

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2018

Sunshine Coast

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Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy



Executive Summary

The WildSafeBC program continues to build on successes from previous seasons. The program supported and interacted with residents from Egmont to Langdale and connected with a variety of community members, from chicken enthusiasts to bow hunters. Many residents on the Sunshine Coast practice habits that keep wildlife wild and communities safe. Garbage is stored indoors, fruit trees are picked, bird feeders are replaced by bird baths, and electric fencing is used to protect livestock. However, there are still Sunshine Coast residents learning lessons in human-wildlife conflict. Visiting the WildSafeBC booth at community events, residents share stories of encounters with wildlife. Most often, the item that attracted wildlife to a home or yard is secured after contact with wildlife has occurred. The freezer is emptied, the bird feeder is taken down, the BBQ is cleaned, only after the wildlife has had a meal.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) works with the community to promote proactive behaviours and solutions to reduce human-wildlife conflicts. Between May and November, the WCC communicated directly with over 1,200 residents and reached thousands more through Facebook, radio and print media. The WCC gave 18 presentations to over 420 participants and attended 9 community events and connected with 443 people. Door-to-door campaigns reached 201 residents and 111 garbage bins were tagged with warning stickers. Social media Facebook 'likes' grew 12.5% since the beginning of 2018 while print and media reached over 24,000 people.

Some of the challenges include the large geographic area to cover and the intentional feeding of wildlife. Black bears accessing garbage is an ongoing issue that requires development of additional strategies in 2019. Some of the innovative initiatives developed this season included the development of guidelines for restaurants, resorts and vacation rental properties owners in order to reach short-term visitors to the area.

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Highlights from the 2018 Season

Wildlife Activity

Human-wildlife reports to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) identify species, locations and timing trends for the Sunshine Coast. Using data from 2014 to 2017, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) was able to plan outreach messaging and activities. Reporting statistics in 2018 show patterns consistent with past years, with high levels of conflict occurring from May through October (fig. 1).

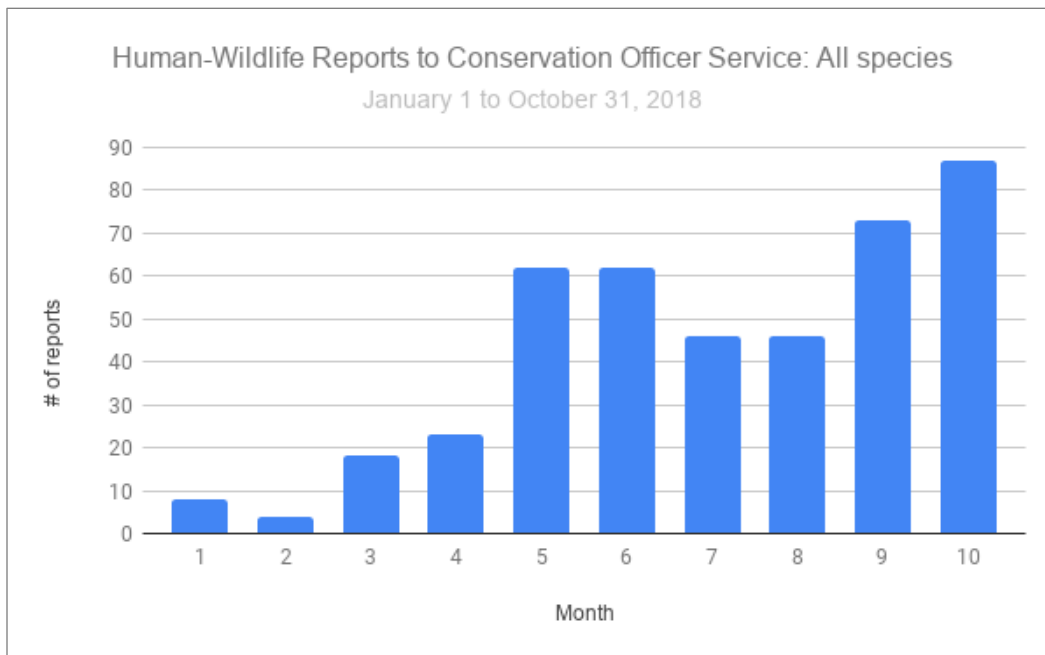


Figure 1. Human-wildlife reports by month from January 1 to October 31, 2018.

WildSafeBC (WSBC) conflict reduction strategies focused on the black bears, black-tailed deer, and cougars, the top three species in conflict with humans on the Sunshine Coast. Moreover, the majority of efforts focused on reducing conflict with black bears, as interactions with the species consistently accounts for 61% of reports (Table 1).

Table 1. Reports to the COS by species from January 1 to October 31, 2018.

Species	# of reports
Black bear	257
Black-tailed deer	76
Cougar	61
Elk	10
Coyote	9
Raptor	6
Bobcat	4
Wolf	4

The top three attractants that bring black bears into conflict with humans continue to be: garbage, fruit trees and bird feeders (fig. 3). In 2018, WSBC programming addressed these attractant issues through garbage tagging, door-to-door visits, social media posts, event outreach, and presentations for youth. These activities are discussed in more detail below.

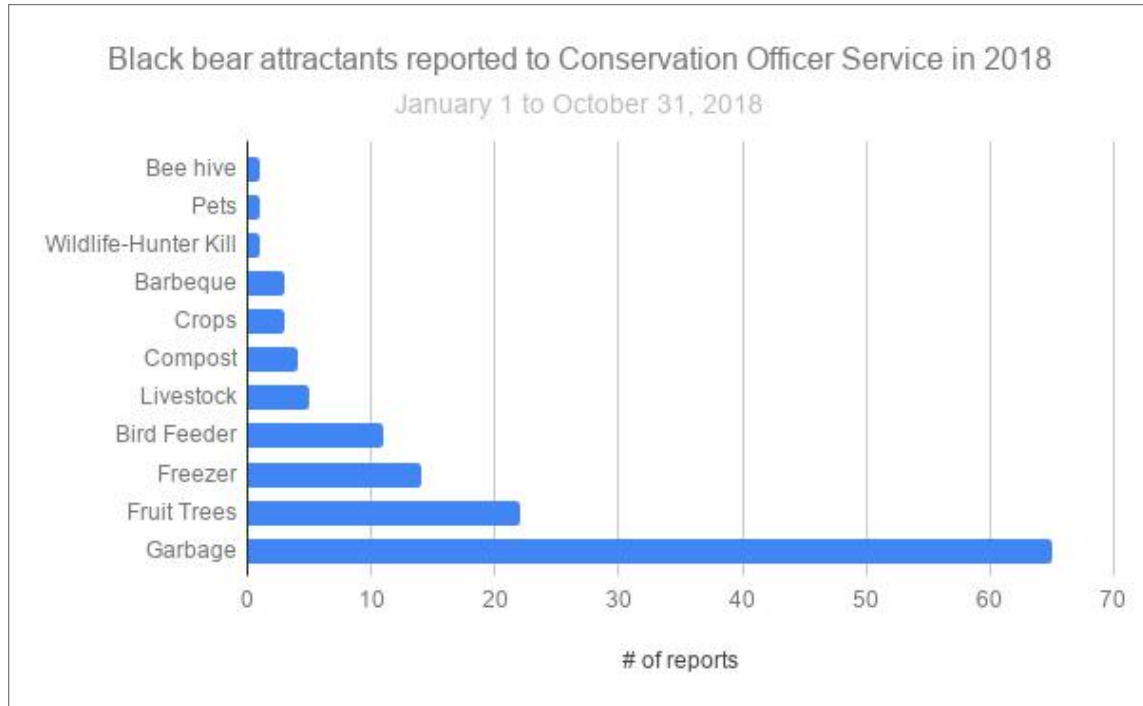


Figure 2. Black bear attractants in 2018 from January 1 to October 31.

Presentations to Schools and Community Groups

The WCC for the Sunshine Coast gave a total of 18 presentations to over 420 participants including:

- Scouts at Camp Byng – One presentation
- Halfmoon Bay Elementary – Two assembly presentations
- Langdale Elementary – Six classroom presentations (fig. 4)
- Explore the Wild Summer Camp at Chapman Creek Hatchery – Five camp presentations (fig. 5)
- SPIDER Elementary – Two classroom presentations and one outdoor activity
- Chapman Creek Hatchery Staff – Bear Spray Training (fig. 6)
- Ladies Ride Mountain Bikers – Bear Spray Demonstration



Figure 3. Junior Ranger Program presentation at Langdale Elementary.



Figure 4. Cougar Leap Challenge during Explore the Wild Summer Camp Presentation



Figure 5. Bear Spray Training at Chapman Creek Hatchery.

Door-to-Door Education and Garbage Tagging

Door-to-door visits allowed the WCC to engage with residents experiencing conflict with wildlife, hear further details and accounts, and gauge solutions that may work best for an area. Door hangers were left at homes, if residents were away, to provide an avenue for further conversation and share WSBC's top tips. Door-to-door activity was carried out 24 times and reached 328 residents.

Garbage tagging activity was targeted in areas outside of bylaw enforcement resources. Three evenings were spent checking 5 neighbourhoods: Bonniebrook, Lower Roberts Creek, Wilson Creek, Davis Bay and Selma Park. Garbage tag reminders, left on bins placed out early, reached 111 residents.



Figure 6. Garbage tagging in Roberts Creek.

Public Displays and Events

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator attended 9 community events in 2018 (Table 2), connecting with 493 people (fig. 7).

Table 2. WildSafeBC attendance at community events on the Sunshine Coast.

Date	Event	Location
July 1	Canada Day at Hackett Park	Sechelt
July 7	Catch a Trout Day at Chapman Creek Hatchery	Sechelt
August 3	Friday Night Market at Gibsons Public Market	Gibsons
August 25	Poultry Swap at Roberts Creek Hall	Roberts Creek
August 25	Family Day at Rod and Gun Club	Sechelt
September 2	Harvest Festival at Botanical Garden	Sechelt
September 15	BC Goes Wild Weekend & SCR D Backroad Trash Bash	Pender Harbour
October 28	Halfmoon Bay Apple Festival	Halfmoon Bay
November 23	Banff Centre Mountain Film Festival World Tour	Gibsons



Figure 7. WildSafeBC Booth at the Sunshine Coast Botanical Garden Harvest Festival.

WildSafeBC provided 1500 brochures to the following organizations to support additional outreach and education:

- Gibsons Visitor Center
- Sechelt Visitor Center
- Madeira Park Visitor Center
- District of Sechelt Bylaw Officers
- Camp Olave
- Sunshine Coast Welcome Wagon

Social Media and Press

Facebook was utilized to regularly engage with followers, sharing reminders about seasonal attractants and trends, as well as updates on wildlife presence in neighbourhoods. The WildSafeBC Sunshine Coast Facebook page grew from 960 likes at the beginning of the year to 1,080. Individual posts on Facebook this year have reached anywhere from 90 to 6,700 people, with a total reach of 48,075 during the course of the season. Additional Facebook activity, like following local Facebook FYI groups, allowed further insights into neighbourhood trends that do not get reported to the COS or WildSafeBC.

Facebook posts also serve to stimulate conversation with local media. A post highlighting the results of garbage tagging resulted in a call from Mountain FM (fig. 8). Coast FM called after viewing an aggressive bear post in the summer and elevated bear activity posts in the fall.

Coast Reporter published an article in the June 7th edition to highlight increased wildlife activity and the restart of the WildSafeBC program. Print and radio media reach for 2018 is estimated at 23,930.

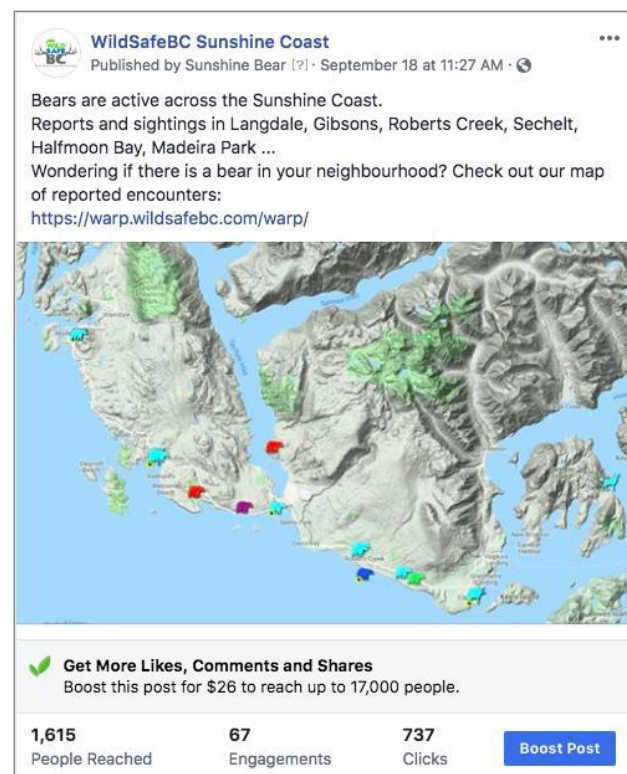


Figure 8. A Facebook post used to keep the community and media engaged in wildlife activity.

Bear in Area Signs

WildSafeBC has a variety of signs to alert the community with regards to specific wildlife activity (fig. 9). Bear in Area signs were utilized in 18 neighbourhoods over the course of the season. Signage was placed in response to the following:

- Request from COS
- Request from neighbourhood group
- Reports of activity via WARP, email, phone, or Facebook.

Smaller signs (8.5” x 11”) were utilized on neighbourhood message boards, parks and trail heads, and large dumpsters. “Cougar in Area” signs (8.5” x 11”) were placed on trail heads and near playgrounds in response to sightings. This included Franklin Street and Soames Hill in Gibsons, Chatelech Secondary and Hackett Park in Sechelt, and Halfmoon Bay Elementary and Conner Park in Halfmoon Bay. An “Aggressive Deer in Area” sign (8.5x11) was placed at the Inglis trail head at the end of Shaw Road in Gibsons.



Figure 9. Wildlife in Area signs used on the Sunshine Coast in 2018.

Fruit Tree Outreach and Education

Proactive harvesting of fruit trees was included in event booth, presentation, and Facebook messaging. Sharing of harvest was also promoted in the Farm and Garden Swap Facebook group. One individual was supported directly in picking. A total of 4 hours was dedicated solely to fruit tree outreach.

Unfortunately, the Sunshine Coast Fruit Tree Project, a volunteer harvest group, was on hiatus in 2018. Finding a partner, or additional strategies, to support fruit tree harvest should be explored in 2019.

Development of Guidelines

In 2018, the WCC guidelines for a WildSafe Restaurant which addressed common attractant issues by suggesting best practices for operating in bear country (fig. 10). These guidelines can be further distributed in 2019 and also support WildSafe routines at resorts.

Guidelines for WildSafe Properties are also in development. These guidelines will be shared with vacation and short term rental property owners, to ensure systems for managing wildlife attractants are in place and guests are provided with wildlife information.

GUIDELINES FOR A WILDSAFE RESTAURANT

WORKING IN BEAR COUNTRY COMES WITH THE RESPONSIBILITY TO OPERATE YOUR RESTAURANT IN A MANNER THAT KEEPS WILDLIFE WILD AND YOUR COMMUNITY SAFE

ACCESS POINTS

1. Keep doors closed during operation, bears have wandered into restaurants.
2. Secure all windows and doors at closing.

PATIO

1. Bus patio promptly during service.
2. All outdoor waste bins must be emptied regularly and put indoors at closing.
3. Sweep patio area daily and wash food spills with soapy water.

KITCHEN ENTRANCE - LOADING BAY

1. Process food deliveries promptly. Do not store food outdoors.
2. Maintain food equipment and bins to minimize leaks and messes.
3. Keep kitchen entrance - loading bay clean, wash with soapy water once per week.
4. Remove and properly dispose of attractants daily.

Zero attractants should be left out overnight. This includes:

- Garbage
- Recycling (food packaging, cans and bottles, juice cartons, buckets)
- Compost
- Grease

COMMERCIAL WASTE BINS

1. Place waste inside appropriate bin and lock EVERY time.
2. Ensure all bin access doors and latches are functioning properly.
3. Contact your waste management company or property manager promptly if a bin is damaged or cannot be secured from bears or other wildlife.

WildSafe BC
British Columbia Conservation Foundation
wildsafebc.com

If you encounter a bear
Ensure you and your guests give the bear plenty of space and an escape route.
Speak loudly, Clap your hands or bang metal trays to scare the bear away.
Call Conservation Officer Services at 1-877-952-7277 or #7277

For further information:
sunshineosag@wildsafebc.com
604-885-8800 ext 6476

Figure 10. Guidelines for a WildSafe Restaurant.

Partnerships

Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) Solid Waste team helped the new WCC get established in 2018, by sharing details of the approach to solid waste in the SCRД, local event options for outreach, and connections to other SCRД departments. Throughout the season, the SCRД provided support for inquiries from the WCC and relayed messages from residents experiencing human-wildlife conflict. WildSafeBC joined the SCRД for the annual Backroads Trash Bash event on September 15, 2018.

The COS provided valuable information on current human-wildlife conflict areas as well as historical knowledge of trends in neighbourhoods. The COS worked with WildSafeBC by requesting visits to areas in need of outreach. In turn, the WCC provided feedback on conflicts resulting in safety issues as well as information on Provincial Wildlife Act violations (eg. results of garbage tagging).

The bylaw departments in the District of Sechelt and the Town of Gibsons worked with the WCC to share information on neighbourhoods experiencing human-wildlife conflict and ensure a representative was able to connect with residents. WildSafeBC shared results of garbage and fruit tree issues for bylaw to enforce or have on record.

The visitor centres in Gibsons, Sechelt and Madeira Park were great advocates of WildSafeBC information. Visitor centre staff shared they are often asked “where do we go to see wildlife?” and they are able to respond with WildSafeBC brochures and tips, as the wildlife is everywhere!

Challenges for the 2018 Season

1. Geography provides a challenge to the program on the Sunshine Coast, resulting in a slightly uneven distribution of service. The communities further afield from the population centres, like Egmont, Pender Harbour, or Keats Island, are less likely to see a “Bear in Area” sign or have face time with the WCC.
2. Long-standing behaviours and habits are taking time to shift. Feeding wildlife can take many forms such as feeders for birds or intentional feeding of raccoons or deer (fig.11). Bears that access fruit trees are also unintentionally being fed human foods. This can lead to human-wildlife conflicts which include safety concerns or property damage. This can be frustrating for neighbours in a community. In many cases dangerous wildlife, such as bears in urban areas, are not reported or reporting is delayed. As conflict behaviours escalate it can be challenging to address them and options become reduced.

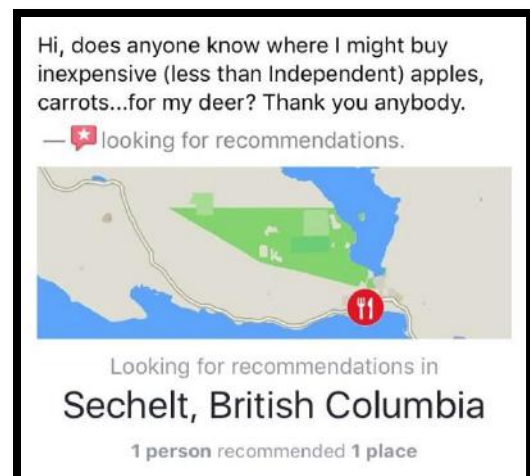


Figure 11. Example of a Facebook post about feeding deer in September 2018.

3. Garbage continues to be an area of concern on the Sunshine Coast. Challenges with garbage include:
 - Garbage stored outdoors as many residents do not have a garages.
 - Limited access to bear resistant bin options.
 - Garbage placed out early prior to collection; sometimes days in advance when people head out of town.
4. As a new WCC, the program start in late May lead to a busy beginning. Learning community relationships and the role, while receiving daily emails and calls of human-wildlife conflict, was a challenge.

Goals and Opportunities for 2019

Many opportunities still exist for the WildSafeBC program on the Sunshine Coast. Below are recommended areas of focus for the 2019 program.

The WCC should plan to attend events in Egmont, Pender Harbour and Halfmoon Bay early in the 2019 season, to establish connections and encourage proactive approaches to conflict management.

The Sunshine Coast sees an influx of visitors and part-time residents during the summer months. It is best to connect with the businesses that support these visitors, and their waste, at the start of the season to ensure WildSafe practices are in place. These include:

- Marinas
- Resorts
- Hotels, Guest Houses, Short Term Rentals, Vacation Rentals

Proactive outreach to new property owners and renters may help to reduce any hiccups in wildlife interactions. This can include connecting with rental or real estate agencies and the Welcome Wagon. The District of Sechelt and the SCRCD can support by distributing information to registered vacation properties.

Exploring options to support waste management by property owners has the potential for significant reductions in human-wildlife conflict on the Sunshine Coast. Over 60% of black bear conflict reports involve garbage. Working with the SCRCD, the WCC can investigate options such as:

- Subsidy program for bear resistant containers
- Bin locks
- Community bins for residents departing before garbage day

Finally, the WCC should continue to connect with community members who successfully manage attractants like fruit trees and livestock. Sharing these local best practices, such as electric fencing and safe bear spray use, will help gain more acceptance and adoption from residents.

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Sunshine Coast program gratefully acknowledges its 2018 funders:

- Sunshine Coast Regional District
- Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy

Thank you to the Conservation Officer Service for providing insights into neighbourhood trends and wildlife biology over the course of the season. Support and communication in-person and by email were instrumental in program success.

Thank you to the following organizations for your support in sharing WildSafeBC information:

Sunshine Coast Regional District; Solid Waste Services and Communications Department; Town of Gibsons Bylaw Office; District of Sechelt Bylaw Office; Visitor Information Centers in Gibsons, Sechelt and Madeira Park; Pender Harbour and District; neighbourhood associations and their representatives; Coast FM; Mountain FM; Coast Reporter; organizations that had WildSafeBC at their events and teachers who shared WildSafeBC with their classrooms.

Thank you to the BC Conservation Foundation team for their operational support and for all the work that keeps the program going.

Lastly, a big thank you to the diligent and dedicated residents of the Sunshine Coast who work to “keep wildlife wild and their community safe”.