

1. Port Metro Vancouver believes the megaport known as Roberts Bank terminal 2 and the birds can coexist. Robert Emsley executive director of "Against Port Expansion", one of several groups opposed to it says it could break the migratory chain which would be a nightmare scenario that could endanger the shore birds. Environmental minister Leora Aglakag has referred it to an independent review panel given the significant adverse effects. The expansion is also the corridor of choice for birds that fly thousands of kilometers from the southern USA, central & south America to breeding grounds in Alaska, Russia, & northern Canada. The Fraser delta provides critical feeding, breeding, & wintering habitat for more than 1M migratory birds, its known as a vital stopover site. The recent environmental Canada report says its nutrient rich bio-film or "sublime slime" acts like an energy drink for migrating birds which is key, it fuels the long distance migration of western sandpipers & Dunlin to their Alaskan breeding grounds making this essential to successful migration and reproduction of the species. Roberts Bank Terminal 2 is to create another artificial island 1.5k long and 700m wide to handle ships up to 400m long and carrying as many as 18,000 shipping containers. About 1850 trucks and 5 trains a day would shuttle cargo, doubling current capacity. So along with threats of spills and accidents there is the concern this island could alter ^{the} flow of current and nutrients that lead to biofilm production but port officials say they believe they can build it without harming the birds or habitat.

When Environment Canada biologist Mark Dreyer with his spotting scope is focussing on the migrating shore birds touching down in the Fraser Delta is asked by a reporter about the situation he says he's not allowed to speak to reporters about it without approval of the environment media office - when the reporter ^{asked} to do that he was refused. While Dreyer is not talking he is the ^{lead} author of the report published in March/14

It suggests there is still much to learn about the shorebirds and what happens there. Total Western sandpiper pop on flyway is estimated at 3.5m & they report about 600,000 stop at Roberts Bank. Dunlins believed to be at about 550,000 also stop during migration and many others. This bio-film is a huge draw. It's rich in carbohydrates & microbes. The dependence of so many birds on it shows how important it is that the biofilm is there during migration.

2/ Cohen report - More than 2 months after the Cohen report was released senior fisheries officials said they still haven't been asked to respond to it. A spokeswoman for the fisheries ministry says the govt is justified in its handling of the report because it didn't find a "smoking" "gun" to prove the department or any other factor was solely to blame for the problems. Craig Ore of Watershed Watch noted the science rarely finds a single cause in situations like the 2009 sockeye collapse & says Ottawa is acting irresponsibly in pushing now for Salmon farms expansion in BC despite Cohen's concerns; The fisheries department went to work quickly after the report was tabled & had detailed responses and cost estimates done for the recommendations even though the dept acknowledged that 'spending proposals had to reflect fiscal realities and the govt's new and more industry friendly approach to habitat protection. The Federal Budget in March didn't refer to the Cohen report but did include an extension of the Sustainable Aquaculture program, which includes research funding; the budget also included \$10M over 2 yrs to fund partnerships across Canada with local groups to protect fish habitat & dedicated the proceeds of the "Salmon Conservation Stamp" that must be purchased by anglers, to the Pacific Salmon Foundation, adding \$1M annually to its coffers.

3/ Parks - Environmental Groups have delivered a petition signed by 166,000 people to the BC Gov't calling for repeal of a law they say allows industrial research in prov parks. People are upset at the province which is

being accused of selling parks to interests such as oil and gas Co. the legislation was passed in March & permits the removal of park land for research, 9 groups are behind the petitions & accuse the govt of ramming the legislation thro, which also allows for commercial filming in parks. Environment Minister Mary Polak said that while industrial development is allowed in parks, no drilling, mining, forestry, transmission lines or gas wells are allowed.

Burrowing owls - They are one of Canada's most endangered owls - (Burrowing owls) were originally in grasslands of south OKanagon but now breed in captivity and then taken to protected wilderness burrows: they used to nest in underground tunnels from budgeis & gophers. They are only 20 centimeters long weigh about 170 grams, haven't been seen much in BC since early 1980's when they were declared extirpated.

Lauren Meeds, S OKanagon site co-ordinator for the Burrowing Owl Conservation Society of BC with volunteers, have built 25 artificial burrows spread throughout the grassland bowl on a hillside bluff. BC breeds more of these birds than anywhere else in N America at 3 different facilities - BC Wildlife Park in Kamloops is the largest; A volunteer ran breeding center at Port Kells Surrey, & the newest in the OKanagon opened in 2011. 14 wild calls from Oregon have been paired & brought in to breed in caged areas surrounded by an open zone where they fly. Their offspring & all other birds were taken to Kamloops this spring for final checking and banding and released into the wild. The parent birds will stay at the facility to breed again. They take the tiny birds into the artificial burrows, first recording the data on their bands to await their mate where they're housed in a portable mesh cage placed over top of the open tunnel entrance - it will stay up for 10 days - this is a trial marriage - food is provided

(Frozen mice & baby chicks) - Volunteers check the burrows every 2-3 days & after 10 days the cover is removed. If pairing is successful eggs are laid in clusters of 6-12 white eggs size of scotch mints. The female sits on the nest for 25 days while her mate forages for food (rodents, insects, grass hoppers) then in mid June they check for hatchlings. In July they count & band, this must be done as soon as they are big enough (about 4 weeks) but before they fly.