

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2021

## District of North Vancouver

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## Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC District of North Vancouver (DNV) Program between May 1<sup>st</sup> and November 30<sup>th</sup> 2021. This was a new coverage area for WildSafeBC this year and the program was delivered within District of North Vancouver boundaries (Figure 1). WildSafeBC respectfully acknowledges that activities conducted in the program area took place on the traditional and unceded territories of the sə́líl̓wətaʔt̓ (Tsleil-Waututh), Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish), and x̓w̓məθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) First Nations.

Black bears are the most commonly reported wildlife species in the area, followed by coyotes, cougars, and deer. Reports to the Conservation Officer Service concerning black bears in 2021 totaled 965 from January 1<sup>st</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup>. This number is above average, which may be due to less food availability from the summer's drought in combination with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Garbage was the most reported attractant.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC), Anna Howard, was tasked with the primary goal of assisting the DNV in attaining Bear Smart Community status, but additionally performed some outreach activities with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community. Following COVID-19 safety precautions, several of the standard WildSafeBC program activities were modified to ensure proper sanitization and physical distancing measures were in place. The following summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the season:

- 2 outdoor WildSafe Rangers presentations and 40 youth reached
- 1 bear spray workshop given to a community group and 27 participants reached
- 1 display booth and over 250 people reached
- Bear Smart Community Status application completed

The WCC spent the majority of her time working on updating the Human-Bear Hazard Assessment and Conflict Management plan written in 2006 and 2009 respectively and supporting the District's Bear Smart Community application. The updated drafts were completed in August and October and were submitted to the District for review.

Thank you to the British Columbia Conservation Foundation, the Province of British Columbia, and the District of North Vancouver for providing the funding that made this program possible.

The main challenge experienced in the DNV is compliance with the Solid Waste Management Bylaw #8436 and bears continuing to access garbage and other attractants. This challenge will continue to be addressed over the next five years as the District attains Bear Smart status and the waste enforcement program put in place by the District allows compliance rates to improve. Moving forward, these initiatives and partnerships will help "keep wildlife wild and our community safe".

## WildSafeBC District of North Vancouver Program Coverage

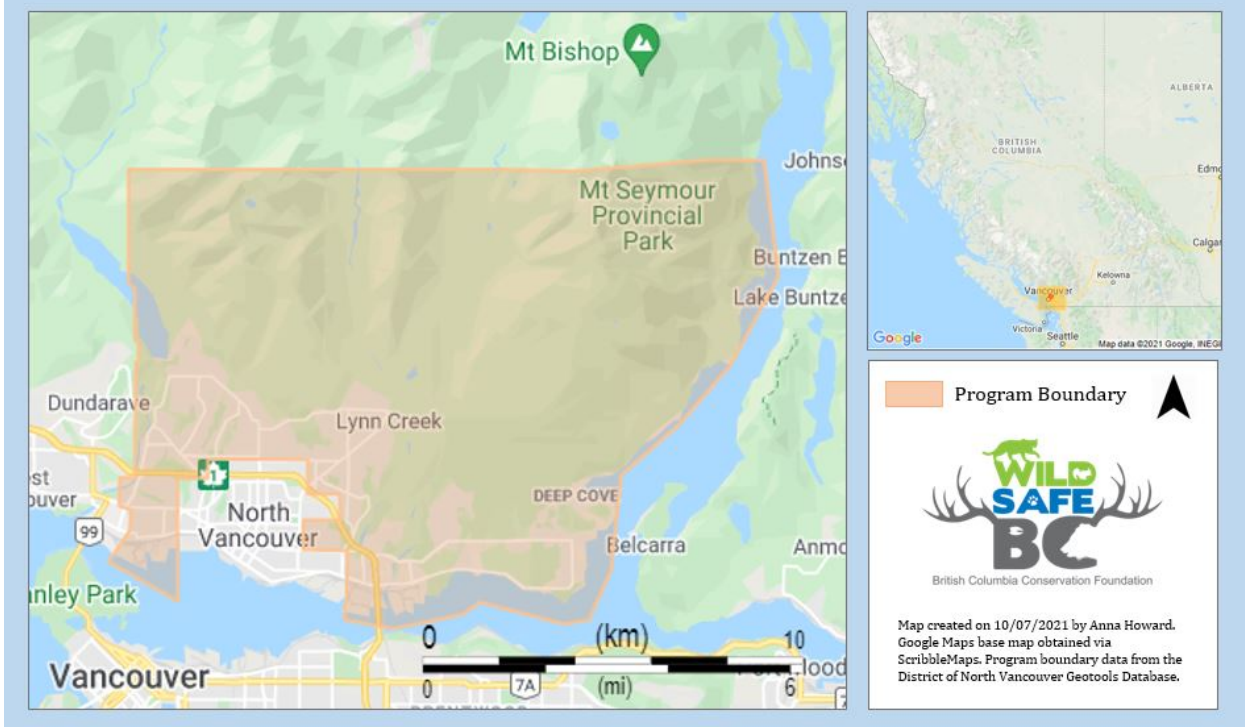


Figure 1. Map of WildSafeBC program coverage for the District of North Vancouver.

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**Cover Photo: A black bear crosses Montroyal Blvd in the District of North Vancouver. Photo: Andy White, District of North Vancouver**

## Highlights from the 2021 Season

### Program Introduction

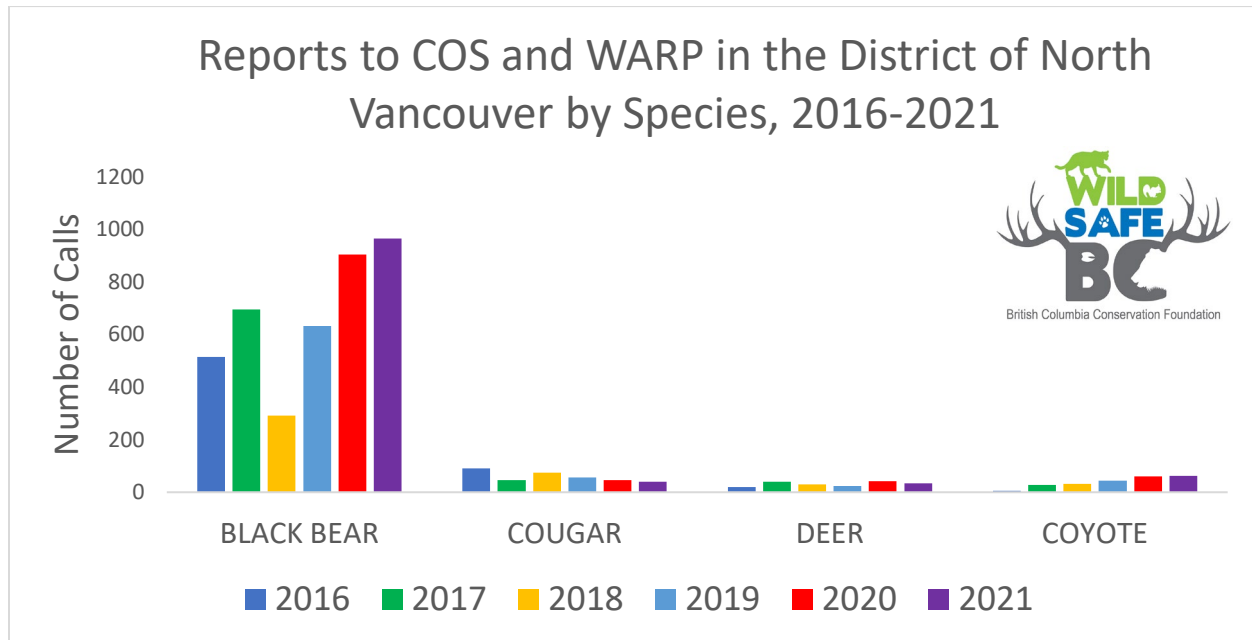
With funding and support from the BC Conservation Foundation, the Province of British Columbia, and the District of North Vancouver, the District of North Vancouver WildSafeBC program was able to operate for its first year. The DNV and surrounding areas experience some of the highest levels of urban bear activity in the province. There has always been a high level of activity in the District, which led to an initial push to pursue Bear Smart status between 2006 and 2009. However, this effort was paused until 2017, when 10 black bears were destroyed in the DNV. This provoked the District Council to begin pursuing Bear Smart status once again and to implement safer waste management systems. In an ongoing effort to achieve the Bear Smart designation, the District supported the creation of a new DNV WildSafeBC program and the hiring of a WCC tasked with the primary goal of updating documents necessary for the Bear Smart application process.

### Wildlife Activity

Reports concerning wildlife in the District of North Vancouver can be made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) or online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>) and are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). This data is updated daily and this report for the District of North Vancouver includes data from January 1, 2016 to October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. In North Vancouver, residents are also able to call the District Bear Line (604-990-BEAR), which directs residents to the COS (ext.1) or the local black bear advocacy society, the North Shore Black Bear Society (NSBBS) (ext. 2). Some residents may feel hesitant to report black bear sightings or conflicts to the COS and prefer to report encounters to the NSBBS. As a result, the total number of reports involving black bears is often split between the two reporting resources. Data for this report is extracted from WARP, and may not reflect all of the reports involving black bears in 2021.

Black bears continue to be the most reported species in the District of North Vancouver, making up 85% of all wildlife reports in the District for 2021. There were 965 reports involving black bears in 2021. This is higher than the previous 3 year average of 614, and falls just ahead of the total number of bears reported for 2020 at 912. There are also reports of cougars, coyotes, and deer in the DNV year-to-year (Figure 2), each of which make up 3-6% of total wildlife reports for 2021.





**Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2016 to October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021.**

Bear activity peaked in July and August (Figure 3), and there was also a higher than average amount of activity reported for September. Province-wide, reports concerning black bears have been high for 2021 (Figure 4). There are a number of complex factors that may lead to an increased amount of human-bear conflict and sightings of bears in the District, but some possible explanations include:

- The DNV experienced a long, hot, and dry summer with multiple heat waves and very little rain. It is possible that berries ripened earlier than what is typical for the area, allowing for a plentiful natural food source earlier in the summer, but a reduced amount later in August and the fall. Reduced natural food availability may have pushed bears into the community in search of food sources.
- Due to COVID-19, many people have been spending more time at home with increased flexibility for working or taking classes remotely. As a result, people may have noticed more bears than they would while working in an office or attending school.
- As education in the community improves and residents are encouraged to report their sightings of bears, sightings might be more frequently reported than in previous years.
- Black bear populations can vary year-to-year. There may have been an influx of bears born in 2018 and 2019. Sub-adult bears may be more likely to enter communities in search of a food source if they have not yet claimed territory in their natural habitat.

On a provincial level, black bear reports typically increase in the fall as bears prepare to den for the winter and begin hyperphagia, a period of intense eating (Figure 4). In the District of North Vancouver, there have been record reports of bears during the last two weeks of July in recent years, with another smaller peak in reports in the weeks where hyperphagia takes place (Figure 3).



Figure 3. Reports made to the COS about black bears in the District of North Vancouver by week from 2016 to 2021.

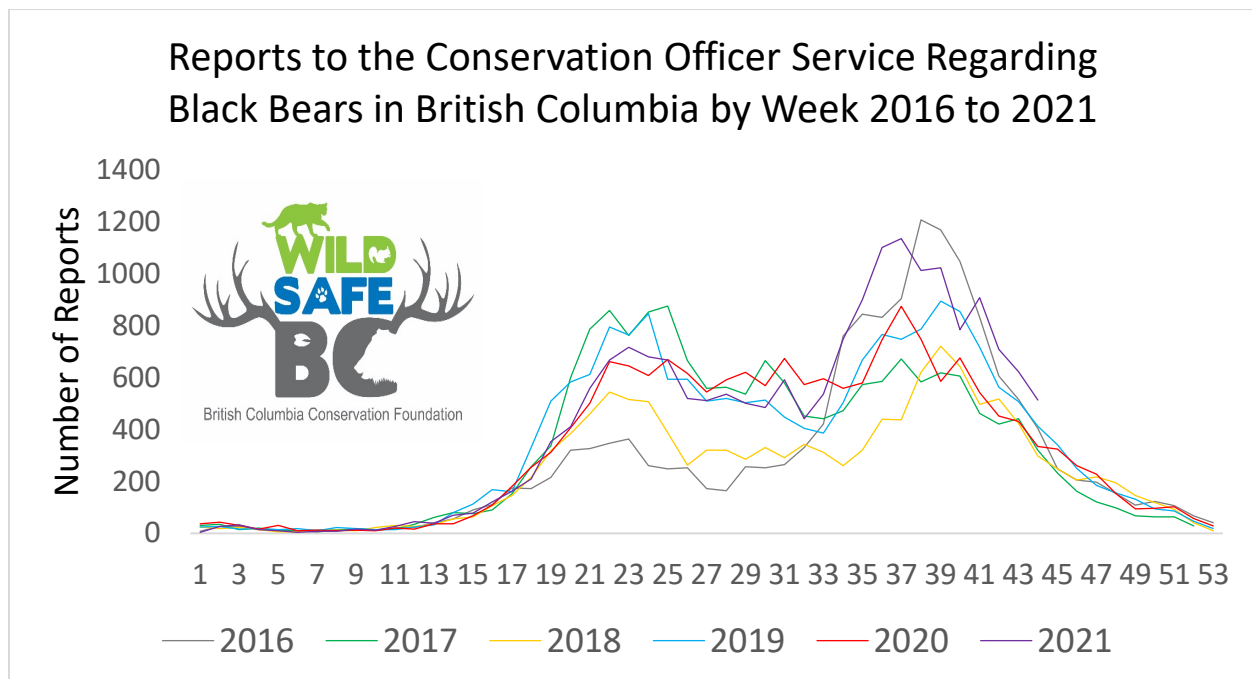
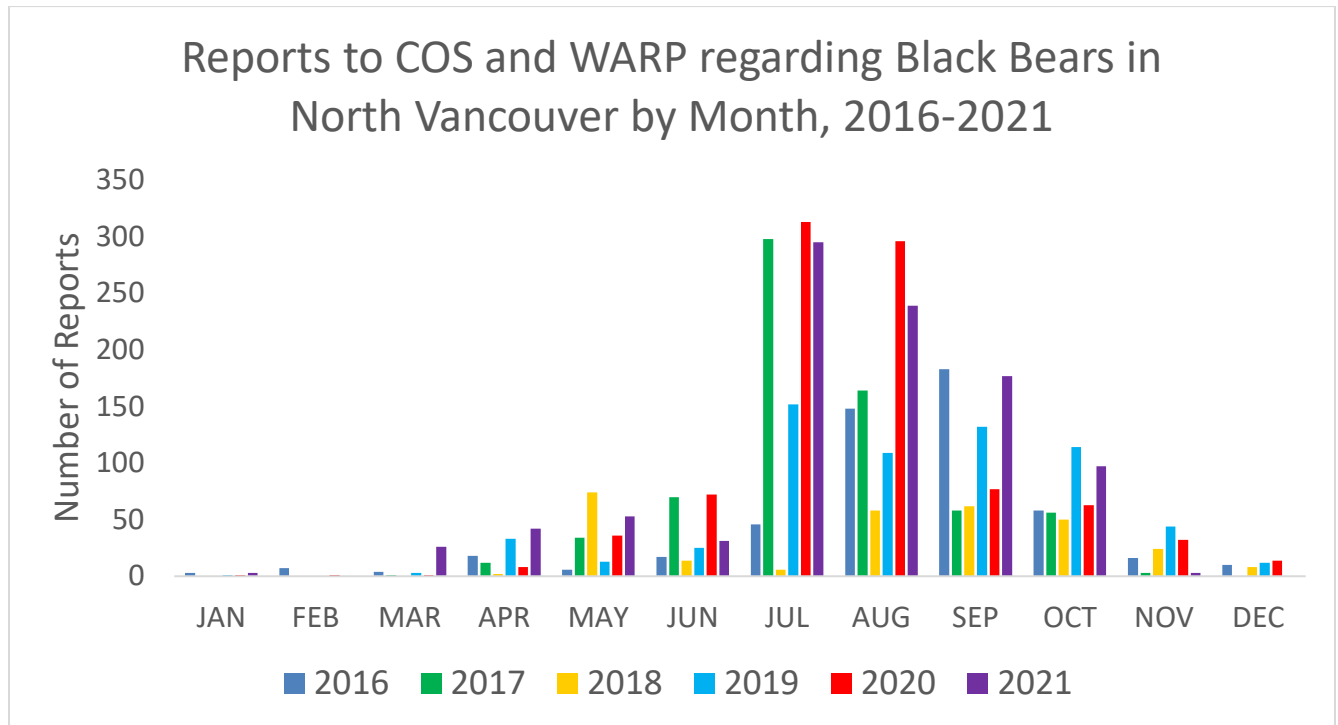


Figure 4. Reports made to the COS about black bears in the Province of British Columbia by week from 2016 to 2021.



**Figure 5. Reports made to the COS about black bears in the District of North Vancouver by month from 2016 to 2021.**

Garbage remains the most reported attractant in the DNV, followed by compost, fruit trees, and bird feeders (Figure 6, Figure 7). This was a record-setting year for reports concerning black bears accessing garbage. The District of North Vancouver introduced bear-resistant residential curbside collection carts in 2017/2018, and began a ‘zero tolerance’ enforcement program in 2020 for carts set out on the street before their designated collection time. The Waste Compliance Officer (WCO) distributes fines on a nightly basis to discourage this. Other communities have been very successful using this method and have attained high compliance rates after two to three years of running the program. The high level of garbage-related reports in 2021 is likely related to the higher number of bears reported in the community over the COVID-19 pandemic, reduced berry yield, carts stored outside on residents private property, or population-level factors.



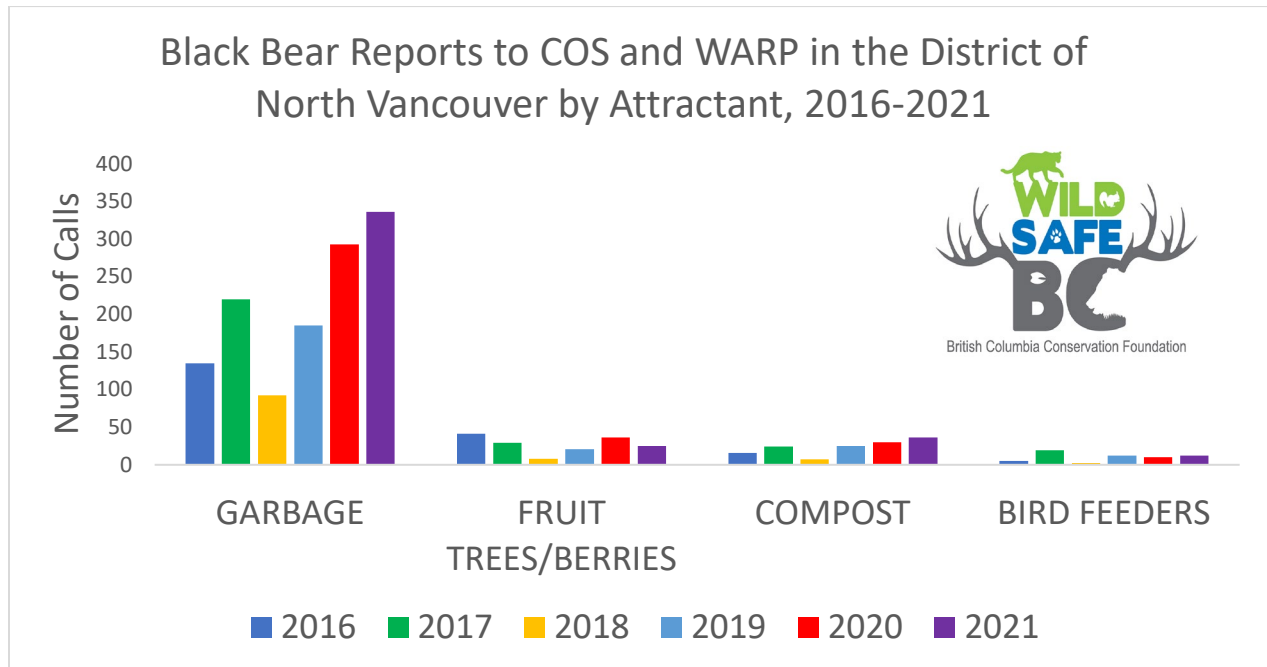


Figure 6. Attractants identified in reports to the COS and WARP in the District of North Vancouver by year, 2016-2021.

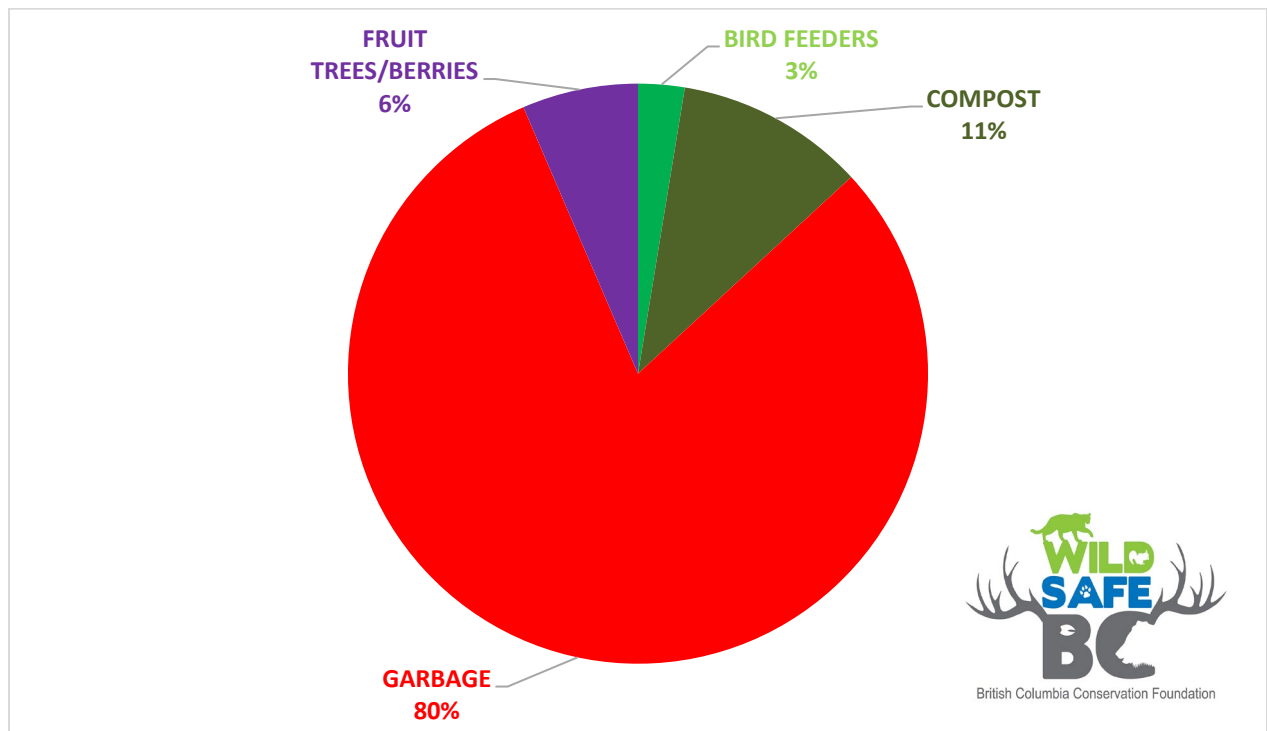


Figure 7. Attractants identified in reports to the COS and WARP in the District of North Vancouver, January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 to October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

## WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. A total of two children's groups participated in the WRP through outdoor presentations that allowed for physical distancing. 40 children became WildSafe Rangers (Table 1) and received a modified WildSafe Rangers kit with an activity book, bookmark, stickers, black bear brochures, and temporary tattoos.

Table 1. Groups that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2021.

Group	Date	Ages	Children
Myrtle Park Daycamp	July 14	6 to 9	17
Myrtle Park Daycamp	August 11	6 to 9	23



Figure 8. The WCC, Anna Howard, presenting the WildSafe Ranger Program to a group of children at Myrtle Park in the District of North Vancouver.

## Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave a total of 5 modified 15 minute bear spray presentations at Grouse Mountain on July 25<sup>th</sup>, as well as several shorter informal 5 minute 1-on-1 bear spray presentations throughout the day. The WCC additionally gave a 1.5 hour long bear spray demo and wildlife safety presentation to the North Vancouver Outdoors Club on November 6<sup>th</sup>.

Table 2. Groups that received presentations in 2021.

Event	Date	Participants
<b>Grouse Mountain “Bearthday Party” Bear Safety Workshops, 15 minutes</b>	July 25	30
<b>Grouse Mountain “Bearthday Party” Bear Safety Workshops, 5 minutes</b>	July 25	150
<b>North Vancouver Outdoors Club Bear Spray Demo + Wildlife Safety Workshop</b>	November 6	27



Figure 9. The WCC demonstrates how to use bear spray using an inert can at the Grouse Mountain Bearthday Party Fundraiser event organized by the Grizzly Bear Foundation. Photo: Grouse Mountain.





Figure 10. North Vancouver Outdoors Club members practice using inert bear spray.

## Display Booths

The WCC had one display booth set up this season at Grouse Mountain on July 25<sup>th</sup> to provide education about bear safety and human-wildlife conflicts in the District of North Vancouver. This display booth was put on in collaboration with the Grizzly Bear Foundation (GBF). The booth took place at a fundraiser event for the GBF celebrating the 20<sup>th</sup> birthdays of Grinder and Coola, two resident grizzly bears on Grouse Mountain. The WCC was invited to provide general bear safety information to visitors, conduct bear spray workshops, and supply visitors with advice on how to prevent human-bear conflicts on their own properties.

Location	Date	Visitors
Grouse Mountain “Bearthday Party” Bear Safety Booth	July 25	>250





**Figure 11. The WCC, Anna Howard, and volunteer Sara Hill talking with visitors at a WildSafeBC Display Booth. Photo: Taylor Green.**

## Collaborations

The WCC's time was spent primarily on the partnership between WildSafeBC and the District of North Vancouver in an effort to pursue Bear Smart Community Status. This partnership required consistent communication and collaboration in order to stay on track for Bear Smart application timelines.

She also spent time collaborating with the Grizzly Bear Foundation (GBF), a charity focused on the conservation of grizzly bear populations through research, education, and conservation programs. The GBF invited WildSafeBC to participate in the 20<sup>th</sup> Bearthday Party fundraiser

event celebrating Grouse Mountain's captive grizzly bears. The event was extremely successful, and the WCC reached over 250 people at the WildSafeBC booth.

The WCC also collaborated with Pourya Sardari, a local North Vancouver resident and biologist, to translate the WildSafeBC black bear brochure into Farsi for distribution to the community (Figure 11).



Figure 12. Page 1 of the WildSafeBC black bear brochure translated into Farsi by Pourya Sardari.

## Bear Smart Community Program

The Bear Smart Community Program was created in response to annual increases in human-bear conflict across the province of British Columbia. The BC Conservation Officer Service, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation, and the Union of British Columbia Municipalities introduced the program in 2002 following the increase in negative human-bear interactions. The voluntary program encourages communities to become Bear Smart by achieving six criteria that can be done sequentially or concurrently:

1. Prepare a Bear Hazard Assessment (BHA).
2. Prepare a Human-Bear Conflict Management Plan (HBCMP).
3. Revise planning and decision making documents.
4. Implement a continuing education program.
5. Develop and maintain a bear-resistant waste management system.



## 6. Implement Bear Smart bylaws.

The program aims to increase safety for the communities living in areas frequented by black bears, as well as reduce or eliminate the need to destroy bears that are accessing human food sources. By addressing the root problems causing conflict and implementing a proactive strategy rather than a reactive one, the number of negative encounters with bears in Bear Smart Communities have steadily decreased (Ministry of Environment, n.d.).

The priority of the WCC was to update the BHA and HBCMP written in 2006 and 2009 respectively, and supporting an application to the Province for Bear Smart Community status. The Bear Smart application process is extensive and has been a significant time and financial investment for the District. The WCC completed the following:

- Reviewed previously written documents to determine gaps in knowledge and necessary updates
- Acquired and sorted data from [warp.wildsafebc.com](http://warp.wildsafebc.com) and the North Shore Black Bear Society
- Communicated with several different District employees, the North Shore Black Bear Society, the Conservation Officer Service, the North Vancouver School District, private schools, and catholic schools to understand different identified risks around the District
- Organized and analyzed data in Excel PivotTables
- Created tables and PivotChart graphs to display data
- Conducted field work around the District of North Vancouver to assess potential bear attractants and risk levels
- Created maps and assessed bear hot spot areas
- Wrote three drafts of the Bear Hazard Assessment
- Facilitated a group of District employees to take part in a review process of the Human-Bear Conflict Management Plan to encourage collaboration between District departments on human-bear conflict reduction
- Assessed budget needs for future Bear Smart initiatives
- Wrote several drafts of the Human-Bear Conflict Management Plan
- Reviewed the Official Community Plan, bylaws, education programs, and the bear-resistant waste management system for the District.
- Submitted the Bear Smart application.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Garbage and community compliance with the Solid Waste Bylaw continue to be the main challenges for the District in mitigating human-bear conflict. The zero tolerance enforcement program for early cart set out put in place in 2020 has been a success so far, but there is still work to do to ensure attractants are not available to passing bears.

To address these challenges, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2022 if the WildSafeBC DNV program is renewed for another year.

- Due to the altered nature of the 2021 DNV WildSafeBC program, outreach activities were not performed to the same degree as other communities. In future years, implement a more dedicated education program about bear and wildlife attractants from a WildSafeBC lens. Focus on trailhead booths, WildSafe Ranger programs, door-to-door education, wildlife in area signs, presentations, business pledges, and community events.
- Create a WildSafeBC social media presence in the District of North Vancouver, directly reaching residents about minimizing attractants on their own properties.
- Engage with North Vancouver food security non-profits for fruit gleaning opportunities.
- Work and collaborate with Indigenous groups on strategies for human-bear coexistence.
- Offer electric fencing workshops complimentary to the DNV's backyard hens bylaw. Advertise through the District website and community Facebook groups.
- Grow the list of volunteers who can aid with door-to-door outreach and community events.
- Work with the DNV to monitor solid waste bylaw enforcement successes and challenges.
- Continue to attend the working group meetings hosted by the NSBBS and collaborate with different groups in the region.
- Uphold Bear Smart goals and organize a progress update meeting between DNV departments.

## Acknowledgements

The District of North Vancouver WildSafeBC program would not have been possible without the generous support of DNV and BCCF staff. The WCC would like to thank Sophie Goodman and Michael Toland with the DNV Solid Waste Department for their constant support and guidance through the Bear Smart application process and other community events. Sgt. Simon Gravel and Officer Erich Harbich from the BC COS were also instrumental in the Bear Smart application process. Thank you to the NSSBS for sharing bear sighting reports, photographs, and their expertise on trends in black bear activity. My most sincere thanks to Mike Badry from the Province of British Columbia for his expertise and guidance in the Bear Smart application process. Thank you to the Grizzly Bear Foundation, North Vancouver Recreation and Culture Daycamps, and the North Vancouver Outdoors Club for collaborating with and hosting WildSafeBC for educational programs. A big thank-you to volunteer Sara Hill for her help this season.

The WCC would also like to thank the community members that took part in WildSafeBC programming this season. It's exciting to see the District of North Vancouver community come together to keep wildlife wild and our community safe.