

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2015

# Sunshine Coast

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Photo: Peter Sulzle



BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CONSERVATION  
FOUNDATION



## Executive Summary

WildSafeBC is a valuable resource for human-wildlife conflict resolution. WildSafeBC serves to reduce human-wildlife conflict in communities through education, innovation, and cooperation. Keeping wildlife wild and communities safe is the focus and mantra of the program. The WildSafeBC website [www.wildsafebc.com](http://www.wildsafebc.com), provides information about many wildlife species found across BC. The expanded scope informs residents and visitors on how to “Live, Work, Play, and Grow” in our communities, all of which bring us into close proximity with wildlife.

For the 2015 season, program delivery continued in the form of providing community outreach and education via door-to-door canvassing, garbage tagging, public booths/displays, liaising with other community groups and services, utilizing social media (Facebook and website), media (radio and newspapers), electric fencing workshop, and educational presentations.

Community feedback showed that the program had been successful in spreading its message and had created more awareness of how to reduce human-wildlife conflict issues (primarily improper attractant management).



Fig 1. WildSafeBC Community Coordinator Kim Drescher with two local children

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## Conflict overview

Statistics provided by the local Conservation Officer on **October 28th, 2015** show **465** wildlife related calls on the Sunshine Coast; the overall trend of calls concerning bears was consistent with the rest of BC for the 2015 season. The bulk of these calls (331) concerned black bears; deer and cougar calls were a distant second and third in call volumes with wolf, coyote, elk, raptors and 'others' comprising the rest of the calls.

The hot weather and drought saw an early departure of one of the bear's natural food sources ~ the berry crop. The black bears' hyperphagia stage (late summer/fall), also creates an insurgence of bear related calls concerning: bears accessing garbage, outdoor fridges/freezers and unpicked fruits. Unfortunately, these poorly managed attractants led to the destruction of eight bears this year and the relocation of one other.

It should be noted that the denning period for black bears on the Sunshine Coast is shorter than some other areas in British Columbia meaning that bears, along with other wildlife species are consistently active and present on the Sunshine Coast year-round.

## Highlights from the 2015 Season:

**Funding:** The additional funding from the SCRD Infrastructure Department (from tipping fees), the Sunshine Coast Rod and Gun Club, and Lehigh Materials (Sechelt Aggregates) enabled the program to start two weeks earlier this season (April).

**Program Expansion:** The expansion of the program included information and education on wildlife in British Columbia. The Community Coordinator was able to address issues regarding many species including cougar, coyote, wolf, deer, elk, and raccoon. Keeping **WildSafeBC** 's message of attractant management in the public eye continued to be the focus, along with providing solutions to human-wildlife conflict.

**Collaboration and Community Support:** WildSafeBC-Sunshine Coast collaborated with community members and other services such as the Sunshine Coast Fruit Tree Project (One Straw Society), Gibsons Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre, Conservation Officer Service, Gibsons Recycling, Bylaw Officers, Sunshine Coast Tourism, Sunshine Coast Visitor Centres, 91.7 C-KAY FM, and the Coast Reporter.

**Contest:** Once again, TyeDee Bin ([www.tyedeebin.com](http://www.tyedeebin.com)) generously donated a “Cub” Unit; WildSafeBC utilized this certified bear-resistant unit in a contest for residents of the Sunshine Coast. The bin was displayed at booths and online on the WildSafeBC Facebook page. This contest encouraged dialogue regarding the “need” and “availability” for certified bear resistant storage options in our community.



Fig. 2 : WildSafeBC 2015 TyeDee Bin Contest Winners. K Drescher Photo



**Electric Fencing Workshop:** In reference to local food production/food security; Livestock and crops can be protected year-round by the use of good husbandry, regular harvesting, and electric fencing. The best way to keep wildlife separate from what you are farming is the proper installation and maintenance of an electric fence. **WildSafeBC** Provincial Coordinator, Frank Ritcey, was here to present another well attended workshop in June. Many thanks to Gibsons Home Hardware for donating an electric fence “kit” that the **WildSafeBC** Community Coordinator was able to use for display at booths and bring to residences that needed some assistance with the configuration of an electric fence that would best serve their needs.



Fig. 3 2015 Electric Fence Workshop w/Frank Ritcey. K. Drescher Photo

The community supports this non-profit program in many ways, one of which was by waiving the fee for WildSafeBC to display educational booths and encourage further public engagement at locations and events on the Sunshine Coast. Many thanks!



Fig. WildSafeBC 2015 Home Show Booth w/Celso Machado & Garry Summers. K. Drescher Photo

## Distribution of Signage, Brochures and Door-to-Door Canvassing

Perhaps one of the most rewarding aspects of this program is the chance to get out into the community and meet with residents who have immediate need for information and problem-solving ideas at their doorstep.

Much time was spent conducting door-to-door canvassing in areas either experiencing, or “at-risk” of human-wildlife conflict. WildSafeBC informational material was distributed from Egmont to Langdale. Cautionary “Bear In Area”, “Cougar In Area”, and “Coyote In Area” signs were posted throughout the Sunshine Coast, along with my own signs that informed people “how to avoid” and “how to react” to wildlife encounters. We also introduced new “Bear in Area” board signs this season, they were placed in “hotspot” areas and moved regularly to reduce the chance of complacency.



Fig. 5 WildSafeBC Bear Sign, WildSafeBC Cougar Sign and new WildSafeBC Board sign 2015. K. Drescher Photo



## School Program

WildSafeBC visited all of the elementary schools in School District No. 46. Informational packages were distributed for each classroom and outreach was provided to 1,800 students.

## Media/Social Media

WildSafeBC was able to write a monthly submission in the Coast Reporter this season. Topics covered included black bears, cougar, deer, attractant management, and safety messaging. There was much positive feedback from the community regarding these articles. Could you spot the fawn on the beach? (Coast Reporter, Friday, June 19, 2015)



Fig. 6 Fawn on beach 2015. K. Drescher Photo

The Sunshine Coast is 3,778.17 km<sup>2</sup> and has many pockets of communities throughout; this presents a challenge for comprehensive outreach. Radio interviews and print articles were very helpful in spreading awareness and basic safety messaging to the 33,000+ residents/visitors on Sunshine Coast. Social media also allows for information sharing and messaging to be posted in “real-time” to residents, regardless of their location on the coast. A prime example of this is shown in Fig. 7, wherein one post on the local WildSafeBC Facebook page received 9,400 people reached/views.

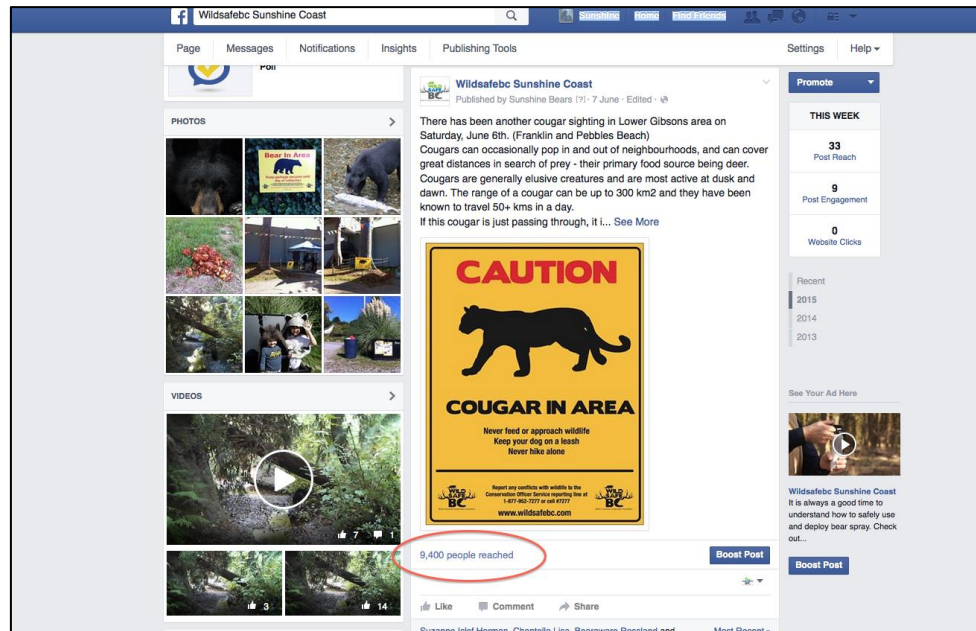


Fig. 7 Screen Shot of SCWildSafeBC Facebook Post 2015. K Drescher Photo

The WildSafeBC website ([www.wildsafebc.com](http://www.wildsafebc.com)) includes the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) map that shows calls to the RAPP line and particulars such as: species, attractant, sighting or type of wildlife-human conflict, location, and outcome. Anyone can sign up and access this online resource.

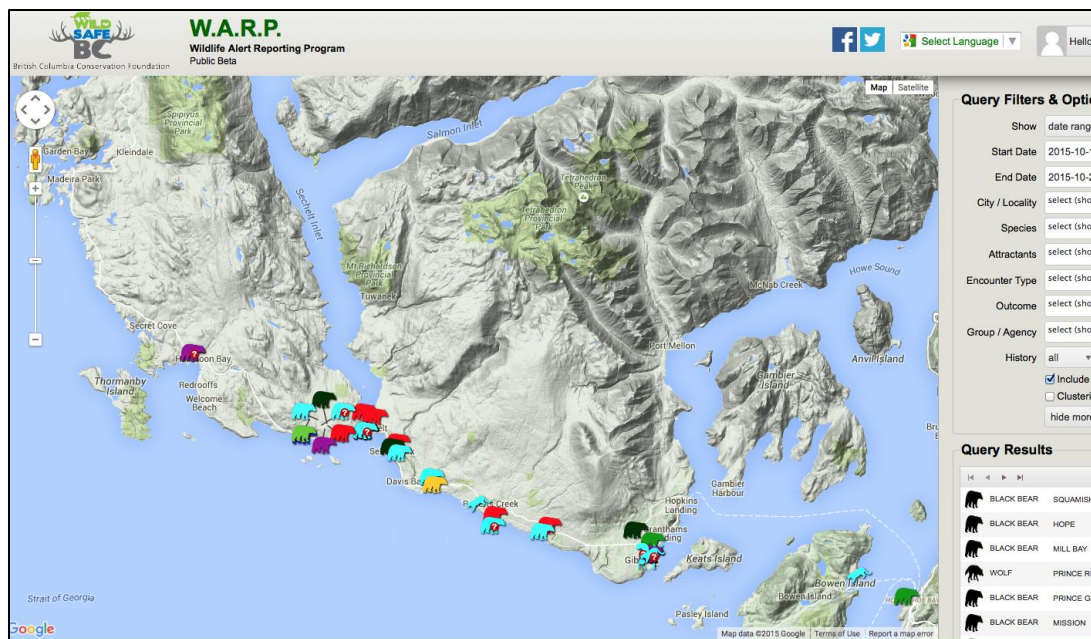


Fig. 8 Screen Shot of WildSafeBC WARP [www.WildSafeBC.com](http://www.WildSafeBC.com) website 2015. K. Drescher Photo



## Display Booths

Educational displays at local events are always an effective part of the program's delivery. Children enjoy the wildlife props (skulls, hide, tracks, and rubber scat) and the WildSafeBC tattoos/bookmarks, while adults see it as a great opportunity to discuss their wildlife encounters and were able to access information and solutions for their own attractant challenges.



Fig. 9 WildSafeBC Booth, COS Sgt. M Smith. K. Drescher Photo

## Presentations

WildSafeBC presentations provide insight into the reasons why human-wildlife conflict occurs and what we can do to reduce it. An understanding of wildlife in our communities (biology, behaviour, attractants, and safety messaging) provides knowledge and presents preventative measures that are key to reducing human-wildlife conflict. Basic biology and behavioural traits of bears, elk, cougar, deer, coyote, and wolves were presented; along with safety messaging and proper use of bear spray demonstrations.



Fig. 10 Presentations at Camp Elphinstone (YMCA) 2015. K. Drescher Photo



## Garbage Tagging

WildSafeBC's yellow stickers were placed on the bins as a gentle reminder for residents that they are attracting wildlife to their neighbourhood and to keep garbages secure. There were also a high amount of plastic bags placed out curbside, thus making the sticker ineffective as it would end up in the disposal truck rather than *seen* on bin by owner.

It is important that residents understand that garbage is a major, non-natural attractant and we need take the steps necessary to reduce the potential for human-wildlife conflict in bear country. However, The Town of Gibsons currently, is the only area that has an enforceable bylaw for refuse collection (specific times, bins with fitted lids). Improvements could be made coast-wide with consistency in refuse and garbage collection bylaws and the use of bear proof or bear resistant containers throughout the area. The Community Coordinator has forwarded and discussed Garbage Collection Bylaws and Wildlife Attractant bylaws from other municipalities to all Sunshine Coast Bylaw departments in past seasons.



Fig. 11 Garbage Tag Patrol 2015. K. Drescher Photo

## Challenges of the 2015 Season:

**Re-occurring Attractant Problems:** Unsecured garbage (both residential and commercial), unpicked fruit, and small livestock (primarily the keeping of chickens) were once again the largest attractant problems in 2015. Non-natural, human-sourced food rewards are the number one reason for human-wildlife conflict in our communities.

**Bear proof/Bear Resistant Bins:** Once again, bear proof or bear resistant bin availability was a challenge in the area. Despite growing interest in these bins, it was difficult to offer realistic solutions to residents due to size-restriction (bylaws) and the cost associated with shipping to the Sunshine Coast. (120-liter is the smallest size for certified bear proof and bear resistant bins). Eliminating “bear” attractants can also greatly reduce the risk of conflict we may have with many other species, including coyotes, raccoons, and rodents.

**High Conflict Areas:** This season, much of the Community Coordinator’s time and efforts were focussed in the District of Sechelt (W. Sechelt/Davis Bay/Selma Park) and the Town of Gibsons due to the high incident rate of human-wildlife conflict in the area (Garbage; Fruit Trees; Chickens). The Sechelt Indian Government District also continued to experience a high volume of human-bear conflict regarding challenges of non-secure refuse containment.

The WildSafeBC-Sunshine Coast program strongly encourages the concept of a “Wildlife Attractant” Bylaw that will help deal with chronic attractant issues and reduce the attractants available to wildlife in our community. Continued preventative measures are the only long term, effective solution to human-wildlife conflict in our area.

## Goals for 2016:

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

- The inclusion of “bear friendly” and “wildlife friendly” language in local OCP’s, AAP’s, Regulations, Recommendations, and Bylaws that are needed to allow for proper enforcement, compliance, and reduction of human-wildlife conflict. A “Wildlife Attractant “ Bylaw in communities would directly address anthropogenic (human created) attractants that often lead to human-wildlife conflict.
- To secure and continue delivery of the WildSafeBC program on the Sunshine Coast.
- 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 to interested residents. Allowance of 120-litre size and a financial incentive to residents who use certified bear-resistant containers would be encouraged.
- Continue to offer educational information and presentations to a wide range of audiences. This includes human-bear conflict talks as well as presentations targeting wildlife species that cause concern locally (cougars, coyotes, deer, elk). Implementation of the new WildSafeBC Junior Ranger Program will be provided in 2016 season.

## Acknowledgements:

The WildSafeBC –Sunshine Coast program gratefully acknowledges its 2015 partners and funders: the Ministry of Environment (MOE), the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF), the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD), the Sunshine Coast Rod and Gun Club, and Lehigh Materials (Sechelt).

Our community partners provide invaluable support and guidance. Thank you to: the Sunshine Coast Regional District Infrastructure Department, SCR D Board and Staff; the Conservation Officer Service, the Coast Reporter; 91.7 CKAY and MountainFM; SC Bylaw Officer Departments; SC Visitor Centres; Gibsons Home Hardware (E-Fence Kit Donation); Gibsons Wildlife and Rehabilitation Centre; Critter Care; Sunshine Coast Fruit Tree Project (One Straw); TyeDee Bin (Gary Jonsson), Rob Haines (Portable Energizer Donation); Conchita Harding and Jennifer Evans, Festival and Event Organizers, Kim Barsanti and Devon Blean for their kind donations to replace some of the stolen signs, and the wonderful WildSafeBC-SC Volunteers: namely Celso Machado (who attended and assisted with every event possible!), Garry Summers (for his extreme patience and subsequent wonderful footage of a black bear, coyote, and bobcat in a Wildlife Corridor), Brittany Kirk, Evan Drescher, Denise Burns, and Glenn Drescher.

Thanks also to the WildSafeBC Provincial Coordinator, BCCF Northern Regional Manager, WildSafeBC Project Coordinator, BCCF staff and all of WildSafeBC Coordinators throughout the province.

This is my fourth and final season as the Community Coordinator. I want to express my gratitude for all of your support of WildSafeBC-Sunshine Coast. It has been a great experience. I hope it continues here, we need this program. Many thanks!

