



News Release

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### **Bear Aware Announces New Community Coordinator for Maple Ridge**

**Maple Ridge, BC:** As spring transitions into summer, the number of bear sightings is increasing in Maple Ridge, a community that has a large 'urban interface' area with the surrounding forest. In order to reduce human Bear interactions, Maple Ridge has implemented the 'Bear Aware' program in our community.

We are pleased to welcome Rosie Wijenberg, who has been appointed as the new Bear Aware Community Coordinator for Maple Ridge. Rosie will be working with District staff, the Ridge Meadows Recycling Society and the BC Conservation Officer Service to coordinate local Bear Aware Program activities in our community.

"Bears are very intelligent creatures and naturally very curious. The key to reducing the number of human-bear interactions is for all of us to take responsibility to eliminate attractants, such as food waste in unsecured garbage and unpicked fruit on fruit trees and bushes," noted Rosie Wijenberg, Bear Aware Community Coordinator for Maple Ridge. "The Bear Aware Program has successfully reduced wildlife interactions in communities both east and west of Maple Ridge, and I'm confident that area residents will respond to the common sense advice that's the cornerstone of the program," she added.

In 2011, the Conservation Officer Service had to euthanize 16 problem bears in Maple Ridge that had become habituated to human contact. The natural curiosity of bears brings them into our neighbourhoods where they often discover attractants and human-associated food. If human-associated food is readily available, bears will quickly learn to forage in our communities, threatening the safety of both the bears and the residents. However, if bears are unable to find the food they need in our backyards, they soon move on.

Bear Aware is a public education initiative that offers practical strategies and solutions, enabling the residents of Maple Ridge to effectively prevent and cope with human-bear conflicts by managing their bear attractants, such as garbage and fruit. The program strives, through proper waste and attractant management, to prevent bears from lingering in our residential areas. This approach is a long-term solution to reducing human-bear conflicts by relying on neighbourhoods working cooperatively to reduce the unnecessary killing of bears and to increase human safety.

Maple Ridge Bear Aware is a joint project spearheaded by the District of Maple Ridge in coordination with the British Columbia Conservation Foundation, Ridge Meadows Recycling Society and the Conservation Officer Service of British Columbia. In addition to directly supporting the Bear Aware

Program, the District of Maple Ridge is demonstrating an ongoing commitment to becoming Bear Aware with such initiatives as installing bear-proof garbage containers in all new parks, retrofitting the garbage cans in existing parks and developing Bear Aware signage for high bear activity areas.

“We all need to take responsibility for how we manage attractants like food waste in our community,” said Maple Ridge Mayor Ernie Daykin. He continued, “This is pretty straightforward stuff. Secure your garbage in wildlife-proof structures and cans. Put your garbage out the morning of pickup, not the night before. Make sure you clean up any ripe fruit that has fallen from trees or shrubs. Keep your pet food inside the house and clean your BBQ after use. The District website has a tonne of great practical tips that will reduce human-bear interactions. I hope that people will follow this great advice.”

Cody Ambrose, BC Conservation Officer, based in Maple Ridge said, “We’re very pleased to have Rosie join us as the Maple Ridge Community Coordinator for the Bear Aware Program. This is the time of year when calls start coming in as members of the community spend more time outdoors. The Bear Aware Program offers a great combination of education and simple, practical, solutions to reducing human-bear interactions. Once people understand that they have to be responsible for managing attractants, we will see the drop in interactions like we’ve seen in other communities.”

Ridge Meadows Recycling Society employee Alison Thompson has been involved in the early implementation of Bear Aware in Maple Ridge. Alison said, “We are pleased to have Rosie join us to spread the word about Bear Aware in Maple Ridge. We’ve already had the opportunity to do outreach into some neighbourhoods where there is historically a lot of bear activity and we were surprised to see people leaving garbage out the night before pickup. This is precisely the kind of thing that will bring bears into the community. We will continue to work closely with Rosie and the Conservation Officer Service to monitor neighbourhoods and to educate people. Something as simple as waiting until the morning to put garbage out can have a huge impact on reducing interactions.”

Rosie Wijenberg is very excited to coordinate the Bear Aware Program in Maple Ridge. “The program has demonstrated effective reduction of human-bear conflicts in other communities and now it is Maple Ridge’s turn! I am looking forward to supporting residents in becoming Bear Aware.”

With this goal in mind, Rosie offers these tips to reducing human-bear interactions:

- Keep your garbage in a location inaccessible to bears. If you do not have secure garbage storage, you can freeze smelly food items until collection or take the garbage directly to the transfer station. You can also use a bear-resistant garbage can.
- Birdseed is particularly attractive to bears in the Spring. Birds don’t need additional feed in the Summer. Bring birdfeeders indoors until November or they may become bear feeders.
- Pick ripe and fallen fruit daily. Consider fruit gleaning or tree removal for any unused fruit trees.
- Compost, outdoor fridges, barbecues, chickens, and pet food are also items that, when managed improperly, become bear attractants.
- If you see a bear, call the Conservation Officers at 1-877-952-7277. The earlier that Conservation Officers can intervene in a human-bear conflict the sooner the bear can return to its natural life and habitat.

Keep an eye out for Rosie canvassing your neighbourhood with valuable educational materials, or visit her at your local Farmers Market, Webster's Corner Day, Canada Day and other community events.

Volunteer to help make your neighbourhood Bear Aware!

Learn more about volunteer opportunities and about identifying and managing bear attractants near your home by talking to your local Bear Aware Community Coordinator, Rosie Wijenberg. For more information visit [www.bearaware.bc.ca](http://www.bearaware.bc.ca) or contact Rosie Wijenberg at [mapleridge@bearaware.bc.ca](mailto:mapleridge@bearaware.bc.ca) or 604-652-3095.

The public is encouraged to report human-wildlife sightings and conflicts that threaten public safety or result in significant property damage by calling the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line, toll-free at 1-877-952-7277 (RAPP), or visit the Conservation Officer Service website at: [www.rapp.bc.ca](http://www.rapp.bc.ca).