



SQUAMISH

SQUAMISH WILDSAFEBC PROGRAM YEAR END REPORT 2014

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OCTOBER 16, 2014



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The District of Squamish (DoS) received Bear Smart accreditation from the Ministry of Environment (MOE) in 2010. In 2014, Squamish continued its commitment to further pursuing Bear Smart criteria through the implementation of numerous initiatives and the building of new partnerships.

The DOS saw a very slow start to bear activity this year with a noticeable steady increase throughout the summer and into early fall. Two bears have been destroyed in comparison to one in 2013 and twelve in 2012. Some contributing factors for the decrease in activity are a fairly good berry crop providing bears with a natural food source and increased awareness and compliance within the community on how to manage anthropogenic food sources. There was an early spring-time destruction of a bobcat that was attacking dogs on various trails and a grizzly bear was relocated out of the landfill three times; a temporary electric fence has been installed with a perimeter fence planned for spring 2015. The DoS continues to experience various wildlife activity.

This report will highlight the 2014 program successes and challenges and will provide insight into how the WildSafeBC Program has concentrated efforts on reducing human-wildlife conflict through education, cooperation and innovation.



Figure 1. WILDSAFEBBC CANADA DAY BOOTH

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Figure 2. LEARNING ABOUT ELK: WALK-4-WILDLIFE



2014 Program Highlights:

The 2014 WildSafeBC Program successes are:

- Continued to provide the community with a wildlife alert email system. Residents sign up for the wildlife alert email on the DoS webpage. These wildlife alerts are sent out in partnership with the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and are issued upon determination by the COS when there is an *increased risk to public safety* that warrants communicating to the community. The email is distributed to numerous residents, user groups and media and is posted on the DoS website, Facebook page and Twitter. If trails are closed, a link is provided to the GIS mapping system which highlights the affected trail.
- Installed 100 trailhead signs: “Be Alert. You are in Wildlife Territory” in an effort to bring about awareness to trail users that they are recreating in wildlife habitat. This initiative is in collaboration with the Squamish Off Road Cycling Association.
- Created an information sheet for mobile food vendors on the requirements to secure all animal attractants as per the Wildlife Attractant Bylaw No. 2053, 2009.
- Created additional information for the filming application and license in relation to the requirements to secure all animal attractants as per the Wildlife Attractant Bylaw No. 2053, 2009.
- Partnered with Pitch-In Canada and organized “Walk-4-Wildlife” nature walks. These nature walks incorporated picking up garbage along the trails while learning about the different species that share our trails. The walks also involved a scavenger hunt with wildlife props i.e. antlers, scat, elk jaw bone etc. hidden throughout the trail providing the opportunity to discuss wildlife and their needs. Pitch-In Canada contributed over 100 “Walk-4- Wildlife” buttons.
- Offered “Wildlife walks and talks” for the schools. This involved an in-school presentation followed with a walk around the school grounds/trails to put into practice what was learned during the presentation. A scavenger hunt approach to the walk provided for hands-on learning.
- Provided requirements for the keeping of urban bees and chickens along with the use of electric fencing. These requirements were adopted into the District of Squamish Animal Control Bylaw No. 2124, 2009, Amendment Bylaw No. 2335, 2014 and the District of Squamish Zoning Bylaw No. 2200, 2011 Amendment Bylaw (Technical Amendments Omnibus No. 2) No. 2303, 2013.
- Collaborated with the Whistler Get Bear Smart Society and Mountain FM and offered a Public Service Announcement (PSA) writing contest for all Sea to Sky schools. Myrtle Philips Grade two students won the contest and were invited to Mountain FM to record their four different seasonal PSA’s. Each season addressed specific measures on how to reduce human-bear conflicts.

- Collaborated with the Special Events Planning Committee to better guide waste management practices and wildlife habitat protection.
- Continued Bear Working Group meetings with key community stakeholders.
- Fostered a collaborative partnership with the Squamish Nation.
- Furthered the wildlife educational campaign throughout the community with presentations, booths, articles, interviews, door-to-door education and garbage patrols. One “Living with Wildlife in Squamish” presentation was offered in co-operation with the COS.

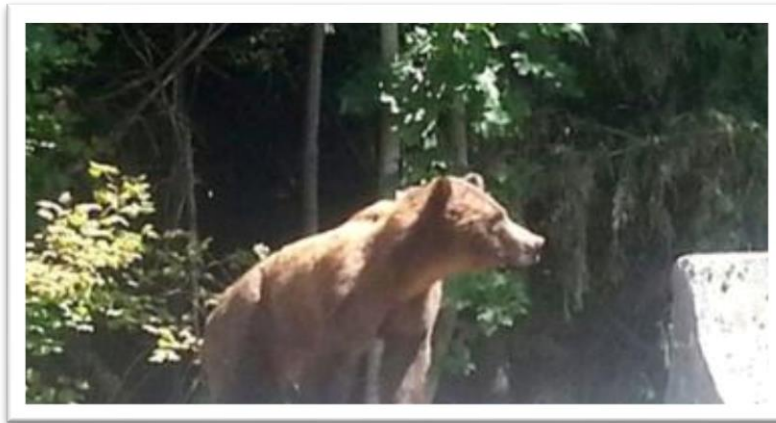


Figure 3. GRIZZLY BEAR AT LANDFILL

2014 Challenges:

Camping: Numerous campgrounds experienced bear activity due to available attractants. One bear was destroyed this year in Alice Lake Provincial Park as a result of campers leaving food and garbage accessible. A grizzly bear accessed a tent, stepping on a camper sleeping inside; a sow with cubs was accessing garbage and food at two different rec sites. Educating campers is a challenge due to the highly transient nature of camping and the need for continuous education, awareness and enforcement. The Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource Operations (FLNRO) temporarily closed two rec sites this year due to bears accessing food and garbage. Squamish continues to pursue the Ministry of Environment Bear Smart standards; it is challenging for the community when a different ministry opens and operates rec sites that do not have bear resistant infrastructure in place and has limited resources to educate and enforce Bear Smart principles. The MOE Conservation Officer Service is often required to manage the wildlife that are attracted to these sites and the community of Squamish is directly impacted as many of these rec sites are in close proximity to residential neighbourhoods.

Recreation & Trail Use: Squamish is a community on the brink of exponential growth. With a newly branded tagline of “Hardwired for Adventure” and with the recently constructed Sea to Sky Gondola, we can anticipate an increase in people moving to Squamish for the outdoor lifestyle along with recreationists discovering Squamish’s back country and front country trail networks. Educating newcomers on the need to reduce human-wildlife conflicts while out recreating is an on-going challenge that is requiring more and more resources.

Special Events & Filming: Squamish is experiencing an increase in yearly special events and filming practices. These events are taking a toll on the natural environment and are disrupting and attracting wildlife. Large events require early stage strategic planning and guidance on how to reduce attractants, how to protect the environment, and how to educate event participants on the need to be wildlife aware. Filming crews require guidance on how to comply with the DoS Wildlife Attractant Bylaw and the requirements to secure all animal attractants.

Fruit Trees: Squamish has copious domestic fruit trees that attract wildlife into backyards. By joining forces with the Climate Action Network (CAN) Fruit Tree Project, WildSafeBC has reduced the frequency of wildlife accessing fruit in back yards and contributed locally by donating food back to those in need. Educating and encouraging residents to be responsible with the maintenance and harvesting of their fruit trees remains a challenging priority.



Figure 4. Signage for trails: “Be Alert. You are in Wildlife Territory”

Recommendations for 2015:

- Assist with implementing a bear-resistant curbside composting system.
- Continue collaborating with Squamish Nation to foster partnerships and offer support.
- Incorporate additional information on how to reduce human-wildlife conflicts while camping and recreating.
- Work with the DOS to amend or revise decision-making documents to better reflect and incorporate human-wildlife conflict mitigation criteria.
- Incorporate solid waste reduction information and going green in wildlife habitat into educational message and workshops i.e. composting in bear country.
- Assist with the necessary education and support needed for the installation of electric fencing for the protection of wildlife attractants.
- Provide guidance related to the keeping of bees and chickens in urban areas and reducing the potential for human-wildlife conflict.
- Continue facilitating Bear Working Group meetings to foster communication and partnerships amongst community stakeholders.
- Provide further guidance for special events & filming operations



Figure 5. Mountain FM interview for the Fruit Tree Project

Acknowledgements:

The successes of the 2014 WildSafeBC Program are a result of many co-operative partnerships. Thank you to:

British Columbia Conservation Foundation WildSafeBC Program

Ministry of Environment Bear Smart Program

Barb Waters: Northern Regional Manager, BC Conservation Foundation

Frank Ritcey: WildSafeBC Program Provincial Coordinator

Conservation Officer Service: Inspector Chris Doyle & Sgt. Peter Busink and Officers Simon Gravel, Kent Popjes & Tim Schumacher

Mayor Rob Kirkham and Council

District of Squamish: Robin Arthurs, Manager of Corporate Services

District of Squamish Bylaw Enforcement Office

Carney's Waste Systems

Mountain FM

The Chief newspaper

Squamish CAN Fruit Tree Project: Tracy Keeling & volunteers

WildSafeBC volunteers: L. Cudmore, R., R., & N. Goodwin, D. & M. Smith, K. McRae



Figure 6. Students at Mountain FM recording Bear Smart PSA's