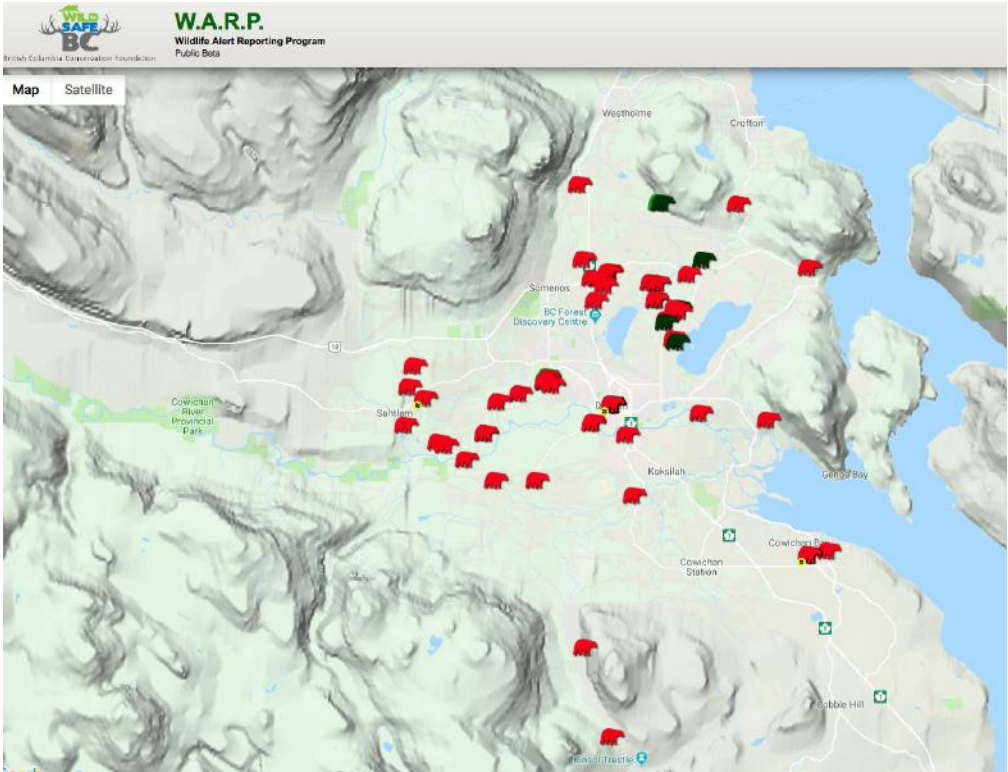


WildSafeBC Annual Report 2018

Cowichan Valley Regional District

Prepared by: Todd Carnahan, WildSafeBC Community Coordinator



Executive Summary

This was the second year for the WildSafeBC program in the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) and the first year of full program delivery. The CVRD is a large geographical area with several municipal governments.

The 2018 season was characterized by lower than average black bear reports to the Conservation Officer Service through the RAPP line with activity peaking in June. Garbage and compost remain the leading reported cause of human-bear conflicts.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) focused on door-to-door campaigns early in the season and reached over 1,700 people. This coincided with garbage tagging activities where over 750 garbage and organic totes were tagged with educational stickers. The WCC delivered the Junior Ranger Program to four schools and 540 participants. Along with five community presentations, the WCC attended eight community events and contacted over 1,550 people.

WildSafeBC messaging was delivered through social media and traditional media outlets. Topics focused on reducing human-wildlife conflicts through education, attractant management and specific bear issues. While garbage and compost are the most reported source of bear conflicts, fruit tree management was identified as an important solution to reducing bear food-conditioning and human habituation. The public was referred to the Cowichan FruitSave Project for fruit gleaning assistance.

The WCC recognizes that the delivery of the program is facilitated by the support and collaboration of several organizations, local school districts, the municipalities and the Conservation Officer Service and thanks them for the ongoing support.

Cover photo: Image from WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) that shows the approximate location of bear sightings and the attractants involved (if any). Red denotes garbage was a source of conflict.

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Highlights from the 2018 Season

Wildlife Activity

Reports of wildlife to the Conservation Officer Service (COS)'s *Report All Poachers and Polluters* (RAPP) line are available to the public through WildSafeBC's *Wildlife Alert Reporting Program* (WARP). In the Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD), black bear reports were low in April and peaked in June (fig. 1). A second peak of activity occurred in September reflecting a typical trend across BC. Cougar reports peaked in September and declined through October. Deer reports peaked in June with a lesser peak of activity in September. There were at least 140 black bear, 71 cougar, 47 deer, and 11 elk reports from April 2018 to October 2018.

Monthly CVRD report totals to the RAPP Line and the WARP in 2018

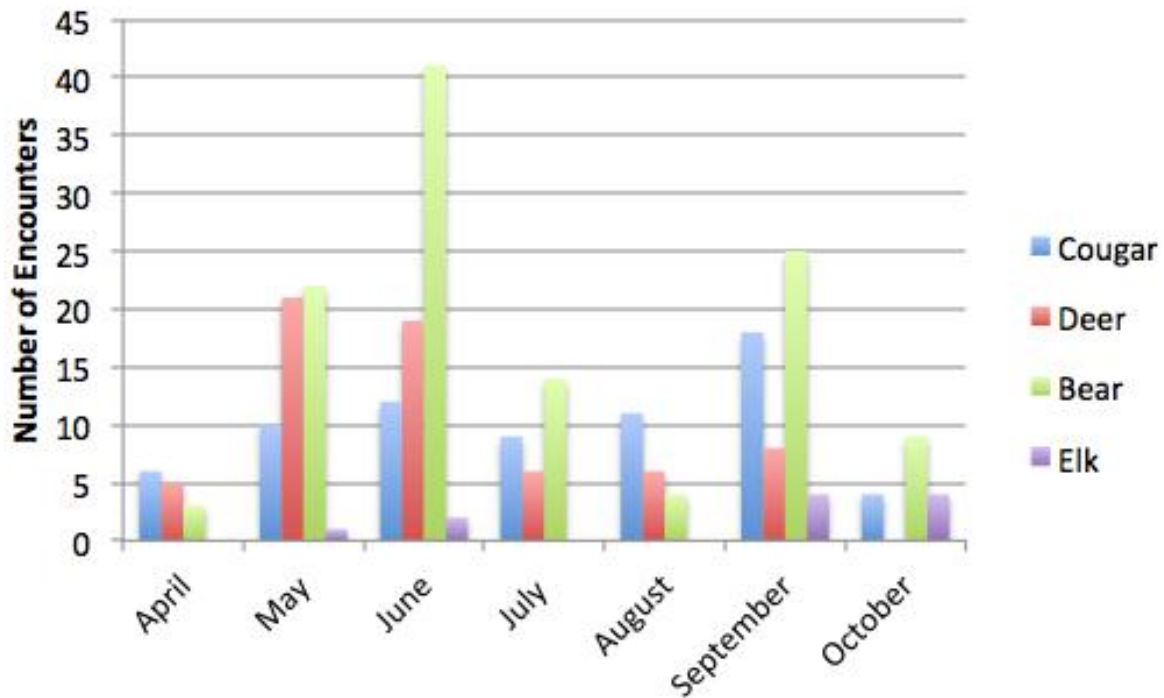


Figure 1. Monthly report totals to the RAPP Line and the WARP in 2018.

When attractants are involved, garbage and compost accounted for 70% of bear conflict reports (fig. 2). For cougars, pets and livestock were the leading attractants.

Bear Attractants

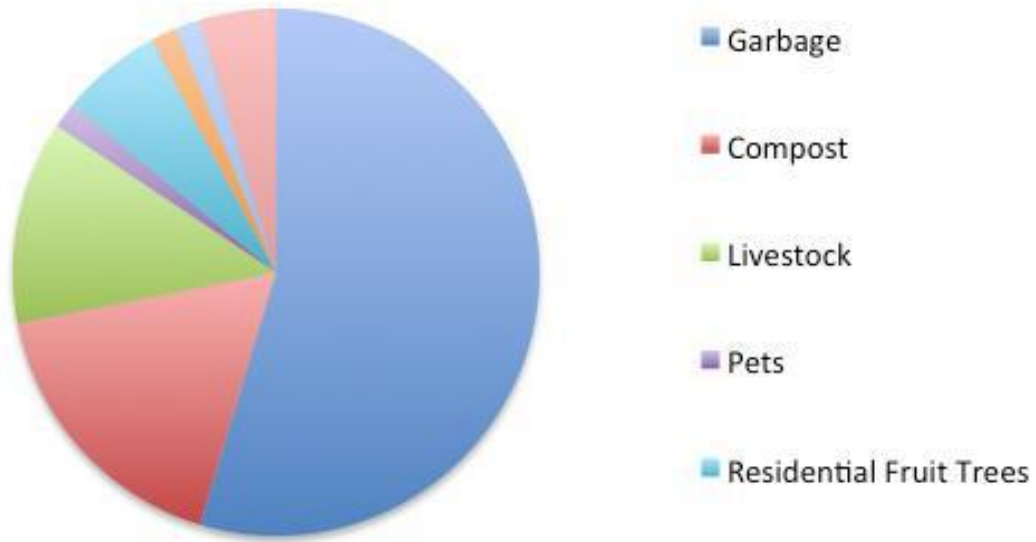
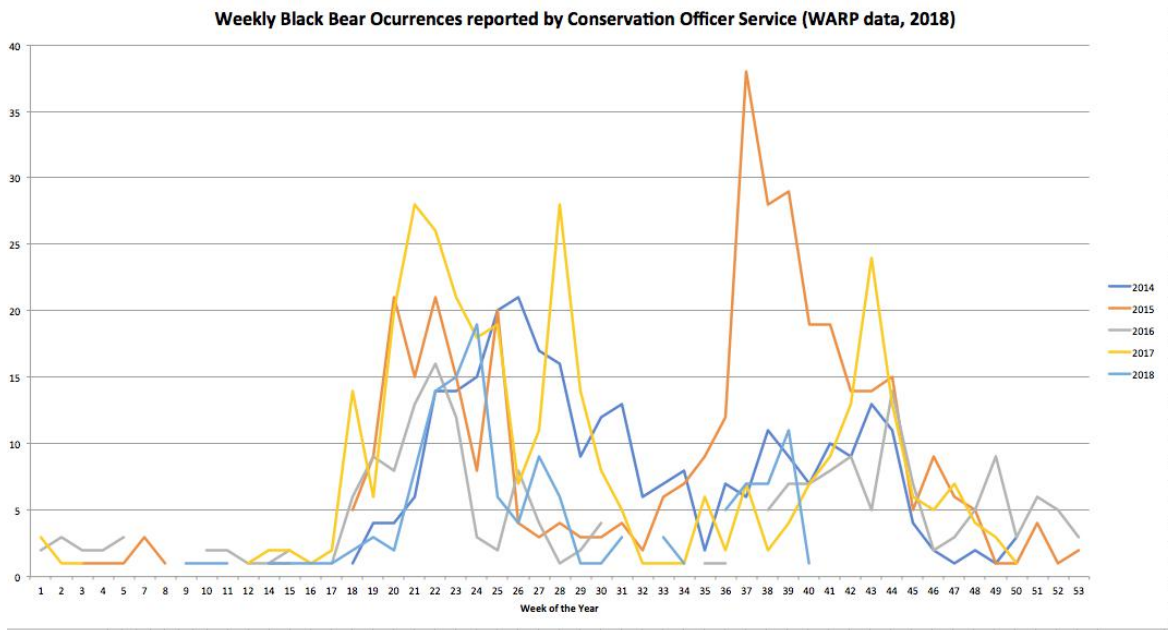


Figure 2. Garbage and compost accounted for seventy percent (n=46) of the bear conflict reports. Pets and livestock were the main attractants for cougar (n=5).



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Presentations to Schools and Community Groups

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) gave a total of 21 presentations at four schools to over 540 participants and delivered presentations to Lake Cowichan Municipal Council (with Sergeant Scott Norris of the COS) as well as the following community groups:

- George Bonner Elementary
- Bench Elementary
- Ladysmith Primary
- Alexander Elementary at Somenos Open Air Classroom
- Island Gardening Club
- Cowichan Estuary Restoration and Conservation Association (CERCA)
- Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable (including Sydney Anglers and Parks Canada)
- Cowichan Watershed Board, including Chief Squtxulenuhw of Cowichan Tribes



Figure 3. Cowichan River Celebration. Viewing and discussion of Stoltz Bluff issues with Craig Wightman (Fisheries Biologist) of BC Conservation Foundation.

In 2018 the WCC focus on outreach was direct to residents and also outreach was focused on developing partnerships for future collaboration. Events like the River Celebration were valuable opportunities to meet a variety of groups offering similar services and functions (fig. 4).

Door-to-Door Education and Garbage Tagging

The WCC focused door-to-door outreach in neighbourhoods identified by the COS as having high wildlife activity or unmanaged attractants. A total of 1,700 people were reached through door-to-door contacts and a total of 750 garbage/organics totes were tagged in seven neighbourhoods. No residential areas demonstrated effective garbage securement and even businesses were typically noncompliant with the Wildlife Act (fig. 5). The CVRD human population is growing quickly and new residential areas are typically not yet pursuing predator precautions. Some previously unaffected areas such as Cherry Point to Mill Bay are recognized by Conservation Officers as new hotspots for conditioned bears. Outreach and tagging included the following neighbourhoods:

- Ladysmith (Holland Creek)
- Shawnigan Lake (Beach Estates, Village)
- Cobble Hill
- Cowichan Bay
- Cherry point (Aros Rd)
- Sahtlam
- Cowichan Lake (north and south shore, east to Sahtlam)



Figure 4. Garbage containers in all areas of the CVRD are typically inadequate to resist bears.

Public Displays and Events

The WCC attended community celebrations, farmers markets, exhibitions, and a wildlife festival to develop a public profile and general community awareness of the WildSafeBC program. The

greatest number of people reached face to face was at the Cowichan Exhibition with volunteer help (fig. 6). The following events and approximate people contacted are as follows:

- Chemainus Waterwheel Park Canada Day 400 contacts
- Duncan Farmers Market (over two days) 500
- Cobble Hill Market (over two days) 400
- Youbou Regatta 150
- Cowichan Exhibition (over two days) 1000 (Figure 6)
- BC Goes Wild Weekend Bat and Owl Show ~ WildWings Festival 30
- Cowichan River Clean Up 50
- Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable - River Celebration 50



Figure 5. Volunteer Theena Van Beek of Vancouver Island University engages families at the Cowichan Exhibition.

Social Media and Press

Media coverage in 2018 was frequent and diverse resulting in many thousands of CVRD residents receiving key messages through the following outlets:

- Valley Voice Magazine (3 articles, event listings)

- Lake Cowichan Gazette: *Conservation Officers Get 100 calls a year*
- Cowichan Valley Citizen: editorial and reprint of above article
- Vancouver Island Independent: reprint of above article
- My CowichanValleyNow.com: How to prevent bear conflict this fall
- CTV Victoria: segment on raccoon conflict
- CBC Radio News 90.5 FM: interview with Liz MacArthur on Cowichan bear issue
- Ladysmith Blog Shawna Cadieux – Bearsmart your neighbourhood
- Juice FM radio interview with Sharon Vanhouwe

The presentation to Lake Cowichan Council with Sergeant Norris was covered by local media such as Cowichan Valley Citizen (Fig. 7) and Lake Cowichan News. It was then picked up by other provincial media including CTV and CBC Radio.

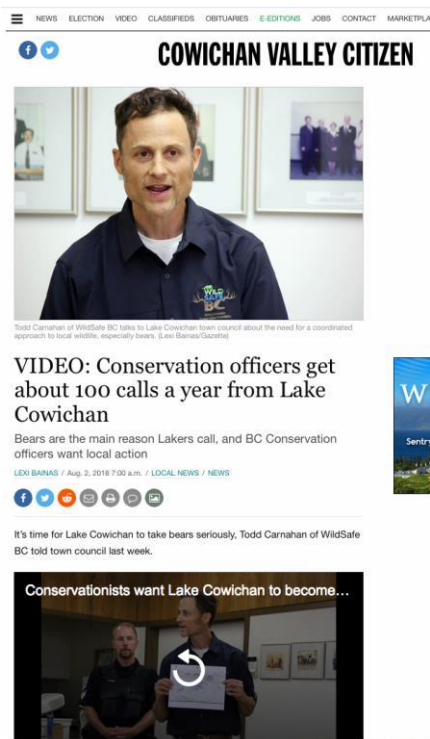


Figure 6. Delegation to Lake Cowichan Council by WSBC and COS.

Bear in Area Signs

The WCC placed three bear in area signs in the Cobble Hill, Shawnigan Lake, and Sahtlam neighbourhoods as a result of numerous bear sightings in the area. These signs are an effective way of alerting local residents quickly and efficiently.

Partnerships

The WCC developed several partnerships during the 2018 season including: Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society (SMWS); Cowichan Land Trust; Tourism Cowichan; Lake Cowichan Chamber of Commerce; Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable; PAN Disposal, and the Cowichan Watershed Board.

SMWS partnered with WildSafeBC on several outreach events. They co-hosted students at the Somenos Open Air Classroom (Fig. 8), led a bat and owl show for 30 participants, and shared outreach space at the Cowichan Exhibition. Events were jointly planned, and cross-promoted in media and social media.



Figure 7. Elizabeth Bailey from Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society at the Open Air Classroom with a volunteer.

The Cowichan Land Trust, Lake Cowichan Chamber of Commerce, and Tourism Cowichan agreed to carry WildSafeBC brochures in their offices and the Cowichan Estuary Nature Centre.

The Cowichan Stewardship Roundtable is a multi-agency community-based organization of collaborating groups concerned about watershed health. The WCC provided presentations at a meeting and river celebration event that reached a broad range of agencies and community organizations that may yield future partnerships.

The Cowichan Watershed Board expressed interest in hosting WildSafeBC for a presentation this fall and will reschedule for the spring of 2019.

The WCC made contact with PAN Disposal to review the collection routes around Cobble Hill and Shawnigan Lake.

The company was pleased to find that WildSafeBC was continuing to provide outreach services for their customers upon learning that Shawnigan Lake area was a wildlife conflict hotspot.

Fruit Tree Outreach and Education

Fruit tree outreach was delivered concurrently with other attractant management messaging at schools, through media, and in presentations delivered from September to October. Public outreach and inquiries were referred to the [Cowichan FruitSave Project](#).

Challenges for the 2018 Season

The CVRD is a large district encompassing many municipal governments and Electoral Areas. The District can accommodate a full time WCC if and when additional funding is secured. The WCC lobbied Lake Cowichan Council and discussed the WildSafeBC program with mayor-elect Al Siebring of the Municipality of North Cowichan.

The CVRD area is serviced by complex systems of recycling, trash, and organics collection services delivered by the CVRD, several municipalities and one company (PAN Disposal). The company provided only general area descriptions due to proprietary concerns resulting from proposed CVRD service area expansion. Routes and services may change in 2019.

Goals and Opportunities for 2019

- CAO Joseph Fernandez of Lake Cowichan suggested novel funding ideas to support the WildSafeBC program and these should be further pursued.
- The Town of Ladysmith will increase their contribution in 2019 if other agencies increase their contributions.
- Pursue additional funding partners including the Municipality of North Cowichan.
- Provide regular WARP updates to news media and Facebook Neighbourhood groups.
- Develop partnership events with FruitSave Project (Cowichan Green Community).
- Focus on early outreach to elementary schools that have not yet had presentations.
- Continue identifying and reaching out to local wildlife experts engaged in media.
- Pursue WildSafeBC training in order to deliver electric fencing workshops.
- Achieve 350 Facebook likes by October 2019.
- Develop new partnerships with organizations such as Cowichan Lake and River Stewardship Society.
- Pursue video segment proposals with Shaw TV and CVRD staff.

Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC acknowledges the excellent communications and program support by Sergeant Bates in Ladysmith and Sergeant Norris in Duncan. Officer Norris provided critical support for the successful Lake Cowichan Delegation and provided animal displays for public outreach.

The WCC thanks our sponsors represented by Kevin Goldfuss, Manager of Operations at the Town of Ladysmith, and Ilse Saraday, Environmental Technician at the CVRD. Ms. Saraday provided a cell phone for outreach, a bear resistant tote, and she coordinated communications with a number of CVRD staff including a meet and greet at the start of the season.

Elizabeth Bailey and Nejma Bellin of Somenos Marsh Wildlife Society employed their established community networks, media contacts, and planning capacity to enhance and support the WildSafeBC Program through several outreach events.