

north shore news

North Vancouver woman accused of setting traps for mountain bikers

[Brent Richter](#) / North Shore News

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The trailhead for Lower Skull in North Vancouver. Photo Mike Wakefield, North Shore News

North Vancouver RCMP have arrested a 64-year-old woman they say was deliberately setting traps on North Shore mountain bike trails intending to injure riders on Mount Fromme.

Members of the mountain bike community had been finding logs and branches strewn across steep sections of the Lower Skull and Quarry trails since last August and had been putting the warning out to fellow riders through the North Shore Mountain Biking Association and online North Shore Mountain Biking message board.

Fed up with the dangerous antics, two local riders decided to sleuth out the suspect on their own in December and purchased six infrared night vision cameras typically used to record wildlife. They then monitored the footage captured by the cameras, logged the incidents of the suspect appearing to set fresh traps and kept detailed notes to turn over to the RCMP, according to Cpl. Richard De Jong, North Vancouver RCMP spokesman.

After reviewing "numerous" clips caught by the cameras, investigators made the arrest at 5 a.m. on Sunday as the suspect emerged after another round of laying debris across the trail, De Jong said.

The RCMP is asking the Crown to approve charges of mischief and setting a trap.

Under the Criminal Code of Canada, being found guilty of setting a trap can result in prison time, whether the trap injures someone or not, if the Crown prosecutes the charges as an indictable offence.

"It's for the Crown and the judge to decide how serious her intentions were," said De Jong said.

De Jong said police are not aware of any injuries resulting from the barriers but they are asking any mountain bikers who crashed over them to step forward.

The suspect was released and is expected to be in court to answer to the charges on Feb. 4. In the meantime, she is not allowed to go near the trails she's accused of tampering with.

Police aren't saying what the suspect's motive was, although she lives in the neighbourhood and walks her dogs on the nearby trails, De Jong said.

In the meantime, the mountain bike community is breathing a sigh of relief and praising the two amateur gumshoes and police for their actions, according to Mark Wood, program co-ordinator for the NSMBA.

"I think it's great the RCMP takes it with the level of seriousness that's appropriate," Wood said, noting potential injuries should be a concern not just for those who ride but the wider community as well.

Though Wood wasn't aware of any injuries, the suspect targeted steep sections of the trail where it would be impossible for riders to stop on a dime, he said.

"They were definitely strategically placed in high-risk places," he said. "You'd for sure be catapulted over the bars."

Wood also was baffled at what would motivate someone to do such a thing.

"I have no idea what the psychology is behind this malicious intent to try to hurt people," Wood said. "I can only suspect there's a lot of NIMBYism on the North Shore where people want things to stay the same."

And, Wood added, the old days of conflicts between trail users are long gone.

"This is an aberration. This is not a widespread community phenomenon. This is somebody who is obviously anti-mountain biker but she's anti-community (as well)," he said. "No matter how you recreate in the forest, we've all decided to pitch in together.

This is somebody obviously working alone with a non-community view of what is a shared resource."

Wood said mountain bikers will be closely watching as the case winds its way through the court system.

The riders who set up the cameras declined to comment.

A spokesperson for the District of North Vancouver, which owns the land the trails are on, also declined to comment.

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There are a lot of unanswered issues in this article. What constitutes a trap? Why would a person do this? Does it impact only bikers? How much of the trail building has been illegal? What has been the impact of all these trails on the wildlife? The environment? On neighbourhoods? A balanced overview is needed on this complex issue. - cjk