

# We need those steenkin' badgers

Even a moody beast like the badger has a welcome home – thanks to their preferred meals.

**T**hey're cantankerous den dwellers that would rather stand their ground than run from any fight, and they're calling the Princeton Golf Course in British Columbia their home. Badgers have taken up residence at the Princeton course, and superintendent Ian Elko is eager to make them feel welcome.

"About 15 years ago, we had a few badgers living on the golf course," he says. "They really took control of the ground squirrel population. They were definitely beneficial for us. We tried a lot of things to take care of ground squirrels and rodents. Nothing worked better than the badgers out here."

Each one of the nocturnal carnivores can put away about two ground squirrels each day. But as tough as they are, badgers are listed as endangered in B.C. Their unwillingness to run from a threat combined with poor eyesight makes them a common victim on roads and highways, which is their highest cause for fatalities. "They wouldn't be too intimidated by a truck," says Elko.

So when three badgers were spotted on the course last June by some club members, Elko jumped into action. He phoned the Badger Sighting Hotline to reach the South Okanagan – Similkameen (SOS) Stewardship Program with the news.

The club joined into a five-year Stewardship Agreement to help preserve the badgers and encourage them to stick around the course.

"We're going to do our part to protect them," he says. "We've put up signs around their dens for golfers to stay away, we keep vehicle traffic away. We don't mow around their dens."

The Stewardship Program is helping with costs for the projects, and assisting them in dealing with other native plants like toad flax and mustard weed that will help the badgers thrive at the course.

The effort is paying off as rodents keep disappearing from the course, and the partnership has alerted Elko and his staff to keep an eye out for other endangered animals that might make Princeton home. "We're on the lookout for other species too, like the red-headed woodpecker," he says. "The golfers like this too. We want to be stewards of our environment."



## SUPERS ON ICE

Most superintendents spend all winter trying to avoid mixing ice and green, but in Vancouver, members of the Vancouver Island Golf Superintendents Association were out on the rink to raise money to fight Multiple Sclerosis.

Members swapped their clubs for sticks and raised \$100,000 for the MS Society of Canada at the 4th annual Charity Hockey Game and Banquet Jan. 29.

About four years ago, members of the association wanted to try to give back to the community, says Greg Kowalski, president of VIGSA and superintendent at Royal Oak Golf Club.

"Every Friday during the winter months, a group of us get together and play pick up hockey at one of the local rinks," he says. "We thought the hockey game would be a perfect venue to raise funds. In our 'family' of people, we knew several that were afflicted with Multiple Sclerosis, so it was the perfect fit."

Money came in from donations gathered by players and the public, as well as bids at raffles and auctions during the banquet at the Westin Bear Mountain Resort after the game. The association has raised more than \$275,000 in total for the cause.

"The event was a great success, with our goal of \$100,000 raised," says Kowalski, repeating last year's accomplishment of the same goal.

Maybe next year, we'll see if golfers can pull a hat trick?



## “QUOTABLES

**"It's a cutthroat industry. The private clubs used to just check what each other was doing. Now, the private clubs are even checking on what the public courses are doing."**

— Chris Andrejicka, superintendent, Essex Golf & Country Club, LaSalle, Ontario, and president of the Ontario Golf Superintendents Association, to The Windsor Star