

# Hundreds of garter snakes disturbed during hibernation in Delta

By Amy Judd Online News Producer Global News Feb 27 2015

WATCH: Staff members at the Wildlife Rescue Centre in Burnaby care for garter snakes after hundreds were disturbed during hibernation in Delta.

VANCOUVER – Staff members at the [Wildlife Rescue Centre in Burnaby](#) are dealing with an unusual amount of snakes in their care.

More than 400 snakes were delivered to their facility after they were disturbed in their hibernation den during dike repair work in Delta.

The first 12 arrived on Wednesday afternoon and another 400 were delivered Thursday after rip-rap (rubble and rocks) were removed from the Boundary Bay Dike works near Beach Grove.

During the fall and winter months, garter snakes gather together to brumate, which is a form of reptilian hibernation.

Concerned residents did report the possible presence of hibernating snakes prior to the start of the repair work so SNC-Lavalin Inc applied for permits from the BC Ministry of Forests, Lands and Natural Resource to allow for their removal. The Wildlife Rescue Centre says more snakes may be on the way.

For now, each snake has been examined and placed in a large plastic container with other snakes, along with a thick layer of damp wood shavings and a dish of distilled water. The tubs are being stored outside to allow the snakes to continue their hibernation until early April. When temperatures rise above 14°C and there's no more risk of frost, the snakes will be released back to Delta.

“We get a few snakes in each year but this is just extraordinary. We've never seen anything like this before and we have never treated so many animals in a single day,” says Linda Bakker, Wildlife Rescue's Team Leader of Wildlife Rehabilitation.

“We've been working as quickly as we can to check the snakes individually and get them housed and settled so that they can continue their hibernation in peace. It has

been quite an intense operation but we are pleased that we have been able to play our part in saving them.”

Staff at the centre have identified three species of garter snakes: the common garter snake, the northwestern garter snake and the western terrestrial garter snake. Some are being treated for their injuries, but most are healthy.