

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2021

Sunshine Coast

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Sunshine Coast Community Program between May 1st and November 30th, 2021. The program area covers the Sunshine Coast Regional District (SCRD) which spans from Port Mellon to Egmont (Figure 1), including the traditional territories of the Shíshálh (Sechelt) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) Nations. The SCRD is comprised of eight administrative regions which are as follows:

- Area A: Pender Harbour and Egmont
- Area B: Halfmoon Bay
- Area D: Roberts Creek
- Area E: Elphinstone
- Area F: West Howe Sound
- District of Sechelt (DOS)
- Sechelt Indian Government District (SIGD or Shíshálh Nation)
- Town of Gibsons (TOG)

Local wildlife activity on the Sunshine Coast in 2021 was somewhat low compared to previous years, particularly in the spring. Some locations still saw hotspots of activity regardless such as a coyote pack on Thormanby Island, bobcats in Roberts Creek, a pair of orphaned black bear cubs in Elphinstone, and sparse black bear conflict throughout much of the program area. An unusually hot and dry summer caused drought and likely impacted natural food sources with some berries ripening earlier than usual. Despite this, black bear reports were low throughout the spring and early summer, picking up in the late summer and fall. This could reflect the availability of natural food sources, as well as being affected by curbside collection disruptions ongoing intermittently since August.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activity 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:

- 13 WildSafe Rangers Program (WRP) presentations to 11 classes reaching 441 youth
- 916 door hangers were placed at homes and the WCC spoke with 153 people
- 5 farmers' market/trailhead/event display booths interacting with 810 people
- 39 Facebook posts were made, and 189 new Facebook followers were gained for a total of 1,431 followers
- 5 new businesses signed on to the WildSafeBC Business Pledge

The success of the Sunshine Coast WildSafeBC Program would not be possible without the support of the Sunshine Coast Regional District, the Conservation Officer Service (COS), and amazing volunteers. There are many opportunities to further engage the community through the

WildSafe Business Pledge, Bare Campsite Program, and WRP in 2022, especially if COVID-19 restrictions are eased and there are more opportunities for in-person activities. Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help “keep wildlife wild and our community safe”.



Figure 1. WildSafeBC Sunshine Coast Program coverage area.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Highlights from the 2021 Season	4
Wildlife Activity	4
WildSafe Ranger Program	5
Presentations to Community Groups	6
Display Booths	7
Door-to-Door Education	7
Social Media and Press	8
Wildlife in Area Signs	8
Collaborations	8
WildSafe Business Pledge	9
Challenges and Opportunities	9
Acknowledgements	9

Table of Figures

Figure 1. WildSafeBC Sunshine Coast program coverage area .. Error! Bookmark not defined.	
Figure 1. WildSafeBC Sunshine Coast Program coverage area	2
Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.	4
Figure 3. Black bear reports to COS and WARP in SCRD by attractant, January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.	5
Figure 4 . Reports to COS and WARP regarding black bears in SCRD by month, January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021	5
Table 1. Schools that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2021.	6
Figure 5. WildSafe Ranger school presentation.	6
Table 2. Presentations given in 2021	6
Figure 6. WildSafeBC display booth	7
Table 3. Display booths in 2021.	7
Figure 7. The WCC performing door-to-door.	7
Figure 8. Bear-in-area sign	8

Highlights from the 2021 Season

Wildlife Activity

Example (please expand your data range to include until October 31, 2021):

Reports 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/>) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). This data is updated daily and this report for the Sunshine Coast includes data from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021 (Figure 2). Garbage was the most cited attractant followed by fruit trees/berry bushes (Figure 3).

From January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021, there were 2,561 wildlife reports made to the COS and WARP for the Sunshine Coast Regional District areas. The top three species reported were black bear (n=1,639), deer (n=407), and cougar (n=299) (Figure 2). Calls regarding coyote (n=73) and others (n=143) made up the balance of calls.

From January 1, 2021 to October 31, 2021 there were 345 wildlife reports made to the COS and WARP. Of those, 201 were regarding black bears, 80 were deer-related, 19 cougar, 21 coyote, and 25 other wildlife reports.

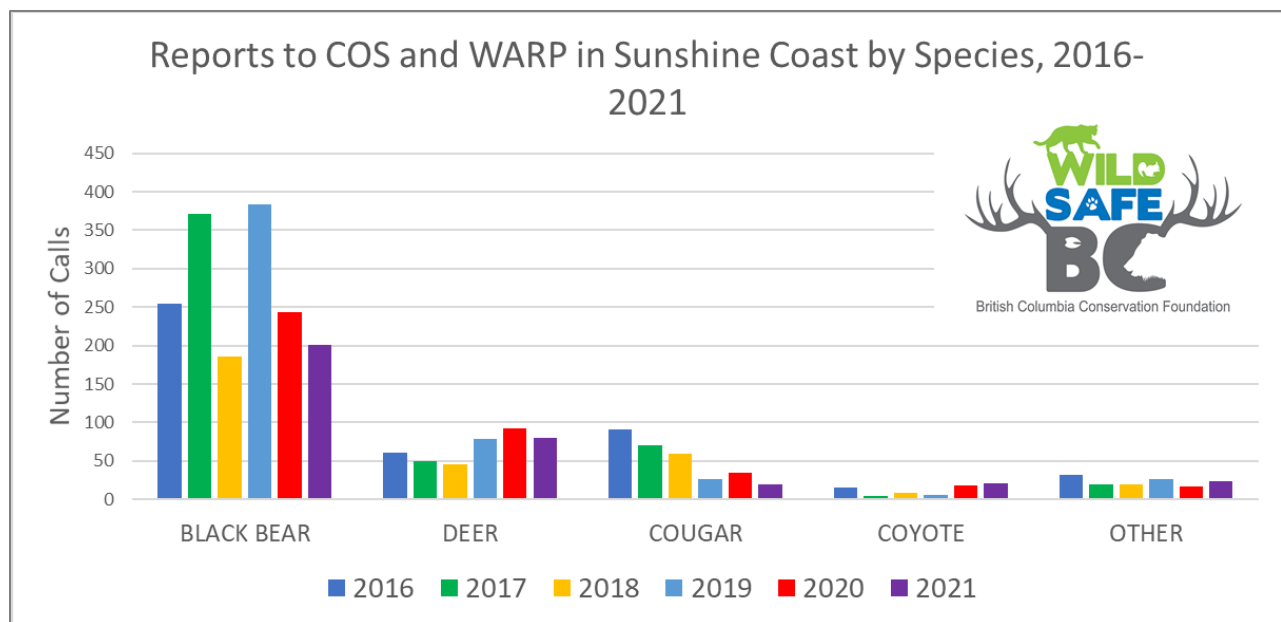


Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

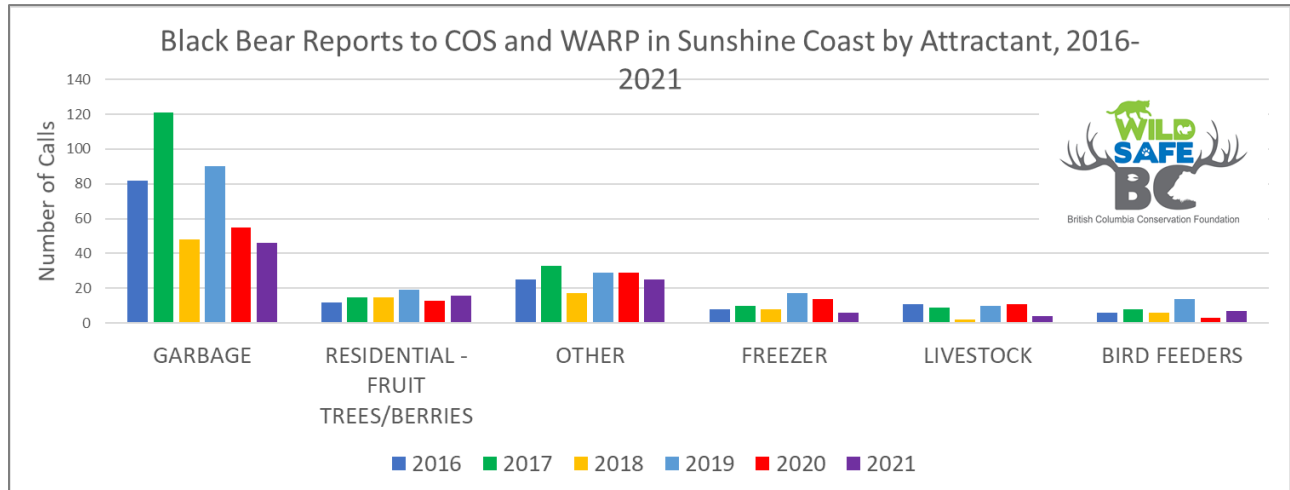


Figure 3. Black bear reports to COS and WARP in SCRD by attractant, January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

Black bear reports were lower than average in the spring of 2021, with a significantly smaller peak in activity than expected (Figure 4). There was a pickup in activity in September/October which is similar trend to what was observed in other parts of the province.

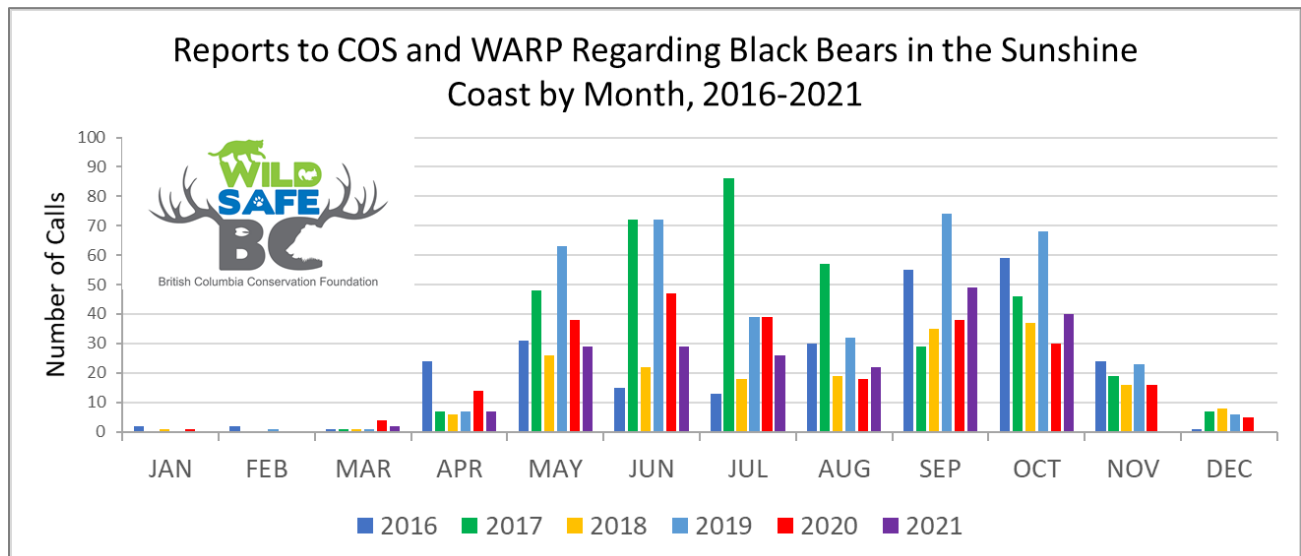


Figure 4 . Reports to COS and WARP regarding black bears in SCRD by month, January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict (Figure 5). A total of seven schools participated in the WRP through presentations that allowed for physical distancing. In total, 441 students became WildSafe Rangers (Table 1). Of these, 61 students received the extended version which included two visits, an outdoor activity, and a take home assignment on attractant management.

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

School	Grade	Students	Extended
Davis Bay	4/5/6	21	
Gibsons	2/3, 2/3	38	20
Halfmoon Bay	4/5	26	
Langdale	K-6	150	
Madeira Park	All Classes, K-6	113	
Kinnikinnick	2/3, 2/3, 5/6	67	41
West Sechelt	4	26	

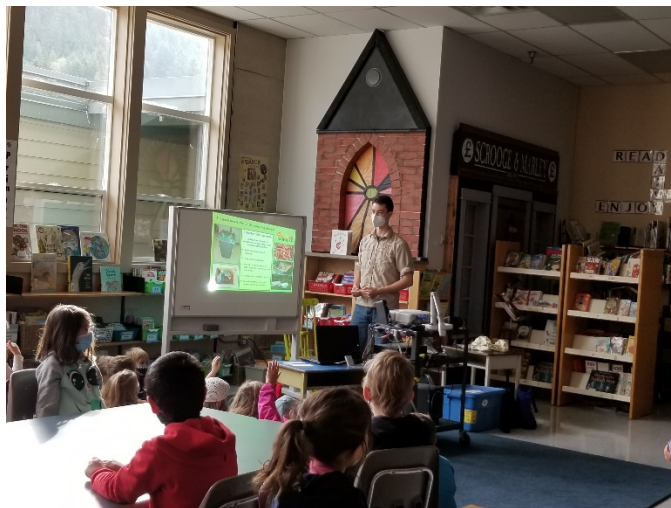


Figure 5. WildSafe Ranger school presentation.

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave two outdoor presentations to 64 participants (Table 2). An electric fencing workshop was organized by the WCC and delivered by the Provincial Coordinator in collaboration with the Sunshine Coast Bee Club. While several attendees already had electric fences, many learned new best practices to improve their design.

A wildlife safety and awareness workshop was organized in collaboration with the Thormanby Island Residents Association in response to concerns caused by human-fed coyotes on the island. Residents were informed on the behaviours of human-habituated wildlife and the basics of managing wildlife attractants, as well as advised to report all conflicts to the RAPP line.

Table 2. Presentations given in 2021.

Date	Type of Presentation	Organization	Attendees
03/07/2021	Wildlife Safety and Awareness	Thormanby Island Residents Association	52
08/08/2021	Electric Fencing	Sunshine Coast Bee Club	12

Display Booths

Display booths were set up at a total of five events, including the BC Goes Wild event reaching a total of 810 people (Figure 6; Table 3). The farmers' markets were a great way to connect with residents and tourists alike. People enjoyed learning interesting facts about wildlife, what to do in a wildlife encounter, attractant management, and the kids especially loved the props such as bear skulls and deer antlers.

The display booths at the Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market drew in massive crowds, while a number of people braved a blustery day to visit the BC Goes Wild trailhead booth and enter into a prize draw.



Figure 6. WildSafeBC display booth.

Table 3. Display booths in 2021.

Date	Event	# of People
10/07/2021	Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market	267
24/07/2021	Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market	196
28/08/2021	Sechelt Farmers' and Artisans' Market	187
25/09/2021	BC Goes Wild	65
30/10/2021	Mushroom Mania	95

Door-to-Door Education

Door-to-door education was modified this year to consist of leaving door hangers with a letter attached addressing the purpose of the visit (Figure 7). Due to COVID-19, the WCC did not knock on doors as had been done in the past. However, if people were outside, the WCC would engage in conversation and education. In total, 916 door hangers were left and conversations were had with 153 people in the neighbourhoods around Elphinstone, Langdale, Sechelt, West Sechelt, Granthams Landing, Welcome Beach, Davis Bay, Lower Rd, Crowe Rd, Highland Rd, and Connor Rd (Roberts Creek). These areas were prioritized as a result of reports of black bears accessing garbage or fruit on trees, or entering homes, sheds, and/or vehicles.



Figure 7. The WCC performing door-to-door.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Sunshine Coast Facebook page grew by 179 fans in 2021 from 1,214 to 1,393 page followers. This platform was an effective way to communicate a variety of information about wildlife safety, attractant management, and events to the community. Posts about wildlife were particularly popular, regularly reaching 2,000 to 3,000 people.

The WCC provide information to local media and submitted several news releases which resulted in the following articles:

- Coast Reporter announcing the start of a new WildSafe season, [New WildSafeBC coordinator on the Sunshine Coast](#)
- Coast Reporter included WCC activities in story about fed coyotes, [COS investigating fed coyote on Thormanby islands](#)
- Coast Reporter published fall safety info, and WCC comments on TOG Attractant Bylaw and curbside collection service disruptions, [Be 'bear aware' this fall](#)

Wildlife in Area Signs

While wildlife can be expected on trails throughout the Sunshine Coast, there are times when wildlife activity increases in hotspots and signage can be helpful in preventing conflicts. It is important for residents and visitors using trails to be aware of their surroundings, make noise with their voice, and keep dogs under control or on a leash.

Signage was posted in response to wildlife sightings reported through W.A.R.P., or in cooperation with requests by collaborating partners, including COS and BC Parks. Some of the locations that signage was posted throughout the year include Soames Hill, Secret Cove Mews, and Connor Park (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Bear-in-area sign.

Collaborations

Working closely with the COS is instrumental to this role. By providing consistent messaging and education to our community members, the WCC and the COS were able to help support different neighbourhoods dealing with human-wildlife conflict.

Working with other wildlife groups such as the Sunshine Coast Bear Alliance and Bear and Safety Awareness on the Sunshine Coast help serve an important role of extra education and awareness building. Connecting with these groups to collaborate on consistent messaging to the public helps make our work more effective at reducing conflict and increasing public safety.

The dedicated volunteers and members of these groups continue to serve the community year-round, providing an essential service during the hibernation months of WildSafeBC.

WildSafe Business Pledge

The WildSafe Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses 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. A total of 5 businesses signed the pledge this year, promising to use their platform to help reduce human-wildlife conflict in their community. They are Buck Fever, Mason Rd Market, Jean's Organic Foods, The Gibsons Dogrunner, and Shaggy Jack's Wild Mushrooms.

Challenges and Opportunities

Unsecured garbage remains a challenge in the community. As collection and service levels vary along the coast, messaging needs to focus on various ways to safely store waste throughout the week as well as on collection day. The introduction of curbside organics collection in the SCRD presents opportunities for waste management and waste reduction education.

Fruit trees and berry bushes continue to be a source of attractants in the community that draw wildlife into residential areas. Bears have been reported damaging fences and remaining in people's yards which impacts the safety of the neighbourhood. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community and would benefit to increased education and fruit gleaning activities. To address the abundance of fruit in the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2022:

- Electric fence demonstration
- Education campaign focusing on the hazards and solutions through social media, news articles, workshops
- Engage food banks, local breweries, and other non-profits
- Connect residents through Social Media food sharing groups
- Increased door-to-door campaigns in hotspots
- More extensive promotion of the business pledge program

There are many vacation rentals and BNBs on the Sunshine Coast. It would be beneficial to reach out to any and all of the associations that manage and promote them to share information and (budget permitting) materials.

Acknowledgements

The Sunshine Coast WildSafeBC program would not be possible without the financial and personnel support of the SCRD and the BCCF. The WCC would like to thank Robyn Cooper

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