

# More marmots in urban areas

## Non-native marmots may be colonizing in the Lower Mainland

BY CHRISTINA MYERS, BURNABY NOW JULY 22, 2011



Little one: This baby marmot was found recently in nearby New Westminster and briefly cared for by the Wildlife Rescue Association.

**Photograph by:** Contributed, BURNABY NOW

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Mystery solved - at least, partly.

A NOW reader recently sent in a photo of an animal he spotted early one morning outside their house but which they couldn't quite identify.

Frank Skinner told the NOW he went out for a walk in the 6700 block of Burns Street and noticed that the crows in the area seemed particularly agitated.

He then heard a noise inside the engine area of a neighbour's car, and figured perhaps a small animal was under there.

Knowing how crows behave around their young, he thought perhaps some eggs had just hatched and the crows, sensing the animal, were getting worked up.

"I thought 'I'm just going to leave it,' and so I went back in the house and made a cup of tea, and then the crows started again, and I looked out and saw it," he said.

The "it" was a furry animal, which Skinner knew was not anything he'd seen locally before, crouched under the front end of a vehicle.

He snapped a shot.

"It seemed scared of the crows, and it sat there. Then eventually it meandered into the blacktop . and went into a hedge," he said.

From there, the animal disappeared.

Skinner wondered if the animal was perhaps a prairie dog because it didn't appear to be a creature normally living in this area.

Turns out, he was partly right - the animal isn't native to the area, but it wasn't a prairie dog.

Staff at the Wildlife Rescue Association say it was a yellow-bellied marmot - just like the one that caused a media stir back in May when it hitched a ride to the Lower Mainland on a truck before being recaptured and sent back home.

But there is still some mystery in

this story: is this another animal that's hitched a ride in, like another marmot that was found in a minivan in 2010, or evidence that the animals are slowly colonizing the Lower Mainland?

Colonies of the creatures have been spotted in the past, including most recently in Richmond, and the Rescue Association recently had a baby marmot in its care, suggesting that marmots could be breeding in the area.

The baby marmot was found on Richmond Street in New Westminster on June 28 and was transferred to Critter Care in Langley after a few days.

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