

Subject: Fwd: Fw: "Mountain biking impacts on bears and other wildlife by Brian Horejsi"
From: Brian Platts <bplatts@shaw.ca>
Date: 05/08/2014 10:07 PM
To: Corrie Kost <corrie@kost.ca>

No post. FONVCA review.

----- Original Message -----

Subject:Fw: "Mountain biking impacts on bears and other wildlife by Brian Horejsi"
Date:Tue, 5 Aug 2014 11:34:07 -0700
From:Monica Craver <mecraver@shaw.ca>
To:<fonvca@fonvca.org>, "West Van Matters Carolanne R." <EditorWVM@westvan.org>

Sent to Mayors and Councils on the North Shore...

From: [Monica Craver](#)
Sent: Tuesday, August 05, 2014 11:13 AM
To: [DNVMayor and Council](#) ; [Mayor&Council \(DWW\)](#) ; [stuartd@dnv.org](#) ; [kmerilees@westvancouver.ca](#)
Cc: [Susan Rogers](#) ; [Gavin Joyce](#) ; [Corinne Ambor](#) ; [A Mooi](#) ; [dmussatto@cnv.org](#) ; [dbell@cnv.org](#) ; [Guy Heywood](#)
Subject: "Mountain biking impacts on bears and other wildlife by Brian Horejsi"

Dear Mayors and Councils: With the recent news about our once "shy and docile" Black Bears NOW breaking into garages and homes on the North Shore, and elsewhere on the lower mainland....

Canadian wildlife scientist and bear expert, Dr. Brian Horejsi, comments on mountain biking's impacts on bears and other wildlife. It is a must read for those involved in making "decisions and policy for ongoing free ride mountain bike sprawl" affecting our North Shore mountains, urban interface, residential areas, etc. --- Human/Bear conflicts

The link to this article (also copied, below) can be found here, including comments (pro and con) by others on the article: <http://www.thewildlifeneeds.com/2014/08/05/mountain-biking-impacts-on-bears-and-other-wildlife-by-brian-horesji/>

The best comment on this article coming from an "ex-mountain biker, R. Harold Smoot", copied in full, here:

R. Harold Smoot says:
[August 5, 2014 at 10:11 am](#)

I have been an avid mountain biker since 1991, going so far as to race nationally for a number of years and currently work in the cycling industry. I've seen the full gamut of mountain biking's impact – both the good and the bad. I do feel that there is a bit of truth to George's piece above and some that is a bit of a stretch in some cases. Regardless two points that are crucial to this argument are that 1. Mountain biking is gaining in popularity. 2. Those gains are putting pressure on the environment as more and more trail networks are needed and being developed to support the demand. I interact with mountain bikers all day long and one thing I've found is that they are just as polarized as American politics are today. On the one hand, you have those who realize or at the very least, sympathize with his argument. And those who could care less so long as they get to have fun. Sadly, those in the second camp are doing the most harm in the form of illegal trail building – often in hidden and pristine parts of the forest. I've seen these trails and ridden a few myself. Not only are most not sustainable they actually have a negative impact on the perception of mountain biking as a whole. Unfortunately, this is becoming all too common and moving into areas I and others have enjoyed in peace and quiet for decades. Needless to say, I gave up mountain biking almost two years ago and now only ride road or gravel. I do still miss the sport but do not miss overcrowded trails, user conflict, startling moose napping in tall grass, getting chased by angry grouse and stumbling across a new and illegal scar on the mountainside by individuals who have no concept or understanding as to what impact they are having. Like MAD mentioned in their comment, like the wolf debate this one is surely to be just as heated or even more controversial. Tread lightly.

I truly hope that North Vancouver and West Vancouver will begin to address this growing problem we are facing with human/bear conflicts on our North Shore, at the core problem --- which is mainly uncontained, and unmanaged "FREERIDE" mountain bike activities sprawling across our forests.

It is not going to get better, but worse, if we do not contain this wily sport to a much smaller area. Better still, it needs to be contained to one or more of our three ski resorts: Grouse/Seymour /Cypress.

The present mountain bike freeride "status quo" is no longer sustainable, *nor wise*, in light of this new information. Thank you.

Monica Craver
North Vancouver V7K 2R3

Also, please read: <http://friendsofmountainviewpark.webs.com/apps/blog/show/42527641-bear-with-us->

From: Brian Horejsi
Sent: Tuesday, August 05, 2014 8:34 AM
To: [Monica Craver](#)
Subject: bears and bikes x Horejsi

The Wildlife News

[ABOUT](#) [HISTORY OF THE GREATER YELLOWSTONE WOLF RESTORATION](#) [ABOUT HUNTING](#)

[BLOG COMMENT RULES](#)

Mountain biking impacts on bears and other wildlife by Brian Horejsi

by [GEORGE WUERTHNER](#) on AUGUST 5, 2014 · [1](#)
[COMMENT](#) · in [ACTIVISM](#), [CONSERVATION](#), [WILDLIFE NEWS](#)

This is a short email that Brian Horejsi sent me on mountain biking and bears. It is a thoughtful review of how mountain biking can have substantial impacts on wildlife.

The basic science solidly supports the general claim that bikers and bikes are displacing bears, can contribute to their habituation and are consequently adding negative load on human / wildlife conflict. I think it has been conclusively established that most kinds of human activity / presence displace bears (and almost all other species), and if there are bears that are not displaced / become habituated, they die at a disproportionate rate, hence their fitness is reduced (as is that of their mothers and fathers). Amongst the leading agents of displacement are industrialized forms of human activity that depend on machines / motors / mechanization to move people great distances, often, quickly, and

with considerable "baggage" (garbage, guns, trailers, ATVs, dogs, and so on). Mountain bikers fit the general category of industrial users, since they come by vehicle (mechanized means), move more and more quickly than people on foot, (allowing quick approach and surprise encounters), have escalated their use of all public lands, are a behavioral cult that exhibits high levels of aggression, partly against the environment and partly against members of society who identify their activities as destructive.

Cumulative Impacts

Another not inconsequential aspects of mtn bikes and bikers is they have forced themselves into landscapes that did not have traditional mechanized access. There are literally hundreds of formerly mini security areas in local and regional parks (and this is in addition to what are thought of as traditional public lands – National parks, BLM and FS) that harbored some forms of wildlife because they had limited and low access refuge areas and/or a wide range of sizes. These are the "homes" of urban deer, coyotes, badgers, even bears and cougars, that are no longer providing day time (high human activity time) refuge and escape (from humans, pets and daytime heat).

I was just in Calgary a bit back and went for a walk in a provincial Park (Fish Creek) inside Calgary borders that formerly contained some forested refuge lands. These areas were cool, relatively dark, and discouraging to most (almost all) walking and running Park users. I was dismayed to see the extensive mtn bike roads on the maps, along with formal support of biking. The dense aspen and spruce/pine stands that I estimate were 5 – 50 acres in size, and functioned as ecological and behavioral "spaces" that provided security and thermal refuge for wildlife, are gone. The bike roads are well used (there are 1.2 millions people in the city, and there ARE bikers) and now bring bike and biker threats to animals that formerly had a daytime hideout. While there are high levels of use of the initially established paved trails, the majority of users (walking, hiking, running, just being out) stuck to them and left the formerly off trail areas alone. Because of bikers, this "standoff" no longer exists (to the detriment of wildlife).

And it gets worse! The demand / need for refuge from humans is greatest when human use is highest, usually on weekends. Previously un-biked niches in the landscape are of disproportionate value during these peak periods. So, what happened? These refuge habitats were dissected by bike roads, which is destructive enough, but biker use also peaks on weekends, aggravating habitat loss at a time when demand / need for it is greatest, so the negative impact of biker use is not linear in relation to the increased number of bikes, but exponential given the elevated need by wildlife.

Habituation

Will this result in or increase the level of habituation? Any activity that escalates contact (space, visual, sound) between humans and their infrastructure and an animal changes the ambient environment for an animal and produces some sort of learning in a wild animal. If the learning modifies behavior by eliminating or altering the strength or frequency of behaviors in response to a given stimulus (human yelling at it from the back yard, vehicle sound/movement, visual presence of human structures, dogs barking) and that initial behavior contributed to that animals fitness, than that animal increases its risk of injury and death and consequently, life time reproductive success.

It may well be that the invasion of bikes/bikers "forces" contact with humans and leads to a more delicate and potentially explosive conflict. While I cant find any evidence in the

scientific literature to support this, it could be argued that an animal forced from its routine and from secure (what ever degree) habitat, makes for an uneasy state of contact with humans and their infrastructure – a condition that could be more explosive due to the stress level related to the forcing. This contrasts with contact that might be initiated by the animal – for example, a grizzly bear female with young that wants to avoid male bears and can use that habitat other years when she has no young or when a male is absent. In the case of biker/biking displacement there is essentially permanent displacement and limited, if any, opportunity to reoccupy formerly (more) comfortable habitat. In other words, the predictability or stability, even strength, of the forced habituation could be questioned.

So, could local residences and human centers of activity begin to experience use by wildlife that formerly stayed away? I don't think there's any doubt about it. The consequences will be / are that fragmentation and use of refuge areas will reduce their capacity to harbor animals, displace them and their use/activity to other adjacent landscapes, many of which will be ecological traps, increase conflict with humans (and other animals), and incrementally reduce overall wildlife use of the larger area as well as reduce population size, distribution and movement. All these will unbalance wildlife dynamics and contribute to long term, incremental reduction of population viability.

The social / educational loss of tolerance for wildlife (the deer eating the roses, the black bear "near" the fence) that human society develops are also (generally) unproductive by-products of conflict and association; amongst these are distrust of, anger towards, and fear of "wild" animals, and not just local animals, but generalized attitudes to wildlife on a much larger scale of perception, and resentment and irritation toward, and consequent decline in support of, wildlife and land managers.

This large scale negative outcome is just another cumulative effect of catering to extreme recreation and the shrill political intimidation of mtn bikers. And while this has been ongoing in a large scale way on NF and BLM lands, its invasion of urban / rural park areas is "new" and threatens to destroy even more of the already stretched and frayed tentacles that connect the majority of Americans and Canadians that now live in Urban areas to the natural world.