

Message from the President

November 2019

Fall is descending upon us and the days are getting shorter. To Victorians this means the weather is unpredictable and you don't know what you are going to wake up to, almost like Forrest Gump's box of chocolates. This is also a time for us to get out and photograph the mushrooms and moss that follow our wet seasonal weather.

Another aspect of our beautiful landscapes are the animals that we share them with and the safety practices we need to adhere to when we are out getting those award-winning shots. Most of us will not encounter the bears or cougars that are out there but it does happen. As a woman in Duncan recently discovered, they don't like Metallica. So, you should make sure that you have your phone loaded up with the sounds of Metallica, just in case! In all seriousness, awareness of animals is a serious issue. When you are out and about in the forest you should make sure that you know what to do if you encounter bears or cougars.

While researching information for safety issues I came across a great blog on Discover Vancouver Island (<https://www.discovervancouverisland.com/blog/bear-wolf-cougar-safety/>). Have a look for some great tips:

- Never come between a mom and her babies
- Never approach them, they need their space
- Do not pack smelly foods
- Use animal-safe garbage and storage bins
- Do not walk at night alone, or in the forest alone without a bear bell
- Always keep dogs on a leash
- Be prepared for an encounter with bears or cougars
- Prepare your bear spray
- If in a group, stick together to seem larger
- Determine three things: the kind of bear, if it has cubs and if it is protecting a food source
- Speak slowly in a calm tone
- Back away slowly, keep an eye on the animal and allow for a clear exit
- Look as large as possible
- Do not run or turn your back
- Maintain eye contact if the animal is watching you

We all want to capture amazing photos but remember that we share the forest and we need to respect the animals and be safe.