







"ONE OF CANADA'S MOST ENDANGERED SPECIES"

Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program

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GLOBAL PANDEMIC DURING THE BREEDING SEASON

When the 2020 breeding season began, the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program team was eagerly anticipating another busy season, but knew there would be hurdles to overcome just like any other year. What we did not expect was a global pandemic that would bring an entirely new set of challenges.

WHAT WE DID NOT EXPECT WAS A GLOBAL PANDEMIC THAT WOULD BRING AN ENTIRELY NEW SET OF CHALLENGES.

For the 2020 breeding season, three interns and two part-time staff were hired to aid the four full-time staff (as seen in photo). Highlights from this year include the solidification of a very important pair bond between Skalula and Oregon, the birth of two new Northern Spotted Owl chicks, and increased community engagement with the debut of Small Eyes, the glove-trained owl. Unfortunately we did lose a chick later in the season due to a leg injury on the nest, which took a toll on the NSOBP team.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THIS YEAR INCLUDE THE SOLIDIFICATION OF A VERY IMPORTANT PAIR BOND BETWEEN SKALULA AND OREGON...

Like many non-profit organizations across Canada, the NSOBP has been directly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Each year, there is always some amount of uncertainty surrounding our financial ability to sustain full operations, and this year that uncertainty is even greater as many donors are simply unable to give during this difficult economic time. We would like to thank everyone for your support of the NSOBP, whether you have been following us for many years or have just been introduced to us. Now, let's get ready for breeding season 2021!

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CROSS-COUNTRY INTERNSHIP & COVID-19 IMPACTS

The NSO Breeding Program's internship program started in 2013 and has continued to grow ever since. This internship provides a rewarding experience for recent university graduates, and we have been fortunate to receive funding from the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program for this unique internship since 2015. Like many organizations all around the world, the NSOBP was not immune to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, Brighten Ching, one of three NSOBP interns, found herself in an exceptional situation, having travelled from Ontario to begin her internship shortly before the pandemic began. Read about her experience below:

"In late 2019, I accepted the NSOBP internship and prepared to travel from southwestern Ontario to British Columbia for the position. Despite the nerves I was feeling, I was also incredibly excited to work with the Northern Spotted Owl and to experience British Columbia for the first time. Though moving across the country was a large step for me personally, I was aware that I was not the first to take on this role, as several NSOBP staff members and previous interns have made a similar journey, with some even travelling internationally. Instead, my internship was made unique by a different set of circumstances: the arrival of COVID-19 and commencement of international lockdown. In mid-March, less than one month into the internship, COVID-19 was classified as a pandemic and the world began to change. I was affected by COVID-19 in many of the same ways

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other BC residents were affected, but I was also very far from home during a time in which you'd typically want to be near family. As the global situation continued to escalate, there were times that I began to question the feasibility of remaining in BC for the rest of the breeding season. However, I was able to find reassurance in the stability and support that my workplace and co-workers provided. I had the privilege of being able to continue working with the incredible staff at the Program, which allowed me to socialize with others in a safe environment and helped me alleviate some stress. The NSOBP staff were fully prepared with proper PPE, as

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health and safety are of upmost importance for the chicks during even the most routine years. Despite the unfortunate situation caused by the pandemic, I still look back on my time as an intern and in BC as a positive experience. Though I wasn't able to do as much exploring on the west coast as I'd hoped, this gives me an excuse to return in the future after the pandemic ends. Being part of the NSOBP was one of the most enriching experiences I've ever had. I have not only gained valuable skills and knowledge about the conservation field, but I have also grown as an individual, and have made lasting relationships with my coworkers."



SKALULA & OREGON: "Sticking" Together

The 2019 live stream featured Skalula (female) and Oregon (male) and documented their journey as they raised a foster chick named Fraser. The 2020 breeding season was full of even more twists and turns, worthy of their own Netflix special!

THE PAIR SUCCESSFULLY RAISED FRASER AND ONCE HE WAS MOVED TO HIS OWN AVIARY, WE WERE INTERESTED TO SEE IF SKALULA AND OREGON'S PROGRESS WOULD STICK.

Skalula and Oregon were selected as foster parents in 2019 to give their relationship an extra boost, as the pair was showing great signs of bonding, but had failed to copulate each breeding season. The pair successfully raised Fraser and once he was moved to his own aviary, we were interested to see if Skalula and Oregon's progress would stick! In order to help them along even more, we restricted their access to their second aviary in hopes they would interact more. (Don't worry, they still had lots space to fly around and stretch their wings!). Using our remote camera monitoring system, we were confident that both owls would feel comfortable sharing a smaller space and did not see any negative changes in their behaviour. In fact, we only saw positive signs! Within a few months of this new living arrangement, Skalula and Oregon



Oregon hopping in the Nest with Skalula and Chick F (Fraser) during the 2019 Breeding Season.



Skalula (left) and Oregon (right) sitting together in their favourite tree.

began roosting side by side in their favourite tree. This was a new behaviour for the pair and was especially promising as they were spending time together outside of the breeding season.

WITHIN A FEW MONTHS OF THIS NEW LIVING ARRANGEMENT, SKALULA AND OREGON BEGAN ROOSTING SIDE BY SIDE IN THEIR FAVOURITE TREE.

As March approached, we watched the cameras carefully, hoping to see copulation. Skalula and Oregon were both participating in the typical breeding season behaviours including nest calling and prey delivery, but as Skalula began preparing to lay eggs, we had yet to see them copulate. One afternoon, while watching the previous night's playback video, Oregon was observed to have copulated...but there was one problem...it was with a tree branch and not Skalula! Unfortunately by the time this behaviour was caught on camera, it was too late, Skalula had laid her eggs and they were infertile.

OREGON WAS OBSERVED TO HAVE COPULATED...BUT THERE WAS ONE PROBLEM... IT WAS WITH A TREE BRANCH AND NOT SKALULA!

A common husbandry technique we use to encourage egg production is double clutching, which means after the first clutch of 1-3 eggs are laid, all eggs are removed from the nest which prompts the female to lay 1-3 more. So with double clutching, there was still hope in 2020 for Oregon to figure out how to copulate with Skalula. In the two weeks between clutches, the infamous branch was cut down in hopes to draw Oregon's attention elsewhere and it worked! Oregon and Skalula were confirmed to be copulating and were officially a bonded pair!

OREGON AND SKALULA WERE CONFIRMED TO BE COPULATING AND WERE OFFICALLY A BONDED PAIR!

While both of their second clutch eggs were fertile but failed to develop, this is just the beginning of their pair bond. Oregon and Skalula are both just seven years old and are in the prime of their reproductive life. Future offspring of this pair are genetically significant, as Oregon is the only member of his family in the breeding program. He was rescued as an orphan in Oregon in 2013 and brought to Canada soon afterward. Skalula was born at the NSOBP in 2013 and has two siblings and three nephews.

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TWO BROTHERS FEATURED IN NEST LIVE STREAM

This year marked the fourth year that live images of a Northern Spotted Owl nest were publicly accessible thanks to our partnership with the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program (FWCP).

Chick J was born on April 20, 2020 after 32 days of artificial incubation and 80 hours of hatching, followed by nearly two weeks of hand-rearing before being returned to his parents Sedin and Amoré on May 3. Chick J, a male, is the second offspring for Sedin and Amoré as they welcomed their first chick, Rocket, last spring.

While Chick J was being hand-reared by the NSOBP team, Amoré was sitting on a "dummy" egg. This egg was left in the nest when Chick J was returned so everyone was able to see how much the chick was growing by comparing his size to the egg. While Amoré was expecting her egg to hatch and a small, 30g chick to be in her nest, she did not seem too bothered when she was given a chick weighing almost four times that instead! Both parents took to Chick J immediately, and both Sedin and Amoré were frequently seen in the nest preening each other as well as the chick.

We were so happy to be able to share some incredible images of Chick J on our live stream this year. Over 5000 people tuned in throughout the month of May and were able to watch Chick J grow from a small chick that required constant care to a large fluffball that was able to fledge from the nest on May 28th.

To keep the fluffball rolling, the live stream camera feed was switched to Chick P and his foster parents Sally and Watson on June 1st after Chick J had left the nest and was no longer visible on the camera. Chick P was born on May 8, 2020 and being three weeks younger than his older brother, it was necessary to have him raised by foster parents to prevent competition between the two chicks. Viewers were

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able to see the different parenting styles of the two pairs, with the most notable difference being Sedin's attentiveness to his family, climbing into the nest to allopreen and feed them. In comparison, Watson was more territorial around the aviary and didn't spend much time interacting with Sally and Chick P in the nest. He made many quick drop off deliveries of food before flying off to roost on his own. Both approaches worked well!

We'd like to thank the FWCP for hosting the stream, the Canadian Press for helping spread the word, and of course, a big thank you to everyone that watched and shared the webcam for your support. We're looking forward to sharing some great live stream images next breeding season too!



HOW CLEAN IS CLEAN?

Though the breeding season is always the highlight and most demanding time of the year, the NSOBP is busy already making preparations in January and February leading up to the arrival of eggs. All of these measures are necessary in order to give the precious Spotted Owl eggs the strongest start possible once they arrive in March. During the 32 day artificial incubation period and ten days of hand-raising after hatch, it is important that the equipment used is clean, vigorously tested, and organized.

The first step in the weeks-long process is the scrub down of exterior surfaces, such as the walkway approaching the incubation building. The walkway is scrubbed top to bottom with a 10% chlorine bleach solution. Twice. Shoes are also removed at the door to manage any mud or dirt that may be tracked in from outside. The incubation building is split into two rooms. The smaller of the two rooms is the incubation room. This room has four incubators, including the newest unit that was purchased at the end of last year to accommodate the increasing number of eggs laid each year. This incubator was purchased thanks to generous donations from the John Ball Zoo, the Abbotsford Community Foundation's Mary Victoria Wakefield Animal Welfare Fund, and through 2019 Adopt-an-Egg donations.

THE SANITATION PROCESS IS MADE UP OF THREE STAGES; HYDROGEN PEROXIDE, 70% ETHANOL, AND 10% CHLORINE BLEACH.

Every tool used throughout the breeding season MUST be sanitized. The sanitation process is made up of three stages: hydrogen peroxide, 70% ethanol, and 10% chlorine bleach. Every single tool and piece of equipment in the incubation building is taken apart and cleaned. Everything from crayons for labelling eggs, small plastic dishes, to the very delicate parts of the incubators data are cleaned! The adjoining hand-raising

room, which includes hatchers, brooder boxes, and feeding tools, is also cleaned top to bottom. All of this cleaning results in a multi-week team effort that must be completed before the arrival of the first eggs.



Interns Brianna (left) and Paula (right) cleaning incubators.

After everything is cleaned and ready to go, the next task is testing the incubators, as strict control of humidity, temperature, and gentle rotation of the egg is critical for development. Each incubator's parameters are recorded three times per day to make sure that the machines are stabilized. Temperatures are also taken using analog thermometers in different "zones" of the incubator to determine if there are any hot or cold sections that should be avoided when eggs are put inside.

Finally, a practice round of fertile chicken eggs are incubated to give the interns a first-hand crash-course in egg development, and to familiarize them with the incubators. This also gives staff the opportunity to fix any "bugs" the incubators might have acquired during the off-season. Interns learn techniques such as handling of the eggs, candling, and the proper sterilizing techniques to avoid cross contamination. After the chicken eggs hatch, the equipment used is thoroughly sterilized once again, and staff and interns alike wait in anticipation for the arrival of Spotted Owl eggs!



"THIS [NEW] INCUBATOR WAS PURCHASED THANKS TO GENEROUS DONATIONS FROM THE JOHN BALL ZOO, THE ABBOTSFORD COMMUNITY FOUNDATION'S MARY VICTORIA WAKEFIELD ANIMAL WELFARE FUND, AND THROUGH ADOPT-AN-EGG DONATIONS".



FIVE YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF ADOPT-AN-EGG & FIRST EVER CHICK ADOPTION

Every March, the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program staff are filled with excitement and anticipation for the first egg of the season to be laid. For the fifth year in a row, the Adopt-An-Egg campaign was run to allow donors to follow along and learn all about artificial incubation. Each donor received a welcome email with a personalized certificate and six weekly updates regarding their egg. These updates included images and videos of the egg's progress and the techniques we use to track development. Donors

WE ALSO INTRODUCED SEVERAL NEW INTERACITVE SPOTTED OWL ACTIVITIES TO ENCOURAGE MORE AT-HOME LEARNING SINCE MANY WERE IN QUARANTINE.

had the opportunity to see everything from the first visible heartbeat of a Spotted Owl in the egg to the complex processes that lead to hatching. We also introduced several new interactive Spotted Owl activities to encourage more at-home learning since many were in quarantine. These activities included online scavenger hunts, colouring pages, matching

WITH OVER 50 PROUD EGG PARENTS, OUR ADOPT-AN-EGG CAMPAIGN RAISED \$1,500, REACHING OUR GOAL FOR THE SEASON.

games, and more. With over 50 proud egg parents, our Adopt-an-Egg campaign raised \$1500, reaching our goal for the season! These funds will help cover equipment upgrades and cleaning supplies to keep the incubation building fully stocked for next breeding season.

As eggs began to hatch, the first ever Adopt-a-Chick campaign was launched! Once the eggs have hatched, the chicks are hand-raised by staff for about 10 days to make sure they are healthy and strong before returning them to the nest where their parents or foster parents care for them. This fundraiser gave donors insight into how staff feed and support the chick's growth, and complemented the milestones chicks reached in our livestream. Funds raised will contribute to the cost of food and veterinary care for 2020's chicks.

One of this year's challenges with COVID-19 was that both Adopt-an-Egg and Adopt-a-Chick campaigns needed to rely fully on online donations. In previous years, almost 75% of Adopt-an-Egg donations were raised at in-person events and so the campaign was in jeopardy when all outreach events were cancelled this spring. We were overwhelmed by the generousity of our online community as well as those that read about us in an article published in the Langley Advance. Thank you to all egg and chick parents!





NSOBP 2019 FUNDRAISER: Showcases our best breeding season yet and a special guest

The Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program's 2019 Summer Fundraiser was held on August 24 at the Kwantlen First Nation Cultural Center on Kwantlen Traditional Territory in Fort Langley. Eighty supporters and community members attended, and

EIGHTY SUPPORTERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS ATTENDED...

were treated to a dinner and presentation highlighting NSOBP's successes in the 2019 breeding season. The event featured a raffle, with prizes sourced from over 15 different donors, Spotted Owl trivia, and an opportunity to suggest names for the five new chicks born and housed at the Breeding Centre.

THE EVENT WAS MADE POSSIBLE BY THE FISH AND WILDLIFE COMPENSATION PROGRAM THROUGH THEIR COMMUNTIY ENGAGEMENT GRANT.

The event was made possible by the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program through their Community Engagement Grant. The fundraiser also gave guests an opportunity to interact with another

BCCF project (Supporting recovery of Western Painted Turtle) that is also sponsored by the FWCP. Turtle recovery staff brought a non-releasable Western Painted Turtle with them to educate guests about the threats these turtles face in the Lower Mainland. The NSOBP's own gloved trained Northern Spotted Owl, Small Eyes, made her debut. Read more about Small Eyes on page 14.

THE NSOBP'S OWN GLOVE-TRAINED NORTHERN SPOTTED OWL, SMALL EYES, MADE HER DEBUT.





The Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program raised close to \$2,800 from the event, and were pleased to have the opportunity to share the 2019 successes with so many loyal supporters. We want to thank Karla one of our volunteers who took photos during the event, along with many of our other volunteers who helped us set up and run the event the day of.

Given the current climate with COVID-19, the NSOBP has been making changes to the Program's fundraising, and does not expect to host an inperson fundraiser this year. Supporters are encouraged to donate online towards the general needs of the Program or through our Adopt An Owl campaign.

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Small Eyes hatched at the NSOBP on May 10, 2009, the second chick to be born into the Program. Shortly after she fledged from her nest, she was diagnosed with bilateral microphthalmia - a genetic disorder of the eye. When Small Eyes hatched, it was observed that her eyes had not developed properly and were abnormally small. Due to this disorder, as well as cataracts she developed later in life, she is visually impaired and requires special care to give her the highest quality of life possible.

SHORTLY AFTER SHE FELDGED FROM THE NEST, SHE WAS DIAGNOSED WITH BILIATERAL MICROPHTHALMIA- A GENETIC DISORDER OF THE EYE.

The NSOBP has a target of at least ten breeding pairs to reach our ultimate goal of releasing owls into the wild, but we have been limited by the number of females in the last few years. In an effort to utilize all females in the breeding program, Small Eyes was housed with one of our males, Downie for one breeding season, in an attempt to have them become a bonded pair. Although Downie tried to impress Small Eyes with delivering prey and calling to her, she was unable to bond. This failure to bond was attributed to her limited vision as she was always

spooked if he flew near her. Even though she has never bonded with a mate, Small Eyes has been known to lay infertile eggs during the breeding season. While this is common for non-bonded females to do, Small Eyes was a little bit different... instead of using her nest, she would lay her eggs on the ground or in her water dish! Since Small Eyes wasn't showing interest in her mate or making wise choices about where to lay her eggs, she was moved into her own aviary in 2018. It was concluded that it was not in Small Eyes's best interest to be part of the breeding program and therefore she was "retired" from breeding.

Small Eyes was on her own for about a year, until it was decided that she could be glove-trained and become our educational ambassador owl! A lot of hard work and patience went in to training Small Eyes to be comfortable on the glove. She quickly made great progress, and in less than a year, made her public debut at the NSOBP annual fundraiser in August 2019 (page 12-13)! We are consistently training with Small Eyes to make sure she is always comfortable, and she is continuing to improve. She has done incredibly well at all of the outreach events she has attended, and we love the reaction people have when they realize they get to meet a real Northern Spotted Owl! It is an especially rare encounter we get to share with the community, as Small Eyes is the only glove-trained Northern Spotted Owl in Canada!

Small Eyes made another big impact on the community during the kickoff to the 2019 giving season as part of GivingTuesday. GivingTuesday is a global movement for giving and volunteering, taking place each year after Black Friday. For the past two years, the NSOBP has teamed up with LangleyGives, a partnership between Langley businesses and charities, to promote volunteering and philanthropy in the community. We started the giving season off by setting a fundraising

THE EVENT WAS DUBBED "SELFIES WITH SMALL EYES". FOR JUST A \$5 DOLLAR DONATION, MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY COULD GET A PICTURE TAKEN WITH SMALL EYES.

goal of \$1500 that we hoped to achieve by GivingTuesday on December 3, 2019. Our main fundraising event was to take place at the Otter Co-Op Retail Centre in Aldergrove and the event was dubbed "Selfies with Small Eyes". For just a \$5 donation, members of the community could get their picture taken with Small Eyes. The event was a huge success, and with the incredible support from everyone that came out, we surpassed our Giving Season goal a week early! In addition to other fundraising efforts, we



Spotted Owl Technician (Jenna) holding Small Eyes while attending "Selfies with Small Eyes" at Otter Co-op.

were able to surpass our goal and fundraise \$2100 by GivingTuesday thanks to the generosity of the community. The funds raised during this time contributed to on going site maintenance projects, which includes new monitoring cameras and equipment, and aviary supplies. As more and more Northern Spotted Owls are born each year, there is a



continuous need to maintain the aviaries we have on site to make them as functional as possible for all of the owls. This means regular aviary maintenance and careful upkeep of a wide variety of equipment to keep the owls safe and secure.

The GivingTuesday Selfies with Small Eyes event was such a hit, we decided to have a second Selfies with Small Eyes in March of 2020. The event was hosted again at the Otter Co-Op Retail Centre, and was even more popular than last time! Small Eyes has really come into her own as an educational ambassador. Her calm yet curious demeanor allows the public to have a truly unique, up close and personal experience with one of Canada's most endangered species.

HER CALM YET CURIOUS DEMEANOR ALLOWS THE PUBLIC TO HAVE A TRULY UNIQUE, UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE...

As a non-profit, we are always so grateful for the community support we receive at events like these. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, the NSOBP had to cancel all of our spring outreach events. Once it is safe to do so the NSOBP will be back attending events with Small Eyes across the Lower Mainland.

Keep an eye on our social media pages to find out where Small Eyes will be next! She even has her own Instagram account, where you can follow her @smalleyestheowl.

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WANT TO HELP SAVE ONE OF CANADA'S MOST ENDANGERED SPECIES?

The Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program is always looking for VOLUNTEERS to lend a hand at the Breeding Centre near Fort Langley, as well at outreach events across the Lower Mainland.



VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION

Building upon the success of the revamped 2018 volunteer program, 2019 proved to be an incredibly successful year for volunteering at the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program. Throughout the year, 42 volunteers generously donated over 1500 hours of their time, contributing to site maintenance, rodent care, outreach, errand driving, administrative tasks, and fundraising. Our volunteer team is comprised of many hard working, caring individuals who always show up to their shifts with a positive attitude, rain or shine.

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR [2019], 42 VOLUNTEERS GENEROUSLY DONATED OVER 1500 HOURS OF THEIR TIME.

Though we feel we can never show enough appreciation for the amount of work our volunteers contribute, the annual Volunteer Christmas Dinner has become a staple over the past few years. This year's dinner was held at Derek Doubleday Arboretum in Langley City and was catered by Fort Langley's Little Donkey, a personal favourite local restaurant amongst staff and volunteers. Because volunteer tasks are split between on-site duties and outreach efforts in the community, the Christmas

DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC, VOLUNTEERS WERE UNABLE TO COME ONSITE AND ALL OUTREACH EVENTS WERE CANCELLED.

Dinner provides a fun opportunity for everyone to meet others with whom they may not otherwise see during a typical volunteers shift. It also gave us a chance to show off our new volunteer and staff sweaters, donated by T-Shirt Elephant.



2019 Volunteer Appreciation Christmas Dinner.

The first half of 2020 has been a challenge for the volunteer component of the NSOBP. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, volunteers were unable to come onsite and all outreach events were cancelled. Thankfully our errand drivers were able to help us out occassionally to pick up much needed supplies such as food for the rodents, cleaning agents and materials, and much more.

THANK YOU VOLUNTEERS FOR YOUR ONGOING PATIENCE AND WILLINGNESS TO DO WHATEVER IS REQUIRED FOR BOTH THE OWLS AND THE PEOPLE AT THE NSOBP!

We missed our volunteer team dearly and are slowly working to re-integrate volunteers back into the everyday routine at the Breeding Centre while adapting to the safest standards possible. Thank you volunteers for your ongoing patience and willingness to do whatever is required for both the owls and the people at the Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program!

IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN JOINING THIS INCREDIBLE TEAM OF INDIVIDUALS, DON'T HESITATE TO SEND US AN EMAIL AT nsobreedingprogram@gmail.com. THE VOLUNTEER POSITIONS WE HAVE AVAILABLE CAN BE VIEWED ON OUR WEBSITE AT www.nsobreedingprogram.com/volunteer-with-us.

THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS











The Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program gratefully acknowledges groups, corporations, and private business for their financial and in-kind support.





Thank You Also To:

Norman and Margaret Jewison Foundation

T/Gear Trust

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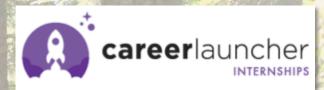
Land Based Investment Fund

Bremner Trio Hydro Corporation









GORDON & PATRICIA GRAYAnimal Welfare Foundation



The Northern Spotted Owl Breeding Program (NSOBP) is part of the registered non-profit British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF).

BCCF's mission is "To promote and assist in the conservation of the fish and wildlife resources of the Province of British Columbia through the protection, acquisition or enhancement of fish and wildlife habitat."



Donations can be made at at our website: www.nsobreedingprogram.com

Thank you for your support to help save one of Canada's most endangered species.