

Hitchhiking marmot needs ride from Burnaby

BY JENNIFER MOREAU, BURNABY NOW MAY 25, 2011



This yellow-bellied marmot needs a ride from Burnaby to Kamloops. The critter came to the Lower Mainland as a stowaway in a truck and the Wildlife Rescue Association needs someone to take it back to the Interior.

Photograph by: Contributed photo, BURNABY NOW

The Wildlife Rescue Association of B.C. has a marmot on its hands that's looking to hitch a ride to the Interior.

The yellow-bellied marmot, (whose sex has not been determined) presumably climbed into an Imperial Oil truck en route to the Lower Mainland from Kamloops. Once discovered upon arrival in Burnaby, the marmot was captured and brought to the Wildlife Rescue Association about a week ago.

Yolanda Brooks, the association's spokesperson, said the marmot is doing really well.

"It's healthy, it's got a big appetite, it's eating a lot of apples and yams at the moment," she said, adding they want to get it back in the wild as soon as possible before it adjusts to "the good life" at the rehabilitation centre.

Marmots aren't often found in the Lower Mainland. They prefer rocky habitats and higher elevations, such as the Hope Slide area, and that's why the association needs to return it to its natural habitat. Marmots are social animals, Brooks added, and it's a "pretty lonely existence in the city."

This is not the first time the Burnaby-based association has seen a stowaway. Brooks said they get a few marmots annually. Last year, a man discovered one in his truck but couldn't get it out, so he drove to the association with the critter in the vehicle. Brooks said they had to dismantle the truck to get to the marmot, whose paws were burnt. They nursed it back to health and released it by the Hope Slide area.

"That's generally how they get here - they hitch a ride," Brooks said. "They like narrow places to sleep. This truck is probably stationary when they get on, and they get a bit of a shock when it takes off and they're stuck until the truck stops again."

As for this year's marmot, Brooks said it'll be put in a kennel and fed before the trip so the volunteer driver won't have to worry about marmot maintenance or getting bitten while on the road. The association needs someone to take it up to Kamloops, where another volunteer will take the marmot on the final leg of the journey north before it is set free.

Anyone heading to Kamloops with room for a furry passenger can call the Wildlife Rescue Association at 604-526- 7275 and ask for Crystal Simmons, the sooner, the better.

"The marmot is basically healthy and ready to go," Brooks said.

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