

Marmot hitches a ride from the Okanagan to Burnaby

Rescue group is looking for a volunteer to take it back home

BY KIM PEMBERTON, VANCOUVER SUN MAY 26, 2011

A trucker got "more than he bargained for" after arriving in Burnaby from the Okanagan, only to discover he hadn't been travelling alone.

Turns out a yellow-bellied marmot hitched a ride with an Imperial Oil truck driver from Kamloops.

The driver was able to catch the skunk-sized animal and bring it to the Wildlife Rescue Association of B.C., which is now looking for someone heading to Kamloops willing to transport the marmot back to its natural habitat.

"In Metro Vancouver it's rare to see a marmot. Their natural habitat is the Rocky Mountains ... They like to burrow and hide in holes. It's likely he or she crawled into the truck trying to sleep," said association spokeswoman Yolanda Brooks.

She said because the marmot appears healthy and is eating well, there's no reason to stress the animal with an examination and determine its sex.

She added although the association gets about 3,000 wild animals each year, they usually only have to deal with five or six marmots annually at the Burnaby care centre.

This isn't the first time a marmot hitched a ride to the coast from the interior. Last year a marmot climbed into the engine of a pickup truck and wasn't discovered until after the man arrived in Delta. But in that case the man wasn't able to lure him out so Wildlife Rescue Association staff had to dismantle the engine to release him. The animal was treated for burns to his paws and released in the Hope Slide area, near Manning Park. In this most recent marmot escapade, the only place it could have come in contact with the Imperial Oil rig was at a truck stop in Kamloops.

The marmot will be released near the truck stop, off a forestry road at Skull Mountain in Barriere, 65 kilometres north of Kamloops.

The volunteer driver only has to take the animal as far as Kamloops and a Wildlife Rescue Association volunteer will take it on its final leg of the journey.

Anyone able to help can contact the association directly at 604-526-2747.

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