

MARISSA BAECKER/Special to The Daily Courier

Sharp dressed men

ZZ Top opened their set Thursday night at Prospera Place with *Got Me Under Pressure* to a delighted audience of about 4,000 fans. The Texas blues and hard-rock band performs in Victoria tonight and Vancouver on Saturday.

ENVIRONMENT

Mussel menace averted

Discovery of invasive mussels on powerboat from U.S. highlights gaps in measures to protect local waters from contamination

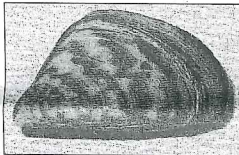
By DON PLANT
The Daily Courier

Okanagan Lake dodged a bullet when a sharp-eyed border guard noticed invasive mussels on a boat destined for Kelowna, says Anna Warwick Sears.

Ottawa is still working on the federal rules protecting B.C. lakes from zebra mussels attached to boats or trailers that enter from the United States. That a Canadian guard called conservation officers after spotting the creatures on a boat from Texas was a lucky break, said Sears, who heads the Okanagan Basin Water Board.

"We didn't get a boat with zebra or quagga mussels coming into the Central Okanagan," she said Thursday. "They cost millions and millions of dollars in damage."

A hauler was towing the pleasure boat at night when it crossed the border at Osoyoos March 12.



File photo

Zebra mussels are triangular in shape and average two to 2.5 centimetres long. Colour patterns can vary.

The guard noticed large, adult-sized mussel shells attached to the propeller area at the back of the boat. Because the boat originated near the Mississippi basin, where the mussels are common, he alerted the conservation service.

Conservation officers confirmed they were invasive and had the boat towed to a hot-wash company in Kelowna. A worker used a pressure washer to blast the mussels off the craft with hot water as a biologist watched. Then the boat was free to go, said Ted Down, who manages conservation science for the Ministry of Environment.

The incident highlights the holes in Canada's ability to protect its

waters from outside contamination. Border agents lack the power to prohibit a boat from entering the country. The hauler happened to be co-operative and allowed the inspection, said Sears.

"We don't know when a boat with live mussels is going to come through. We need to get our systems in place so we can stop that. This was a way to try out our systems and see where the gaps are."

Shuswap Lake could have become the mussels' new beachhead in 2012. Officials found quagga mussels on a powerboat moored for three days there at a marina. It had been transported from Arizona, bringing the mussels with it.

Authorities in Idaho noticed the mussels but had no power to decontaminate the boat. They alerted B.C. environment officials, who located it in Shuswap Lake and determined the animals were dead.

Since then, scientists have tested the lake for larvae and screened parts of Okanagan Lake. They've found no evidence so far, Sears said.

The mussels have infested much of the American southeast. The tiny creatures multiply quickly and grow on top of each other in waste-water outfalls, drinking-water intakes and boat engines.

"They just grow like crazy. One female can have a million eggs a year," Sears said. "They clog everything and crust everything. We could have them crusting on rocks on the beach. Then there's broken shells on the beach and they're clogging up pipes, your boat motor and encrusting the (Bennett) bridge."

The water board has pleaded with the provincial and federal governments to set up boat-inspection stations to prevent the mussels from migrating into Okanagan Lake and other interior waterways. The roadside stations are already set up in Alberta, Washington, Idaho, Montana and Oregon.

B.C. amended a regulation in 2012 so authorities can impound mussel-infested boats and have them decontaminated. Ottawa is working on new legislation that will ban the importation of mussels to Western Canada and allow border guards to stop boats at the border.

For now, though, there's no federal authority to keep them out, said Down.

"The threat is well understood. We've taken a number of actions to try to mitigate that threat and we continue to evolve the programs."

VALLEY IN BRIEF

Drunk driver flees police

A young man was drunk when he led police on a car chase through Kelowna, RCMP said.

The 22-year-old faces numerous charges after he allegedly drove away from police in a Ford Mustang Wednesday night. Mounties later arrested him at home and say his blood-alcohol content was over the legal limit.

An officer was on routine patrol on Highway 33 before 11 p.m. when he noticed the red Mustang turn south on Gerstmar Road. The car skidded through the turn, forcing oncoming vehicles to brake so they didn't crash, RCMP said.

The Mustang turned west on Springfield. When the officer caught up to it at a red light, the driver took off at high speed, RCMP said. The Mountie recorded the licence plate before the car disappeared. Police later traced it to a home in the 3700 block of Casorso Road and arrested the suspect there.

He was prohibited from driving, so police impounded his car for a week. He's facing several charges, including impaired driving, prohibited driving and fleeing from police.

United Way official stepping down

Marla O'Brien will be stepping down as executive director of the United Way.



O'Brien

After 18 months on the job, O'Brien and her family plan to take a break from the day-to-day working world, although she'll still be involved with local non-profit organizations.

Her last day on the job will be April 15, right after the organization hands out its annual Spirit Awards.

Under her leadership, the United Way of the Central and South Okanagan/Similkameen tried to become more than just an organization that raises money by emphasizing volunteerism and community works.

The 2013 campaign raised just over \$1.2 million, down slightly from the year before — like just about all other charity fundraising campaigns. More than 70 volunteers were honoured at an event announcing the total.

Hundreds of Lions to meet in Kelowna

The Kelowna Mission Lions Club will host the club's district convention Thursday to Saturday next week at the Ramada hotel.

More than 300 delegates from Prince George to Moses Lake, Wash., are expected for the event.

The last time the Lions had a convention this big in Kelowna was 1999.

—The Daily Courier

COMMENT

Foreign students pay for more than themselves

Can you identify the adverbial in this sentence:

"Probably, the Vancouver Canucks will not win the Stanley Cup."



ability to communicate in English," reads part of the website for Global Village English Centres, which runs the test at

they're hoping to boost the number of international students to 20 per cent of enrolment within three years.

of tuition, accommodation and living expenses, according to a 2012 government report.

Canada, and the Okanagan in