

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2014

## Sunshine Coast

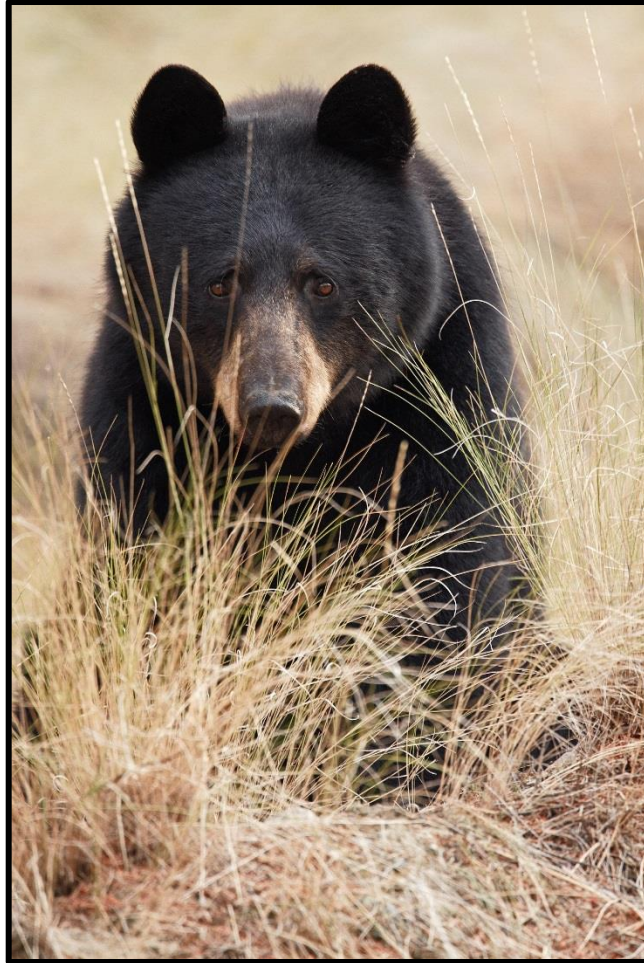


Photo: Peter Sulzle



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
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## Executive Summary

The WildSafeBC program aims to reduce human-wildlife conflict throughout British Columbia. The program was delivered to communities on the Sunshine Coast in 2014 by WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WSBCCC) Kim Drescher. Program delivery focused on maintaining and increasing community involvement through education and collaborative partnerships. Educational campaigns included door-to-door canvassing, garbage tagging, public displays, presentations, use of social media, and workshops.

Reported wildlife activity on the Sunshine Coast was lower in 2014 than in 2013. As of October 22<sup>nd</sup> there were 707 wildlife-related calls placed to the Conservation Officer Service line, compared to 853 in 2013 for the same period. Reported coyote sightings decreased in 2014, while the number of individual cougar sightings rose from 2013. Black bears, however, still represent the highest number of human-wildlife conflict calls (Table 1). The Sunshine Coast differs from many areas in British Columbia in that the denning period for black bears is much shorter than other locations. Bears (and other species), therefore, can be active on the Sunshine Coast 365 days per year.

The top attractants in 2014 were garbage, unpicked fruit, small livestock, and outdoor fridges and freezers. Conflicts with wildlife led to the destruction of one cougar in Roberts Creek and ten black bears (one in Pender Harbour, one in Roberts Creek, and seven in Sechelt). One black bear family unit (sow and two cubs) was relocated from Sechelt.

This year-end report summarizes the activities, successes and challenges of the program in 2014, and provides recommendations for future WildSafeBC initiatives that stem from this year's experiences.

Table 1. Calls to the Conservation Officer Service reporting line from January 1<sup>st</sup> to October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2014 for the Sunshine Coast.

Gibsons	
Black Bear	121
Cougar	19
Coyote	8
Other	
Halfmoon Bay	
Black Bear	27
Cougar	15
Coyote	
Other	3
Pender Harbour	
Black Bear	73
Cougar	4
Coyote	
Other	
Roberts Creek	
Black Bear	76
Cougar	24
Coyote	
Other	
Sechelt	
Black Bear	275
Cougar	28
Coyote	20
Other	6
Wolf	2

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## Highlights of the Program

### *Funding*

In addition to the primary sponsorship by the Sunshine Coast Regional District, WildSafeBC received additional funding from the Town of Gibsons, the Sunshine Coast Rod and Gun Club, and Lehigh Materials (Sechelt Aggregates). These contributions helped expand the breadth of the Sunshine Coast program in 2014.

### *Partnerships*

In 2014 WildSafeBC was once again able to form positive relationships with community partners such as the Sunshine Coast Fruit Tree Project, Gibsons Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, Conservation Officer Service (Sunshine Coast & Powell River), Town of Gibsons Bylaw Officers, District of Sechelt, and the Sunshine Coast Regional District. A new relationship was also formed with the Sechelt Indian Government District Public Works Department.

### *Display booths*

Educational displays at local events are an integral part of the program's delivery. Children enjoy the wildlife props (skulls, hides, rubber tracks, and scat) and the new temporary tattoos, while adults access information and find it a great place to discuss local wildlife sightings and stories. Sunshine Coast WildSafeBC attended the following events:

- Sunshine Coast Home and Cottage Show
- Canada Day (Sechelt)
- Sea Cavalcade (Gibsons)
- Gibsons Jazz Festival
- Rivers Day at Chapman Creek Hatchery
- Sunnycrest Mall
- Farmers Markets
- Gibsons Public Market

### *Presentations*

An understanding of wildlife biology and behaviour is often key to reducing human-wildlife conflict. In addition to describing animal biology and behaviour, WildSafeBC presentations explain why human-wildlife conflict occurs and what can be done to reduce it. In 2014 presentations were provided to: youth groups, camps, schools, Sandy Hook Community Association, and St. Mary's Hospital/Health Care Auxiliary.

### ***Contests***

TyeDee Bin donated a certified bear-resistant bin (the Cub unit) that WildSafeBC used in a contest for residents. The bin was displayed at booths and online on the Facebook page. The contest encouraged dialogue regarding the need and availability for certified bear-resistant storage options in the Sunshine Coast communities.

### ***Signage and door-to-door canvassing***

Neighbourhoods were canvassed door-to-door in areas experiencing, or at risk of human-wildlife conflict. Informational materials were distributed from Egmont to Langdale. In addition, cautionary “Bear In Area”, “Otter In Area”, “Cougar In Area”, and “Coyote In Area” signs were posted throughout the Sunshine Coast. Signs were also posted which informed people how to avoid and react to wildlife encounters.

### ***Garbage tagging***

Tagging campaigns involve placing bright attractant warning stickers on waste containers that are put out on the curb the night before collection. Campaigns were conducted in Sechelt, Gibsons, Langdale, and Davis Bay in 2014. Unfortunately, there were a high number of plastic bags used in the Sechelt area, making the sticker ineffective as it would be thrown out rather than seen on the bin by the owner.

Davis Bay had the highest number of bins and/or garbage bags placed out the night before collection. Curbside organics bins were also placed out early and the WSBCCC received reports that they were accessed by bears and other wildlife.

Although some residents take the necessary steps to change their waste-management practices, others are unwilling to manage their attractants. The Town of Gibsons is currently the only area that has an enforceable bylaw for refuse collection regulations; bins must only be placed outside at certain times and must have fitted lids. Improvements in compliance could be made coast-wide with consistency in and adoption of refuse collection bylaws and the use of bear resistant containers. The WSBCCC has shared examples of wildlife attractant bylaws from other municipalities to all Sunshine Coast Bylaw departments.

### ***Electric fencing workshop***

Local small-scale food production on the Sunshine Coast creates a need for wildlife-friendly farming practices. Sunshine Coast WildSafeBC, the SCRd, and the Pender Harbour Garden Club partnered with Gillian Sanders (Kaslo WildSafeBC) to host an electric fencing workshop in 2014. The workshop was well received and there are plans for a second workshop in the mid-Sunshine Coast area in 2015.

## ***Media***

The Sunshine Coast spans a large area (3,778.17 km<sup>2</sup>), and multiple forms of media were necessary to reach audiences. Press releases and interviews were given through local media (print and radio), and Facebook was used to share information in real-time with residents. Facebook was very helpful in reaching audiences, as evidenced by one post that reached 3,164 viewers. Facebook also allowed for the sharing of wildlife reports through links to WARP (WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program).

## **Challenges to the Program**

### ***Recurring attractant problems***

Unsecured garbage (both residential and commercial), unpicked fruit, and small livestock (primarily chickens) were once again the largest attractant problems in 2014.

### ***Short program season***

The program ran May through October, however wildlife is present year-round in the area. Human-wildlife conflict calls continue beyond the allocated contract end date. An increase in budget would allow for an earlier start date and longer season for the WSBCCC. This would benefit the community by providing the information and support that it needs during the early spring and late fall.

### ***Bear-resistant bins***

Providing access to bear-resistant bins remains a challenge. Despite growing interest in these bins, it was difficult to offer solutions to residents due to size-restrictions (bylaws) and the cost associated with shipping to the Sunshine Coast.

### ***High conflict areas***

This year the District of Sechelt and the Sechelt Indian Government District were hotspots for human-wildlife conflict. In particular, garbage, fruit trees and chickens were prominent attractants, and human-bear conflict was high due to unsecure waste containers.

## Goals for 2015

Sunshine Coast WildSafeBC hopes to continue to collaborate with community partners to decrease human-wildlife conflict and provide solutions for wildlife attractant issues. The goals include:

- Continue to promote the inclusion of language pertaining to wildlife conflict resolution in local community plans, regulations and recommendations.
- Promote bylaws that are needed for proper enforcement, compliance, and reduction of human-wildlife conflict. A Wildlife Attractant Bylaw would directly address attractants that often lead to human-wildlife conflict.
- Work with community partners to make bear-resistant garbage bins more readily available to Sunshine Coast residents. A bulk order would reduce shipping fees and make the bins immediately available. Allowance of 120-litre bin size and a financial incentive to residents who use certified bear-resistant containers would be encouraged.
- Update the Bear Hazard Assessment (2006) and create a Human-Bear Conflict Management Plan for the Sunshine Coast. Due to budget limitations, the WSBCCC will need to secure separate funding for this project.
- Continue to offer educational presentations to a wide range of audiences, including human-bear conflict talks as well as presentations targeting wildlife species that cause concern locally (e.g. cougars, coyotes, elk). WildSafeBC is working on a classroom program for intermediate grades and is also planning to launch a WildSafeBC Junior Ranger Program that will be implemented in 2015.

## Acknowledgements

The Sunshine Coast WildSafeBC program gratefully acknowledges its 2014 partners and financial support: Ministry of Environment (MOE), British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF), Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD; sponsor), Town of Gibsons, Sunshine Coast Rod and Gun Club, and Lehigh Materials (Sechelt Aggregates).

Our community partners provide invaluable support and guidance. Thank you to: Conservation Officer Service Inspector Murray Smith; Conservation Officers Dean Miller, Andrew Anaka, and Gerry Lister; Mary Mavin (MOE); Robyn Cooper (SCRD Infrastructure Department); SCR D staff; District of Sechelt; Sechelt Indian Government District; Coast Reporter; The Local; Coffee News; 91.7 CKAY; Mountain FM; SC Bylaw Officer Departments; SC Visitor Centres; Welcome Wagon; Gibsons Wildlife and Rehabilitation Centre; Critter Care; Sunshine Coast Fruit Tree Project; Gary Jonsson (TyeDee Bin); Garden Clubs; Farmer's & Public Market Coordinators; festival and event coordinators; volunteers; and the residents of the Sunshine Coast.

Many thanks also to WildSafeBC Provincial Coordinator Frank Ritcey, BCCF Northern Regional Manager Barb Waters, WildSafeBC Project Coordinator Jen Bellhouse, BCCF staff and all of the WildSafeBC Community Coordinators throughout the province.



## Appendix: Photographs



Figure 1. Canada Day celebrations display (Sechelt). Photo by K. Drescher.



Figure 2: TyeDee Bin contest winner. Photo by K. Drescher.





Figure 3: Booth at the Home & Cottage Show with volunteer Celso Machado. Photo by K. Drescher.



Figure 4. School Presentation. Photo by K. Drescher.

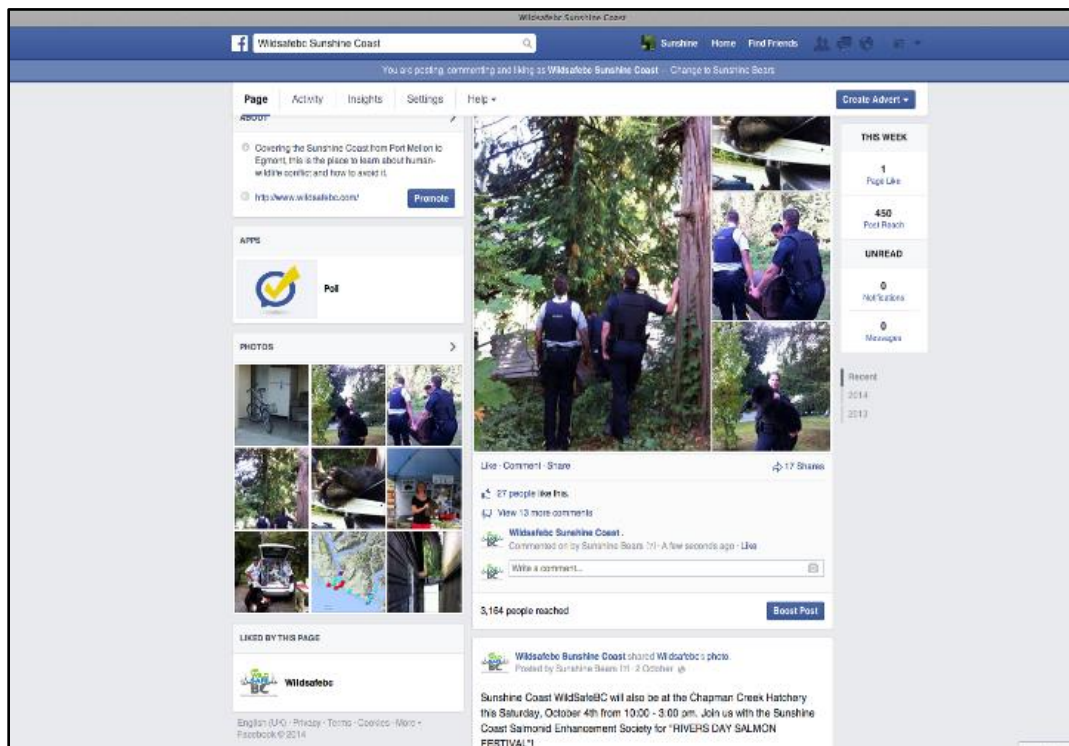


Figure 5. Screen shot of Sunshine Coast WildSafeBC's Facebook post. Photo by K. Drescher.

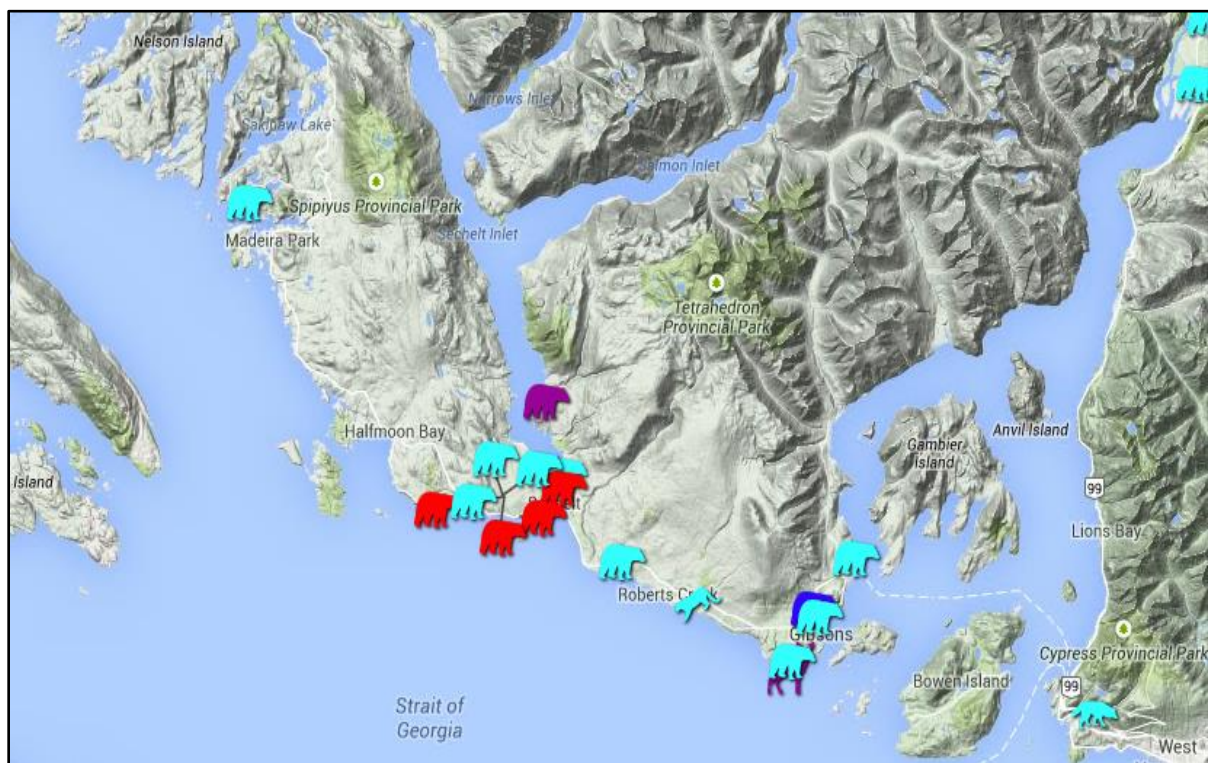


Figure 6. Screen shot of WildSafeBC's WARP (Wildlife Alert Reporting Program). Photo by K. Drescher.



Figure 7. Bear signage. Photos by K. Drescher.





Figure 8. Display at Sea Cavalcade with Jon Glencross and the WSBCCC. Photo by K. Drescher.



Figure 9. Garbage tagging campaign and patrol. Photo by K. Drescher.



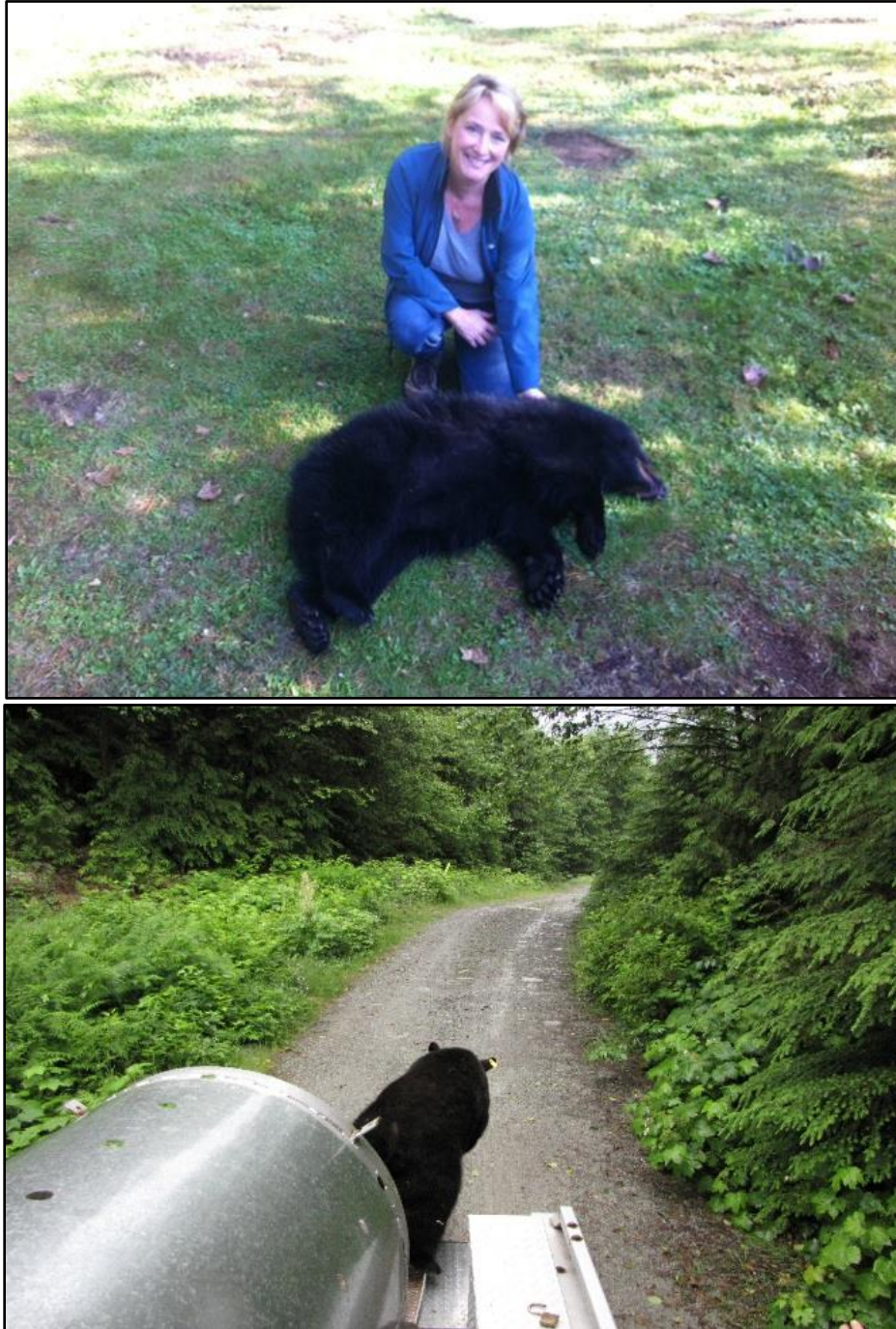


Figure 10. WSBCCC at a bear release. Photo by K. Drescher.





Figure 11. Photo posted to Facebook post (Sechelt). Photo by Melodie Pierre