

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2016

## Maple Ridge

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## Executive Summary

The 2016 season was a relatively quiet for reported calls in Maple Ridge. In 2015, we had 311 bear calls from April 1 to October 24. This year during that same time frame we had 335 bear calls. The main focus this year's program was to educate residents about the bear-resistant organics and garbage bins discount offered by the city to the first 400 residents.

School District #42 is in the middle of a pilot program on reducing food waste in the schools. Some of the schools are having their secured organics picked up twice a week. While other schools chose a pack-it-in, pack-it-out program. The pack-it-in, pack-it-out program means each student takes home all their organics instead of disposing of them in the garbage. This reduces attractants on school grounds.

There were more cougar sightings this year than in year's past. WildSafeBC working with Conservation Office presented several workshops throughout the year educating residents on cougar attractants, and safety.

Wildlife encounters created more media exposure for Maple Ridge. These encounters included a resident that had an encounter with a protective sow black bear and the posting on social media of a video of a cougar stalking in backyards.

We also were part of the very first BC Goes Wild, a provincial wide initiative started by WildSafeBC in 2016.



*Bear Picnic Site*

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British Columbia Conservation Foundation

## Highlights from the 2016 Season

WildSafeBC worked with community leaders and the City of Maple Ridge on continuing the education of residents about attractants before most of the bears emerged from hibernation. With the help of the WildSafeBC WARP map, we targeted neighbourhoods that had high human-wildlife conflicts in the past along with developing neighbourhoods. Fast developing east Maple Ridge, brought new residents from other areas that had little or no experience with bear encounters. Education was focused on those areas to help residents become aware of the types of wildlife in their new neighbourhoods and how to take steps to remove attractants. Last year, three bears were destroyed. In 2016 only two were destroyed.

Month	Bear calls	Other wildlife
May 2015	99	11
<b>May 2016</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>10</b>
June 2015	39	4
<b>June 2016</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>15</b>
July 2015	11	3
<b>July 2016</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>24</b>
August 2015	33	10
<b>August 2016</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>14</b>
September 2015	55	2
<b>September 2016</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>12</b>
October 2015	29	6
<b>October 2016</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>8</b>

## Presentations

WildSafeBC Maple Ridge conducted presentations throughout the community. Below are some of the presentations we conducted in 2016.

- SPCA
- ARMS (Alouette River Management Society)
- Parks Day with KEEPS (Kanaka Education and Environmental Partnership Society)
- Numerous schools and preschools
- Earth Day
- Maple Ridge Home Show
- Canada Day
- Country Festival
- Maple Ridge Library Literacy Day
- Environmental Mother's Group
- Girl Guides
- Scouts Night Hike



**WildsafeBC coordinator, Daniel Mikolay and Conservation officer, Robin Sano were at the Earth Day Celebration showing residents ways to keep wildlife wild and communities safe.**

## Door-to-Door Education



This year the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator educated Maple Ridge residents about wildlife attractants around the home using a new and very effective method.

In years past, we would tag garbage cans with bright yellow stickers reminding residents that garbage is a wildlife attractant and should only be set out the morning of garbage pick-up. We also did door-to-door education for areas that needed more in-depth awareness. Both ways proved to be effective in getting across the importance of keeping wildlife wild and communities safe.

This year as part of the education process with our residents, we added a one page sheet that not only informs the resident about attractants such as garbage, bird feeders and pet food, but also explains the Wildlife Act and possible fines. The information sheet was sent to all the local garbage haulers for them to forward to their customers. This proved to be highly effective in reducing wildlife interaction in problematic neighbourhoods. We also joined various neighbourhood Facebook pages to stay aware of wildlife issues in various neighbourhoods. City Bylaws and Conservation did a City-wide sweep issuing warnings and fines to residents that set out their garbage/organics too early.

## Displays

WildSafeBC was out in the community with educational displays at local events. These events were great places to learn from residents of their wildlife concerns and to educate them on ways to reduce wildlife conflict.



WildSafeBC was out this September for the very first BC Goes Wild.



WildSafeBC in association with KEEPS were out on BC Parks Day.



### Subsidized bear-resistant bins

The Mayor and Council approved \$20,000 to subsidize the first 400 residents to purchase WildSafeBC certified bear resistant bins for organics and garbage. The subsidy along with the volume discount meant that residents could purchase bins at a 50% discount from the retail price. The increase of the bear-resistant bins in our neighbourhoods will lead to a decrease in human-wildlife conflict.

### Maple Ridge Bear Conflict Working Group

While the bears are hibernating this Winter, a group of volunteers and wildlife stakeholders including the City of Maple Ridge, Conservation, By-Laws, and RCMP will continue their support of keeping wildlife wild and communities safe by working together to create an action plan for our community leading to our goal of Bear Smart status.





## Media

The WildSafeBC Maple Ridge Facebook page was updated throughout the season providing a platform for community discussion around local wildlife activity and preventing conflicts. WildSafeBC was also involved in neighbourhood Facebook pages.

Maple Ridge made the Greater Vancouver area news outlets in July when a sow protecting her cubs attacked a senior resident causing minor injury. Footage of a cougar wandering through a residential area also made the Greater Vancouver news outlets.

As part of the awareness, Daniel Mikolay, the WildSafeBC coordinator for Maple Ridge appeared on Breakfast TV in late August to educate the audience on the effectiveness of bear resistant bins.

Local media outlets helped spread WildSafeBC's messaging through publishing press releases in local papers, and sharing information through social media. The WCC is always amazed by the reach of this media coverage and appreciates the support.

## Challenges of the 2016 Season

The berry crop was much better than last year's drought stricken crop which contributed to lower human-wildlife encounters. However, there was one reported bear resident conflict in our community which resulted in minor injuries to the resident and re-location of the sow and her three cubs.

The footage of a cougar in a residential area meant more awareness on the types of attractants that could bring a cougar in the area and how to remove the attractants. With the cooperation of the Conservation office, WildSafeBC was able to bring to most of their events a full sized cougar mount. This allowed the resident to understand the size of the animal and create a better appreciation for its power. This also helped residents to learn the visual characteristics of a cougar so that they could better identify it in the future.

WildSafeBC - Maple Ridge continued to work with local garbage haulers to educate residents about the effects of garbage attractants on wildlife. One of the local haulers even offered for sale bear resistant bins to their customers.

## Goals for 2017

Looking forward to the 2017 season, WildSafeBC hopes to continue to collaborate with community partners to make concrete solutions available for local wildlife attractant issues.

- Expand the wildlife attractant education to include more local businesses.
- Be a leader in regional Bear Aware programs to share ideas and plans with other communities on ways to reduce wildlife conflict.
- Continue to eliminate early garbage set out in high wildlife/human conflict areas through education and by working with Conservation and Bylaws.



## Acknowledgements

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Finally, thank you to all those residents who made an effort this season to remove wildlife attractants from their properties. Let's keep wildlife wild and our communities safe!