

We Need Your Support



Demonstration: Friday, Nov. 3 1:00 pm
Beacon Park * SIDNEY

Parks Canada is doing a mass kill of all the fallow deer on Sidney Island.

The native black-tailed deer will also be completely exterminated in the process.

When: Phase 1, November 25 - approximately December 15

How: Shooting by helicopters. Using dogs to round up deer and shooting them.

Cost to Taxpayers: \$6,000,000 (\$6 million)

Stated Purpose: To allow vegetation/ecosystem to regenerate

Population of Fallow deer: According to Wildlife Biologist, Emeritus Professor David Bird, the population has been **well controlled** through organized hunting and a UBC study indicates that the **island vegetation/ecosystem is recovering**. Parks Canada's estimates of the deer population are not based on a scientific count, which is a fundamental principle of wildlife management.

GOALS: Stop the inhumane, unscientific and costly deer eradication on Sidney Island.

- At least postpone this action to have a scientific count of the deer & vegetation recovery.
- Review alternatives like Oak Bay's successful contraception program.
- Demand a response from MP Elizabeth May, who has been silent on this issue.

Please show your support by attending and contact Sharon Glynn a.s.a.p.

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Beacon Park

At the end of Beacon Avenue by the ocean.

From Pat Bay Hwy: Take Sidney exit on to Beacon Avenue. Come early to find parking.

For further background see Times Colonist Commentary by Emeritus Prof. David Bird.

This information piece has been prepared by Sharon Glynn.

Comment: No reason to rush into a cull of fallow deer on Sidney Island

Is eradication as proposed by Parks Canada even feasible and/or ethical?

David M. Bird
Sep 14, 2023 4:40 AM



Sidney Island is on the right with Mount Baker in the background. DARREN STONE, TIMES COLONIST

A commentary by an emeritus professor of wildlife biology at McGill University [DAVID BIRD]. He lives in North Saanich.

As someone who has had the privilege of hunting fallow deer on Sidney Island in the past decade, I have been advised that these cull hunts might be coming to an end.

Why? Because Parks Canada wants to spend almost \$6 million of valuable taxpayers' money to hire a private company to try to use sharpshooters in helicopters and dogs to wipe out every deer on the island in December.

Using an arguably generous estimate of about 400 deer, that works out to almost \$15,000 per animal.

This proposed highly flawed cull has effectively polarized the Sidney Island community. Some want the deer totally eradicated, some want them unharmed, and others wish to have the deer numbers managed at a low level to allow both plant restoration and deer harvesting for consumption.

A recent vote revealed that barely more than 50 per cent of the residents want eradication. Surely there exists some sort of compromise to make both parties at least partially happy.

In the space of 10 years or so, the well-organized annual hunts have arguably knocked the island deer population from around 2,000-2,500 animals to just 300-500 (and counting).

Both sides agree that new growth of desired vegetation has indeed occurred. Why is that not enough?

The extremely well-organized and unique non-trophy hunts, offering a source of red meat free of disease and hormones, are safe, accessible, affordable and very "green."

One cannot get lost, there are no dangerous four-legged predators, and the hunt allows resident and guest hunters to pre-sign for designated areas and disallows powerful large-calibre guns.

Sidney Island boasts stunning scenery, plenty of edge habitat, and lots of interesting wildlife to view. I have spent time birdwatching on both Sidney Island and nearby Portland Island, a deer-free Gulf Island park, and I definitely see a greater variety of bird species on the former island.

As a landscape already badly ravaged from past human impacts, its dry summers do not easily favour the growth of plants with or without deer.

Regardless of whether there are deer or not, the island will remain no more “flammable” than any other forested islands in the area. And despite past studies, no one can confidently state that a complete eradication of the deer will restore the vegetation to its previous form, considering increasing climate change effects and growing numbers of humans building homes on the island.

As someone who taught wildlife management at McGill University for 30 years, I realize that the fallow deer need some level of management to keep them from overrunning the island.

But is eradication as proposed by Parks Canada even feasible and/or ethical? The concept of using “snipers” shooting from helicopters at wily deer quite capable of hiding under fairly dense vegetation seems highly impractical and perhaps even hazardous to “prey and hunter” alike. How many animals not killed outright might die slowly from wounds?

Elsewhere in the world, the concept of shooting wildlife from aerial machines is highly unpalatable to the public.

For example, the U.S. government passed the Airborne Hunting Act in 1971 because of public outcry over the shooting of wildlife from helicopters. Even the use of dogs to herd the deer into corrals to be shot by marksmen can be considered cruel.

That is precisely why hunters are not allowed to use dogs to hunt deer.

I have experienced the capture of fallow deer into baited corrals to be shot by marksmen on Sidney Island. I watched stressed deer frightened out of their wits run headlong into the wire fences to escape the bullets.

It was a horrible spectacle. Surely a single shot from the rifle of an unseen hunter is a much more humane way for a deer to end its life.

Contrary to what Parks Canada tells you, fallow deer are not poor swimmers and thus, will likely continue to repopulate Sidney Island from nearby James Island where these deer were originally introduced for hunting.

Moreover, some clever fallow deer always seek protection during the organized hunt sessions by retreating to private property where hunters cannot shoot them, and most certainly not sharpshooters in helicopters.

As for the support of First Nations folks for the Parks Canada proposal, I certainly do understand their right to be able to harvest certain medicinal plants currently being consumed by both deer species.

The hunt culls already in place are apparently encouraging their growth. As for wanting to wipe out the fallow deer to promote traditional black-tailed deer for their harvest on the island, why do they not seriously consider including the more numerous and tastier fallow deer in their diet?

Examining the bigger picture, do we not already have myriad other more broad-reaching, significant problems facing our plants and wildlife in Canada that require money already in short supply?

Besides the 841 species officially listed at risk in our country, need I even mention climate change and the wildfire season of 2023?

Must we spend \$5.9 million of tax dollars to purportedly wipe out a useful deer population on a tiny island of only 8.7 square kilometres and using an inhumane, ineffective technique that will surely serve to give not only Parks Canada but our entire country a huge black eye in the eyes of the world?

The organized humane hunts, that cost the public literally nothing, are clearly working, so what is the big rush?