

April 25, 2022

## Bear cub killings prompt formal complaint to BCCOS

*The Fur-Bearers calls on BC Conservation Officer Service to clarify roles and create measurable change to reduce deaths of animals.*

**VANCOUVER** – A formal policy and service complaint to the BC Conservation Officer Service and the BC Minister of Environment and Climate Change Strategy was filed last week by The Fur-Bearers. This was in response to concerns surrounding numerous killings of bear cubs in recent years.

The Fur-Bearers is a wildlife charity founded in 1953 to protect fur-bearing animals in the wild and confinement, and promote coexistence through conservation, advocacy, research and education.

The policy and service complaint (available at the bottom of this page) outlines concerns regarding systemic issues found through a review of documents obtained via the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. Supplied to The Fur-Bearers by a concerned resident, the documents detail the killings of young bears by BCCOS officers from January to December 2021 through Human Wildlife Conflict Reports (HWCRs). The summary provided identified 77 records of killings of cubs and juveniles.

“Our review of the reports provided, in conjunction with court decisions related to officer discretion in killing wildlife, quickly showed systemic issues related to how juvenile bears are treated in the BCCOS,” says Lesley Fox, Executive Director of The Fur-Bearers. “As noted by the Service many times, Conservation Officers are not wildlife managers and their role is related to public safety. But the records show killings of bear cub that were not related to public safety; we also read other incidents in which cubs were killed for their ‘poor health’ were not visually evaluated by qualified individuals.”

Ellie Lamb, a bear viewing guide and educator not linked to the complaint, notes that non-lethal and kinder solutions are accessible to manage many situations unveiled in the report.

“Black bears are capable of learning boundaries and will often respond to a firm and calm voice. BC is also graced by numerous wildlife rehabilitation centres that can provide a second chance to orphaned or injured bears,” Lamb says. “There are safe ways to manage non-emergency encounters with bears that for reasons not listed in reports were not utilized, and as a result, bear cubs were killed.”

The Fur-Bearers believe a properly funded and staffed BCCOS that receives third-party oversight is essential to public safety and the protection of British Columbia’s environment.

“A lack of demarcation between mandated public safety duties and non-mandated wildlife management, and an irregular adherence to policy, compounded by the absence of third-party oversight, creates systemic issues that must be addressed,” says Fox. “We hope that by raising these concerns through the formal complaint process, Minister Heyman and the BCCOS can address them directly and help create a path forward to policies that reflect coexistence and compassion for wildlife in the province.”

The formal complaint was filed Friday, April 22, 2022. The complaint and the original Freedom of Information response package is available at this link (<https://bit.ly/38qR2IT>).

Images and video of bear cubs in British Columbia for use in reporting on this are available upon request.

*UPDATED May 10, 2022, to clarify that the 77 records revealed killings of bear cubs and juveniles.*

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