



---

## **An Economic Case for Ending the Grizzly Bear Trophy Hunt in British Columbia.**

Compiled by the Commercial Bear Viewing Association

[info@bearviewing.ca](mailto:info@bearviewing.ca) | 604-762-7751

## Summary

1. Grizzly bear-viewing is now worth up to 10 times more than grizzly hunting to BC (Various sources).
2. Grizzly-viewing operators in British Columbia (BC) are at or close to capacity because of their inability to expand to view hunted populations (CBVA members).
3. One third of bear-viewers in BC said they would not come to the province if they could not view bears (Swain, 2006). Grizzly-bear viewing is a key driver for eco-tourism in BC.
4. Many grizzly-viewing operations are being hurt by grizzly hunting in or around their viewing areas (CBVA members). See case studies attached.
5. While there has not been a study to measure the exact effects of bear-hunting on bear-viewing in Canada, a recent study in the US concluded that in areas where large predators are hunted, viewings of those predators drop significantly (Borg et al., 2016).
6. Managing the grizzly hunt is expensive for the BC government. One official suggested that the cost of management is more than the income brought in by the hunt (Honey et al., 2015).
7. BC's branding as a wild and natural destination for tourists is tarnished by the trophy hunt, hurting its entire eco-tourism sector. (Anecdotal evidence from guest interviews.)
8. Context: More than 90 per cent of BC residents (both rural and urban) support an end to grizzly hunting (Insights West, 2015). This number has trended upwards steadily since 2001 when it stood at 52 per cent.

## Detail

### **1. Viewing grizzly bears is worth up to 10 times more than grizzly hunting to BC and requires far less government management.**

While it is difficult to give an exact value to both grizzly-hunting and grizzly-viewing in BC, a study by the Center for Responsible Travel and Stanford University estimated that grizzly bear-viewing in the Great Bear Rainforest alone was worth \$15.1 million to BC in 2012. The comparative figure for trophy hunting was \$1.2 million, which included both resident and guided hunts.

An audit of 16 of the leading grizzly-viewing operations in BC in June 2016 showed that annual income from grizzly-viewing alone was \$13.1 million, according to the most recent accounts submitted to the tax authorities. This is thought to be up to 10 times the comparable income from grizzly hunting.

### **2. Grizzly-viewing is now at or close to capacity in the province, its expansion constrained by the hunting of grizzly bears.**

Grizzly bear viewing has expanded almost exponentially over the last several years and has now reached or is close to capacity. Several prominent viewing operations have built new lodges or bought new boats in the last three years (Maple Leaf Adventures, Knight Inlet Lodge, Bluewater Adventures, Great Bear Nature Tours, Grizzly Bear Ranch). Further growth, however, is severely constrained by the difficulty of viewing hunted bear populations.

Several operators pointed out that hunting grizzly bears makes them much more difficult to view. It also raises ethical questions for viewing operations who fear that when bears get used to being viewed peacefully, they then become easy targets for hunters. Several operations have reported losing bears they view to hunters. The science suggests that grizzlies used to being viewed are also safer than scared populations. According to one study, 67% of grizzly attacks are initiated by a scared/surprised bear (Joep, 1985).

John Marriott, who guides sold-out grizzly bear photo tours in BC, said: "If you stop hunting bears you could do bear-viewing on every salmon run in BC. On a spring day in Jasper (where there is no grizzly hunt) you have an average of 100 bear photographers a day pumping

money into the local economy, staying in hotels, buying gas and food. Terrace and Smithers have way more bears than Jasper. Sometimes I see 30 bears a day, but they are all running away. No one wants to pay to see the ass-end of a bear." (See John Marriott case study attached.)

After Costa Rica banned trophy hunting 10 years ago income from wildlife-viewing sky-rocketed to \$2 billion annually (Mann, 2015).

### **3. Negative economic impact of grizzly hunting.**

In one study (Swain, 2006) fully one-third of tourists who came to BC and signed up for a bear-viewing tour said they would not have come to the province if bear-viewing was not available. Statistics show that the average bear-viewer that comes to BC spends 9-13 days in the province (Honey et al.; Swain, 2006). Groups that came on a bear-viewing tour spent an average of \$10,000 in BC over and above the cost of the tour, not including international airfares (Honey et al.).

With bear-viewing at capacity in the province and little room to expand, the province is likely losing many millions of dollars a year in lost eco-tourism revenue, and the associated benefits for other sectors.

### **4. Compatibility. Bear-viewing and grizzly hunting do not co-exist well in the same place at the same time.**

Some bear hunting advocates claim that both industries can co-exist. "That is like saying that hikers are welcome to hike on ATV trails," one bear-viewing operator said. "It sounds fair, but in reality, they simply don't." Most experts now recognise that hunting and viewing can not take place in the same place at the same time. As an example, in 2016 Grizzly Bear Ranch, an operation in the Kootenays, was forced to cancel one of its two bear-viewing seasons after the Ministry of Lands Forests and Natural Resource Operations extended the grizzly hunt in its area despite objections. Subsequently, there were two incidents when viewers were impacted by hunters.

Julius Strauss, the owner of Grizzly Bear Ranch, said: "We had a grizzly hunter drive through town with a dead grizzly bear strapped to the roof. Another time we were forced to leave a drainage when grizzly hunters arrived. The sad reality is that they can hunt where we view,

but we can't view where they hunt. We are a small family-run business in a remote rural community. Cancelling our spring viewing has pushed us right to the edge of viability." (See case study attached.)

## **5. Hunting hurts viewing, a new study concludes.**

While there has not been a study to measure the exact effects of bear-hunting on bear-viewing in Canada, a recent study in the US concluded that in areas where large predators are hunted, viewings of those predators drop significantly (Borg et al., 2016). The study detailed the behaviour of wolves and concluded that in years they were not hunted on the boundaries of the park they were up to 50 percent more likely to afford viewings to recreational wildlife viewers in Yellowstone Park (where hunting is banned.) In Denali, the chances increased even more. This suggests that a ban on grizzly hunting in BC would lead to a significant increase in bear-viewing, especially in remote communities where the tourists dollars would be especially welcome.

## **6. The cost of management. Bear-viewing vs. Bear hunting.**

While commercial grizzly-viewing is almost entirely self-regulated in BC (through the Commercial Bear Viewing Association), the province spends significant amounts on regulating grizzly hunting. One BC government wildlife biologist told the authors of the CREST report: "We spend an inordinate amount of time and resources on grizzly bear management and regulations, compared with other species in the province because it is a politically-charged hunt. I would say for sure it is a net loss."

## **7. BC's branding as an eco-tourism destination is being hurt by grizzly hunting.**

Less easy to quantify, but perhaps equally importantly, BC's branding as an eco-tourism destination is being tarnished by grizzly hunting. In 2005 the European Union banned the import of grizzly bear body parts citing "failure by the BC government to manage its grizzly bear population reliably". Anecdotal evidence suggests that most tourists questioned see grizzly hunting as a significant negative in their view of BC.

## 8. Context: 9 out of 10 BC residents want the grizzly hunt banned.

In a poll, in Nov 2013 & Oct 2015 taken by Insights West, 91 percent of British Columbians said they were in favour of banning grizzly hunting province-wide. “Only 7% in British Columbia and 12% in Alberta are in favour of trophy hunting” (Insights West, 2015). Other polls have given similar results. Polling also concluded that 92 per cent of rural British Columbians opposes the grizzly hunt. This flew in the face of the accepted wisdom which had suggested that urbanites were against the grizzly hunt while rural voters favoured it. The reality is that both oppose the grizzly hunt.

The number of BC residents opposing the hunt had trended steadily upwards since 2001 when the hunt was briefly halted. In 2001, 52 per cent of British Columbians opposed the grizzly hunt, in June 2008 73 per cent opposed grizzly hunting (McAllister), in Sept 2013 87 per cent opposed grizzly hunting.

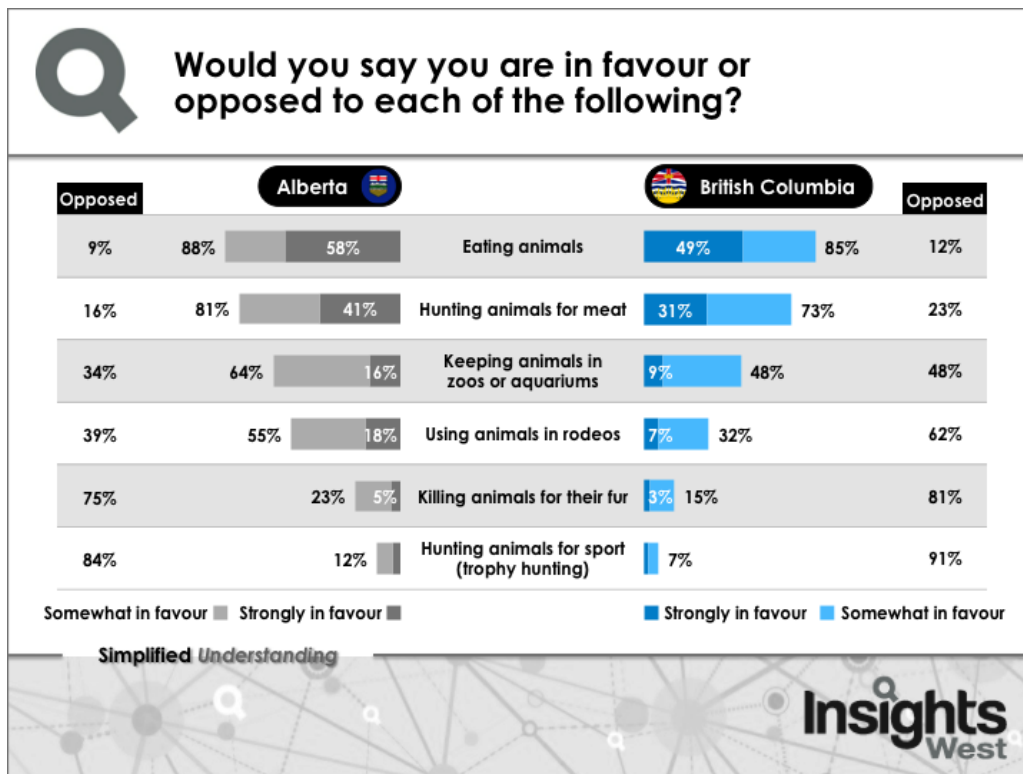


Image 1: Insights West 2015 poll.

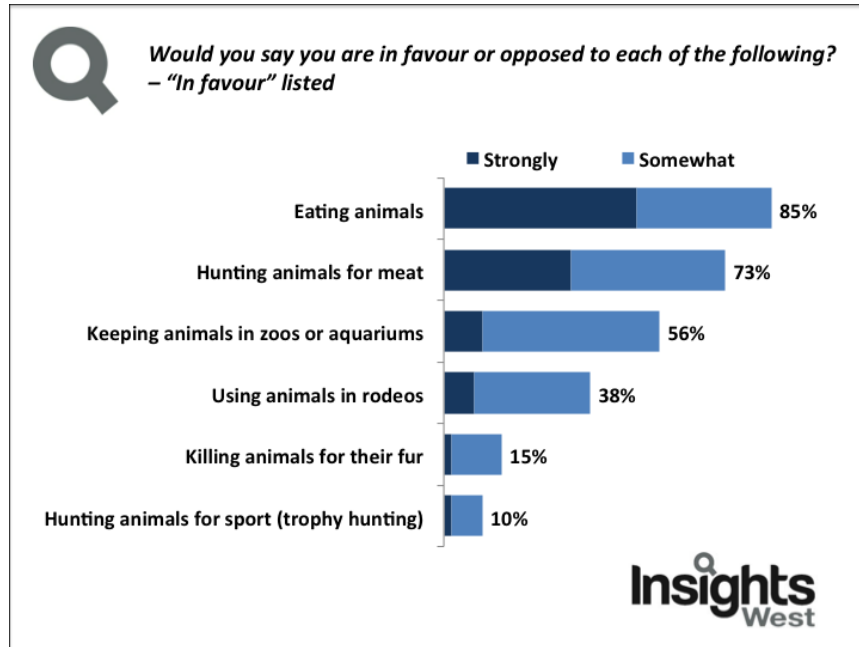


Image 2: Insights West 2013 poll

2013 poll states “Across British Columbia, only one-in-ten residents (10%) are in favour of hunting animals for sport, while 88% are opposed to the practice”. Image 3.

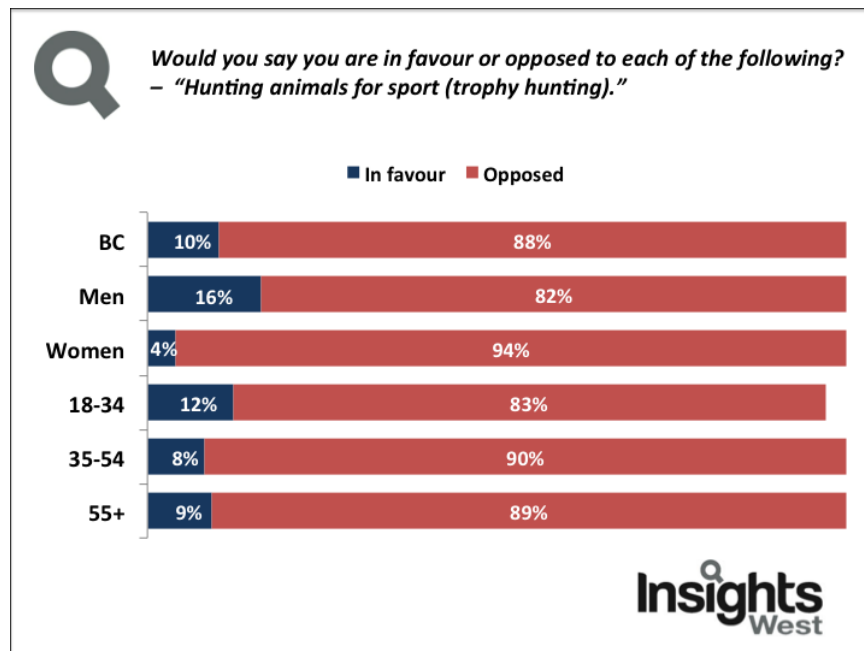


Image 3: Insights West 2013 poll – 88% opposed to trophy hunting

It is abundantly clear that few British Columbians are in favour of trophy hunting.

## Case Studies

There are over 60 bear-viewing lodges and other operations currently operating in BC. Here we have highlighted just a few.

### a. Knight Inlet Lodge.

- Brings in \$4 million a year in receipts from bear-viewers.
- In order to operate it is forced to pay a local guide outfitter *not* to hunt bears allocated under the provincial rules. To date, Knight Inlet Lodge has paid their local guide outfitter \$80,000 *not* to hunt bears in the area.
- Knight Inlet Lodge employees 30 seasonal and 10 year-round employees. The total amount paid in wages is \$1.06 million annually.
- The lodge directly benefits the local economy through relationships with Pacific Coastal Airlines, Vancouver Island Air, Comfort Inn Campbell River and many others. The total amount injected into the local economy is \$2.87 million annually.
- Knight Inlet Lodge also pays \$136,625 in federal and provincial taxes and licenses.

### b. Grizzly Bear Ranch

- Grizzly Bear Ranch is in a remote valley in the west Kootenays. It employs 10 local residents and brings in \$400,000 a year in receipts, more than the entire revenue from grizzly hunting in the West Kootenays.
- The government has consistently refused to give Grizzly Bear Ranch a local hunting closure to allow it to view grizzly bears in the spring and recently extended the grizzly hunt in the area, despite protests. As a result Grizzly Bear Ranch has been forced to cancel its spring viewing season, pushing the operation into the red.



- For the last two years, Grizzly Bear Ranch has implored MFLNRO to change the rules to give it some space to view bears in the spring, but all calls have been rejected or ignored so far.

### **c. Canadian Wildlife Photography Tours and Workshops**

- Canadian Wildlife Photography Tours and Workshops is run by John Marriott and brings four tours a year to BC worth \$100,000 to the province.
- John said: "My tours sell out in 24 hours and have waiting lists of 40 to 50 people. However, there is no space to expand. The Khutzeymateen (grizzly bear sanctuary) is full; the Chilcotin is full. We need more opportunities. The reason we can't do bear-viewing elsewhere is because of the grizzly hunting. I also photograph roadside bears in the National Parks. It is safe and natural. On a spring day in Jasper you have an average of 100 bear photographers out a day, all pumping money into the local economy, staying in hotels, buying gas and food. Terrace and Smithers have many more bears than Jasper. Sometimes I see 30 bears in a day, but they all runaway. I can go days without a photo. These bears are terrified. People don't want to pay to see the ass-end of a bear. I was on the Stewart-Cassiar Highway with a high-end client at the start of May. Every road we wanted to turn down, there were hunters. We tried 10 different roads and eventually gave up. The client was absolutely disgusted. You can't take a \$5,000 client into areas where there is bear hunting because you can't risk seeing a dead bear. My reputation would be screwed. Wolf-viewing in Yellowstone is worth \$35 million a year. BC is missing out on all this. Wildlife viewing is a huge factor in the economies in Banff and Jasper, and BC is missing out on all this."

### **d. Tide Rip Tours**

- Howard Pattinson runs Tide Rip Tours, a successful bear-viewing operation which takes day-trippers to view bears around Glendale Cove.
- Howard said: "Two years ago I had to decide whether to expand my business. Because of grizzly hunting in the area, I decided not to expand. I was going to buy another boat at a cost of

\$275,000, but I decided not to. We depend on five or six local bears who are used to boats pulling alongside to view them. They don't run away. In the other inlets, because of trophy hunting, grizzly bears simply run into the bush when a boat shows up."

#### **e. Tweedsmuir Park Lodge**

- Peter Mattsson and Beat Steiner are two of the co-owners of Tweedsmuir Park Lodge. Tweedsmuir has offered a bear-viewing programme since 2000 and is now almost fully booked.
- Tweedsmuir Park Lodge will take in \$800,000 this year in bear-viewing revenue. Their occupancy rate is at 99 percent for the peak season and expected to reach the same for shoulder season.
- Peter Mattsson said: "Over the last 10 years our grizzly bear viewing bookings have increased over 200%. This year, for example, we are pretty much sold out. The same goes for all the bear-viewing lodges in BC. Seeing bears are at the top of the list of most eco-tourists."
- "Our location is in the BC Park with restrictions on hunting. We live in peace with the bears. Not one incident have been reported over the last 10 years. It is a remarkable co-existence. However, right outside the park, just a few kilometres from our lodge, the same bears who interact with us are allowed to be shot and killed. We have lost bears over the years."

## References

Honey, M., Johnson, J., Menke, C., Cruz, A., Karwacki, J., & Durham, W. H. (2015). The Comparative Economic Value of Bear Viewing and Bear Hunting in the Great Bear Rainforest.

Insights West (2013, November 26). British Columbians Denounce Trophy Hunting. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.insightswest.com/news/british-columbians-denounce-trophy-hunting-furring/>

Insights West (2015, October 5). British Columbians and Albertans Condemn Trophy Hunting. <http://www.insightswest.com/news/british-columbians-and-albertans-condemn-trophy-hunting/>

Mann, A. (2015). *Importance of Economics, Conservation Laws, and Law Enforcement Concerning Deforestation of the Costa Rican Tropical Rainforest* (Doctoral dissertation).

Swain, P. (2006). The Value of Watchable Wildlife: Measuring the Impacts of Bear Viewing in British Columbia (Thesis research, Master of Science).