

March 4, 2012

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**City assisting Ministry of Environment investigation of felled eagle nest tree**

The City of Campbell River is working with the provincial conservation office and the Ministry of Environment to investigate the felling of an active bald eagle nest tree on the morning of Feb. 27.

The Douglas fir tree, which was registered in the Provincial nest tree data base and mapped in the SOCP as an environmentally sensitive development permit area, was cut down in a residential area located on the ridge south of Rockland Road in Campbell River.

City staff attended and photographed the site, and neighbours who witnessed the tree being cut volunteered contact information.

The City has sent a letter to the property owner advising that any land disturbance within a 60-metre area around a nest tree requires a City development permit and that only the Province can authorize the removal of an eagle nest tree. Since the nest tree was at the crest of an identified risk slope, the land also falls within the hazardous conditions development permit area as identified in the Sustainable Official Community Plan. The letter also noted that the City is assisting the Conservation Officer Service in their investigation.

Section 34 of the Provincial Wildlife Act provides year-round protection for bald eagle nests. The City of Campbell River's development permit area requires that a 60-metre naturally vegetated buffer must be maintained around eagle nest trees, measured as a radius from the base of the nest tree. If the 60-metre buffer cannot be achieved either due to lot size or location of the tree, the distance may be altered if the land owner supplies a report from a Qualified Environmental Professional with experience in raptor assessments. There are an estimated, 25 bald eagle breeding territories within the City of Campbell River.

According to the province's Wildlife Tree Stewardship (WiTS) program, the primary constraints to bald eagle nesting success are food supply, health of the eagles, availability of nesting and perch trees and disturbance by human activity. Preventing the loss of nesting and perching trees is a key component in assuring the long-term viability of the eagle population.

In a WiTS 2010 report, in the Willow Point area of Campbell River, all the known nest trees in two nesting territories have been cut down. The report also says between 1990 and 1999 from Qualicum Beach to Campbell River, 17 of 253 known nest trees were lost, and in the same areas. Between 2000 and 2009, a further 33 nest trees were lost.

Bald eagles build large nests, often two metres across and weighing more than 500 kg. These huge weighty nests can only be supported by the largest trees in the area, in past most commonly veteran Douglas fir, often with a breast-height diameter of one to two metres. The preferred location of these trees is near the shore with commanding views of the ocean, and eagle pairs defend a nesting territory of approximately one kilometre of coastline.

More information, including guidelines for behaviour in the vicinity of eagle nests may be found in a provincial Develop with Care publication available through the WITS website at [www.wildlifetree.org](http://www.wildlifetree.org)

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## BACKGROUND

Bald Eagle Breeding Cycle:

October: Eagles return from migration to their nests

Mid-October-November: Nest refurbishment

Mid-November-January: Winter survival and holding down the territory

February – early March: Mating and final nest preparation

Mid-March to early May: Egg laying

Mid-March to May: Brooding, male and female brood eggs for approximately 35 days

May: Chicks hatch

June to early July: First chicks peeping to wing flapping and jumping by July

Late July: First flight 85 days after hatching

Mid-August-September: Migration off island (adults and young)