

Stowaway marmot returns to the wild

BY JENNIFER MOREAU, BURNABY NOW JUNE 1, 2011



This yellow-bellied marmot came to the Lower Mainland as a stowaway in a truck. The Wildlife Rescue Association has released him near Hope.

Photograph by: Contributed, BURNABY NOW

A stowaway marmot who hitched a ride from Kamloops to Burnaby has been released in the Hope Slide area after a stay at the Wildlife Rescue Association of B.C.

The furry mammal apparently hopped on an oil rig en route to the Lower Mainland a couple of weeks ago. When the truck stopped in Burnaby, the marmot escaped, was captured and brought to the association's wildlife rehabilitation centre. Public pleas for a ride home garnered countless calls.

"We did get lots and lots of feedback from the public, and we think we have a lot of new transport volunteers," said the association's Yolanda Brooks. "The phone was basically ringing for two days."

Despite the numerous offers, an Environment Ministry officer decided to take the critter to Kamloops because they also had a marmot that needed to be returned to the Interior. But that attempt was thwarted on Monday when construction closed the Coquihalla Highway. So, the officer decided to release the marmot in the Hope Slide area, which is really good marmot habitat, Brooks added.

"It likes to tunnel in the high rocky area," she said, adding the marmot was in perfect condition to return to the wild. "It was healthy, but they like to live in communities. It's a sad and lonely life hanging out in a small enclosure (at the wildlife centre) by yourself."

While the marmot may be far from its furry peers, Brooks said she hopes it will reintegrate or at least be close to other marmots. Brooks thanked everyone who offered to help.

"For animals in the future, it will be easier to get them out and release because we have more transport volunteers," she said.

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