorst)  
Above: Hiking in the threatened Nanoose Creek Coastal Douglas-fir forest

# Remaining ancient forests in BC



Many are surprised to learn that BC has a rainforest region hundreds of kilometres inland from the coast, a unique forest found nowhere else in North America.

Extending from just south of Prince George into northern Idaho, in the Columbia Mountains and on the western side of the Rocky Mountains, this rainforest is unique

not only for its geographic rarity but also for its tremendous biological diversity. Grizzly bears, bull trout, wolverines, fishers, and BC's reclusive mountain caribou are just a handful of the hundreds of ancient forest associated

# Southwest BC's Coastal Rainforests

## The tall trees of Vancouver Island and the southern coast

The wild coastal rainforest of southwest BC is the region where most of the largest and oldest trees in Canada have been discovered. For example, the Cheewat red cedar tree is located on Vancouver Island's west coast in Pacific Rim National Park. At over 18 meters in circumference and over 55 metres tall, it's Canada's most massive tree.<sup>32</sup>

The oldest recorded tree in Canada was a yellow cedar on southwest BC's Sunshine Coast. Unfortunately, researchers found it too late – a chainsaw had got it first. Its stump in the middle of a clearcut showed over 1,800 years of life in its yearly growth rings. No one has been able to find an older Canadian living tree, though its believed that the southwest BC still harbours trees over 2000 years old.

Logging in this land of the tall trees has perhaps taken the biggest toll in all of BC. According to the Sierra Club of BC, more than two million hectares of BC's coastal rainforest ecosystems, mostly on Vancouver Island and the South Coast, now have been logged so heavily and have lost so much of their original wild forests that they can no longer sustain species.<sup>33</sup>

They also found that the highest priority for policy reform is to

protect the remaining areas of wild forest from logging and to identify older "second-growth" forest in the tree plantations for conservation to avert loss of species in threatened ecosystems.<sup>34</sup>

In another study, researchers found that there would be a net benefit associated with increased preservation of wild forests in the Lower Mainland needed for spotted owl habitat. In other words, the benefits of preservation in terms of increased recreational opportunities, non-timber forest products, and carbon storage outweigh the costs in terms of lost timber harvesting.<sup>35</sup>

But time is short. On the southwest mainland of BC, where once 500 pairs of spotted owls lived and raised their young in the vast wild rainforests, today, after a century and a half of logging, a mere half dozen owls hang on in the fragments of the remaining ancient forest.<sup>36</sup> Though some forests have recently been protected by the provincial government for the spotted owls' survival, it's time to preserve every

# Inland Rainforest

## BC's mountain caribou forest

species that call BC's inland temperate rainforest home. The wettest areas of inland rainforest in the Interior Cedar Hemlock zone, also have the highest diversity of tree species in the province, including massive red cedars that rival their coastal cousins for their great age and size.

After just a hundred years of industrial logging, only a handful of large valleys and watersheds remain unlogged with their wild forests intact, and it is these few remaining biologically rich, easily accessible valley bottoms that are still being targeted by logging corporations.<sup>27</sup> Approximately 23% of the forest lands of the Inland Rainforest area still survive as wild forest with their giant ancient trees.<sup>28</sup>

Already, because of habitat loss predominately caused by logging and industrial development, the Columbia Mountain region has 85 wildlife species listed as threatened or endangered provincially, including 51 bird species, 19 mammals and 13 reptiles. Additionally, 88 plant species and 8 plant communities are at risk.<sup>29</sup>

Perhaps the best known but least seen endangered species of the Inland Rainforest is the mountain caribou, one

of the most endangered mammals in North America. Their numbers have steadily declined down to approximately 1,900<sup>30</sup> today, mostly due to human-caused habitat changes especially the logging of their wild forest habitat. It's estimated that Mountain Caribou have been extirpated from 43% of their historic BC range.<sup>31</sup>

Recently the BC government has put aside some wild forests for the protection of mountain caribou. But other ancient forests important to the conservation of mountain caribou continue to be open to logging in the region. This must stop: all remaining wild forests in the Inland Rainforest must be protected.

Mountain Caribou (by John E. Marriott); Incomappleux River Valley (by Jakob Dulisse)



Western red cedar (by Jeremy Sean Williams); Mountain goat mother and kid (by Roberta Olenick); Sockeye salmon (by John E. Marriott)





# Time to protect the remaining wild forests of BC

**‘A**ncient Forests Forever!’  
Now is the time to make this dream a reality in British Columbia. For decades, reports have shown the tremendous damage BC has suffered every time another grove of wild forest is cut down.

We have seen salmon runs reduced to a mere trickle of former abundance because the wild forests that once held the stream banks together are long gone. Wildlife populations including elk, deer and mountain goat are hit hard in tough winters because the ancient forest groves they use to shelter against the cold winds and snow have been eliminated.

Forest workers have also suffered as timber companies send more and more of their logs to offshore mills, even as they close their mills here at home.<sup>37</sup>

For too long we have played around the edges of these problems. Our government has set aside protected areas that amount to a mere 15 percent of the province, when conservation biologists tell us that at least 50 percent is required for nature protection, especially under the increasing stresses of climate change.<sup>38</sup> Weak, toothless laws have imposed minor restrictions on log exports, but stronger regulations are needed to protect forests and forest workers.

It is true that the BC government has recently set aside more areas of wild forests for the conservation of endangered species such as the spotted owl and mountain caribou. But many fear it is too little too late as the BC government continues to allow the logging of ancient forest habitats critical to the survival of our growing list of endangered species.

It’s time to follow the lead of other countries who have already taken the steps necessary to protect their environment and jobs. In 1987, the government of New Zealand, riding on a wave of citizen support for forest protection, banned the logging of their remaining wild forests. In 1989, the government of Thailand, horrified by the rapid loss of wild forests in their country, followed suit. Sri Lanka imposed a ban on wild forest logging in 1990 as did the Philippines in 1991.<sup>39</sup> The movement to ban the logging of the Earth’s remaining natural

forest cover has been spreading from country to country ever since. Finland is the latest to be moving toward a total ban on wild forest logging.<sup>40</sup>



Now it’s our turn to pass legislation banning the logging of British Columbia’s remaining wild forests and supporting forest workers by requiring all timber cut in BC’s second-growth tree plantations be milled in the province.



Old-growth trees on logging truck; Log exports; Western red cedar, Clayoquot River Valley (by Mark Wareing)



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## Write Now!

Let our leaders know how strongly you want new laws passed to protect all of BC’s remaining ancient forests for the health of our environment and to stop all log exports to protect our forest workers’ mill jobs.

**Hon. Gordon Campbell**  
**Premier of British Columbia**  
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# Yes!

Together we can save ALL of BC’s remaining wild ancient forests, and forest jobs too!



clip

And return to:  
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