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Royal BC Museum releases first-ever children's book

VICTORIA, BC – Would you be surprised if you came face to face with a Red-eared Slider, Gypsy Moth or Brown Bullhead? Would you know what to do if Dalmatian Toadflax or Giant Hogweed landed in your neighbourhood?

In *Aliens Among Us*, the first-ever children's book published by the Royal BC Museum, Victoria-based **children's author Alex Van Tol identifies more than 50** species of alien animals and plants that have established themselves in British Columbia.

Van Tol has harvested the knowledge of Royal BC Museum biologists to alert the next generation of responsible environmentalists.

After a brief discussion of biodiversity and its importance to the health of ecosystems, Van Tol describes the aliens, how they got here, and how they upset the natural balance and often cause serious harm to native species. Finally, she gives advice to young readers on what they can do to reduce the impact of invasive species in BC.

She names the creatures that can eat their way through an ecosystem, like Smallmouth Bass, Gypsy Moths and American Bullfrogs, as well as those that cause damage to property, like Norway Rats and European Starlings. And she points out the species that might do serious harm to humans and other animals, such Rockpool Mosquitoes, Giant Hogweed and Poison Hemlock.

Each alien is rated with a threat meter, so readers can quickly identify the serious invaders. Threat meters range from Risky to Deadly. Greedy invaders crowd out native species or eat all their food: Norway Rat, American Bullfrog, House Sparrow, Gypsy Moth, Carpet Burweed, Scotch Broom and many more.

This readable and alarmingly informative book will help young people prepare for the invasion, and arm them with the tools to stop the spread of unwanted aliens in British Columbia.

A former middle school teacher, Alex Van Tol has written numerous books for young people. She claims that *Aliens Among Us* has been the most fun to research and write, because she learned so much in the process. She lives with her two sons in Victoria, BC.

Mike Deas has illustrated or written several books for young readers, including *Dalen and Gole* and the *Graphic Guide Adventure* series. He grew up with a love of illustrative **storytelling and Capilano College's Commercial Animation program helped him fine-tune** his drawing skills and imagination. Mike lives with his family on sunny Saltspring Island.



About the Royal BC Museum

The Royal BC Museum explores the province's human history and natural history, advances new knowledge and understanding of BC, and provides a dynamic forum for discussion and a place for reflection. The museum and archives celebrate culture and history, telling the stories of BC in ways that enlighten, stimulate and inspire. Looking to the future, by 2017 the Royal BC Museum will be a refreshed, modern museum, extending its reach far beyond Victoria as a world-class cultural venue and repository of digital treasures.


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