



NORTH SHORE BLACK BEAR SOCIETY

2020 YEAR-END REPORT

Prepared by Luci Cadman



Photo: Tony Joyce

The North Shore is Bear Country

The North Shore Black Bear Society supports the coexistence of people and bears

Introduction

The mandate of the North Shore Black Bear Society is to reduce human-bear encounters through education, cooperation and community support.

The Society focuses on:

- Reducing the accessibility of unnatural food sources to wildlife in residential areas;
- Forming and maintaining working relationships with staff of the three North Shore municipalities, organizations that work to reduce wildlife attractants in the community or protect and enhance natural wildlife habitat, groups who work or recreate in or close to wildlife habitat, and the Conservation Officers Service;
- Preventing the unnecessary deaths of bears which can result from bears accessing unnatural food sources in residential areas and spending too much time near houses and roadways; and
- Promoting and fostering the public's understanding and awareness of, and participation in, the respect and preservation of wildlife.

This report covers the work that was completed between November 1, 2019 and October 31, 2020.

2020 in Review

Wildlife sighting reports

North Shore residents and visitors have several options for reporting sightings and encounters with wildlife. One option is to file a report to the **Conservation Officer Service (COS)** through the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line in Victoria (1-877-952-7277). These calls are shown on the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) map – available on the WildSafeBC website.

Another option is to contact the **North Shore Black Bear Society** through the Bearline (604-990-BEAR, press 2) or cell phone call or text (604-317-4911). This year the Society responded to 578 calls from residents and visitors. Further reports were received via Facebook Messenger, website (northshorebears.com) and email (nsbbsociety@gmail.com).

Residents contact the Society to:

- Report a wildlife sighting
- Request signage
- Report attractants in their neighbourhood
- Request neighbourhood canvassing
- Obtain Information or support with wildlife challenges

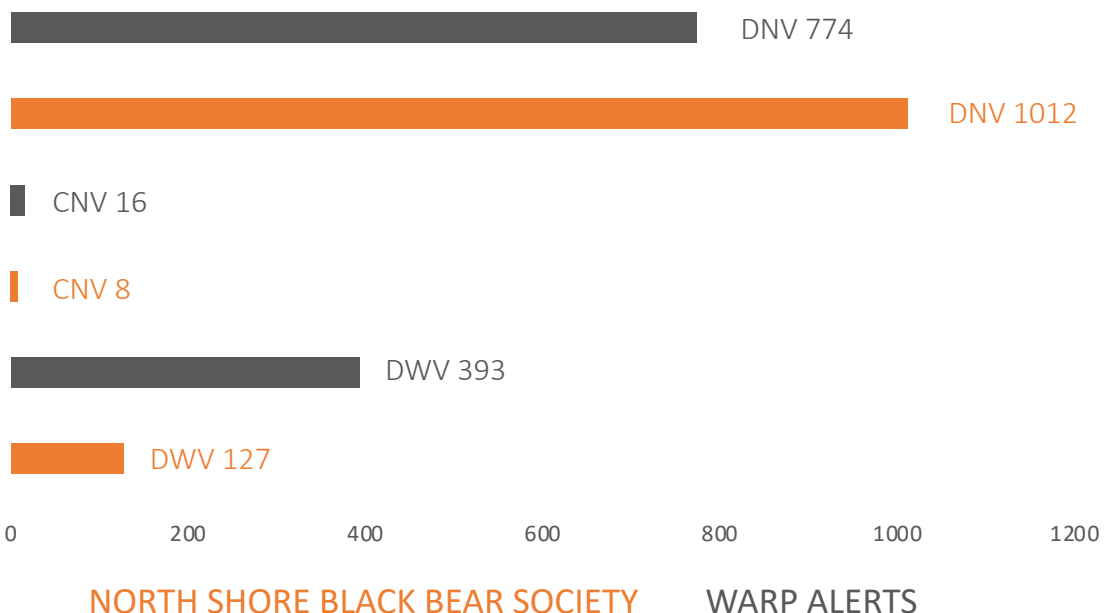
The following statistics summarize the reports received between January 1 and October 31, 2020.

The Society compiled the following data by maintaining a spreadsheet of the reports made to the Society and wildlife alerts sent via email from the WARP map.

Black bears

2020 North Shore Bear Sighting Reports

Total Reports 2330
NSBBS 1147 WARP 1183



Cougars



CNV: 4
DNV: 28
DWV: 18

TOTAL: 50

Coyotes



CNV: 7
DNV: 46
DWV: 15

TOTAL: 68

Other wildlife

Deer, bobcat, skunk, raccoon, marmot and unknown

CNV: 2
DNV: 33
DWV: 11

TOTAL: 46

Black bears remain the focus of the Society’s presentations to groups, but information about cougars, coyotes and bobcats is now included. Occasionally we received a request to focus on a species other than black bears. Information packages about the four species were updated and circulated as needed throughout the year.



Bear attractant management

When residents report a bear sighting to the COS or Society, most “self report” about what attracted the bear to their property. As you can see from the graphic below, most reports (61%) were reports of a bear passing through. Bears travel extensively in search of food and often have no choice but to pass through residential areas. Our homes are built beside wildlife corridors and we should expect to see bears. Bears will stop to eat more than natural foods if we leave easily accessible unnatural foods available to them. The biggest attractant in residential areas continues to be garbage (27%) and fruit trees (4%). Compost and bird seed accounted for (8%). Other attractants include natural foods, BBQ’s, recycling, vegetables, toys and ponds.

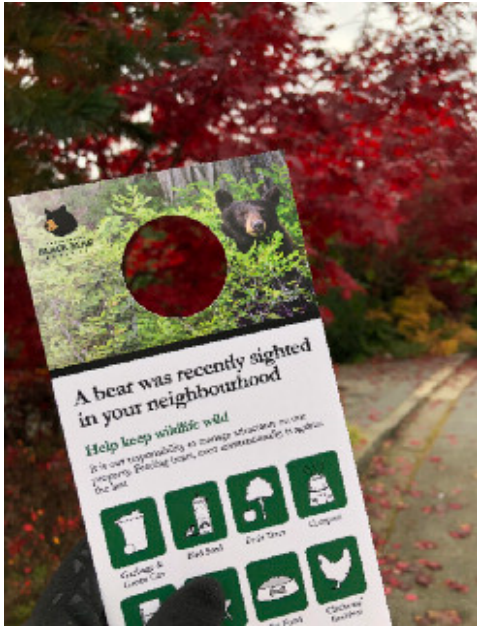
2020 North Shore Black Bear Sightings and Attractant Reports



We worked closely with the District of North Vancouver’s Solid Waste staff to help residents to accept that the lockable carts are not bear-proof and need to be kept clean and stored securely. Many residents who contact us believe the carts to be bear-proof. The consistent message is that people who store their carts outdoors need to freeze odorous food scraps and keep carts clean to prevent attracting wildlife and having the locked carts damaged. In addition, we advise securing carts that are stored outside so they cannot be tipped, as this is typically how bears access these carts.

Canvassing

Due to COVID restrictions our outreach methods were limited and much of our education was shared via email. When restrictions were lifted, we resumed canvassing with bear-in-area hangers and followed the safety guidelines set out by the municipalities. For much of the season print material distribution was not permitted in the District of West Vancouver. When restrictions were eased in September, we resumed canvassing.



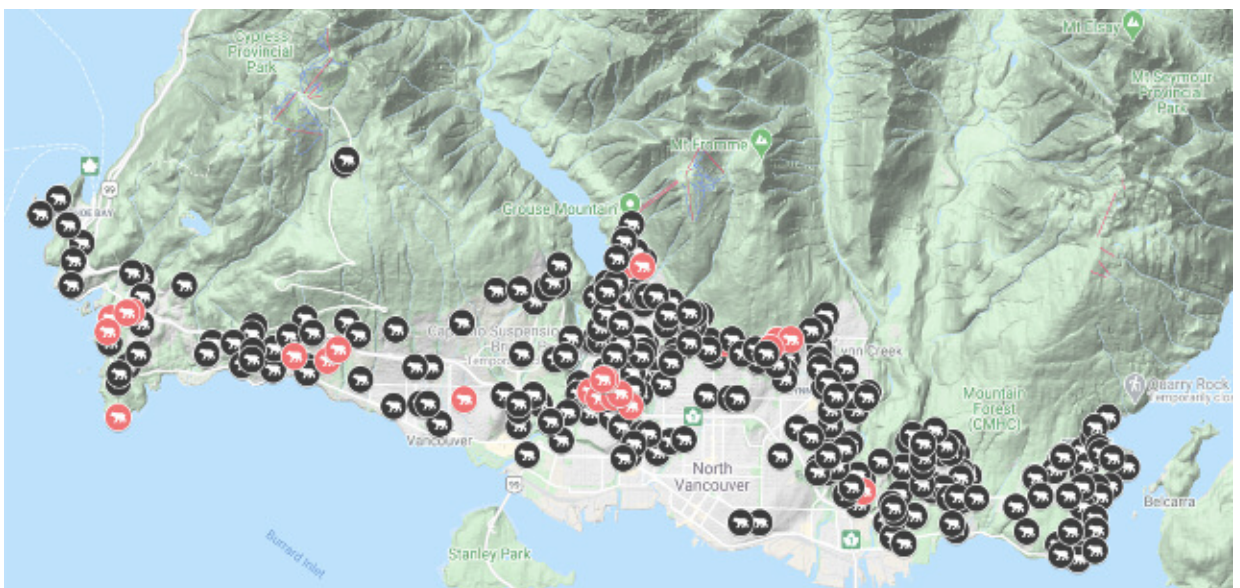
Bear-in-area hangers

CNV: 35

DNV: 2634

DWV: 295

When the Society learns of bear activity, there is a coordinated approach to education with signs and door-to-door canvassing and/or email distribution to Block Watch and anyone reporting to us via email or text.



* Red bear icon indicates sign is up as of Nov 19th, 2020

Signs

Bear-in-area signs

CNV: 8

DNV: 250

DWV: 79

Workshops

We adapted all educational workshops to a virtual format using Zoom.

Throughout May and June we offered 12 free workshops to the public, as well as private workshops for groups.

School presentations (in-person and virtual)

DNV – 2 134 students

DWV - 1 80 students

CNV - 1 22 students

Newcomers to Canada

We welcomed new residents to bear country with 11 virtual presentations hosted by MOSAIC and the North Shore Multicultural Society.



North Shore Black Bear Society
An online introduction to living and playing in Bear Country
Email nsbbsociety@gmail.com to register and receive your Zoom code

Cubs – 45 minutes
Designed for school aged children. Introduction to basic bear biology, a black bear's life cycle, basic bear behavior, clues a bear has been in the forest and what to do if you meet a bear. [Grades 1-7]
Thursday May 14th, 10am
Tuesday May 26th, 2pm

Exploring Bear Country – 1 hour
Best practices for hiking, biking and camping in bear habitat. Includes understanding bear behavior, identifying bear sign, describing seasonal habits, avoiding surprise encounters, learning about bear safety tools and knowing what to do in an encounter.
Thursday May 21st, 4pm
Saturday May 23rd, 10am

North Shore Wildlife – 1 hour
Learn seasonal habits, basic black bear behaviour, best practices for trail users, how to reduce bear activity in the neighbourhood and what to do in an encounter. Short introduction to coyotes and cougars focusing on seasonal habits and what to do in an encounter.
Tuesday May 19th, 4pm
Saturday May 30th, 10am

Presentations are free for North Shore residents. The Society accepts honoraria to help fund our education programs.

[f](https://www.facebook.com/northshorebears) [i](https://www.instagram.com/northshorebears) [t](https://www.tiktok.com/@northshorebears)
Bear photos: Tony Joyce
northshorebears.com

We presented physically distanced workshops to North Vancouver Recreation Commission and Escape Biking summer camps, approximately 300 campers. In addition, we presented 11 virtual workshops to other groups including the Lynn Canyon Ecology Centre, North Vancouver Public Library and Wild Bird Trust.



Exploring Bear Country
Learn some best practices for hiking, biking, and camping near bear habitats from North Shore Black Bear Society's Luci Cadman!
Visit www.nvdpl.ca for more information.
NORTH VANCOUVER DISTRICT Public Library



The North Shore is BEAR COUNTRY
The beautiful forests of North Vancouver's parks are home to black bears. Learn how to enjoy our local parks while keeping bears and people safe.
Presented by Luci Cadman - North Shore Black Bear Society
Hosted by the Ecology Centre

Educational resources

This spring we created one-page resources for recreating in bear country, specifically tailored to popular North Shore activities in bear habitat: mountain biking and trail running. Both these activities are typically fast and quiet, increasing the chances of a surprise close encounter with a bear. These guides outline best practices for recreating and reducing our impact when enjoying time in the bear's home.

The resources have been shared with trail running groups, mountain biking groups and the North Shore Mountain Bike Association (NSMBA) which committed to sharing with their members.

These resources are shared with anyone who reports bear activity whilst recreating and are available on our website.



The North Shore is Bear Country

Best Practices for Biking in Bear Habitat

Black bears are the only bear species living in the North Shore's dense, vast forests. Black bears are naturally wary of humans and expend a lot of energy attempting to avoid us. Their instinct is to hide in trees from threats. As intelligent animals, they are adapting to increased human activity in their environment. Bears may become more tolerant of our presence and this should not be mistaken for boldness or aggression.

Biking is a high impact, high speed, quiet activity that increases your chances of a surprise encounter with a bear. When recreating in wildlife habitat, we have a responsibility to reduce our impact and learn how to respond in an encounter. Following these best practices will help to reduce risk for people and bears.

Avoidance Strategies

- If you see a bear in the distance and it does not notice you, quietly turn around and take an alternate route
- Respect all warnings, including bear-in-area notices and trail closures
- Be alert and aware of your surroundings. Stay on the trail
- Avoid wearing headphones
- Use your voice to alert wildlife that humans are close by. Use a loud, firm voice and call out often. Be louder on narrow, low visibility trails or when biking by rivers and creeks
- Travel in groups; avoid biking alone
- Tell someone your trip plan
- Go slower on blind corners and low visibility trails
- Learn to recognize and be alert for natural bear foods, bear tracks and bear scat. Avoid or leave areas with an abundance of fresh bear sign or natural bear foods
- Never leave food unattended
- Avoid biking between dusk and dawn when wildlife is most active

Off-leash dogs pressure bears to defend themselves and are the cause of many negative encounters between people and bears. We advise keeping your dog at home to reduce risk and impact on wildlife.

If you encounter a bear, dismount, put your bike between you and the bear. Speak calmly to the bear as you slowly back away. Show you are not a threat. Give the bear an exit. If a black bear is curious, they may approach you. Do not run or pedal away as this could trigger a chase. Stand your ground and use a loud, firm voice. Raise your arms or bike. Be prepared to use your bear spray. Leave your phone alone; never approach bears for photographs!

Bear spray is just as important as a helmet. Always carry bear spray and know how to use it. Bear spray is your best defense in a surprise encounter. Wear it on a chest or hip holster for immediate access as you may be separated from your pack or bike.

Report bear sightings
northshorebears.com 604.317.4911



The North Shore is Bear Country

Best Practices for Running in Bear Habitat

Black bears are the only bear species living in the North Shore's dense, vast forests. Black bears are naturally wary of humans and expend a lot of energy attempting to avoid us. Their instinct is to hide in trees from threats. As intelligent animals, they are adapting to increased human activity in their environment. Bears may become more tolerant of our presence and this should not be mistaken for boldness or aggression.

Running is a high speed, quiet and often very technical activity that increases your chances of a surprise encounter with a bear. When recreating in wildlife habitat, we have a responsibility to reduce our impact and learn how to respond in an encounter. Following these best practices will help to reduce risk for people and bears.

Avoidance Strategies

- If you see a bear in the distance and it does not notice you, quietly turn around and take an alternate route
- Respect all warnings, including bear-in-area notices and trail closures
- Be alert and aware of your surroundings. Stay on the trail
- Avoid wearing headphones
- Use your voice to alert wildlife that humans are close by. Use a loud, firm voice and call out often. Be louder on narrow, low visibility trails or when running by rivers and creeks
- Reduce speed on blind corners and low visibility trails
- Travel in groups; avoid running alone
- Tell someone your trip plan
- Learn to recognize and be alert for natural bear foods, bear tracks and bear scat. Avoid or leave areas with an abundance of fresh bear sign or natural bear foods
- Never leave food unattended
- Avoid running between dusk and dawn when wildlife is most active

Off-leash dogs pressure bears to defend themselves and are the cause of many negative encounters between people and bears. Keep your dog on leash or at home to reduce risk and impact on wildlife.

If you encounter a bear, stop and stay calm. Speak calmly to the bear as you slowly back away. Show you are not a threat. Give the bear an exit. If a black bear is curious, they may approach you. Never run as this could trigger a chase. Stand your ground and use a loud, firm voice. Raise your arms to appear bigger. Be prepared to use your bear spray. Leave your phone alone; never approach bears for photographs!

Bear spray is just as important as water. Always carry bear spray and know how to use it. Bear spray is your best defense in a surprise encounter. Wear it on a chest or hip holster for immediate access. Lightweight, neoprene holsters are available and designed for trail runners.

Report bear sightings
northshorebears.com 604.317.4911

Social media

The Society maintains a website, as well as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts. Our Social Media following has increased by 5700 followers over the past year. We are increasing our educational outreach and community engagement through these platforms. Our educational posts are shared widely, with one reaching over 690,000 people this summer.



Traditional media

Interviews by reporters provide opportunities for the Society to reinforce the messages about attractant management, bear behaviour and and best practice for living, working and exploring in bear country.

Media provided these opportunities:

TV: 18 – Global BC, Breakfast TV Vancouver, CTV Morning Live Vancouver, CTV Vancouver

Radio/podcast: 8 – Fur-Bearers Defender radio, News1130, Spice Radio, CKNW

Print: 20 – Featured in at least 20 print/internet articles – North Shore News, North Shore Daily Post, CTV, Global, Pique News magazine.

With the help of a volunteer, our Education Coordinator secured a monthly column with Pique News magazine. Two articles have been published in print and online this year. The column will resume in the late winter to prepare for upcoming bear activity.

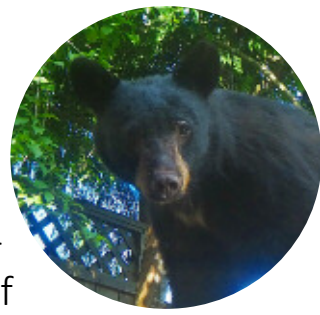


Community events

COVID restrictions cancelled most of our regular community events. We were invited by the Conservation Officers Service to assist Metro Vancouver staff with closing trails around Rice Lake, and to provide education on bear behaviour to those attempting to access the trails for two full weekend days in July. We followed up with an additional 3 visits to Rice Lake with our display.

DNV: 8
DWV: 2





Bear management and community partnerships

Five bears were killed by the COS as of October 31st 2020- 3 in the District of North Vancouver and 2 in the District of West Vancouver. In addition, one bear was hit by a vehicle in West Vancouver and was euthanized a few weeks later by COS. One bear was killed on the highway in West Vancouver. The body of a young bear with its internal organs removed was found in West Vancouver (Cypress Mountain).

A mother bear was seriously injured by COS when they attended to rescue her cub who was entangled in a residential soccer net. She was killed the following day. Her two orphaned cubs are in the care of Critter Care Wildlife Society, until their release back into the wild late next spring.

Most of these bears were killed because they found readily accessible unnatural food sources in residential areas. The Society will continue to inform North Shore residents about how to effectively reduce attractants, as well as further the education about other reasons bears spend time in our communities.

The partnerships with Engineering, Solid Waste, Bylaws, Communications and Parks Departments in the North Shore municipalities and the Conservation Officer Service are important to provide consistent messaging about the responsibilities of living in bear country.

One way to maintain and strengthen community partnerships is through the **North Shore Working Group** (NSWG) that was formed in 2018. The NSWG includes staff from the three municipalities and representatives from the RCMP, West Vancouver Police Department and Conservation Officer Service and representatives of the Society. These partners can work collaboratively to reduce unnecessary bear deaths.

A special honour

This year we were notified that we have been awarded the Fur-Bearers Clements Award, which will be presented virtually in February 2021. North Shore Black Bear Society has been chosen for the category of Outstanding Organization.

The Clements Awards was created to highlight the outstanding work of the many wildlife advocates and animal lovers in Canada in honour of long-time directors and leaders of The Fur-Bearers, George and Bunty Clements. These awards are presented to celebrate those who have followed in their footsteps as advocates for fur-bearing animals in Canada. We are grateful to those who nominated the Society and voted for us.

Plans for 2021



Photo: Tony Joyce

The North Shore Black Bear Society will look closely at the locations of the 2020 bear sighting reports and bear deaths, identify “hot spots” for bear activity, and target proactive education in these areas.

In addition, the Society plans to continue to encourage the provincial government ministries to assess and update its wildlife management policies and practices.

Other plans are for the Society to study the successful practises used in other Canadian and American communities to find other ways to educate North Shore residents and visitors in order to reduce the number of bear deaths.

The Society will continue with its present education outreach programs that are outlined in this report and modify them for different audiences and the changing needs of the communities. In addition, we will continue to work to increase residents’ knowledge and understanding of wildlife to support their need to feel safe living and recreating in bear country.

Acknowledgements

Funding Partners

- District of West Vancouver
- District of North Vancouver
- City of North Vancouver
- Recycle BC
- BC Gaming grants

Educational Outreach Partners

- Engineering and Solid Waste Departments, Districts of North and West Vancouver
- Parks Departments, Districts of North and West Vancouver, City of North Vancouver Engineering, Parks and Environment, City of North Vancouver
- Bylaws Officer Service, Districts of North and West Vancouver, City of North Vancouver,
- Communications Department, Districts of North and West Vancouver, City of North Vancouver
- North Shore Multicultural Society
- Lynn Canyon Ecology Centre
- Block Watch Coordinators, North and West Vancouver

Special Appreciation

The Society is grateful to the **District of North Vancouver** for providing spaces for our Board Meetings and Annual General Meeting, as well as for the North Shore Working Group meetings, in non-COVID times.

In addition, we appreciate the District Bear Line [604-990-BEAR (2327)] which makes it easy for North Shore residents to report bear or attractant sightings and to request information or support with their attractant management challenges.

The Society appreciates the working relationships with **Parks, Engineering, Solid Waste and Bylaw Officer Service Departments** in the three municipalities.

The Society is grateful for the expertise of bear behaviour expert and bear viewing guide **Ellie Lamb**, who has shared her knowledge and experience with us for many years. This summer she was instrumental in guiding our messaging to promote increased tolerance for the presence of bears around our communities. The community has been very receptive to the increased education on bear behaviour.

Volunteers

As with every other year, volunteers contributed to the success of the Society's education programs. The Society is fortunate to have committed people who contributed in a variety of ways; in particular, placing and removing bear-in-area signs, canvassing, doing night-time checks, and working at community events. In 2020, the work of volunteers assisted with the prevention of human-bear encounters on the North Shore.

Special mention to Danielle Herschmiller, who volunteered a great deal of her time (and every day of the summer) to assist our Education Coordinator by responding to reports, canvassing, creating social media posts and sharing her knowledge with visitors to our displays.

The Society looks forward to providing more volunteer opportunities in 2021.

Extra special appreciation

On December 31st, 2020, the Society's Executive Director, Christine Miller will retire from her role. Christine has committed 15 years to educating residents and visitors about bear attractants and the best practices for living in bear habitat. Christine has secured and maintained relationships with municipal staff and other groups seeking to reduce human impact on wildlife and wildlife habitat.



Christine is well known throughout the North Shore for her dedication and advocacy. She will be missed by staff, board members and the community. The Society will continue to expand on the excellent foundations that Christine worked tirelessly to create. Christine's efforts have gone a long way to reducing the number of human-caused bear deaths on the North Shore. We will be forever grateful for her guidance and commitment.

The Education Coordinator role will evolve to cover Executive Director duties.