

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2019

## Sunshine Coast

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Coordinator



**WildSafeBC: Credit P. Sulzle**



## Executive Summary

This report describes the highlights from the delivery of the WildSafeBC Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) program in 2019 (Figure 1). The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) provided public outreach and education about how to prevent human-wildlife conflict.

In 2019, 465 wildlife reports were made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). This number of reports is higher than the three year average of 369 and may be a result of less natural food availability or greater access to unnatural food sources in the community.

Due to unforeseen events early in the season, the coordinator position was not filled until July 19, 2019. Despite this and serious personal challenges that limited the amount of time spent delivering the program, the WCC reached 67 people through phone calls and emails, 37 people through door-to-door canvassing, 35 people at a bear spray demonstration, and 900 people through a series of public display booths. Through garbage tagging activities, 6 people received education stickers for having their garbage out the night before collection. Additionally, the popularity of the WildSafeBC Sunshine Coast Facebook page grew with 41 new followers.

Unmanaged garbage and fruit trees continued to be a challenge in the Sunshine Coast. Goals for 2020 include reaching more students through the WildSafe Ranger Program, continuing to work with the newly formed Sunshine Coast Bear Alliance, developing a better relationship with the local Indigenous community, further communication and collaboration with the COS, as well as reaching more of the community with both door-to-door canvassing and with the highly successful display booths. Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help “keep wildlife wild and our community safe”.

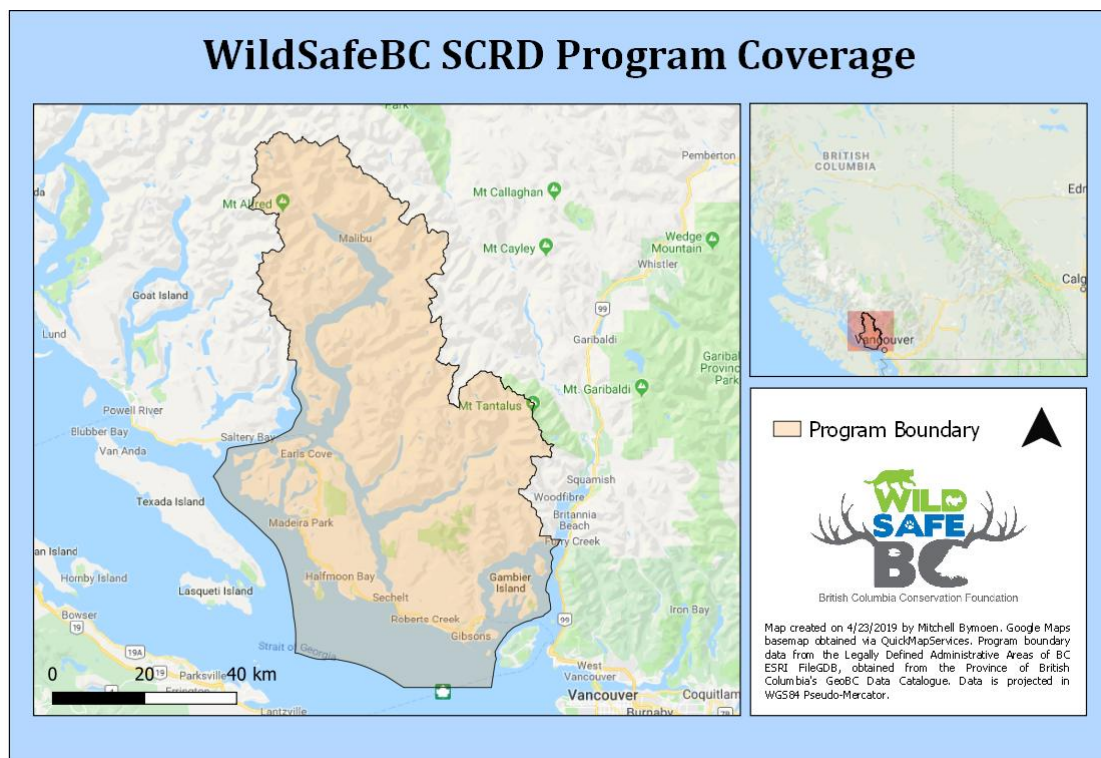


Figure 1. WildSafeBC SCRD program coverage area.

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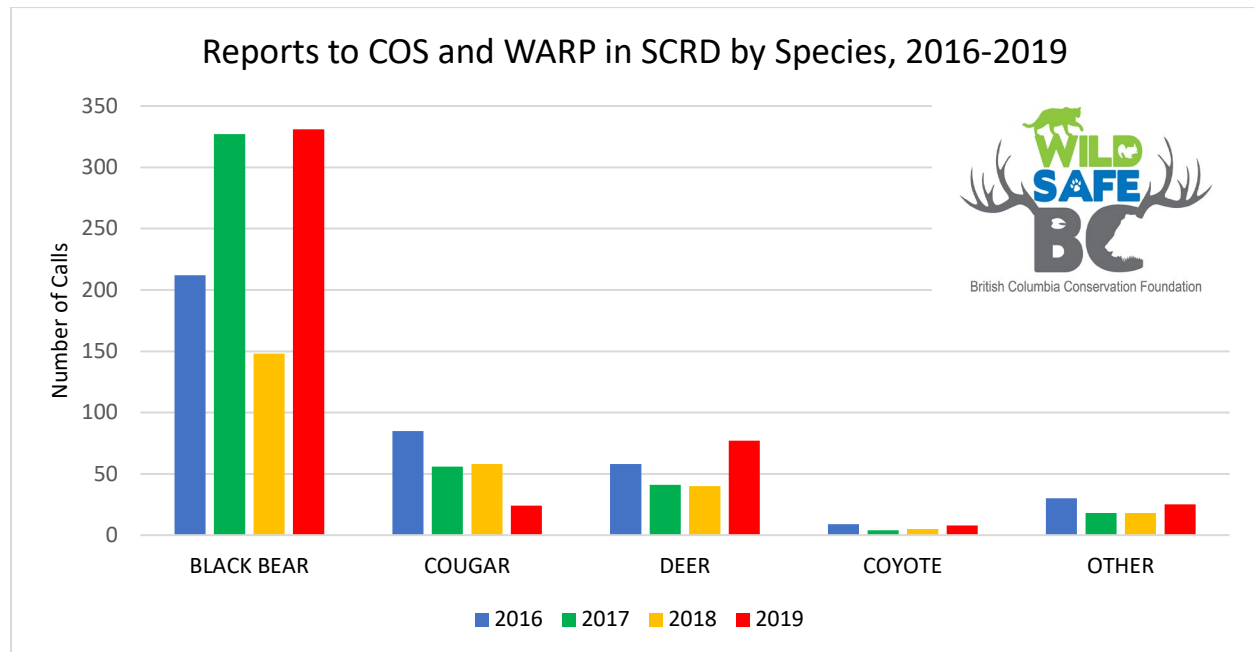
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## Highlights from the 2019 Season

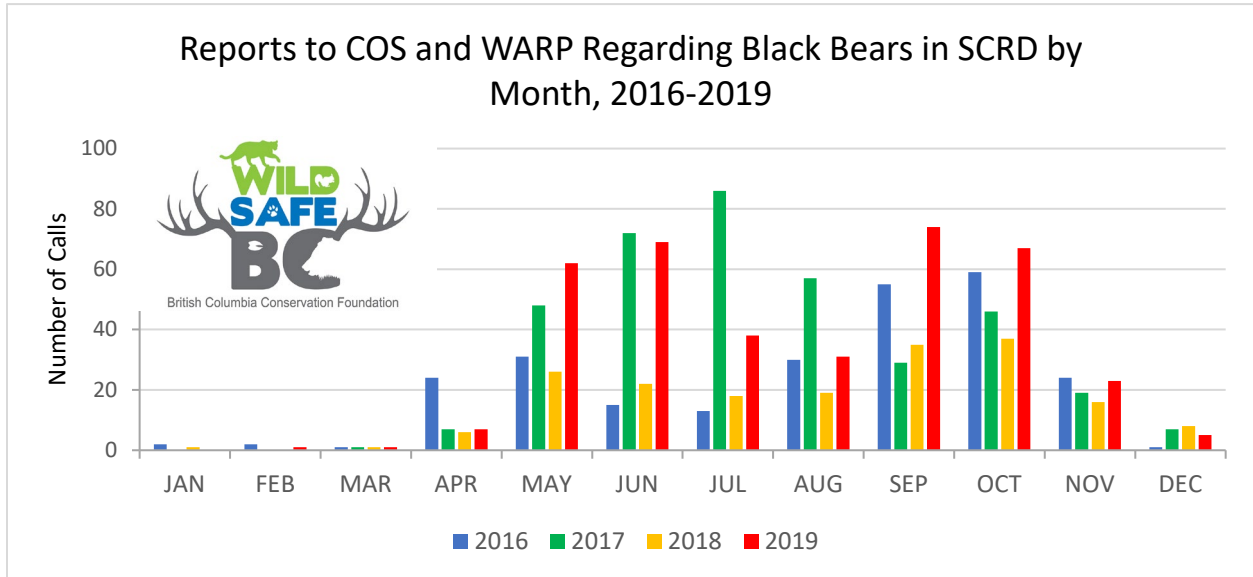
### Wildlife Activity

Calls made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). This data is updated daily and this report for the SCRD includes data from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2019. In 2019, black bears were the most reported species, followed by cougars, deer, and coyote (Figure 2). There were 373 black bear reports which is higher than the 3 year average of 272 (Figure 3) but comparable to 2017 which was also a high conflict year. Bear conflicts in the SCRD tend to have two peaks, one in the spring after mating season and one in the fall when bears enter hyperphagia and their caloric demands increase to over 20,000 calories per day.

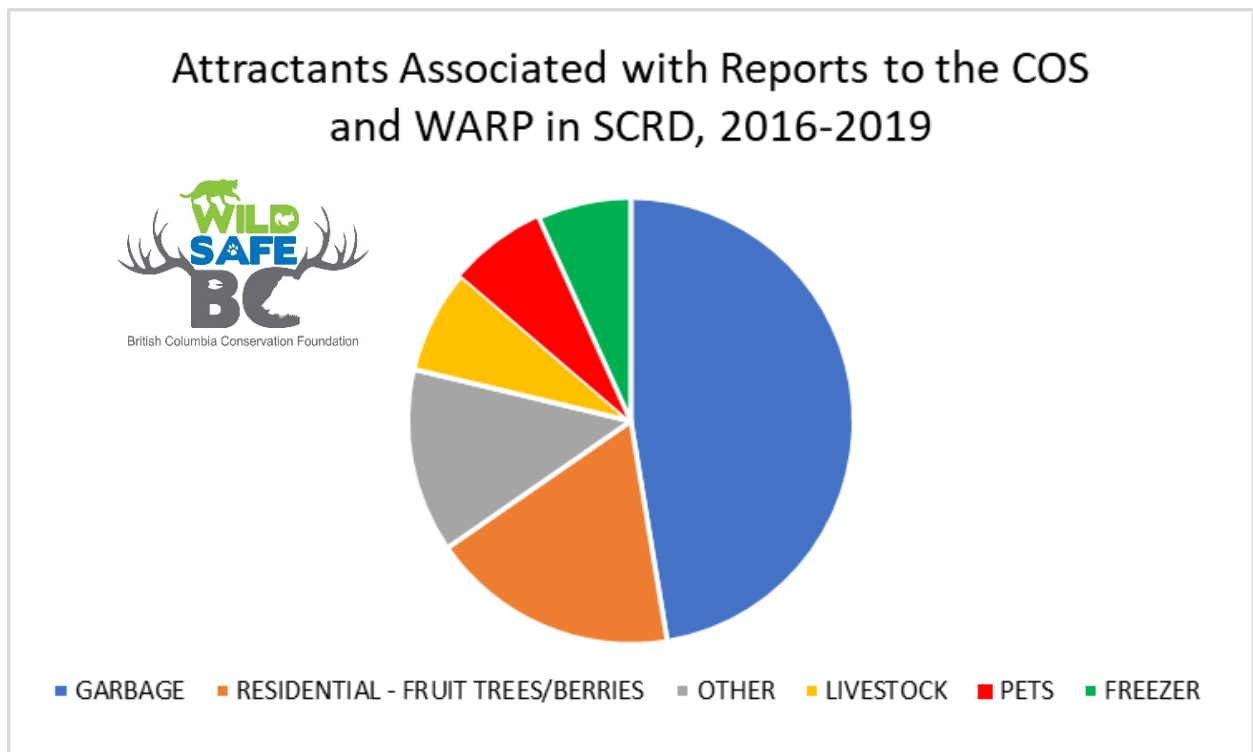
Deer conflicts were also higher than average with 77 reports (Figure 2). Urban deer conflicts are on the rise in many communities in BC as deer find shelter, food and protection from predators among urban landscapes. Other species were lower than average. Garbage remained the most reported attractant followed by fruit trees (Figure 4).



**Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP in SCRD by species, 2016 - 2019.**



**Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears in SCRD by month, 2016 - 2019.**



**Figure 4. Attractants associated with reports to the COS and WARP in SCRD, 2016 - 2019.**



## Presentations to Community Groups

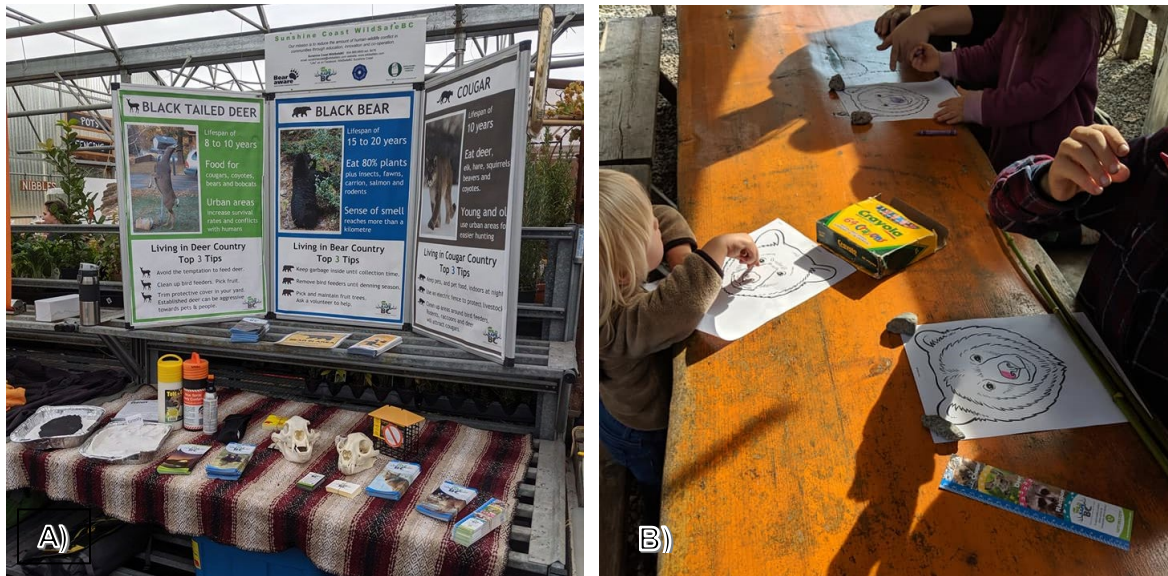
The WCC gave one bear spray demonstration to 35 participants as part of the BC Goes Wild event (see the 'Public Displays and Events' section for more information).

## Public Displays and Events

The WCC connected with 900 people when displaying the WildSafeBC information booth at community events including:

- Gibsons Night Market – August 20, 2019
- Harvest Festival – September 1, 2019
- Sechelt Public Market - September 7, 2019
- Fall Fair – October 12, 2019 (Figure 5 A)

Additionally, the WCC hosted a BC Goes Wild event at Persephone Brewing on September 29, 2019. Thirty-five people participated in a bear spray demonstration and activities for children (Figure 5 B).



**Figure 5. A) WildSafeBC display booth at the fall fair. B) Children colouring at the BC Goes Wild event.**

## Door-to-Door Education and Garbage Tagging

Door-to-door education was used to promote awareness when dangerous wildlife was known to be in an area. This type of outreach was also used proactively, to bring attention to backyard wildlife attractants and encourage people to report sightings of dangerous wildlife to the RAPP

line. If a resident was not home, an educational door hanger was left with the WCC's contact information. Through this activity, 37 people were reached.

Garbage tagging is an educational activity consisting of placing a highly visible and removable sticker on containers set curbside the day before collection or outside of times stated in local bylaws. Six people received stickers for having their garbage out early.

## Social Media and Press

The popularity of the [WildSafeBC Sunshine Coast Facebook page](#) grew with 41 new followers. Over 29,260 people were reached through posts to the page during 2019.

## Wildlife in Area Signs

The WCC used information provided by WARP, as well as direct communication with the COS, to focus efforts in areas where sightings or conflict had recently occurred. When human-wildlife conflict was reported in an area, the WCC would visit the neighbourhood and place a 'Bear in Area' sign at a highly visible location (Figure 7). Signs were placed at Kinnikinnick Park, Mission Point Park, and Sargeant Bay Park.



Figure 6. Bear in Area sign at Kinnikinnick Park.

## Collaborations

The COS provided valuable information on current human-wildlife conflict areas as well as historical knowledge of trends in neighbourhoods. The bylaw departments in the District of Sechelt and the Town of Gibsons also worked with the WCC to share information on neighbourhoods experiencing human-wildlife conflict. The WCC worked with both of these bylaw groups and followed up directly when necessary. For example, the Gibsons Market had an issue with bears accessing used grease bins outside as well as a locally owned restaurant experiencing the same problem. Suggestions were made and both of these issues were resolved. The WCC attended a meeting with the Sunshine Coast Bear Alliance, a newly formed group of concerned citizens who bring to the table a wealth of knowledge and experience, as well as a significant number of people to help spread the message of reducing human-bear conflicts.

## Province-wide Initiatives for 2019

WildSafeBC focused on two initiatives in 2019: increased use and acceptance of bear spray and increased Indigenous awareness and engagement.

### Bear Spray

The WCC gave one bear spray demonstration to 35 participants as part of the BC Goes Wild event (see the 'Public Displays and Events' section for more information).

### Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The WCC received training about how to build relationships with Indigenous Peoples.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Unmanaged garbage and fruit trees continued to be a source of attractants in the community that drew wildlife into residential areas. Residents were also reported to be intentionally feeding wildlife and unintentionally through birdfeeders. Several areas were identified as hotspots in the community and they would benefit in receiving increased education and outreach activities. To address these issues, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2020:

- Continued collaboration with the Sunshine Coast Bear Alliance
- Continued education and outreach activities
- Provide information to residents on bear-resistant composters
- Identify barriers to adopting "bear smart" best practices and tailor solutions
- Work closely with local bylaw and the SCRD on education around waste management initiatives such as the new curbside collection program

## Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Sunshine Coast program gratefully acknowledges its funders for the 2019 season: the Sunshine Coast Regional District, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation, and the 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. The WCC appreciates the support of the 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 the WildSafeBC Program with their classrooms. Thank you to the BC Conservation Foundation team for their operational support and for all their work that keeps the program going. Finally, a big thank you to the diligent and dedicated residents of the Sunshine Coast who work to "keep wildlife wild and their community safe".