

# Wildlife Whispers

## Ocean Park's Wilderness Watch

by Dee Walmsley

A lone eagle rides the air currents over camp Kwomais surveying its kingdom of Douglas fir, alders, cedar and blackberry brambles. Fields of dandelions and stinging nettles cover the ground where huckleberries and salmonberries bloom. A fire burns, clearing the land for another new family. It's the early forties.

Today the tall trees are being replaced by nursery stock; the human population is currently 14,400 and growing.

The area wildlife is slowly vanishing as the cunning coyote replaces the dainty red fox. The indigenous Douglas squirrel is competing with its larger relative the transplanted Eastern Grey for habitat. With the increase of cats, and the loss of dead trees the northern flying squirrel's numbers are waning.

Three species of woodpeckers, the Downy, Hairy and Pileated continue to raid backyard bird feeders and can be heard rat-a-tatting on rotting trees as they build their homes

The deer population is kept in check with coyotes, road kills and our constant encroachment on their habitat for houses and parking lots, but the raccoons have prospered over the years as they learn to coexist with their human neighbours.

Skunks, few in numbers in the forties, are a rare sight or smell today. Weasels and wild mink have moved onto greener pastures and the chipmunks, while still around, are struggling for survival.

Black bear and cougars once seen in Ocean Park vanished when hunting and the increase in the human population took over their territories.

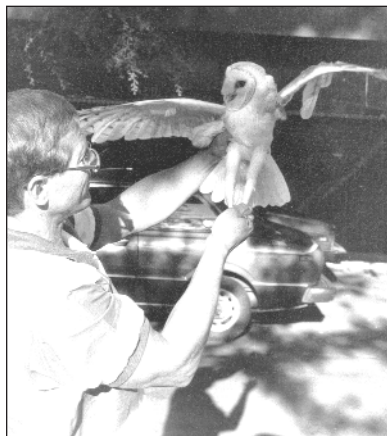
'Possums hitch hiking on trains and trucks from south of the border are now permanent residents, as are the introduced Canada Geese. The once plentiful Brant, Willow Grouse, and pheasants are a rare sight.

The night no longer echoes the hoot of a great horned owl, or the calls of its cousin the screech owl.

The salamanders, frogs and snakes that mischievous boys used to terrorize the local girls with, are seldom seen or heard.

Orcas, and the gentle giant Grey whales are being poisoned with toxic waste and dying of starvation due to global warming. Over-fishing and pollution is taking its toll on our Semiahmoo Bay sea life.

Nature has its cycles, and continues to survive despite the adversity. Today eight magnificent bald eagles soar, with the wind beneath their wings, over the small community of Ocean Park.



DR. OLAFSON RELEASES OWL

## OUR FIRST VETERINARIAN

### Local Veterinarian has seen Great Changes in Community

by Dr. Jim Olafson

During the past 32 years of practicing veterinary medicine in the Ocean Park area, I have watched a rural community grow up and come alive, while still maintaining its unique character. From my perspective, Ocean Park has evolved with the times, but thankfully has retained a fresh sense of place, a presence, and a style.

A typical day for me 30 years ago would have begun with appointments in my office which was located in the shopping centre next to the liquor store and Nordel Electronics. Upon completion of office visits, treatments and surgery there, the latter part of the day would most likely include 'house-calls' to local farms perhaps to check a lame horse, castrate baby pigs, or treat a sick cow. There was always time for a little visit and a chat, then back to the office for more small animal appointments. Sounds strange, but yes, this was your neighbourhood - with its small farms, truly a rural community!

As time went on and more residential development took place, the inevitable infringement on wildlife took place and as a result many injured animals found themselves under my care. Local citizens such as Dee Walmsley would arrive at my clinic with deer, raccoons, birds and rodents, all of which were treated and released whenever possible.

Ocean Park has 'grown up', but I'm proud to be a long time member of this community both as my home and with my practice at the South Surrey Veterinary Hospital. I am pleased that even with its changes, Ocean Park has retained a wonderful ambiance and fondness to us all. Happy Birthday!

## CRITTER CARE WILDLIFE SOCIETY

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