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# What's a cross between a macaw and a seal?

Another environmental crusade, this time in Belize

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TELEGRAM FORUM

Recently, driving along Conception Bay Highway I spotted a seal basking on a rock at the mouth of a salmon river near Holyrood. The first thought to come to mind was how many productive salmon has this beautiful creature devoured since finding this feeding ground?

Unfortunately, a few kilometres later, my seal-eating salmon thoughts were lost in the toxin-laden brown cloud drifting out over Conception Bay South from the Holyrood hydro generating station.

While trying to grasp the reality of what 15 billion pounds of sulphur released from this facility during the past 30 years has done to our land and ocean wildlife, my attention turned to the ongoing open-line debate about a proposal by Fortis Inc. to build a hydro dam in the South American country of Belize.

The caller was a former Belize cabinet minister, who was telling Bill Rowe that despite claims by actors like Harrison Ford and others, the scarlet macaw was far from being an endangered species and that Belize farmers in order to protect their crops, have regularly killed thousands of those scarlet macaws, apparently without any protest from the now-concerned actors and environmentalists.

### Visions of Bridget

Immediately, I wondered what would happen if Newfoundland fishermen started killing thousands of seals just to protect their fish stocks? Well, it didn't take long before the TV images of Bridget Bardot kissing an endangered white coat seal on the ice floes of Newfoundland flashed through my mind and abruptly ended any speculation about what might occur.

As a result of listening to this well-informed Belize resident articulate his points, I am now convinced Harrison Ford's endangered scarlet macaw has about as much of a chance of disap-

pearing from this Earth as Bridget Bardot's endangered Newfoundland white coat seal has of disappearing from the Newfoundland shoreline.

### Hear the anger

It wasn't very difficult to recognize in the callers' comments the overtones of frustration often heard from well-informed Newfoundlanders who have, for several decades, been fighting the claim by the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) that Newfoundland seals are near extinction and that Newfoundlanders themselves are a barbaric and ignorant people who really want to destroy every last one of those cuddly animals.

At every opportunity we beg the world to let us decide the fate of our overpopulated seal herd, because we claim that since we have to live with the consequences we have a much better understanding of the damage seals

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cause to our environment than either the IFAW or Bridget Bardot.

Yet it would appear many of us are not willing to afford the people of Belize the same courtesy in deciding for themselves the impact the proposed Fortis dam will have on the scarlet macaw and other wildlife.

Ironically, if the people of Belize have to resort to building a thermal-generating factory like we have operating in Holyrood to save the macaw, then it is quite possible they will end up causing more harm than if they build the dam.

Maybe the short-term impact a dam would have on the macaw and other wildlife would be a small sacrifice that will help prevent thousands of other wildlife species from extinction as a result of being poisoned by chemicals from a fuel-generated hydro facility.

Eugene Conway writes from Conception Harbour.