

Wasps in the Woods

Probably everyone has their wasp story. Mine is more or less mundane. We love our coastal forest, and soon after we acquired it in 2016, we commenced building trails through the thick salal, huckleberry, ferns, and timber-sized rhododendrons. Steve led the way with his chainsaw and machete, and I followed on hand-and-knees, clearing the new trail. Unfortunately for me, as Steve bushwhacked in the trail, he disturbed the ground-nesting wasps. They weren't quick enough to get him, but as I came along, they had just begun buzzing up...really buzzing up. You can guess the result, and it took days for the swelling to go down.

Steve's wasp story is better than mine. Back in the day, Weyerhaeuser put on woods tours for visiting dignitaries, and the foresters took turns, more or less, leading these. One summer it fell to Steve to lead a delegation of elderly Chinese trade representatives, all dressed in suit and ties, with highly polished shoes, out onto the tree farm. They had requested to watch the felling of a tall tree. These gentlemen spoke no English but had traveled with their own translator. The tour was going well, and the group arrived at the landing where the loggers awaited them. Just as the chain saws were revving up, the Deputy Minister of Trade put his foot into a yellow-jacket nest. Yikes. No time to wait for the translator. Steve just grabbed the visitor and lifted him away as the wasps swarmed angrily. A lot of agitated Chinese language followed, and then died away. The translator intimated that as the Minister had survived the Long March, a few American wasps did not trouble him, but he thanked the American none-the less. The Minister nodded graciously at Steve the tree fell, and the tour continued.