

Unanswered Questions about BC's Golden Eagle Slaughter

Posted by

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May 27, 2005 by Ingmar Lee

Last year, when it became known that people involved with the Vancouver Island marmot recovery project had been bait-killing Golden eagles, Dr. Andrew "Mr. Marmot" Bryant, immediately went on record expressing shock and outrage that this had happened without his knowledge. Ostensibly, Doug Janz, then chair of the Marmot Recovery Team had sneaked around behind his back and destroyed a number of these magnificent birds, all in the name of 'protecting' Vancouver Island's marmots. Later Janz took the fall for the killings, which made front page headlines across Canada and shocked and horrified people around the world.

From Jody Paterson's March 19th 2004 article in the Victoria Times Colonist:

"...The government bureaucrat who presided over the execution orders -- Doug Janz, head of the Island's wildlife division -- is not only chairman of the province's marmot recovery team, but an outspoken advocate of predator culls for a variety of purposes. Janz has regularly promoted wolf culls on the Island for more than 20 years -- initially to boost flagging deer populations so that hunters would have more to kill, and more recently to spare marmots. Several culls of wolves and cougars have occurred during his tenure, sometimes at the hands of government and sometimes through a boost in permits to hunt predators, as happened last winter..."

Subsequently Janz has received a "Golden Handshake," and now, presumably has retired.

I've been researching the internal WLAP command-structure process by which the Gordon Campbell government got involved in the killing of the Golden eagles. One expects that the WLAP Minister, - then Joyce Murray, must have been briefed prior to the killings, given how controversial and repugnant the killing of eagles is to nature loving Canadians. (Even the Gordon Campbell government now offers substantial rewards for information leading to the conviction of eagle-killers.) My recent Freedom of Information package isn't as comprehensive as I had hoped for and it is clear that WLAP is being evasive as to a possible direct connection between Murray and the slaughter. But one thing that does come out in my package is that then WLAP Deputy Minister, Nancy Wilkin was the highest known official to have been briefed about the killing of Golden eagles. I see that Nancy Wilkin now sits on the board of the Marmot Recovery Foundation. (www.marmots.org)

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I'm wondering if Dr. Bryant is aware of the connection between Nancy Wilkin and this dreadful incident which has been so hugely embarrassing to his efforts with the marmots? I'm wondering if he ever received a thorough explanation as to why all these people sneaked around behind his back, shooting Golden eagles without informing him. And now that one of the approvers of that ugly business now sits on the board of the Marmot Recovery Foundation, what assurances does the Marmot Recovery Team have that the predator killers don't continue to sneak around behind their backs with other diabolical secret projects?

Golden eagles aside, the government continues to sanction the targeted killing of wolves and cougar for the "protection" of the marmots. Here's what Raincoast Conservation Society wolf experts, Chris Darimont and Chris Genoali had to say about WLAP's absurd "predator control" efforts:

"The Ministry of Water, Land and Air Protection (WLAP) has no reliable data on the status of wolves and cougars, (or golden eagles for that matter) on the island, and does not carry out a scientifically credible enumeration of their respective populations. Rather, the ministry depends on "hunter surveys" to estimate wolf and cougar populations. Regardless, provincial biologists have suggested that active management of predators, particularly wolves, is a necessary component of the marmot recovery plan. The killing of wolves will not provide relief from predation and, perversely, may exacerbate it." (Victoria Times Colonist March 26, 2004)

Vancouver Island's Marmot Recovery project is fraught with outrageous sneaking hypocrisy and sleazery. The management approach for the marmots is identical to the Weyerhaeuser and TimberWest management vision for the forests of the area. After logging, the companies broadcast laboratory-cloned seedlings across the stumpfields which they hope will "take." For the marmots, they simply carry on with their private land clearcutting massacre, with an annual broadcast of laboratory-bred marmots across the extirpated colony sites, which they hope will "take." From the marmot website:

"...Major land owners in Vancouver Island Marmot habitat area are TimberWest, Weyerhaeuser & the BC Government. Recognizing that the Vancouver Island marmot is critically endangered, a partnership has been created between these Major Landowners and the Marmot Recovery Foundation. The Landowners Partners Fund (LPF) provides the Marmot Recovery Foundation with core funding that supports and enables the implementation of the Recovery Plan..."

Without any credible scientific justification, Weyerhaeuser, TimberWest and the BC Government

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are playing Russian Roulette with Canada's most endangered specie. The blatant kowtowing to the private land 'rights' of industry to wantonly destroy nature which is taking place in the mountains behind Nanaimo demonstrates the collusion of big logging, the BC government and the quisling marmot scientists. It also highlights the absolute impotence and incompetence of Canada's Species At Risk Act (SARA) to protect our most endangered species.