

WildSafeBC Year End Report 2014

Grand Forks, BC

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Executive Summary

WildSafeBC launched the first season ever for Grand Forks, BC. The season began on December 16, 2013 with a major focus on reducing human-wildlife conflict (primarily deer). The program endeavors to reduce human-wildlife conflict through education, innovation, and cooperation. The new WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WSBCCC), Laurie Grant, worked to keep attractant management at the forefront of resident's minds through educational displays, door-to-door visits, presentations with field experts, media releases, and a community Facebook page.



Figure 1 WildSafeBC Grand Forks Coordinator, Laurie Grant.

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Highlights from the 2014 Season

The launch of the WildSafeBC program in Grand Forks was welcomed by many residents who said it was a useful expenditure by the city. Residents were glad to see the program offering information on many species of wildlife and felt that it was an important, value-added, vehicle for offering education. Keeping WildSafeBC and its messages of attractant management in the public eye was the focus this season as well as providing concrete solutions to human-wildlife conflict using the following tools:

Presentations

“Let’s Talk About…” presentations were developed for a wide range of audiences this season to provide monthly public insight into the reasons human-wildlife conflict occurs and what we can do to reduce it (Figure 2). WildSafeBC Grand Forks gave the following presentations at the Grand Forks and District Public Library:

- Deer Proof Gardening
- Hiking Safety
- Rattlesnakes
- Bears and Electric Fencing
- Deer and Lyme Disease



Figure 2 “Let’s Talk About Rattlesnakes” presentation at Grand Forks and District Library, 2014.

Presentations for Kids

The BC school strike made classroom presentations impossible, therefore Rattlesnake presentations were developed for youth at the Grand Forks and District Library by special request:

Reading Club 4-6 year-olds Reading Club 9-12 year-olds General- kids of all ages

Displays

Educational displays at local events also proved to be an effective part of the program's delivery, visited with interest by locals and visitors to Grand Forks. Each event showcased a professional display of WildSafeBC educational materials including: species brochures for black bear, coyote, cougar, deer, rattlesnake, and raccoon; a multi-species poster; a banner; a stand-up display; and a folding display, all usually housed under a colorful tent. The season also showcased a growing collection of wildlife props including: a white-tailed deer skull replica, toy models of a buck, doe and fawn, a scat identifier tool, rubber scat models of white-tailed deer, mule deer, and cougar, a variety of reference books and occasionally a stuffed bear and prehistoric bear paw replica. It was a great place to discuss local wildlife issues with residents. People shared their own wildlife sightings and stories and were able to access information and solutions for their attractant challenges. The display was also a big hit with kids of all ages (Figure 3) – offering kids a temporary wildlife tattoos, multi-purpose bookmarks and take-home animal species crafting. WildSafeBC spent 30 days at the following local events:

- Partner's in Parenting Conference (Mar)
- Grand Forks Farmer's Market (Jun–Oct)
- Grand Forks Fall Fair (August)
- Rock Creek Fall Fair (September)
- Where the Wild Things Are (August)
- Harvest Festival (September)
- Doukhobor Flour Mill (July-September)
- Airport Appreciation Day (August)



Figure 3 Display at “Where The Wild Things Are” event, August 2014.

Media Coverage

WildSafeBC Grand Forks appeared in print in the Grand Forks Gazette 12 times; online in the Boundary Sentinel 5 times; as well as in many local event calendars and was interviewed by local radio twice. The Coordinator developed the WildSafeBC Grand Forks Facebook page, the local chapter of WildSafeBC where residents can discuss (in a respectful manner) all matters related to human-wildlife conflicts in Grand Forks. The readership increased weekly to a total of 118 likes.

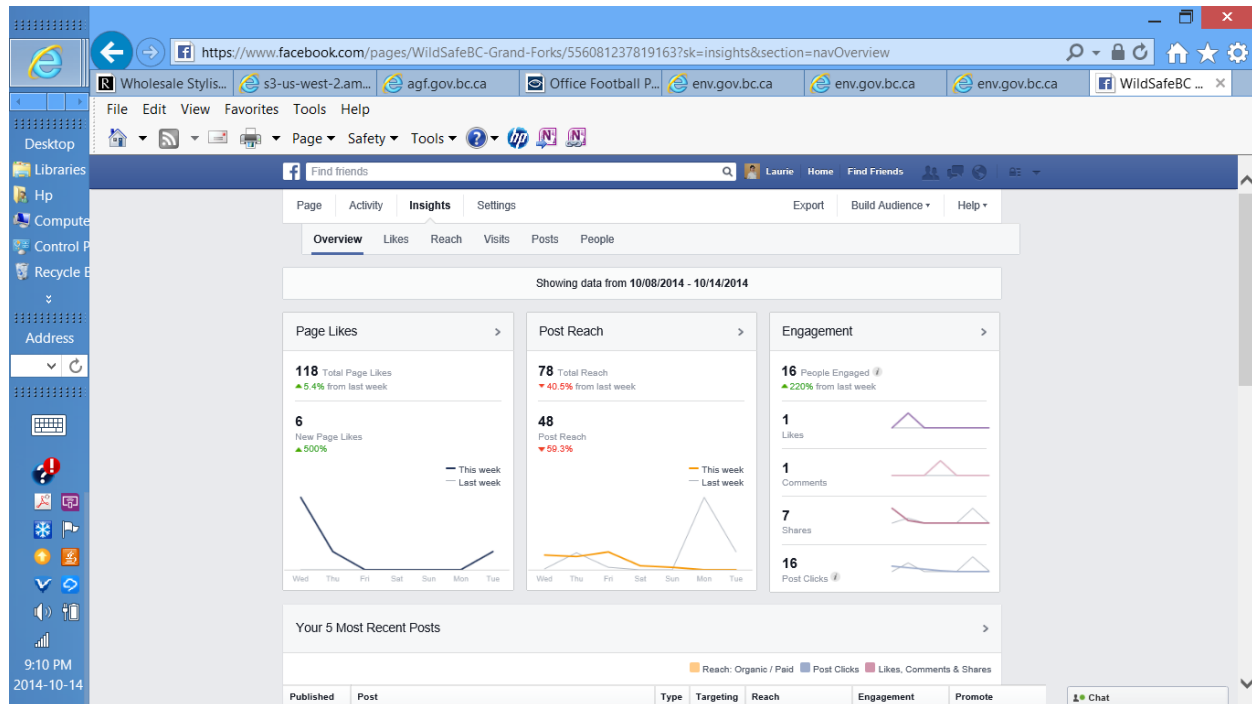


Figure 4 WildSafeBC Grand Forks Facebook page weekly insights, Oct 14, 2014.

Deer Committee

The Coordinator provided monthly reports at the Grand Forks Deer Committee meetings and participated in semi-annual Deer Counts. With the Coordinator’s input, the Deer Committee made recommendations to city council for: increasing signage (Don’t Feed the Deer); a question of a deer cull for voters at the upcoming election; and collaring 9 deer to monitor GPS signals for their movements in the city.

Door-to-Door and Garbage Tagging

The Coordinator visited neighborhoods that were reported to have human-wildlife conflict with brochures and information. Residents were happy to see that education was being offered and eager to discuss the problems. The Coordinator also conducted garbage tagging, leaving a bright yellow “Bear Attractant” sticker on bins put out too early. This education will hopefully play a role in reduced bear conflicts next season.

Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP)

The Coordinator invited the community to participate in the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) where individuals can report animal wildlife sightings and set up notifications for email alerts and an opportunity to participate in a private Grand Forks Group.

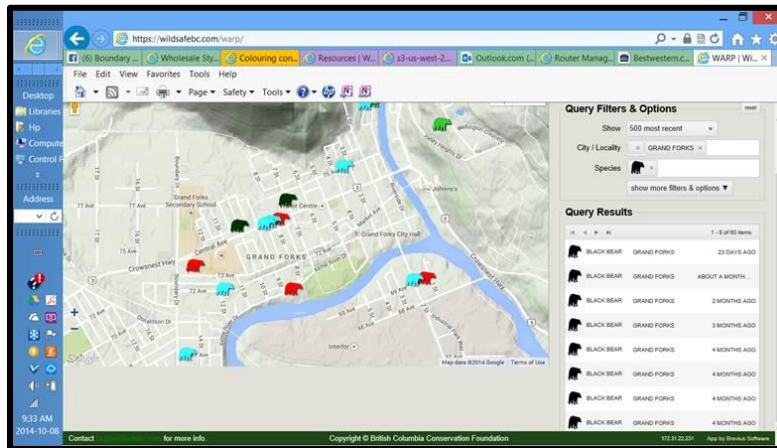


Figure 4 Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) bear activity, 2014.

Volunteering

West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group (WKBCWG) - WildSafeBC Grand Forks attended a meeting of the WKBCWG, an initiative of local bear biologists and the Conservation Officer Service. Meetings are held bi-annually with the goal of identifying solutions to human-bear conflict and collaborating to find ways of implementing those solutions.

Rural Communities Conference - WildSafeBC booth at the educational event that culture, education, and a plethora of wonderful ideas to take home and share with my community.

Grand Forks Education Garden - WildSafeBC Grand Forks sits on the volunteer board working to develop a local education garden.

Doukhobor Flour Mill – set up display offering human-wildlife conflict reduction ideas to visitors and locals of the community while volunteering at the mill.

Challenges of the 2014 Season

Unsecured garbage, compost, and unpicked fruit were the largest attractant problems for bears in 2014. WildSafeBC hopes that the door-to-door visits, public presentations, Facebook discussions, and published press releases assist to educate residents to reduce the attractants available to wildlife in our community in the future.

Deer-feeding residents, availability of unfenced plants, and lack of deterrents were the largest attractant problems for deer in 2014. The issue remains a challenge as many people who feed deer are resistant to change without bylaw enforcement.

Deer-vehicular collisions remain high in Grand Forks. The main highway through town is under the jurisdiction of the Provincial not Municipal government. Frequent collisions with deer cause thousands of dollars of property damage, high insurance rates and the preventable death of deer.

Goals for 2015

Looking forward to the 2015 season, WildSafeBC hopes to continue to collaborate with community partners to make concrete solutions available for local wildlife attractant issues through education by:

- Continuing to build on, and forge new, relationships with community groups, local businesses, and other non-profit groups with the goal of making WildSafeBC a familiar and integral part of our community.
- Update the Bear Hazard Assessment and Human-Bear Conflict Management Plans for Grand Forks and the surrounding area.
- Extend the WildSafeBC Program to include the rural residential areas of Grand Forks in Area D and offer educational programs for the ATV club and visitors to their new multi-use facilities.
- Continue to offer education to a wide range of audiences, offering human-wildlife conflict presentations targeting wildlife species that cause concern locally.

Acknowledgements

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Finally, thank you to all those residents who and refrained from feeding wildlife and those who made an effort this season to remove wildlife attractants from their properties. Let's keep wildlife wild and our communities safe!



British Columbia Conservation Foundation