

A.P.E. *Against Port Expansion in the Fraser Estuary BC*

Port Metro Vancouver - Stop Ignoring the Science Surrounding Shorebird Feeding on Roberts Bank, According to a New Study

The latest scientific paper on biofilm feeding by shorebirds on Roberts Bank, jointly-authored by a team from Simon Fraser University and Environment Canada, has just been released in the January 2015 edition of the "*Estuarine, Coastal and Shelf Science Journal*" – an international multidisciplinary journal.

This new and important research clearly demonstrates – once again – the critical importance of Roberts Bank in supporting internationally significant populations of migratory shorebirds and Western Sandpipers in particular.

Key points in the paper include:

- Western sandpipers and dunlin follow ebbing tides while foraging on stopovers.
- Tide following foraging behaviour is stronger for dunlin than western sandpipers.
- Western sandpiper foraging distribution matched biofilm availability. (meaning that this is their preferred food despite other options being available)
- Biofilm, an energy source for shorebirds, merits conservation consideration.

As the paper documents, shorebird species rely on habitats like Roberts Bank, yet these species are becoming increasingly threatened by industrial development. A prime example of this is Port Metro Vancouver's plans to build a massive man-made island on Roberts Bank for a second container terminal.

Based on the study that lead to the publication of this research paper, it is clear that the intertidal biofilm that is present on Roberts Bank plays an important role in shorebird diets – the western sandpiper in particular. Daily averages of more than 100,000 sandpipers concentrate at Roberts Bank during the northward migration. The paper specifically recommends that environmental assessments for coastal development and conservation strategies for shorebirds need to explicitly consider the physical and biotic processes that produce and replenish biofilm. The conservation implications are clear. The environmental quality of biofilm rich stop-over sites must be maintained so that biofilm availability for shorebirds remains adequate. Therefore there has to be a major conservation priority to safeguard the Roberts Bank habitat, thus ensuring that biofilm availability. What does that involve – no more port development, no more land reclamation for industrial uses.

In related news the country of Panama has just announced new legislation which will protect a key area of wetlands in the Bay of Panama, home to migratory shorebirds including the western sandpiper. Under the new law, already in effect, construction is banned in a 210,000 acre stretch of the Bay of Panama.

If Panama can do it why cannot Canada?
Port Metro Vancouver – are you listening?

If you wish to access the full research paper please follow this link:
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S027277141400417X>

APE (www.againstportexpansion.org) is a group of concerned citizens that believes port expansion will see the degradation of the quality of life for thousands of Lower Mainland residents; the industrialization of prime agricultural land; and the loss of globally-significant habitat for salmon, migrating birds and orca whales.