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# Wild Times

## Strong and true species law

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by Joe Foy

**BC has a new provincial government. Our new leaders have promised a kinder, gentler BC, where the environment is better protected. For those who love old growth forests and want BC's species at risk to survive and thrive, it feels like our ship is about to come in. But clearly not yet. Far from it.**

After visiting the home ranges of several forest-dependant species at risk over the summer months, I am sad to say there is scant evidence of an on-the-ground change for the better. In fact it's pretty much business as usual in the woods – or should I say what is left of the woods.

For some of BC's most endangered species, time is running out.

Take the northern spotted owl. Once numbering several hundred pairs in BC's southwest Coast and Cascade mountain ranges, this species is thought to now number only about 12 individuals left in the wild – desperately clinging to life in their tattered remnant old growth forest

home. You would think that the governments of BC and Canada would have gone into action to map out the owl's remaining forest habitat, and then immediately protect it from its greatest threat – industrial logging.

But ten years since the BC government designated some wildlife habitat areas for the protection of the spotted owl, a comprehensive map of remaining spotted owl habitat has not yet been produced. Even worse, the BC Liberal government caved in to logging company demands, allowing several wildlife habitat areas to be logged. And the government of Canada has allowed this shameful state of affairs.

I have just returned from one of those spotted owl wildlife habitat area logging sites, located near Hope just off the Coquihalla Highway near the Sowaqua Creek Valley. Where Douglas fir and western redcedar once towered above the forest floor resplendent with ferns, moss and huckleberries, now a splintered mass of stumps and shattered wood covers the

hillside like mulch. Government maps show this area as protected spotted owl habitat. But the images we collected that day tell a different story. The spotted owl is being killed off by willful neglect.

I saw the same thing unfolding near the gateway to world-famous Wells Gray Provincial Park earlier this year. Even though the government of Canada has mapped out the critical forest habitat of at-risk mountain caribou, the government of BC had given a logging permit within the habitat area.

BC's new government has promised a law to protect the province's endangered species, over 1,600 species. But that new law better be enacted fast, while there are still owls and caribou left to protect. And the law better be strong and true. Not like the former BC government maps – that were coloured green in a dishonest attempt to hide the deadly clear-cut truth.

Joe Foy is the national campaign director for the Wilderness Committee.

