

## LETTER: We can all do our part to keep wild animals wild

North Shore News

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**Dear Editor:**

Re: [Cub Killings Prompt Call for Policy Review \(http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/other-voices-cub-killings-prompt-call-for-policy-review-1.2103284\)](http://www.nsnews.com/opinion/other-voices-cub-killings-prompt-call-for-policy-review-1.2103284), Nov. 4 Other Voices.

Despite the record number of human-bear conflict calls, **the number of black bears destroyed by conservation officers is actually on a downward trend.** In fact, over the last 30 years the number of complaints of bears is up by 300 per cent, yet the numbers euthanized by conservation officers has fallen by half.

The public has a critical role in ensuring bear safety, by managing attractants.

Garbage, birdseed, improperly stored pet food and fallen fruit from trees are driving bears towards urban areas, where they come into conflict with humans. And when bears become habituated to people or conditioned to garbage, conservation officers are forced to destroy them for public safety.

**Bears and cubs that are conditioned to the presence of people, or human food sources, are not candidates for relocation or rehabilitation.** Relocating a bear to a familiar area can be effective only if the animal is not habituated or conditioned.

Not a single conservation officer relishes the thought of having to destroy an animal. This is the most distressing part of their job, and it is something that is often preventable if citizens do their part to keep wild animals wild.

This is why it is so important for everyone to take responsibility and manage attractants responsibly. Too often, conservation officers find that people are not putting away their garbage, harvesting their fruit trees or using bear-proof containers.

If bears are not allowed to get comfortable around people, and do not have ready access to human food sources, there are more options available to deal with them.

Conservation officers make bear decisions on a case-by-case basis, with input from provincial biologists, veterinarians and senior conservation officers. Euthanizing an animal is always a last resort.

**Doug Forsdick, chief conservation officer**

**B.C. Conservation Officer Service**

**Ministry of Environment**

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