



LOGGING

to

EXTINCTION

SAVE BC'S OLD-GROWTH FORESTS



Charlotte Dawe
Conservation and Policy Campaigner
[@ClimateChar](#)

Every year, thousands of hectares of old-growth forest are cut down in B.C. In the last decade on Vancouver Island alone, industry has logged the equivalent of more than thirty-four soccer fields of old-growth forest every single day.¹ There are hundreds of reasons why old-growth forests are important, but one of the most critical is the habitat they provide wildlife species. Many of these animals can't live anywhere else.

That's because the structure of an old-growth forest is very different from a tree plantation. It's like comparing the structure of an ancient tree standing

as tall as an office tower and as wide as your living room — to a Christmas tree.

Stewarded by Indigenous Peoples for millennia, intact ancient forests have sustained species like the spotted owl, southern mountain caribou, northern goshawk and marbled murrelet — until now.

As trees from these forests get carried away on logging trucks, so does the chance at survival for many species. Years of old-growth logging has resulted in dozens of species becoming at risk of extinction.² And now rapid climate change caused by the burning of fossil fuels is hitting many remaining forests with a greatly increased risk of fire, floods and droughts.³

Scientists around the world warn we're living in a global extinction event.⁴ The need to protect remaining old-growth forests from logging has never been greater.

Southwest B.C.'s population of spotted owls is now reduced to just three birds in the wild with several more cooped up in cages in a breeding facility.⁵ Both the South Selkirk and South Purcell caribou herds are officially a part of our past, having been logged out of existence.⁶ Species are dropping before our eyes; this is the clearest wake-up call the B.C. government has ever had. It should trigger the changes species need but our elected leaders

are in a trance, blinded by the timber industry's lobbying.

The provincial government is failing to reign in industry and continues to approve unsustainable resource extraction. Its forest ministry continues to furiously approve logging in critical habitat and in some cases they've actually increased the number of cutblocks set to be logged in the habitat of species facing extinction.⁷ Astoundingly, even BC Timber Sales (BCTS) — the government's own logging agency — continues to liquidate old-growth forests in critical areas like Schmidt Creek and the Nahmint Valley.⁸

It's a trend — the B.C. government is choosing industry and profits over the survival of species at risk.

Recovery plans are supposed to be made for every federally-listed threatened and endangered species at risk. But time and time again both federal and provincial governments fail to follow the science and recovery plans end up falling short without having effective recovery measures or essential

habitat protection.⁹

The solution to saving old-growth-reliant species is simple: save old-growth forests.

Yet, the government is showing no signs of stopping old-growth logging. Despite the vast majority of critical low-elevation old-growth forests having already been logged, government and industry continue to decimate these irreplaceable ecosystems.¹⁰

This paper will highlight how the government is catering to industry and failing to protect and recover species at risk using the stories of the iconic caribou, the spotted owl and other key species. Halting and reversing the extinction trend for old-growth reliant species is possible and we know exactly what the government must do — ban old-growth logging.



Photo top: northern spotted owl (Jared Hobbs).
Photo above: loaded logging truck, Schmidt Creek (WC file).
Photo right: old-growth cedar stump, Schmidt Creek (WC file).

The solution to saving old-growth-reliant species is simple: save old-growth forests



NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL

Logged out of house and home

The northern spotted owl is perhaps the best known old-growth forest-dependent species in North America. This species’ celebrity status is attributed to a heated U.S. logging versus preservation debate that erupted in the 80s and 90s.¹² As a result, thanks to the U.S. endangered species law, about four million hectares of forest in Washington, Oregon and Northern California were eventually protected.¹³

In Canada, where our species laws are weaker, our governments have been slower to act — with devastating consequences. Canadian spotted owl habitat range encompasses the remaining low elevation old-growth forests of southwest mainland B.C.¹⁴ Since the 80s the governments of B.C. and Canada have known the species population is plummeting because of industrial logging. Both governments profess concern about shrinking owl numbers and have committed to recovering this species back to a healthy population.

But neither level of government has been willing to stop the logging of the owl’s habitat — old-growth forests. While some forests are protected, most remaining old-growth outside of parks continue to be open to logging, even as the spotted owl moves closer to being completely eliminated from the wild in Canada.¹⁵

A provincial captive breeding program is in place to produce young owls for eventual release. About 20 spotted owls are currently cooped up in pens in Langley. But after 10 years of operation, they’ve yet to successfully place even a single owl into the wild.¹⁶

Biologists estimate there would’ve been around 500 pairs of spotted owls in the old-growth forests of southwest B.C. before industrial logging started.¹⁷ **Last year researchers only found three individuals remaining.**¹⁸ There’s hope some owls could move into B.C. from the U.S. — but this can only happen if there’s habitat left for them to move to.

Old-growth logging must be banned, not only to give the spotted owl some hope for recovery, but also for the many other species sharing and relying on the forest where the owl has always lived.

Species that depend on B.C.’s northern spotted owl’s forest include: coastal tailed frog, coastal giant salamander, cutthroat trout, chum salmon, coho salmon, sockeye salmon, Chinook salmon, marten, fisher, northern goshawk, marbled murrelet, Vaux’s swift, pileated woodpecker, Hammond’s flycatcher, northern pygmy-owl, harlequin duck, hooded merganser, flammulated owl, coastal western screech-owl, American three-toed woodpecker and golden-crowned kinglet.¹⁹



Photo: northern spotted owl (Jared Hobbs).

MARBLED MURRELET

Needs ancient forests to survive

Plunging down from the blue sky, barreling head-first into the Pacific blue waters, the marbled murrelet surfaces from an 80-metre dive with a herring in beak.²⁰ It’s a successful hunt for the elusive and mysterious Pacific seabird. A fleeting moment of a fledgeling in the sky or an eggshell fragment on the forest floor provide the tiniest clues of the birds’ continued use of old-growth forests in B.C.²¹

Marbled murrelets were designated by the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) as threatened in the 90s. This was due to oil spills, getting caught in fishing nets and losing nesting habitat from old-growth forest logging.²²

Marbled murrelets only nest on the limbs of coastal old-growth trees over 200 years old and have been found in the forests of Desolation and Clayoquot sounds and the Carmanah-Walbran area of southwest Vancouver Island. Unfortunately, other coastal areas in

B.C. are scarred with intense old-growth logging. Because of this logging marbled murrelet numbers have been declining as they directly rely on old-growth forests to survive.²³

In 2002 the Wilderness Committee took to the courts and asked for a halt to logging in marbled murrelet habitat along the Sunshine Coast region. **The court case revealed the**

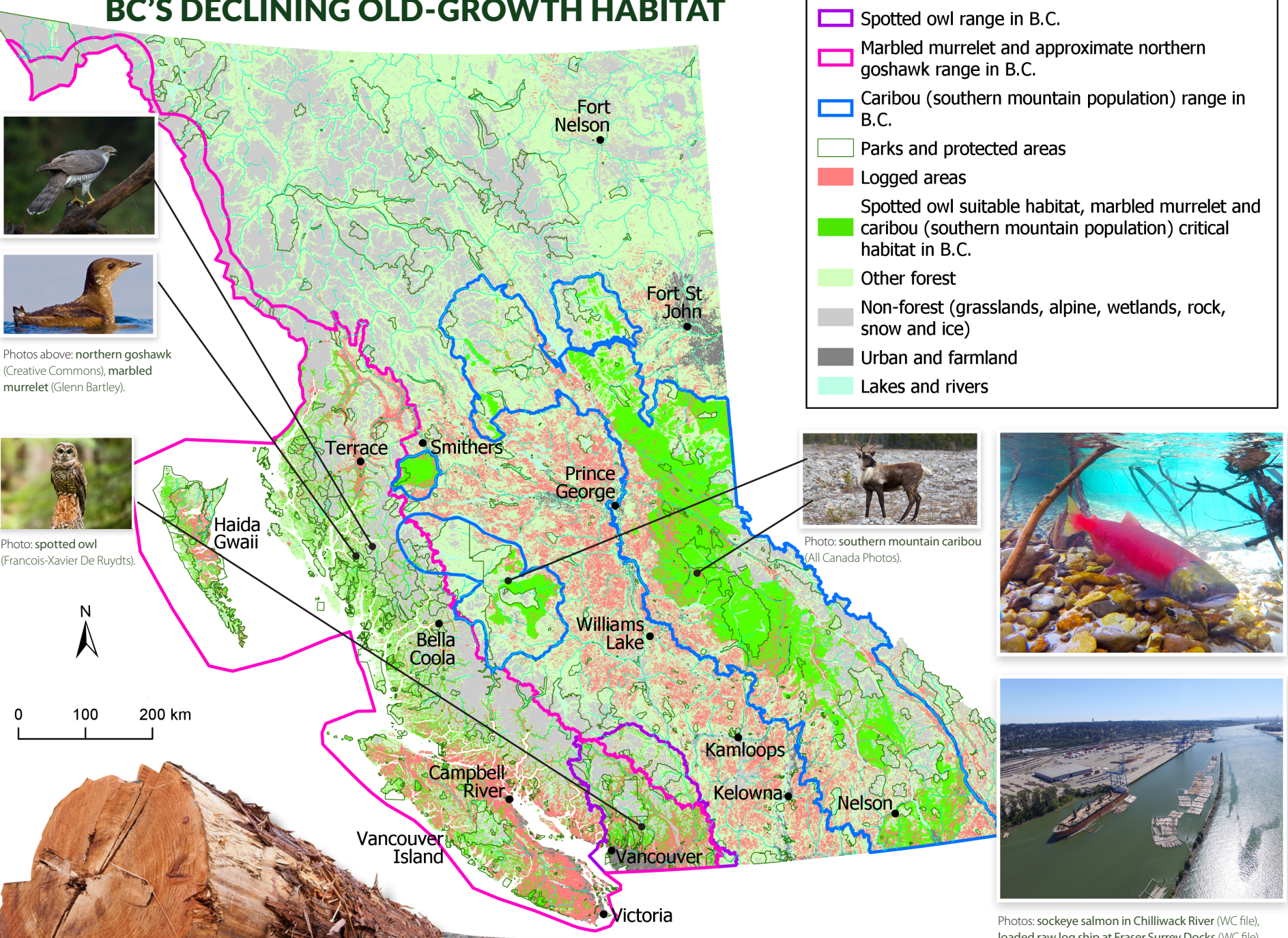
B.C. forest ministry, against recommendations from their biologists, was approving logging that would further drive the species to extinction.²⁴ Two years later we were back in court asking for the enforcement of the Species at Risk Act. The court ruled the federal government failed to propose recovery strategies after the species were formally identified and the federal government missed their deadlines by up to six and a half years.²⁵

The marbled murrelet’s continued decline is a case of terrible management and lack of protection of old-growth forests.



Photo: marbled murrelet (All Canada Photos).

BC’S DECLINING OLD-GROWTH HABITAT



SOUTHERN MOUNTAIN CARIBOU

Two more herds disappear

Around mid-autumn in the early 90s, the land would shake when anywhere from 500 to 1000 southern mountain caribou would appear on the tops of hills while migrating through the landscape of South Selkirk. They were a herd once so vast and dense they looked like ants on the land. **Now they're locally extinct.**²⁶ How did we get here?

Southern mountain caribou were declared a threatened species in Canada in 2000.²⁷ But to this day, almost two decades later, an action plan turning research into on-the-ground-protection has not been made.



Photo: southern mountain caribou (John E. Marriott).

The primary threat to southern mountain caribou is old-growth logging and fragmentation by roads, which allows predators easy access to caribou. Caribou need intact forest habitat to travel up in elevation or horizontally into remote wilderness. But high amounts of habitat disturbance have created highways for predators into normally inaccessible areas. These disturbances include logging roads, seismic lines, off-highway vehicle tracks and cutblocks. To achieve long-term recovery for caribou, habitat protection and restoration are top priorities.²⁸ So how well is the province doing on recovering caribou? We graded their efforts — they get an **F**.

In the South Selkirk, South Peace and North Columbia, 250 wolves were shot from helicopters just in the past three years by the B.C. government. The South Selkirk caribou herd went extinct anyway and the reason is clear as day. The habitat was so severely destroyed by logging, logging roads and off-highway vehicle paths that the herd stood no chance.

After the South Purcell herd also became locally extinct, the federal government forced B.C.

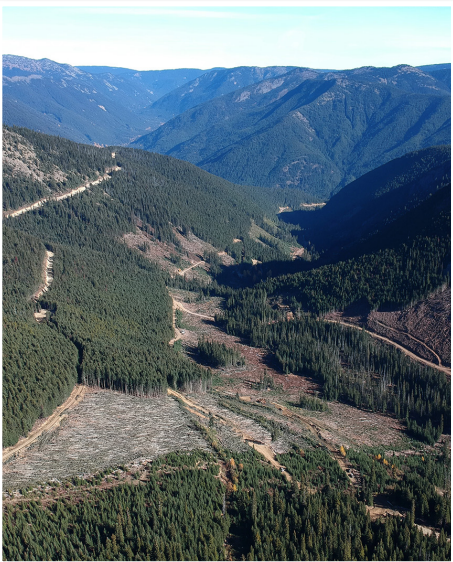


Photo: clearcut in Skagit watershed old-growth forest (WC file).

into negotiations with First Nations to create a plan for caribou. But while the government of B.C. was negotiating, its ministry of forests approved logging at rapid speed. Shockingly, 314 new critical habitat cutblocks were approved in just four short months, an area eight times the size of Victoria.²⁹

Enough is enough — the B.C. government is siding with extractive resource industries over caribou, even if it means extinction. We need the federal minister of environment, Catherine McKenna, to issue an emergency protection order which will finally give caribou the old-growth habitat protection they so desperately need.

Indigenous rights must be respected and upheld

Access to wood, cut in old-growth forests, is an inherent right of Indigenous Peoples whose territories encompass all the forests discussed in this report. A ban on heavy industry logging the remaining old-growth forests must not interfere with Indigenous People's right to get and use wood from these forests as they always have.



Photos: old-growth red cedar logs near Harrison Lake, old-growth red cedar tree on Meares Island (WC files).

BC TIMBER SALES

Proof government needs to clean up its act

B.C. Timber Sales (BCTS) an agency of the B.C. government is responsible for one out of every five trees cut in the province.³⁰ BCTS grant permits to clearcut-log old-growth forests which has devastating impacts on the species depending on these forests for survival.

In 2003, concerned by the public outcry over the logging of old-growth forests spotted owls need to survive, two of B.C.'s largest logging companies, International Forest Products and Canfor, voluntarily gave up their logging rights in spotted owl habitat.³¹ **BCTS then moved in to take charge and continued clearcut logging in many of the areas the big companies had vacated.** And spotted owl numbers dwindled to record lows.³²

As recently as last year, BCTS was criticized for planning and permitting clearcutting in a number of old-growth forests including one near the

world-famous killer whale beaches of northeast Vancouver Island in Schmidt Creek. That same year, BCTS was also responsible for facilitating logging in the Nahmint Valley near Port Alberni

where some of B.C.'s finest remaining old-growth Douglas fir groves were felled. The government-owned logging operation also planned and issued permits

for logging high elevation old-growth in an unprotected area surrounded by Manning and Skagit provincial parks, known as the Donut Hole.³³

It's an appalling betrayal — the B.C. government's own logging outfit shouldn't be going after the last old-growth forests.



Photo: clearcut southern mountain caribou habitat near Clearwater Valley (WC file).



NORTHERN GOSHAWK

Backroom deals fatal for species



Along the coast of B.C. in mature coniferous forests lives the northern goshawk.³⁴ They create large nests in closed-canopy, old-growth tree stands and build them with conifer needles to release aromas that act as an insecticide and fungicide.³⁵

In 1995, northern goshawks were first found to be at risk due to commercial old-growth logging in their habitat.³⁶ That logging continues even now — resulting in the species becoming uplisted from "special concern" to "threatened."

Luckily in Canada, we have the Species at Risk Act which is meant to prevent extinction and recover wildlife at risk. Yet, for the northern goshawk, the act has been ineffective for one main reason: the logging industry has been influencing the plans.³⁷

The B.C. government is required to take appropriate action to save listed species at risk and work with the federal government to create recovery plans to save vanishing wildlife. Although the northern goshawk was listed 24 years ago, no federal recovery strategy was produced until last year.

In 2015, after years of waiting

in anticipation for a recovery strategy our former national policy director, Gwen Barlee, filed a freedom of information (FOI) request to reveal why the recovery plans were overdue. The answer proved to be very disturbing.

The FOI showed the draft recovery strategy had been shared

with the forest industry who strongly criticized it because of how it would impact their timber supply. The province folded to

industry and watered-down the draft recovery strategy — making it weak and ineffective.³⁸

Under SARA, recovery strategies must be science-based and not be concerned about economic impacts — that means industries should not be making backroom deals with the government to keep logging habitat. But this FOI proves the government is catering to industry even if it causes the extinction of a species.



Photo: northern goshawk (Wayne Lynch).



BC SPECIES AT RISK LAW IS NEEDED

One of the reasons B.C.'s species' populations are declining is because they receive very little, if any, legal protection. British Columbia doesn't have its own law to protect or recover species at risk. Although Canada has a Species at Risk Act, it only applies for migratory birds, aquatic species and species on federal land. How much of the land in B.C. is federal? A whopping one per cent.³⁹



Photo: western screech-owl chick (Wayne Lynch).

This means for these land-based species at risk, unless they're located in a national park, post office, airport or military base, they receive zero automatic protection from being killed or having their habitat destroyed. Ninety-four per cent of the land in the province is under provincial jurisdiction. That's why B.C. needs a law to protect all the species at risk living here. Here's the good news — after years of the Wilderness Committee campaigning for a new act to protect endangered species, the B.C. government is creating a species at risk law. They intend to release an intentions paper this spring which will outline what the new law will look like.

This is our opportunity to get this law right the first time because it's difficult to change a law once it's made. For more information on how you can help get B.C. the best species at risk law possible visit WildernessCommittee.org/BCSpecies

KICKING THE OLD-GROWTH LOGGING HABIT

Logging old-growth forests is causing a growing number of species to slide towards extinction worldwide. Several countries have kicked their old-growth logging habit cold turkey. Philippines and Thailand are examples of countries that took emergency action to save forest-dependent species regardless of impacts to their forest industries.⁴⁰

In British Columbia, we're lucky enough to have some options for keeping forest industry jobs while at the same time moving to ban old-growth logging. Our forest industry must move away from logging old-growth and instead rely on cutting trees in previously logged areas. However, that will reduce timber supply to our mills but one way to make up for this is to ban the export of logs to foreign mills.

Currently, B.C. exports one tree for every ten trees logged.⁴¹ This amounts to about 185,000 logging truck loads sent to offshore mills every year. Freeing up this supply for local lumber manufacturing would help mitigate timber supply reductions related to old-growth preservation and **could supply lumber for the construction of more than 100,000 homes built in B.C. by B.C. workers.**⁴²



Photos: old-growth red cedar in the central Walbran Valley (WC file), rocky mountain tailed frog (Wayne Lynch).



REFERENCES

1. "State of Vancouver Island's Coastal Temperate Rainforest." Sierra Club BC. 2018. <https://goo.gl/KDWYDG>
2. Coste, Torrance and Wieting, Jens. "Logging B.C.'s ancient forests adds to extinctions." Vancouver Sun. Feb. 5, 2019. <https://goo.gl/BGn4dj>
3. "Impacts of Climate Change." Government of British Columbia. 2016. <https://goo.gl/i6f2aG>
4. Barnosky, Anthony D. et al. "Has the Earth's sixth mass extinction already arrived." Nature international journal of science. Mar. 2, 2011. <https://goo.gl/6kbJSh>
5. Cox, Sarah. "Keepers of the spotted owl." The Narwhal. Nov. 1, 2018. <https://goo.gl/rcWNQq>
6. Cox, Sarah. "A sad day: two more B.C. mountain caribou herds now locally extinct." The Narwhal. Jan. 18, 2019. <https://goo.gl/xvU6x7>
7. Cox, Sarah. "B.C. approves 314 new cutblocks in endangered caribou habitat over last five months." The Narwhal. Mar. 14, 2019. <https://goo.gl/9VWb2a>
8. Laird, Kevin. "Conservation groups discover ancient old-growth forest near Port Renfrew." Sooke News Mirror. Jan. 19, 2019. <https://goo.gl/6RUQJE>
9. Chung, Emily. "Why Canada's endangered species are declining faster than ever." CBC News. Sept. 14, 2017. <https://goo.gl/EhiEje>
10. Bennett, Nelson. "Only 21% of old growth forest left on Vancouver Island." Vancouver is Awesome. Sept. 12, 2018. <https://goo.gl/a4vJ5N>
11. Stein, Paul. "The who's who of owls: A look at the northern spotted owl." Calaveras Enterprise. Aug. 2, 2013. <https://goo.gl/IUGHXJ>
12. Burns, Jes. "Looking Back: The Northwest Forest Plan's New Conservation Paradigm." Oregon Public Broadcasting. Apr. 6, 2015. <https://goo.gl/sdTnmj>
13. Greenwald, Noah et al. "9.6 Million Acres Protected as Critical Habitat for Northern Spotted Owls." Center for Biological Diversity. Nov. 21, 2012. <https://goo.gl/PJsYtU>
14. "All About Birds: Spotted Owl Range Map." Cornell University. 2017. <https://goo.gl/w7sXtd>
15. "Keepers of the Spotted Owl." Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Pynn, Larry. "Glimmer of hope for B.C.'s endangered owls." Vancouver Sun. May 20, 2014. <https://goo.gl/wFN65y>
18. Keepers of the Spotted Owl." Ibid.
19. Knowler, Duncan and Dust, Kristin. "Dollars and Sense, The Economic Rationale to Protect Spotted Owl Habitat in British Columbia." David Suzuki Foundation, Ecojustice, Wilderness Committee, August 2008. <https://goo.gl/YnUsts>
20. Strachan, Gary et al. "Ecology and Conservation of the Marbled Murrelet." United States Department of Agriculture." Feb. 1995. 247-253 p. <https://goo.gl/URWynA>
21. Blood, Donald A. "Marbled Murrelet, The ancient mossy trees in which these birds nest are disappearing." Government of British Columbia. Mar. 1998. <https://goo.gl/1jDh2q>
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Armstrong, Jane. "Marbled murrelet diving toward oblivion." The Globe and Mail. Apr. 16, 2018. <https://goo.gl/vRAKQB>
25. Cheadle, Bruce. "Court finds 'enormous systemic problem' in enforcement of Species at Risk Act." CTV News. Feb. 14, 2014. <https://goo.gl/jsh3zw>
26. Petryshen, Eddie. "How we changed our mountain landscapes and pushed southern mountain caribou to the brink." Wildsight. Sep. 7, 2018. <https://goo.gl/b6qvKi>
27. "Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou, Southern Mountain population (Rangifer tarandus caribou) in Canada [Proposed]." Environment Canada. 2014. <https://goo.gl/GANBGc>
28. "Recovery Strategy for the Woodland Caribou, Southern Mountain population (Rangifer tarandus caribou) in Canada [Proposed]." Ibid.
29. "B.C. approves 314 new cutblocks in endangered caribou habitat over last five months." Ibid.
30. "BC Timber Sales." Government of British Columbia. <https://goo.gl/3zKryX>
31. Matas, Robert. "Spotted owl's habitat is opened for logging." The Globe and Mail. Apr. 18, 2018. <https://goo.gl/Sm5rcD>
32. Barlee, Gwen et al. "In Defence of Canada's Spotted Owl." Sierra Legal and Wilderness Committee. Dec. 2005. <https://goo.gl/s6utmI>
33. Coste, Torrance. "B.C. government agency responsible for logging rare old-growth forests." The Narwhal. Aug. 13, 2018. <https://goo.gl/BnE5x6>
34. "COSEWIC Assessment and Status Report on the Northern Goshawk Accipiter gentilis laingi in Canada." COSEWIC. 2013. <https://goo.gl/FpeHCO>
35. "All About Birds: Northern Goshawk." Cornell University. 2017. <https://goo.gl/SJSvfs>
36. Northern Goshawk Accipiter gentilis laingi Recovery Team. "Recovery strategy for the Northern Goshawk, laingi subspecies (Accipiter gentilis laingi) in British Columbia." Government of British Columbia. 2008. <https://goo.gl/XHoane>
37. Hume, Mark. "Opinion: Time is over for compromising on habitat versus logging issue." The Globe and Mail. Mar. 22, 2018. <https://goo.gl/AFeuu5>
38. Ibid.
39. "Working on the Land Base." Government of British Columbia. <https://goo.gl/9fwLhT>
40. Yonariza. and Singzon, Sharon B. "Post-logging Ban Timber Tree Planting in Thailand and the Philippines." Southeast Asian Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture. Aug. 2010. <https://goo.gl/v926tU>
41. "British Columbia Log Export Permit Report." Government of British Columbia. 2017. <https://goo.gl/y87QCW>
42. "Fast Facts for the Vanderhoof Forest District." Government of British Columbia. <https://goo.gl/tCFTZn>

TAKE ACTION

Call on B.C.'s forest minister and premier to:

- ▶ Ban old-growth logging
- ▶ Stop the export of raw logs and legislate that the manufacturing of trees into wood products must be done by B.C. workers in local mills
- ▶ Support a strong B.C. species at risk law that protects habitat

And sign up for regular progress reports on the campaign to end old-growth logging and save B.C.'s species at risk here: WildernessCommittee.org/SaveOldGrowth

Premier of B.C. ✉ premier@gov.bc.ca or ☎ 250-387-1715
B.C.'s forest minister ✉ FLNR.Minister@gov.bc.ca or ☎ 250-387-6240



Photo: old-growth red cedar in Clayoquot Sound (WC file).



WildernessCommittee.org • 1-800-661-WILD (9453)

YES!

LET'S SAVE BC'S OLD-GROWTH WILDERNESS AND WILDLIFE



clip

Return to:
Wilderness Committee
46 E. 6th Avenue,
Vancouver, BC V5T 1J4



click

WildernessCommittee.
org/Donate



call

604-683-8220 in the
Lower Mainland, BC
1-800-661-9453 toll-free
elsewhere in Canada

Enclosed is: ☐ \$35 ☐ \$60 ☐ \$150 ☐ Other \$ _____

Fed. reg. charity #11929-3009-RR0001

NAME _____ PHONE _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____

PROVINCE _____ POSTAL CODE _____ EMAIL ☐ Yes, send me updates via email.
☐ Email my tax receipt.

Your gift will be put towards our critical wilderness preservation work.
People-powered wilderness preservation for a wild future.

CREDITS

Writing: Charlotte Dawe and Joe Foy

Editing: Alex Hsuan Tsui

Art Director: Sue Fox

Graphic Design: Perry Sky Jack

Mapping: Geoff Senichenko

Wilderness Committee, Vol.38, No.3, 2019.

Canadian Mail Product Sales Agreement No. 0900567.

Posted in Vancouver for free distribution. Printed in Canada on recycled newsprint with vegetable-based inks.

Press Run 21,000 © Wilderness Committee 2019.

All rights reserved. Written material may be used without permission when credit is given.

Published by

Wilderness Committee — National Office

46 E. 6th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5T 1J4

☎ 604-683-8220 or 1-800-661-9453 📠 604-683-8229



/WildernessCommittee



@WilderNews



@WilderNews



**WILDERNESS
COMMITTEE**