

## Hummingbirds Put Pipeline on Pause

Unceded Coast Salish Territories (BURNABY, BC) — One of the world's smallest birds may have found a way to stop the Trans Mountain Expansion pipeline. On Tuesday March 23, two Anna's Hummingbird nests were confirmed in the woodland corridor of the Brunette River watershed in an area slated to be clear cut for Trans Mountain pipeline construction. Measuring just 4cm diameter, these tiny nests must be protected with a 30 m buffer until the baby birds can fly. This effectively closes the window for construction through significant riparian areas until at least May 1st. A group of local birders are concerned, however, because tree cutting has taken place within 4m of one of the nests, and cutting is ongoing.

Amateur birders spotted the nests after noticing anxious hummingbirds. They say many of these beautiful and tiny birds are present because the forest includes an understory of salmonberries - and the nectar of those signature early spring pink flowers is a favorite food of hummers; males will fiercely defend a territory of blooms on behalf of his family.

"Spring is so obviously here" says Sara Ross, one of the nest-finders and also a Burnaby Mother. "Leaves are opening and birds are singing all around - a sign that they may well be on nesting territory. Yet as of today TransMountain is still cutting trees."

Ross and the group of birders are concerned that TransMountains construction activities, which include clearcutting 1000s of trees in Burnaby, is destroying habitat and harming birds and other wildlife. They contend that the company has a facade of due diligence, but continues to move forward with cutting, and have even provided false information to Federal Authorities.

According to the Federal Wildlife Officer who confirmed the presence of the nests, TransMountain claims there has been no active tree cutting around that nest for three weeks. However, the birdwatchers present on the ground were witness to cutting only 13 days prior - a date which would have had the female hummingbird already sitting on eggs according to her current behaviour and a hatching timeline.

When the two nests were discovered the birders reached out immediately for support. A Provincial Conservation Officer as well as a Federal Wildlife Officer accompanied by a Biologist joined the birders to confirm and document the presence of the two Anna's Hummingbird nests on March 13 and 23.

One hummingbird nest is located within 4 metres of recently felled trees and cut salmonberry bushes. Anna's hummingbirds, which are also Vancouver's official bird, begin nesting in the region as early as December.

Under the Federal Migratory Bird Convention Act (MBCA), active birds nests are protected by law, and may not be damaged or threatened. March 26 is the date that the official "nesting window" begins according to a [CER filing by TransMountain](#), however nests are protected whenever they are present.

The attending Biologist from Canada Wildlife Services said “It’s because of citizens like you that we know to initiate these investigations.”

“Endorsed by Trudeau, TransMountain is surely destroying this forest while pretending they have some kind of concern for the environment.” says Ross. “This tiny hummingbird nest is now on the edge of a clearcut and it represents the threat to all of us. We think this is a brutal and harmful project that should be stopped immediately.”

In honour of the opening of the Federal Bird Nesting Window, a Multi-Faith Prayer Group is gathering today on the Central Valley Greenway adjacent to the active tree-cutting for a physically-distanced Vigil to Protect Nesting Birds. They hope their actions will help protect the nests.

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**BACKGROUND**

The group of birders, possibly known as Hummingbird Land Defenders includes: A retired Burnaby teacher and former Director of Wild Bird Trust, 2 registered Biologists one of whom conducts nesting surveys professionally, 4 Nature Educators trained in bird behavior and observation, and a Reverend who is also a bird photographer. Many other supporters are contributing virtually.

The \$12-15 billion Trans Mountain Expansion (TMX) pipeline project was purchased from Texas oil giant Kinder Morgan by the federal government in 2018. Costs have ballooned since the purchase. The project is opposed by the Squamish-, Tsleil-Waututh- and Secwepemc Nations, as well as Coldwater Indian Band, who were denied leave to appeal by the Supreme Court of Canada. TMX conflicts with Canada's commitment to keep global temperatures from rising above 1.5 degree Celsius as per the Paris Climate Agreement. The project would impact numerous drinking water sources along the route, Burrard Inlet and Tsleil-Waututh, Qayqayt and other First Nations, Burnaby Mountain and Simon Fraser University. It would also spell a 7-fold increase in tanker traffic in the Burrard inlet and an increased threat to the endangered Southern Resident Orcas. The Province of British Columbia, the State of Washington, and 20 municipalities oppose the pipeline project.

The existing Trans Mountain pipeline is already a major environmental and public health hazard with a [long history of disastrous spills](#). In June 2020, 50,000 gallons of crude [spilled](#) from a pump station above an aquifer that supplies the Sumas First Nation with drinking water. At the pipeline terminus, the thirteen 67-year old tanks are so close together it will be impossible to put out a fire, according to Burnaby Fire Department. 240,000 people live within the 4.2 km radius of the site that is considered an evacuation zone, including 32,000

members of the SFU community. A [growing number](#) of insurers have pulled out of the pipeline project; those still involved [are facing pressure to divest](#). In November 2020, the Canada Energy Regulator [released a report](#) stating that there is no need for any pipeline expansion if Canada takes measures to curb GHGs, and [in Sept. 2020, economists warned](#) that the Trans Mountain project is no longer financially viable. Indigenous groups, as well as the final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls have pointed out the connection between resource extraction man-camps and [violence against Indigenous women](#).

The Cities of New Westminster and Burnaby officially oppose the pipeline. The coalition of environmental groups supporting the Brunette protection camps includes, but is not limited to, Mountain Protectors, Protect the Inlet, Coast Protectors, Extinction Rebellion Vancouver, Burnaby Residents Opposing Kinder Morgan Expansion (BROKE), Climate Convergence, Dogwood, Burnaby Climate Hub and Wilderness Committee.

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