

CANADA'S SPOTTED OWL



Who's to blame if it goes extinct?

Spotted Owls: North America's Best Known Endangered Species

It is estimated that there are only about 3,600 pairs of northern Spotted Owls left in the world. They live in the oldgrowth forests along the west coast of North America, from California to southwestern B.C. In the U.S.A., where the Spotted Owl is listed as endangered and an "indicator species" for the overall health of the forest ecosystem, lengthy lawsuits and bitter public campaigns have ensued over how much Spotted Owl habitat to protect.

Only 33 pairs of Spotted Owls and 15 active nesting sites have been located in Canada—all in the Lower Mainland region of B.C. None have been found in forests less than 120 years old. Canada's Spotted Owls were designated an endangered species in 1986 by our national Committee on the Status of Endangered Species (COSEWIC).

Why are Spotted Owls endangered?

Only 30 percent of the Spotted Owl's original low elevation ancient (oldgrowth) forest habitat remains in B.C. In the United States, over 90 percent of the Spotted Owl's habitat has been logged. At the current rate of logging, all B.C.'s unprotected Spotted Owl habitat will be irreparably fragmented within five years. Neither Canada nor British Columbia has Endangered Species Legislation requiring the protection of endangered species and the habitats they need to survive.

Most scientists say that, in order to survive, Canada's Spotted Owls need all their remaining habitat. This means protecting about 254,000 hectares of Lower Mainland forest lands—all the oldgrowth left in their range plus some additional second growth that will eventually mature to become a suitable owl home.



It's scary to think how few Spotted Owls are left. It's scarier to know that they might go extinct, taking with them a myriad of other oldgrowth species and the hope of our children to live in a healthy world.

B.C.'s SPOTTED OWLS MORE ENDANGERED THAN EVER

Despite government planning teams, numerous scientific studies, heated debate and efforts of environmentalists and government biologists to conserve B.C.'s northern Spotted Owl, this beautiful bird is now more in danger of going extinct than it was before all the fuss began a decade ago.

Why? Because oldgrowth logging continues to destroy its habitat and owl conservation has a price that the timber industry and its union workforce refuse to pay...giving up logging 254,000 hectares of forest—the last of the Spotted Owls' habitat in B.C.

In June of 1995 the B.C. Government caved in to the timber industry lobby that had intensified over the protection of some oldgrowth forest in the newly created Pinecone Lake/Boise Valley/Burke Mountain park. At the same time as it announced the Pinecone/Burke park, the government announced that about 175,000 hectares of proposed SOCAs (Spotted Owl Conservation Areas) would be thrown open to logging—an area roughly equivalent to 440 Stanley Parks. That's almost three-quarters of the total forest land that scientists on the government's Spotted Owl Recovery Team (SORT) identified as absolutely necessary to preserve in order for these owls to survive over time.

The NDP Government says that its Spotted Owl decision is "balanced"—it offered some trees to the forest industry and some to the owls. But its approach ignores the fact that the Spotted Owls have already lost over 70 percent of their original B.C. habitat. The species is endangered because industry has already had more than a fair share!

The fight to protect B.C.'s Spotted Owls is not over. Government has committed to creating more new parks in the Lower Mainland region where the owls live. But how much land—and, specifically, how much oldgrowth owl habitat—will be protected? So far, government has said

OWL'S ENEMIES FIGHT BACK

The conservation campaigns to protect the endangered northern Spotted Owl have inspired many counter-campaigns by timber industry lobbyists. These range from exploiting people's simple ignorance and fears to promoting carefully distorted "research".

The timber lobby, bent on blaming the Spotted Owl for

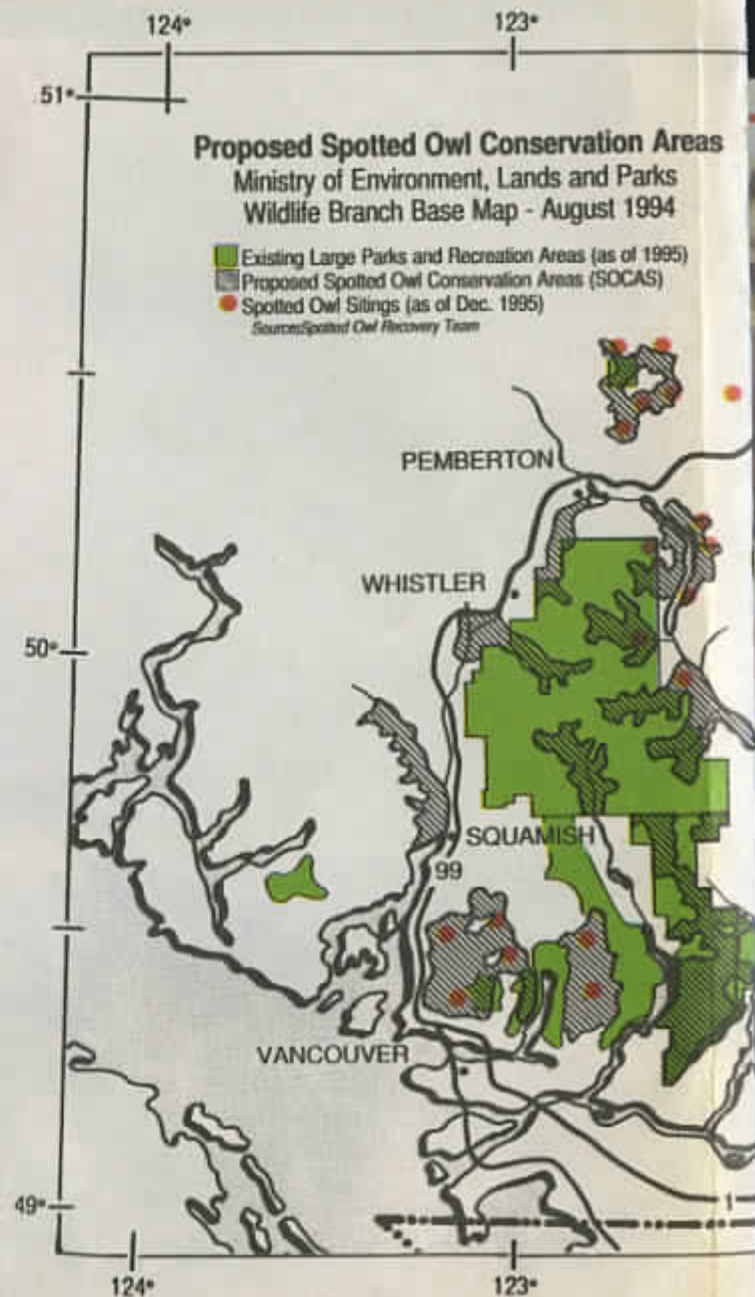
that it will only increase protection in the Lower Mainland from the current 10 percent to 13 percent of the land base. This means only another 104,000 hectares of parks—not enough to protect the forests the Spotted Owls need, let alone other needed park areas which do not contain owl habitat like the Stoltmann Wilderness, Caren Range, and Burns Bog.

Doing the dirty work of carving down all the preservation areas proposed for the Lower Mainland (including the Spotted Owl Conservation Areas) to try to squeeze into the government's impossibly tiny preservation "shoe", is a hand-picked team of "public" representatives called the Regional Public Advisory Committee (RPAC). The environment groups sitting on RPAC include B.C. Wild (a coalition of B.C. environment groups heavily funded by U.S. foundations), the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS) and the Federation of B.C. Naturalists. They are striving to reach consensus with the logging companies that will be affected.

It is rumoured that some of the environment groups on RPAC are so intent on saving one particular area (the Mehatl) that they are lobbying B.C. Fish and Wildlife Branch biologists to "drop" some SOCAs to make room for it within the 13 percent squeezebox. Hopefully the government biologists will resist.

The Wilderness Committee stands firm: the Mehatl, all the needed Spotted Owl habitat, the Stoltmann Wilderness, and the other Lower Mainland protected area proposals are all essential if we are to keep this region of the planet liveable for both people and other species. Trade-offs now will drastically short-change our future.

Why is it worth saving an endangered species like the Spotted Owl? Extirpation of Canada's only Spotted Owls would signal the destruction of almost all significant stands of oldgrowth in the bird's range. **Hundreds of other oldgrowth-dependent species would go with it into extinction.**



SAVE A LOGGER

Loggers

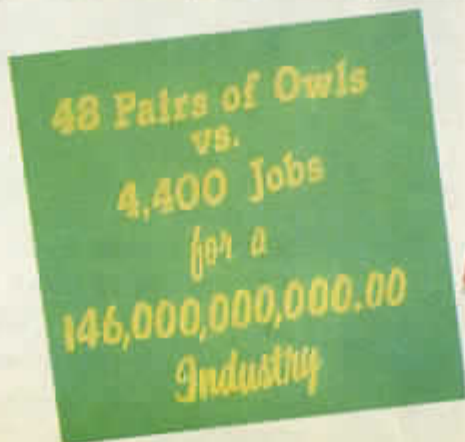
every job loss including those caused by mechanization and over-cutting, has produced a huge array of posters, t-shirts, buttons and signs--some funny, some vulgar and some just plain stupid. See some of the best on the right.

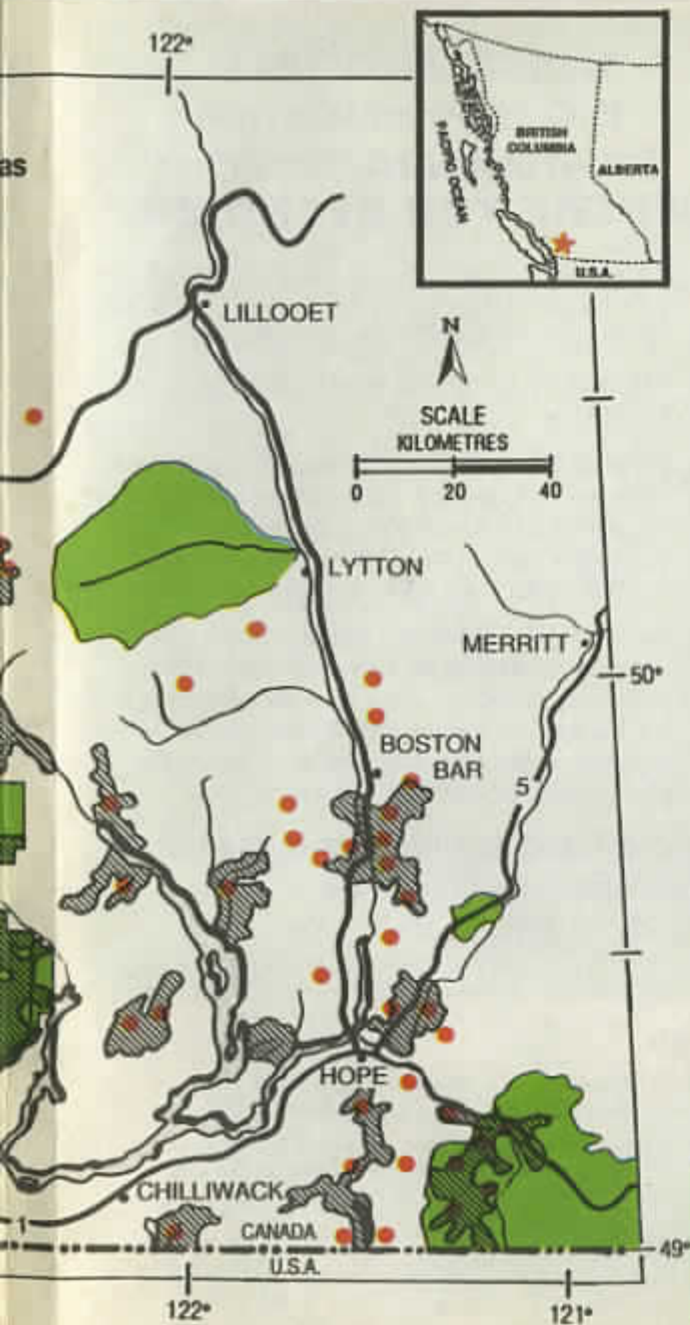
B.C.-based anti-owl efforts include the silly proposal of Chilliwack forester Bernie Cross to save the owls by moving all of them into parks, along with millions of mice (as prey). Another is the "Spotted Owl Information Bulletin" published in December of 1995 by International Forest Products (InterFor). InterFor claims that its "landscape approach" to clearcutting (varying the shapes and sizes of clearcuts over the broad terrain) replaces the need to protect natural owl habitat. InterFor has also used computer modelling to suggest that, with or without habitat protection, the Spotted Owl has less than a 20 percent chance of survival.

The art of twisting statistics is raised to new heights in a recent book (*Pacific Spirit: The Forest Reborn*) by Patrick Moore, a former Greenpeace leader who sold out several years ago to become a high-paid lobbyist for the big timber barons. In his chapter on Spotted Owls, Moore features a rare study that says Spotted Owls can survive in a particular kind of Californian second growth. He fails to mention the hundreds of other studies which show that these owls cannot survive without oldgrowth forests.

Another of Moore's distortions is blaming the Spotted Owl for the "economic disaster" predicted for Washington and Oregon States when the U.S. government protected several million hectares of forest as Spotted Owl reserves. The fact is, overcutting already had closed down many mills there and the rest would have soon run out of oldgrowth...the same thing that is happening in much of B.C., leading to a loss in old-style logging jobs wherever it happens.

Instead of disaster, the Northwest States economies rebounded with value-added manufacturing and diversification of their economic base. In 1994, just three years after the timber lobby's owl howls had echoed world-wide, Oregon's unemployment rate fell to its lowest level since 1979, despite an influx of 40,000 people. While 15,000 jobs were lost in the woods and mills (not the 100,000 predicted), 100,000 new jobs were created, 20,000 in high tech companies. Nine out of every ten re-trained forest worker found jobs, averaging only \$1 less per hour than those in the woods and mills.





B.C.'s northern Spotted Owls, say the scientists who know them best, may be vital to the survival of their kin south of the Canada-U.S. border. Our owls, in fact, may hold the key to survival of the species in all of North America because of the genetic variability they possess, being at the extreme northern edge of their range. They have the best chance of adapting through natural selection to the rapid environmental changes now occurring.

Who will be to blame if enough of the Spotted Owl's habitat is not protected and the owl goes extinct? The list is sure to include the timber industry executives who could have provided more value-added job opportunities instead of blaming the owls for their problems; the government officials who could have acted upon the advice of their own scientists; and the environmentalists that may be foolish enough to sign off on a parks plan that is likely to commit 87 percent of the Lower Mainland to logging and development.

What will save the Spotted Owl? An informed and politically active public that accepts the limits of nature and that is willing to pay a small short-term cost to ensure survival for all species with whom they share this planet.

Just how much would it cost us to "give up" logging the rest of the Spotted Owls' habitat in B.C.? Government economists have calculated the cost of implementing a modest level of protection for the Spotted Owl (and the old-growth and many other animals and plants it symbolizes) at only \$6.04 per household per year: the price of a couple of video rentals.

Costs aside, everyone must consider: **do we have the right to condemn another species to death?** And what might be the hidden costs to future generations if we do not save Earth's wild species and the biosphere-stabilizing ecosystems they create?

The northern Spotted Owl (*strix occidentalis*) is a small chocolate coloured owl 50 cm. long and between 800-1200 grams in weight. Its range is the old-growth forests along the west coast of North America, from California to southwestern B.C.

B.C. Endangered Species Legislation Needed Now

For more than a year the Canadian government has been developing

Governments Resist Owl Preservation

The Spotted Owl became a hot issue in the U.S.A. about two decades ago when environmentalists realized that its populations were steadily declining at about one to two percent per year. In 1990, following 17 years of legal battles and intense public debate over forest practices and how best to protect the rainforest ecosystems of the Pacific northwest, the U.S. Supreme Court ordered a recalcitrant U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to declare the Spotted Owl, a known "indicator" of forest health, an endangered species. During the next few years the U.S. government declared 3.5 million hectares of old-growth Spotted Owl habitat from California to Washington State off-limits to logging.

Over \$100 million worth of scientific studies have been conducted in the U.S.A. to understand this owl species and determine how much old-growth forest it needs to survive.

Now B.C. is bracing itself for the same battle. In 1986, the Committee on the Status of Endangered Wildlife in Canada (COSEWIC) added the northern Spotted Owl to Canada's endangered species list. But since neither Canada nor B.C. have Endangered Species Legislation to force government to do something about a COSEWIC-listed species, little action to save the owl ensued. Eco-groups in the U.S.A. relied heavily on their Endangered Species Act to provide legal clout to save the owl.

Finally, in 1990, the B.C. government appointed a Spotted Owl Recovery Team (SORT) to prepare an owl recovery plan. But for three more years the owl's habitat remained open to logging. Most of the known active owl sites were given interim habitat protection in 1993, but limited funding for inventory work kept the number of sites low.

In 1993, just when SORT was ready to release its draft recovery plan, its mandate was changed by the B.C. government. Instead of preparing a scientifically-based recovery plan specifying measures needed to rescue the owl from being endangered, the team was now instructed to prepare an "options report" that identified alternatives ranging from full protection throughout the historic range of the owl in Canada to no extra protection at all.

SORT's final report included "management options" with various levels of possible logging activity within identified specific areas where Spotted Owls were known to exist, called SOCA's (Spotted Owl Conservation Areas). The owl's status in the future could range anywhere from de-listed (saved) to vulnerable, threatened, endangered or



Legislation Needed Now

For more than a year the Canadian government has been developing endangered species legislation to meet its obligations under the Biodiversity Convention it signed in 1992 at the Rio Summit on the Environment.

The environmental community greeted the proposed draft legislation with resounding boos when it was finally tabled as a white paper for public comment in the fall of 1995. Not only did the draft legislation only apply to federal lands—less than 4 percent of Canada's land base—it did not even require the protection of the natural habitat critical to species' survival.

It's not that the public is resistant to the idea of strong and universally-applicable endangered species legislation. A recent poll found that 94 percent of Canadians support such legislation.

So, what's the problem? The Federal Government, in this era of shaky federal-provincial relations, says that it will not impose endangered species legislation on provinces. According to its legal experts, federal legislation would infringe on provincial jurisdiction over land-related matters. Thus, the provinces must take the lead roll in protecting endangered species in Canada.

Where does the NDP government and the opposition parties in B.C. stand on enacting endangered species legislation? Their silence is as loud as the noise made by the nameless plants and animals going extinct every day around the globe because of humankind's relentless development, especially the continued clearcutting of earth's ancient forests.

For all political parties to consider, here are eight key elements that effective provincial endangered species legislation must contain:

- Protection for all endangered species and populations everywhere in B.C.
- A clear method as to how species at risk are determined—based on scientific not political criteria and including identification of main threats.
- Prohibition of all actions that harm endangered species or damage the natural habitats they need to survive.
- Preventive approaches to protect species, not just "critical care" when they're in the throes of extinction.
- Mandatory implementation of ecosystem-based recovery plans for each listed species.
- Stiff penalties for violating the Endangered Species Act.
- Incentives to promote cooperation amongst landowners, First Nations, and other governments to give endangered species and their habitats full protection.
- Provision for citizens to use and enforce the Endangered Species Act.

Which B.C. political party will be the first to promise, if elected, to enact effective Endangered Species Legislation in B.C.?

to exist, called SOCAs (Spotted Owl Conservation Areas). The owl's status in the future could range anywhere from de-listed (saved) to vulnerable, threatened, endangered or extirpated (extinct in Canada) depending on which option the government chose to act on. Such formulation of options would be illegal in the U.S., because the law requires survival plans, not possible extinction plans.

SORT proposed 18 SOCAs, averaging 8,000 hectares each in size and less than 20 kilometres apart. They are smaller and farther apart than their U.S. equivalents.

In the summer of 1995, timed to coincide with the declaration of the Pinecone-Burke park, the B.C. government publicly announced its plans for the Spotted Owl. It opened up 175,000 hectares of owl nesting and feeding habitat to logging.

Now the B.C. government says that all permanent owl conservation areas must fit under its ceiling of 104,000 hectares of new parks in the Lower Mainland. This spells sure extinction for B.C.'s Spotted Owls, who need their 254,000 hectares of habitat fully protected to survive. Causing the extinction of a species through ignorance is awful; knowingly doing it is immoral and unacceptable.

DRINKING WATERSHEDS BEST OWL SANCTUARY CANDIDATES

The Capilano/Seymour/Coquitlam watersheds that provide Greater Vancouver residents' drinking water have ideal Spotted Owl habitat, maybe the best left in Canada. But even here, continued oldgrowth logging operations threaten to destroy the owls' living space.

Six active owl sites have been identified in these three watersheds. It's possible that a thorough survey could reveal as many as 10 more sites.

At present, logging in Greater Vancouver's drinking water reservoir areas is supposedly done only to enhance water quality. We know for a fact that no logging will enhance Spotted Owl habitat! Studies indicate that an end to all logging in the watersheds would lead to reduced landslides, decreased siltation and higher water quality. Owly environmentalists would be delighted if these precious watersheds became no-log Spotted Owl and pure drinking water sanctuaries.

WCWC TAKES BC'S CHIEF FORESTER TO COURT TO SAVE SPOTTED OWLS

Western Canada Wilderness Committee (WCWC) has petitioned the B.C. Supreme Court to force B.C.'s Chief Forester Larry Pedersen to take preservation of endangered Spotted Owl habitat into account and lower the rate of logging (the Allowable Annual Cut) in the Timber Supply Areas (TSAs) where the owls live.

Scientists on the government's own Spotted Owl Recovery Team concluded that the owl will be extirpated (go extinct in Canada) unless most of the remaining larger fragments of oldgrowth forest in the southwest mainland of B.C. are left unlogged.

The petition filed by the Sierra Legal Defense Fund on behalf of WCWC was heard on February 22-23, 1996. WCWC contended that Pedersen broke the law in explicitly excluding owl habitat requirements when he made his recent cut determinations for the Soa and Fraser TSAs. On March 18, the petition was denied. WCWC is appealing this decision to a higher court.

Andrew Miller, who holds a Master of Science degree in wildlife management from the University of Alberta and is a PhD candidate there, was WCWC's chief witness. His list of credentials makes him a leading northern Spotted Owl expert. As a wildlife biologist with the U.S. Forest Service from 1988 through 1991, Miller conducted extensive field research on the Spotted Owl, noting that these fearless birds have only one persistent enemy: the timber barons. WCWC's case, however, hinges on technical legal interpretation of the wording of the *Forest Act* not on biological criteria or moral principles.

Even if WCWC wins its case, it does not ensure that B.C.'s Chief Forester will make an adequate reduction in the rate of forest harvest to save the owl. To meet the letter of the law, all the Chief Forester has to do is *consider* the owl's conservation needs. But the Wilderness Committee hopes he uses his powers to drastically reduce the cut and tip the balance in favour of Spotted Owl survival.

NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL LIFE ASSURANCE POLICY - \$50

- I realize that there are only 33 known pairs of northern Spotted Owls left to be insured (assured survival in B.C.). I'm ordering my policy to help you protect them before it is too late.
- Enclosed please find my donation of ___\$50_____more to "purchase" a WCWC Spotted Owl Life Assurance Policy.

Note: policy holders get a tax receipt and a beautiful certificate. Use form below for name and address.

WCWC Offers Lower Mainland WILDERNESS WALKS

WCWC is launching eco-tours into the Lower Mainland's magnificent oldgrowth forest, including some special evening Spotted Owl tours. For information on how to participate call 683-8220. WCWC's eco-tours are scheduled to start on April 13, 1996. Customized tours available.

WRITE AND TELL B.C.'s Premier and Environment Minister WHERE YOU STAND ON:

1. Saving the Spotted Owl from going extinct in British Columbia by protecting a minimum 254,000 hectares of Owl Conservation Area habitat.
2. The need for strong provincial Endangered Species Legislation.
3. Removal of government's 13 percent upper limit on the amount of land that can be set aside as parks and replacing it with a higher, ecologically reasonable figure. (Based on conservation biology, WCWC thinks it should be at least 40 percent.)
4. Having public open house meetings in the main communities around the Lower Mainland where people can comment on the recommendations of the Regional Public Advisory Committee (RPAC) regarding new Lower Mainland parks before the recommendations are sent to Cabinet.

Address and send letters today to:
Legislative Buildings, Victoria,
British Columbia, V8V 1X4.

Credits

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Come to WCWC's Council of All Beings Solstice Celebration

Legislature Lawns, Victoria B.C.

NOON to SUNSET (9:22 PM)

Friday June 21, 1996



*Hear Bill Devall, the father of Deep Ecology, speak.
Come as your favourite animal.
Join in the largest eco-ritual in recent history.
Re-affirm your rootedness in nature.*

This summer solstice, hundreds of people will shed their human limitations and take on the identity of other life forms. Prepare your costume now! Learn about Earth's threatened and endangered species...the bears, bugs, trees, Spotted Owls... Rally for 40 percent not 13 percent preservation of the wilderness habitats of B.C. and the world.

For more information about WCWC's *Council of All Beings Solstice Celebration* call Andy Miller at WCWC 604-683-8220.



Month-old Spotted Owl in area slated for clearcut logging.

I will not share the blame for the possible demise of B.C.'s Spotted Owls!

- I have written letters to B.C.'s Premier and Minister of the Environment.
- I am joyfully contributing to your work towards saving the Spotted Owl. Enclosed is my tax-deductible gift of \$30 \$50 \$100 \$500 other to help you win this campaign.

WCWC's Federal Registered Charitable Tax Number is 0587113-21-28.

I want to renew my WCWC membership become a WCWC Member. Enclosed is my \$30 membership fee.
 I would like to become a Sustaining-Family Member. Here is \$52 membership fee (\$1 per week for wilderness preservation). Please upgrade my regular \$30 Membership to a Sustaining-Family Membership. Enclosed is \$22.
Note: please call our toll-free 1-800-661-9453 number to donate and become a WCWC Member and save time and trees!

Name (please print) _____ Address _____
City _____ Province _____ Postal Code _____ Phone _____

Send to the Western Canada Wilderness Committee (WCWC), 20 Water Street, Vancouver, BC V6B 1A4.

Protect the Spotted Owl
SPIRIT OF THE ANCIENT FOREST
Spotted Owl Bumpersticker
\$3 each (includes taxes and postage).

