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The City of Bellingham faces a crossroad as it looks to the future. And a key to that future is how its citizens will organize themselves to redevelop and restructure the city's waterfront.

I have heard several "visions" for this waterfront and most of them seem to me to be missing one ingredient that – once mentioned – folks admit is very important for a waterfront. That ingredient is Habitat – and not habitat for people, but for birds, sea mammals, and fish.

Bellingham, like all growing cities is losing bird habitat to development and "so called" cleanup. Last year a major pruning of the Intra Urban trail between downtown and Fairhaven swept away several acres of good songbird habitat. And we all know about the attempt to keep development from affecting the heron rookery at Post Point.

We have an opportunity to enhance the waterfront to include good songbird habitat and to attract waterfowl. The city of Blaine has the wonderful distinction of being a prime place for migrating waterfowl to stop over and stay for a while. Our waterfront is not as protected as Blaine's from the winter seas but we certainly could attempt to improve it for migrating birds. In addition, around town, we have areas where gulls and Caspian Terns nest year after year. These areas should be protected while we change the waterfront. All of our waterfowl and songbirds are being reduced in numbers by many factors. We have the opportunity to slow that reduction and even reverse it by planning carefully.

The same is true for marine mammals. We have several sites in town where seals, sealions, and river otters live and play. They are an absolute delight to watch for anyone of any age. These sites should also be carefully noted and protected as we begin this project.

There are even a couple of wonderfully colorful tide pools that are alive with anemones, sculpins, and sea stars. Let's not destroy them in our eagerness to develop.

My vision of the waterfront not only has good access for humans, but also for the many creatures that we come down to the waterfront to see.

Elizabeth Kilanowski 715-3248
PO Box 2206 Bellingham, WA 98227