

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2017

## Cowichan Valley Regional District

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P.A.N Disposal



Ministry of  
Environment



## Executive Summary

The 2017 year was the first year for the WildSafeBC program in the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD). Funding for the program was provided by the CVRD, the Town of Ladysmith, Pan Disposal, and the BC Ministry of Environment. By the end of the season the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) for the CVRD had recorded a total of 482 calls. Of these, 237 were black bear, which accounted for 49% of the total calls in the given period. Other reported wildlife in the area included; cougar, deer, elk, raccoon, wolf, and raptor.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) attended farmers' markets and many other community events in the CVRD speaking and educating the public regarding human-wildlife conflict and how to strategically reduce these encounters. Brochures were available to the public at all the events along with coloring books, bookmarks, and temporary tattoos for the children. The display was set up in a very interactive manner for the children and adults to learn the different types of common wildlife by identification of skulls and paw prints.

The WCC was involved in numerous events throughout the CVRD, such as Ladysmith Days, Canada Day events, The Salmon and Mushroom Festival, and many more. This year was the first year for the WildSafeBC BC Goes Wild weekend in the CVRD where the WCC held a scavenger hunt and nature walk in the Somenos Marsh.

In its first year, the WildSafeBC program played an important role in spreading information throughout the CVRD about wildlife safety, attractant management and how to deal with human-wildlife conflict.

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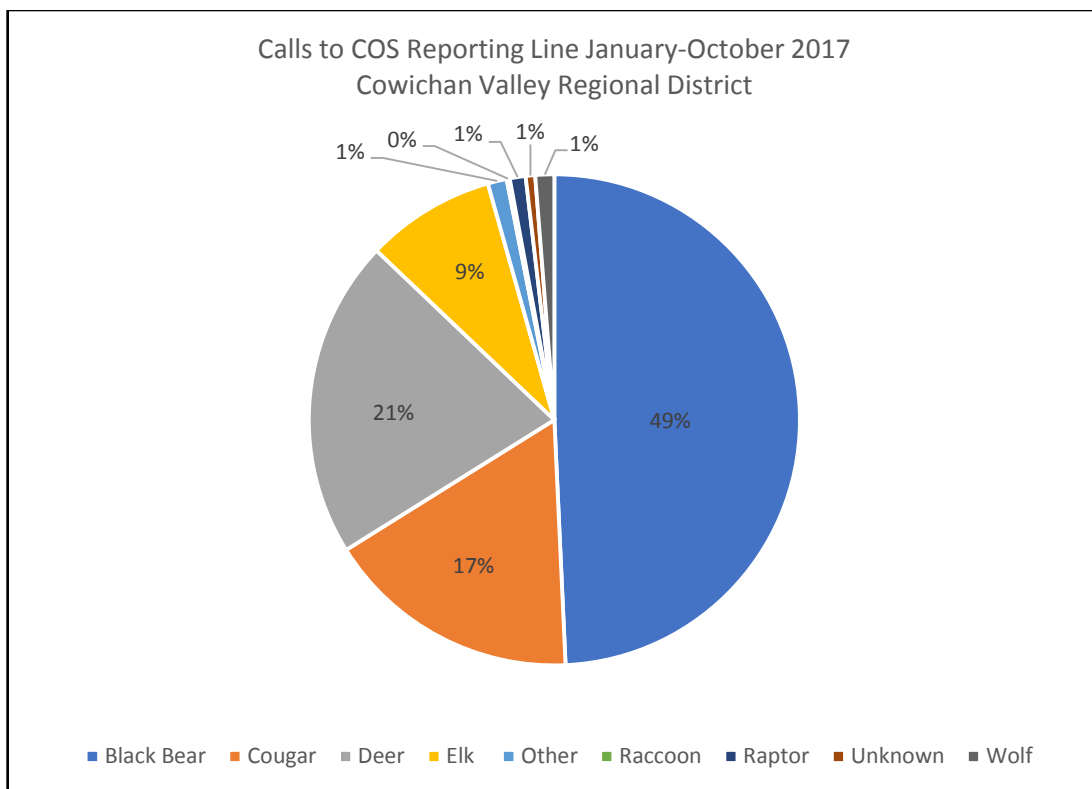
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## Introduction

The 2017 season was the first year for the WildSafeBC program in the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD). The objectives of the program were to introduce the WildSafeBC program to the community through events and presentations, and to begin the process of establishing the program in the community as a “go-to source” of wildlife related information. These objectives would give community members accurate wildlife related information enabling them to make informed decisions when it came to human-wildlife conflict management.

In the CVRD there was a total of 481 wildlife calls from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017 to October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017. Black bear account for nearly 50% of these reports, with a total of 237 during the specified period. Other wildlife regularly reported included: cougar, deer, and elk. (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Wildlife Reports for the CVRD for January-October, 2017**

Approximately 69% of black bear reports that specified an attractant within the Cowichan Valley were due to garbage. Compost contributed to 11%, while pets contributed to 6.8% of all black bear related calls (Figure 2). Garbage is by far the number one attractant for bears throughout the CVRD.

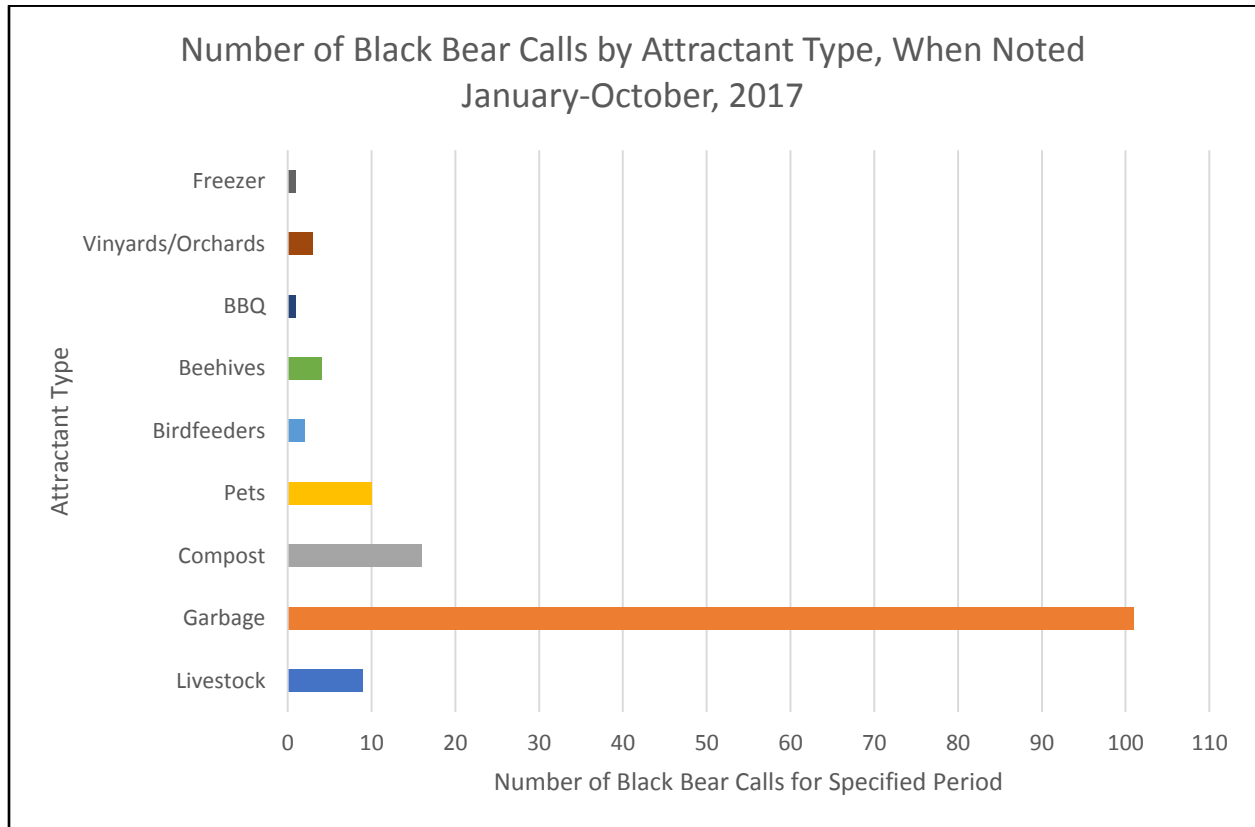


Figure 2. Black bear attractants, when noted in CVRD January-October 2017

## Activities from the 2017 Season

Activities performed in the 2017 season included presentations, garbage tagging, door-to-door education, community events, social media, and the BC Goes Wild Weekend. Extra emphasis was put on community events and social media in order to inform the community of the new WildSafeBC program and to build a following.

### Presentations

Presentations are a great way to educate the public and spread the word of the WildSafeBC program throughout the community. They offer the opportunity to engage with the public and provide consistent messaging on wildlife biology and common human-wildlife conflicts.

## Garbage Tagging and Door-to-Door

Garbage tagging consists of the WCC and a volunteer going out after dusk the night before curbside collection to place a bright yellow “Wildlife Attractant” sticker onto garbage and compost bins that have been placed out early. This was conducted throughout the CVRD in communities based on data from the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program as well as recommendations from PAN Disposal (curbside collections company) and observations made by the WCC. Garbage tagging was conducted frequently throughout the season as garbage is the number one attractant for bears.



**Figure 3. WildSafeBC Community Coordinator Hailey Quist conducting door-to-door education**

Door-to-door education was provided in areas with high or active human-wildlife conflict (Figure 3). Many times, there was a bear actively in the area where door-to-door education was being



conducted or the Conservation Officer Services (COS) had set a bear trap in the area. This provided a great way to address attractants such as, garbage and fruit trees head on.

Community members were provided with brochures and those that were not at home were left with an informational door hanger explaining the reason for the visit and ten ways they can manage their attractants.

## Community Events

WildSafeBC CVRD attended as many community events as possible this season. Due to this being the first year for the program in the community it provided a great way to interact and make the program known to numerous people at one time. The events offered a chance to network with other organizations within the community and spread the word about the program. These displays offered up-to-date wildlife related information including safety and attractant management tips, wildlife biology, and contact information for the COS. The display consisted of cougar, wolf, bear, and deer skulls as well as a mounted black bear head that were provided by the COS (Figure 4). The information brochures available were very popular. In total the WCC attended 12 events throughout the community including:

- Chemainus Canada Day Celebration
- Duncan Farmers Market (x2)
- Ladysmith Days (x2)
- Salmon and Mushroom Festival
- Somenos Wild Wings Festival (x2)
- Cowichan Heritage River Celebration
- Cobble Hill Fall Fair
- BCGW Event at Somenos Marsh
- Youbou Regatta



Figure 4. WildSafeBC Community Coordinator Hailey Quist set-up for Somenos Marsh Event

## Social Media

Social media is a great platform to further promote WildSafeBC information. Posts were done regularly informing users of upcoming events within the community that WildSafeBC would be attending. Attractant management posts as well as posts promoting the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program were also done. It is also a great way for the community to contact the WCC with questions or concerns. This year the WildSafeBC Cowichan Valley Regional District Facebook page gained 45 new followers.

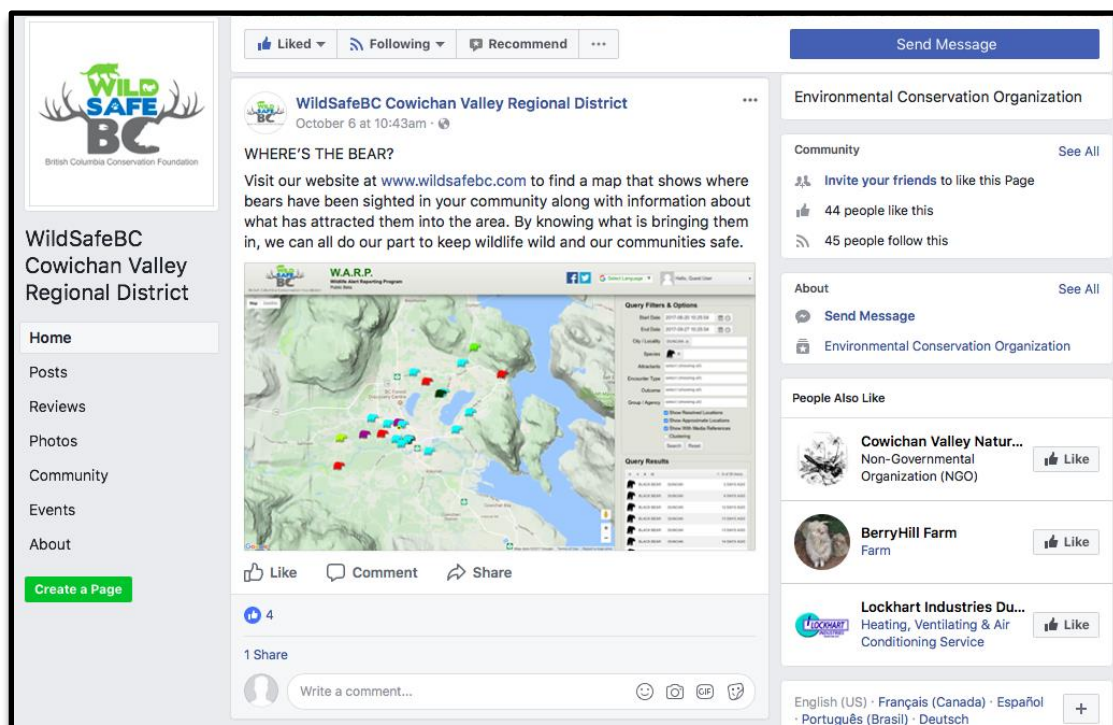


Figure 5. WildSafeBC CVRD Facebook post “WHERE’S THE BEAR?”

## BC Goes Wild Weekend

This was the first “BC Goes Wild Weekend” in the CVRD. The BC Goes Wild Weekend is a province wide event, which takes place on the third weekend in September. There were different events running all weekend throughout the province. It was a great opportunity to get families outdoors for a fun day. In the Cowichan Valley, the WCC hosted a plant and wildlife scavenger hunt at the Somenos Marsh Boardwalk and a nature walk guided by Barry Hetschko, a representative of the marsh. There was also an online province-wide coloring and photography contest with the chance to win various prizes.



## Challenges of the 2017 Season

Due to the large area of the Cowichan Valley and the various types of communities within it, challenges were presented throughout the 2017 season. Challenges were addressed by the WCC as they arose. Ongoing challenges this season were the size of the area covered, improperly managed fruit trees and garbage, as well as unwilling residents and budget constraints.

### Size

This was the first year WildSafeBC had a program in the Cowichan Valley. This posed the problem of lack of awareness of the existence of WildSafeBC. The Cowichan Valley is over 3,400 km<sup>2</sup> and has a population of 83,739. It includes three gulf islands which are Thetis, Kuper and Valdes. The vast area as well as the disconnect between the islands made it difficult to reach all members of the community. This was approached by targeting areas based on previous human-wildlife conflict levels, as well as focusing on areas that had additionally sponsored the program. This helped to prioritize which target areas to focus on more thoroughly and allowed the WCC to service all areas with high human-wildlife conflict. A WildSafeBC Ambassador would be a huge help in covering more ground during the season.

### Garbage and Unwilling Residents

Unfortunately, as with the rest of the province, garbage is the number one attractant of black bears in the Cowichan Valley. Many residents are in the habit of placing their garbage out curbside the night before collection day. A large percentage of residents did not have an enclosed, secure area to store their garbage regularly. This meant that garbage and organics totes were left out in the open as easy pickings for bears. Sometimes this occurred even after bins had been broke into by bears and after proper storage was discussed with the resident by the WCC. Another common theme noticed while talking to residents at community events was the belief that it was okay to feed deer throughout the winter. The WCC provided education on the reasons why this was not beneficial to the animal and how it posed the risk of drawing predators into the community.

## Budgeting

Due to this being the first year of the WildSafeBC program in the community there was a small budget. This limited the distance that the WCC travel in order to promote and facilitate the program. This was mitigated by focusing on key areas of high human-wildlife conflict. This year an office space could not be found for the WCC and the tool-kit provided did not include a cell phone, tent, table, or display materials. These materials were sourced through the generosity of the COS as well as the Cowichan Green community. Many items such as the table, tent and cellphone were sourced directly by the WCC. This did however impact the time, budget, and kilometers for the program as these materials had to be picked-up and dropped off after use at their various locations. Future years of the program would greatly benefit from these additional materials as well as an office space or location to store the “tool-kit”.

## Goals and Opportunities for 2018

- Continue to build and foster relationships with various community groups including Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society.
- Expand the school presentation program and build the WildSafeBC reputation within the school system.
- Encourage the Cowichan Valley Regional District to create a bylaw allowing garbage and organics to only be placed out within a time frame on the morning of collection.
- Acquire a bear pelt and other display materials for community events and presentations.
- Build a base of volunteers in order to spread the WildSafeBC message more efficiently.
- Interact with, and promote the WildSafeBC program through media coverage and Facebook posts.

## Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC CVRD is very thankful for the generous support the program receives from its sponsors, partners and volunteers. Without their support the program would not have been able to start creating the positive reputation it has within the CVRD. Thanks to our sponsors: The BC Ministry of Environment, British Columbia Conservation Foundation, the Cowichan Valley Regional District, the Town of Ladysmith and Pan Disposal.

A huge thank you to our community partners: Ilse Sarady at the Cowichan Valley Regional District. Scott Norris and Mark Kissinger from the Conservation Officer Service for their support and advice throughout the program as well as lending display items. Andrea from Pan Disposal for her insight on garbage related matters. The Cowichan Green Community for their generosity in lending tents for community events.

A thank-you to the hardworking volunteers that dedicated invaluable time to this year's program. Your time was truly appreciated.

Finally, WSBC would like to thank all the residents of the CVRD who acted upon information provided by the WSBC program and ensured that wildlife attractants were managed appropriately and encouraged others to follow suit.