

# All creatures great and small revel in region's corn-ucopia

BY KIM WESTAD  
Times Colonist staff

Sweet Saanich Peninsula corn is ready early and in abundance after last month's heat wave, though many local farmers had a hectic time with deer, raccoons and even Canada geese this year.

Wendy Fox of Silver Rill Farm lost three acres to deer, who prance in and nibble the tops off the corn along with a few kernels before moving on to the next row.

Deer, long the scourge of gardeners, can wreak financial havoc for farmers. It doesn't take long for them to do thousands of dollars of damage in a single morning feeding session, Fox said.

They also like strawberry plants — the foliage, not the berries.

Canada geese can decimate a corn field. "When the corn is small, they come in and graze like they're eating grass," said Larry Sluggett, whose family has a Brentwood Bay produce stand and farm.

"It can simply be a flat loss. The corn is gone."

Farmers can get permits under a Central Saanich bylaw that allows them to humanely kill wildlife threatening agri-

cultural crops or livestock. The farm must be five acres or larger. Sluggett said he's obtained such a permit in the past for the geese, but didn't this year.

"I don't like to, but the other side of the coin is they can do \$5,000 damage in 20 minutes."

Raccoons, too, seem to know just when the corn is ready, popping in and raiding the rows before daybreak.

The warm weather has added additional challenges, with irrigation and watering the No. 1 concern. Several of the larger farms which have their own wells and ponds, had to supplement by buying municipal water, which they can purchase at a reduced agricultural rate.

"We buy some water every year, but had to buy more this year," said Terry Michell, of Michell Brothers farm.

Michell is liking the slightly cooler weather and more morning dews. It all helps in a time of low water.

At Dan's Farms on Bear Hill Road, Dan Ponchet picked his first football-sized watermelons at least a week early.

"They love the heat," said Ponchet. The temperatures concentrate the sugars, so they're even sweeter than usual.

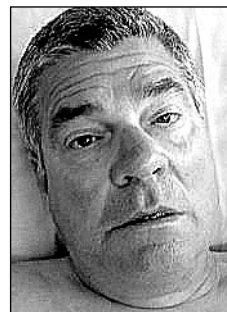


Farmer Larry Sluggett with a wheelbarrow full of fresh-picked sweet corn bound for Thrifty Foods.  
Ray Smith/Times Colonist

# Police seek identity of man found unconscious

Victoria police are asking for the public's help in identifying a man who was found unconscious in the 500-block of Dallas Road.

The man, who is in hospital, thinks his name is Bruce. He may have had a stroke, and he has no memory of who he is or where he lives.



He did not have any identification when he was found late Monday afternoon. He thinks he may live near the water.

The unconscious man has a Yin and Yang tattoo on his left shoulder. He was wearing blue jeans, a grey T-shirt, a white-and-blue jacket with red piping, brown hiking shoes and a backpack. He has rose-coloured bifocal glasses in a brown frame.

Anyone with information can call Victoria police at 995-7654.

Times Colonist staff

## Armed man robs Gordon Head store

A man brandishing a butcher knife walked into Gordon Head Grocery Store Tuesday and ran off with cash.

Saanich police are investigating the armed robbery which took place at 5:16 p.m. at 4343 Tyndall Ave.

A clerk chased the robber from the store, running down Tyndall to Francisco Terrace, where a getaway car was waiting. The robber escaped in an older-model, four-door car. He is described as about six feet tall and slim. He was wearing a grey hoodie pulled over his face and blue jeans. He is believed to be in his mid-twenties.

Anyone with information can contact Saanich police at 475-4321.

Times Colonist staff

# Ladysmith drops waterfront development effort

BY ROB SHAW  
Times Colonist staff

An ambitious plan to develop Ladysmith's waterfront into a sprawling marina, hotel and residential community has been abandoned.

Town council voted at an in-camera meeting last week to ditch the project, effectively rejecting the grand vision of the only company to make a proposal, First Principles Development Group of Vancouver.

The project was billed as one of the most unique real estate opportunities on Vancouver Island and the chance to develop almost the entire waterfront.

First Principles' \$300-million plan, unveiled publicly earlier this month, called for a hotel, marina and boardwalk of shops and apartments on 94 acres of town and provincial land north of Transfer Beach.

"The majority of feedback was supportive of major aspects of the proposal," said Ladysmith Mayor Rob Hutchins on Tuesday.

"However, there was concern about two or

three of the major components."

One of the concerns was pollution cleanup. The waterfront land is a former dumping ground for coal mining and logging industries. Estimated cleanup costs varied anywhere between \$9 million and \$30 million.

Although First Principles had a cleanup plan, it didn't commit to dredging the harbour for pollutants, said Hutchins.

A further difficulty was odour discovered on the land at low tide — a potentially large problem for a developer looking to sell residential units nearby, acknowledged First Principles president Don Redden.

"They've got some odour issues at low tide that we were not aware of and were not mentioned in any environmental reports that we received," said Redden.

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of the proposal was a land-swap. First Principles wanted to put housing on part of Transfer Beach park in exchange for creating a new chunk of park on a cleaned-up coal waste dump called Slack Point.

The swap idea was not received warmly at a public forum. It prompted "grave concerns" from the public, said Hutchins.

"We were surprised by the reaction to that because we were going to be giving them a net doubling of park space," said Redden. "However, we didn't realize the attachment the town had to that piece of land."

Yet some Ladysmith residents did express support for the plan and for finally moving forward on waterfront revitalization, said Hutchins. This is the third time a waterfront development project has failed.

Despite the rejection of its overall vision, First Principles has been invited to work on 26-acre chunk of land near — but not on — the waterfront. It could include 470 residential units, and potentially a hotel if approved by the town, said Redden. Council could vote on that development by early fall.

Meanwhile, the town will seek a partnership with the province to find a way to clean up the harbour without developers.

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