



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**BC Wildlife Federation believes that when it comes to wildlife, conservation is first and foremost.**

Vancouver, BC – Anti-bear-hunting activists are using the low salmon returns and anecdotal perceptions that there are fewer bears this year in order to call for a stop to the bear hunt. According to BC Wildlife Federation, these claims are remiss of appropriate scientific-based research.

Mel Arnold, President of BC Wildlife Federation which represents 35,000 hunters, anglers and outdoor recreationists, stated during a live interview on *CBC Almanac* today that the real “figures show that the bear population can support a sustainable harvest.” Arnold points out that, in actuality, bear sightings and activity reached its highest level last year with nearly 21,000 reports being received by the Conservation Officer Service. These reports have been growing yearly for the past number of years and the rate has been climbing sharply over the past 4 years. 2008 was a good year for bears and most reached their dens healthy and fat. Furthermore, anecdotal reports indicate high birth rates with litters of 3 – 4 cubs.

The following observations from the provincial *Bear Aware* program are noted with the office monitoring the changes in bear movement and behaviour throughout this summer: Bear and human conflict calls are down dramatically all over the province. It has been an unusually hot and dry summer.

There have been many large forest fires with smoke from those fires traveling hundreds of miles. These fires and the resulting smoke may have been enough to change the moving patterns of several wildlife species as fewer moose for example are being reported in the lower valleys and river bottoms this summer, not just bears.

Numerous reports from experienced hunters and conservationists are that bear encounters and sightings have been occurring in the higher elevations this summer. Provincial and National Parks in the high elevations have been reporting lots of bear sightings, and BCWF members have personally corroborated these observations, reporting “there are more bears this summer than in any other year and all my sightings have been in the high elevations”. Most of these sightings have been of grizzlies.

Berry crops have been reported to be the best in decades in the mid to upper elevations throughout the province. People picking berries for preserves and baking have been reporting the best berry picking in years from numerous sources around the province.

No one needs to be told that valleys bottoms have been dry and parched. Not the kind of habitat one would expect to see many bears in.

There have been no reports coming in to any agencies or groups of bear's carcasses being found.

We are most likely experiencing one of those freak phenomena's due to weather, excellent berry crops and forest fires that have forced bears and other animals to change their movement patterns. This is what makes these animals so unique, they have the ability to adjust to difficult circumstances in order to survive.

Arnold further asserts, "It certainly is unwise and irresponsible to make the assumption that bears are dying off without proper observation data and scientific evidence".

For further information contact Patti MacAhonic, Executive Director of the BCWF at 604-291-9990 extension 230 or click to email us.

**The BCWF is a province-wide voluntary conservation organization representing over 35,000 British Columbian members whose aims are to protect, enhance and promote the wise use of the environment for the benefit of present and future generations.**

**The B.C. Wildlife Federation was incorporated under the B.C. Societies Act in 1951 and it became a registered charity in 1969. The Federation is British Columbia's largest and oldest conservation organization.**