Endangered Species and Spaces

13.0 Summary and Conclusions

Like the province, the Columbia Basin has a rich and diverse environment, and compared to many areas in Canada, its natural ecosystems are still relatively intact. Notwithstanding this, there have been and continue to be, a number of human disturbances that have irrrevocably altered the landscape. Most notable of these are the damming of the Columbia River in several locations which has drowned hundreds of kilometres of some of the most productive habitat in the Columbia Basin, and clearcut logging which continues to reduce old growth forests at a non-sustainable rate. The province has 187 vertebrate (mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and freshwater fish) species that are on the red and blue lists. The Columbia basin has 46 species representing **24.6%** of the provincial total. In the case of vascular plants, the Columbia Basin contains **17.1%** of the provincial red and blue-listed species. Although precise figures are lacking, a similar outlook is projected for invertebrates, non-vascular plants and plant communities.

With recent additions to the protected area system in the Columbia Basin, about **11.7%** of the landscape has some form of protective status. There is growing doubt however, about the ability of these protected areas to meet long term biodiversity objectives. Many of the protected areas contain high proportions of alpine tundra including rock and ice, and while these areas are aesthetically attractive, they are relatively depauperate in numbers of species and habitats.

Many ot the protected areas identified in recent regional land use processes were set aside at least in part because they had no significant resource development potential. Much of the critical valley bottom habitat was considered too valuable for development purposes to be "locked-up" in protected areas.

It is now commonly recognized that many protected areas in the province are too small to contain all the critical habitat requirements of wide-ranging species such as Grizzly Bears.

These figures indicate that there is considerable room for concern about our ability to preserve biodiversity over the long term. There is an urgent need for more research and monitoring, since many species are disappearing either without our knowledge, or without knowledge of how to prevent the loss. There is a need for increased legislation and regulations to prevent the destruction of species and their habitats. There is a greater need for cooperative arrangements between all levels of government, industry, and private citizens alike towards biodiversity conservation. Greatest of all is the need for a profound philosophical and attitudinal shift away from an anthropomorphic view of the world, to one in which all species have equal value. Failing that utopian objective, we require a complete and compelling understanding that only in the preservation of the ecosysytems in which we live, is our own survival on earth possible.

"ecology..has been blinkered by our focus on organisms. Species, populations and communities have drawn attention away from the larger realities of which they are a part and in which much of their meaning resides. We have not been able to see the hive for the bees nor the forest ecosystem for the trees. Hence, the conviction that the entitiies of prime importance on earth are the plants, animals and especially people, rather than the globe's miraculous life-filled skin. ***Endangered species*** *elicit torrents of public concern;* ***endangered spaces*** *are routinely desecrated*

and destroyed with scarcely a murmur of public disapproval. The priority is wrong, and from this profound error, the whole world suffers.".

J. Stan Rowe

Ecology Misconceived[1]

[1] J. Stan Rowe. 1994. The Importance of Conserving Ecosystems. Ch. 1 in Biodiversity in British Columbia. Harding, L. and E. McCullum Ed's.

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