

Wildlife Advisory Committee
Annual Report

April 15, 2014 – April 13, 2015

The Wildlife Advisory Committee (WAC) deals with wildlife concerns on the island. Specifically, it is concerned with the harassment of wildlife by uncontrolled dogs, illegal and unsafe hunting practices, rescuing or otherwise dealing with injured or distressed wildlife, and the confirmation and reporting of sightings of cougars and bears. The WAC also acts as a central clearing agency for information concerning lost and strayed dogs.

Formed in February, 2003, using the name “Animal Control Committee,” the group’s primary purpose then was to deal with dogs that were harassing and killing wildlife on the Island. The original Terms of Reference were established and approved by DIRA in April, 2003, and the name changed to the “Wildlife Advisory Committee” as Denman does not have bylaws controlling domestic animals which could be effectively enforced. The Wildlife Act, on the other hand, clearly set out regulations that made it unlawful for dog owners to allow their dogs to harass or kill wildlife.

As members of the community started to request help with other wildlife issues and after merging with the DI Deer Hunting Regulations Committee in 2004, the WAC’s activities and mandate expanded.

The WAC met once over the past year prior to the Denman Island Residents Association (DIRA) AGM of April 13, 2015. The volunteer members who make up the Committee included Cindy Critchley, Chris Danks, Dennis Forsyth, Peter Karsten, Mike Nestor, and Glen Snook.

As usual, Denman Islanders can contact members of the Committee about any of the above concerns by looking in the front of the DI Phone Directory under “Wildlife Advisory” (Cindy, Peter and Mike) and/or “Dogs – Lost or Found” (Cindy and Chris)

As a Non Tax Supported Committee of DIRA there is no budget to report.

A summary of our activities this past year follows:

- 1) Harassment of wildlife by uncontrolled dogs – There seems to have been a recent increase in the number of reports of dogs running loose. We continue to urge residents to stay in control of their dogs as they are likely to harass all forms of wildlife on the island when loose. The Committee’s first focus is always to try to assist the dog owner in solving the problem around their dog’s behavior (keeping on leash, improved fencing on property, finding more appropriate placement if necessary or continues, etc.)

- 2) Illegal/unsafe hunting practices -- Incidents of suspected poaching were logged on an Excel spreadsheet and conveyed to the Conservation Officer by the WAC. Focus is primarily around night hunting and other poaching activities. An article in the Grapevine is put in each fall to educate Islanders about the pending deer hunting season (one month shorter on Denman and Hornby since 2007 due to our efforts a few years back.) Islanders are encouraged to contact committee members if they hear shots at night or are aware of hunters on land without the owner's permission.
- 3) Injured/distressed wildlife -- Reports of injured and distressed wildlife were responded to by committee members at various times over the year and the animal was either humanely dispatched, taken to a local wildlife rehabilitation center (MARS in Merville or NIWRA in Errington) or effected a rescue of our own (released from fishnet fencing or allowed a traumatized bird or animal to rest quietly and recover from shock.)
- 4) Bear/cougar sightings -- There was no black bear sighting made during this period. The last confirmed sighting was made on the island back in October, 2013. After several years of numerous cougar sightings (May, 2006 through December, 2008), the past several years have been relatively uneventful. This past year two reports were made to the WAC with no actual sighting (May, 2014) with no further reports or solid evidence forthcoming. The WAC encourages islanders to presume there may be large predators on the island at any given time and to contact the WAC should they come into contact with these large animals.
- 5) Lost/strayed dogs -- Numerous lost and stray dogs calls were handled by the committee and many were reunited with their owners due to efforts by WAC members (particularly Cindy Critchley and Chris Danks who are listed under "Dogs – Lost or Found" in the front of the DI Phone Directory.) The use of social media (i.e. DI Bulletin Board pages and the new Denman Island Dog Directory on Facebook) has helped dogs get home more quickly as well.