

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2021

## Bamfield

Prepared by: Mandy Ross, WildSafeBC Bamfield Coordinator



# Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Bamfield Program between April 15 and November 30, 2021. The program area falls within the boundaries of Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD) Area A which includes the unincorporated town of Bamfield and the Huu-ay-aht First Nation Village of Anacla (Figure 1).

The incidents of wildlife conflict in Bamfield were higher this year than the previous year due to a combination of natural and non-natural factors. Non-natural influences included the resumption of tourism due to the relaxing of COVID-19 restrictions, a sudden increase in the number of people raising backyard chickens and poor waste management practices. The heat dome and the dispersal of subadult cougars were natural factors influencing human-wildlife interactions.

Thanks to the support from our sponsors this year, the WildSafeBC Bamfield Coordinator was able to perform a number of community outreach initiatives. Efforts to engage with the community online through the WildSafeBC Bamfield Facebook page reached 646 people. In-person communications followed COVID-19 safety precautions ensuring physical distancing measures were in place. These in-person efforts reached 344 individuals through WildSafeBC brochure distribution, onsite consultations about cost-sharing programs, and the promotion of the WildSafeBC Business Pledge and Bare Campsite Program. Attractant management, namely unsecured chicken coops, poor disposal of fish refuse and non-bear resistant dumpsters, were the main sources of conflict with wildlife. Cougar attractants included those aforementioned attractants as well as deer and free-ranging domestic pets. The WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program and the use of electric fencing for chicken coops and fruit trees are all conflict reduction strategies that gained traction this year.

Bamfield is currently working towards attaining Bear Smart Community status. A Bear Hazard Assessment of Bamfield and Anacla will be completed by the end of 2021 and will lay the framework for a community based Human-Bear Conflict Management Plan. We will continue to engage with the community over evolving issues to help inform our vision of a Bear Smart Community, keeping wildlife wild and the community of Bamfield safe.

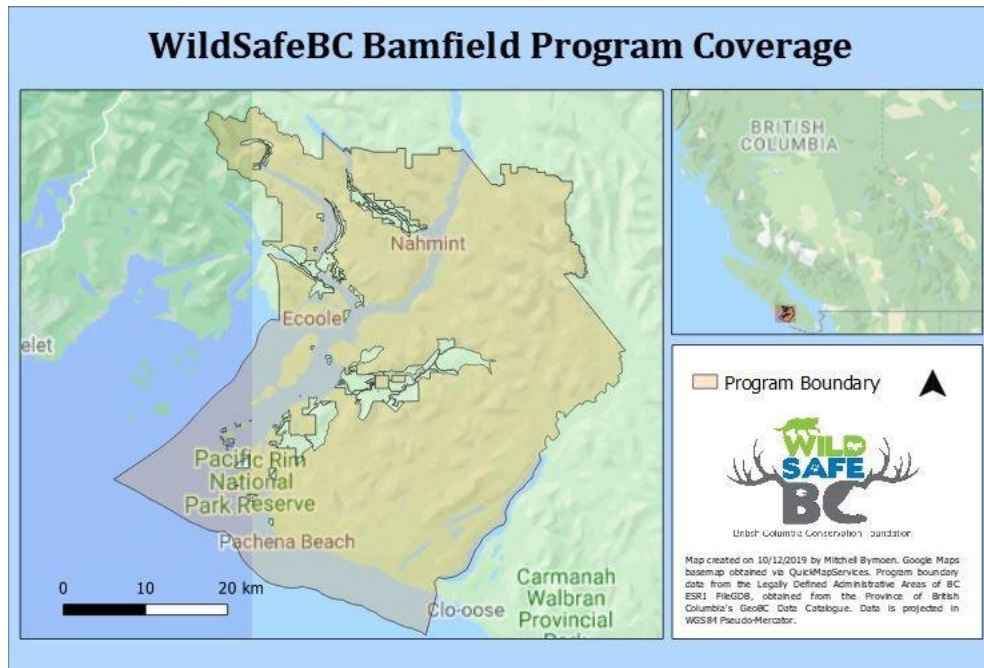


Figure 1. Map of the WildSafeBC Bamfield program coverage.

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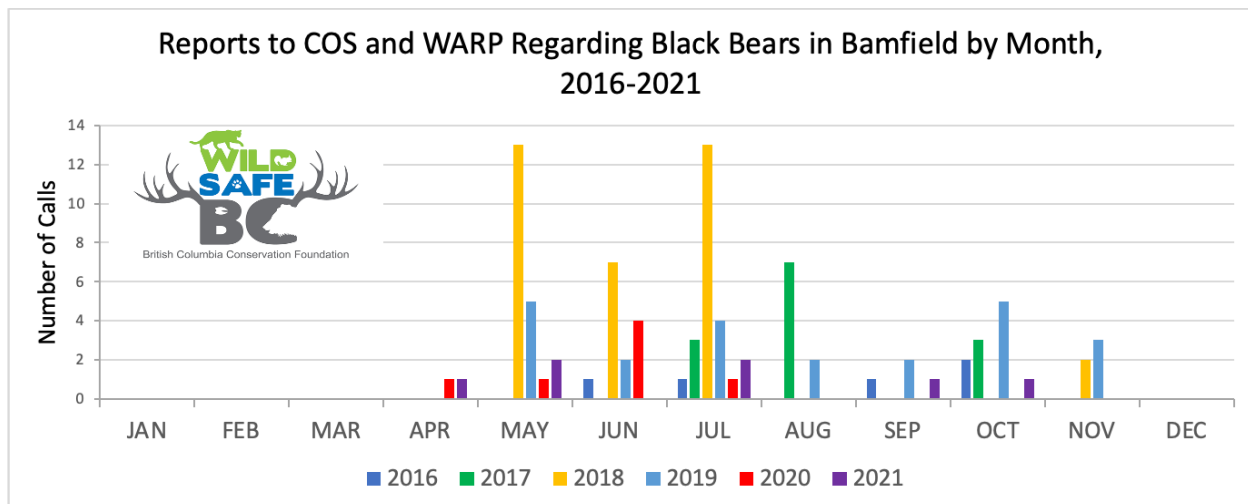
Cover Photo: The photo of a bear with Bamfield Marine Sciences Center in the background (credit: Heather Cooper).

# Highlights from the 2021 season

## Wildlife Activity

Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) and online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) on the WildSafeBC website. Unfortunately, the WARP data is limited for Bamfield because few residents call the RAPP line to report negative interactions with wildlife. Based on the WildSafeBC coordinator's observations and conversations with Conservation Officers and local experts, there were more incidents of human-wildlife conflict this year than last year. This was likely due to an increased number of visitors because of fewer COVID-19 restrictions, poor waste management practices, and a significant increase in cougar activity.

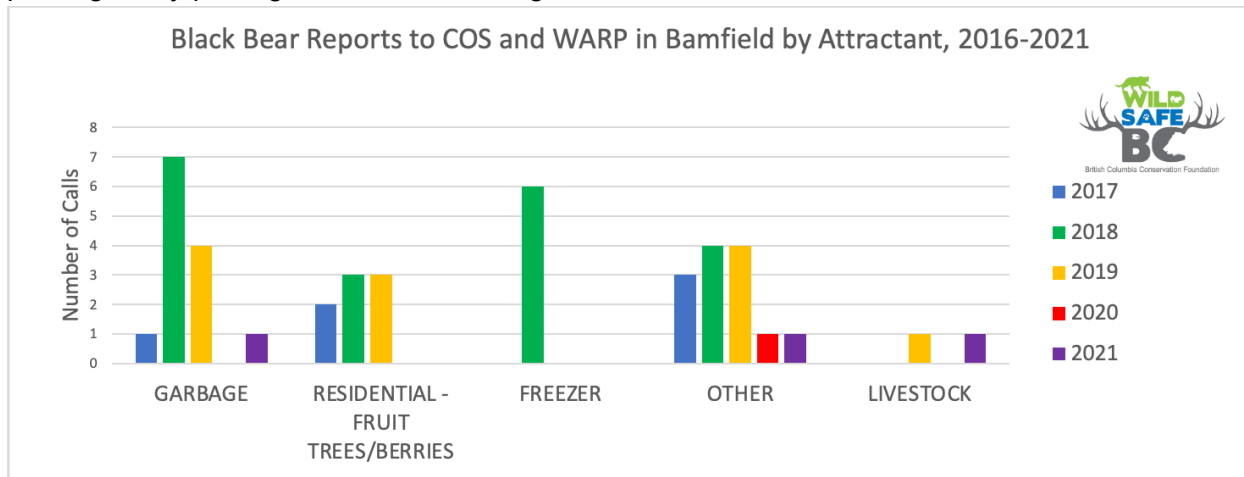
In 2021, there were only 7 black bears reported between January 1 and October 31 (Figure 2). There were no calls made during June and August, the peak tourism months. There were a number of unreported conflicts with bears bluff charging off-leash dogs. This was likely the result of off-leash dogs persistently barking at and chasing bears. There were several incidents of bears standing their ground or bluff charging people during the extreme heat wave. These appeared to be isolated incidents likely associated with the extreme weather conditions.



**Figure 2. Reports to COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.**

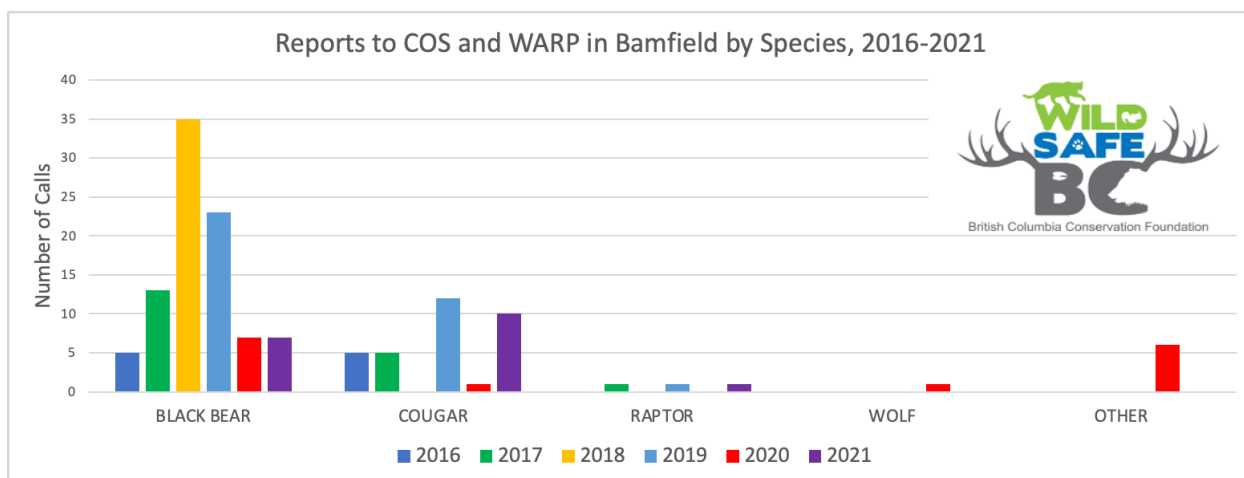
There was only one incident reported involving bears and garbage (Figure 3). This however, does not accurately reflect the actual number of incidents which occurred. There were numerous incidents of a bear getting into a broken and non-bear-resistant dumpster in Anacla in May/June and during hyperphagia in the fall. In November a bear entered several structures (private residences and a commercial accommodation). This resulted in a trap being set for food-conditioned bear as it was a risk to public safety. There was only one report of bears getting into livestock, however there were also 5 unreported incidents of bears breaking into chicken coops and killing chickens. There were no incidents with fruit trees reported this year. The reduction in the fruit tree conflict may be in part due to effective attractant management

messaging in certain high conflict areas which resulted in better fruit tree management such as pruning, early picking and electric fencing.



**Figure 3. Reports of black bears to COS and WARP in Bamfield by attractant from January 1, 2017 to October 31, 2021.**

There was considerable cougar activity within the town limits. There were 10 reports of cougars in 2021 and 12 reported in 2019 (Figure 4). There was significantly more cougar activity this year than in 2019 despite 2019 reports being slightly higher. The majority of cougar sightings went unreported. The increase in activity was likely the result of 2 or 3 dispersing subadult cougars from March onward. The cougars were likely attracted to the free-ranging chickens, deer, domestic pets and other small animals like rats and raccoons in town. A small dog was killed by a cougar and the disappearance of at least 4 house cats coincided with cougar activity. Cougar safety and attractant management was delivered through social media, in-person meetings and signage. Conservation Officer Stewart Bates was brought in to speak at a Community Affairs meeting to answer cougar related questions and encourage people to report sightings to the RAPP line.



**Figure 4. Reports to COS and WARP in Bamfield by Species from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.**

## Brochures

A total of 344 individuals were reached through WildSafeBC brochure distribution and onsite consultations about cost-sharing programs and informal wildlife safety talks.

## Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Bamfield Facebook page was created in May 2020 and has 126 followers, 73 more than last year. There were 656 reaches. The majority of messaging came from making posts on the Bamfield Community CorkBoard Facebook Page and from the local newspaper "The New Bamfielder".

## Wildlife in Area Signs

Permanent and temporary signage has been a very effective educational tool for Bamfield. Funding has been provided by the Bamfield Community Affairs Grants in Aid Society to support the purchase of educational wildlife signs for Bamfield and Anacla. These will include permanent metal signs for proper disposal of fish refuse off of docks, garbage disposal, camping, general wildlife signs and temporary "Bear and Cougar in Area" signs.

## WildSafe Business Pledge

The WildSafe Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses to set good examples in their community on how to safely co-exist with wildlife. To take the pledge, a business is required to follow best practices in solid waste management, provide adequate training to staff and support WildSafeBC's safety and conflict reduction information. In return, WildSafeBC will provide ongoing support to the business in the form of staff training, WildSafeBC materials (subject to budget constraints) and a WildSafeBC Business Pledge poster. One business, Argo's Landing, committed to the business pledge.

## WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

The WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program is a new initiative in 2020. Through the program, WildSafeBC is able to provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife. A wildlife hazard assessment was carried out at the Elleen Scott campsite in 2020 and Pachena Campsite in 2021. The Bamfield Parks Board have enacted a number of the recommendations already and intend to continue their improvements next year.



## WildSafeBC Cost-Share Program

A cost-share program was developed in order to support community access to bear-resistant or predator-exclusion products (Appendix I). This program helps reduce the financial barriers to adopting new WildSafe practices by making these products more affordable. Funding was obtained from the Bamfield Community Affairs Grants in Aid Program. A grant of \$1000 per year for each of the next three consecutive years has been allocated to cover fifty percent of the cost of certified bear-resistant products purchased by community members. These products include bear-resistant garbage bins, composters and electric fencing. This program has subsidized two electric fence installments this year and has several other purchases in the process of being ordered (Figure 5).



**Figure 5. Electric fencing installations subsidized by the 2021 cost-share program. Photo on left shows electric fence around a composter. Photo on the right shows an electric fence around a chicken coop and run.**

## Challenges and Opportunities

Recent food security concerns have led to a threefold increase of the number of backyard chicken coops in Bamfield. Poor coop design and security resulted in half of the chicken coops being broken into by bears. Significant efforts were made to encourage people to purchase electric fencing to protect their coops. While there was some progress in encouraging the purchase of electric fencing for chicken coops there is still much work to be done around promoting its acceptance.

Free-ranging backyard chickens were also identified as one of the attractants responsible for the increase in cougar activity in town. The steady presence of cougars hunting in town was very concerning to the community. In order to try and develop an accurate account of the cougar's behaviour, a consistent effort was made by the coordinator to encourage people to call the COS RAPP line (1-877-952-7277). Despite numerous sightings and interactions, only a fraction of the people made reports to the RAPP line. This demonstrates the need to continue work on fostering trust between the community and the Conservation Officer Service.



Many of the commercial bins in Bamfield and Anacla were either non-bear resistant and or broken (Figure 6). It is imperative that all bins be bear-resistant and in working order. In order to ensure that the bins are bear-resistant they must be used correctly by the public. Metal bear bars must be secured by carabiners in order for the bins to be bear-resistant. Providing carabiners and instructive decals for each bin would help reduce operator error and ensure that the bins are secured.



**Figure 6. Examples of non-bear resistant commercial bins. A) Bin without bear-bar. B) Bin without bear-bar and broken bear-resistant latches. C) Bin with bear-bar in the down position making it not bear-resistant.**

The temporary electric fence around the transfer station needs to be replaced. The fence was designed as a temporary measure in 2018 and the plastic components are starting to break from UV damage. It is imperative that a permanent electric fence be installed around the transfer station.

There was significantly more fish refuse seen washed up in the intertidal than in the previous three to four years. This may be in part due to new visitors to the communities who are unfamiliar with bear smart protocol. This further supports the need for more signage and education around fish refuse disposal.

As in previous years, much of the educational efforts were directed towards campers at the unofficial campsites on Brady's Beach. There is no place for campers to safely store food and garbage and no signage to help campers make "bear smart" decisions. Since Brady's Beach is on Crown land and there is no official oversight, the coordinator regularly visited campers to educate them about Bare Campsite protocol. With the increase in visitors to Brady's Beach it is important that the community develop "bear smart" guidelines for the area.

Some of the issues that should be focused on in 2022 are:

- Electric fence demonstrations
- Ensuring that all commercial bins are bear-resistant
- Education campaign focusing on attractant management
- Continued efforts to encourage use of the RAPP line
- Continued promotion of bear-resistant products like electric fencing and bear-resistant composters through the Cost-sharing program
- Promoting the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program initiative
- Develop a Bear Hazard Management plan
- Help the community develop bear smart guidelines for Brady's Beach

Bamfield has already begun to see anticipated changes to the community since the proposed logging road upgrades. Continued engagement with the community and the development of a strong human-wildlife conflict management plan will help ensure that our growing community will be able to evolve while coexisting with wildlife.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD), British Columbia Conservation Foundation, Bamfield Community Affairs and the Province of BC for their generous support. This never would have been possible without the Jenny Brunn at the ACRD who recognized the need for this program in Bamfield. I would be remiss if I didn't thank Caitlin Bickford, Andrew Riddell and Stewart Bates, our local Conservation Officers for the tireless work that they do to help prevent human-wildlife conflict.

# Appendix I

**Bamfield cost-share program to help secure bear attractants is back by popular demand**



Electric fencing



Composters



Poly carts



Bins

**WildSafeBC has funding to help support the purchase of certified bear-resistant products in Bamfield.**

**We will cover 50% of the cost of electric fencing, bear-resistant bins and composters.**

**Funds are limited.**

**To apply please contact your local WildSafeBC coordinator at [Bamfield@WildSafeBC.com](mailto:Bamfield@WildSafeBC.com) or 250-720-1808**



Ministry of  
Forests, Lands, Natural  
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