



British Columbia Conservation Foundation

QUESNEL WILDSAFEBC

2014 YEAR END REPORT

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2014 saw the inaugural season for a WildSafeBC program in the City of Quesnel. As it was sponsored only by the City of Quesnel, operations were limited to the Municipal boundaries of the City. The programs staff consisted of a WildSafeBC Community Coordinator position and a WildSafeBC Ambassador position. The initial emphasis was placed on introducing the program, its goals and objectives to Quesnel's populace through as many public displays and media presentations as possible. In addition, intensive garbage marking and door to door interviews were used to emphasize the need for better wildlife attractant management.

As the season progressed, it became apparent that the message was getting out and the sources of human - wildlife conflicts were being markedly reduced in the community. By working closely with City of Quesnel staff and the Conservation Officer Service, identified problems were responded to and in most cases, reduced. It is hoped that the program can be continued and expanded upon now that the basis has been established for a successful relationship with the people of Quesnel. Expansion to include the perimeter areas under the Cariboo Regional District jurisdiction would be most useful in reducing overall human - wildlife conflicts in the urban areas.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE 2014 SEASON

Obviously, the inception of the WildSafeBC program for the City of Quesnel was the major highlight of the year. The enthusiastic acceptance of the citizens of Quesnel (and the surrounding area) of the program and its objectives and meaning was a great first step in seeing the program succeed in the long term. Quesnel's citizens are for the most part, very "Wildlife Savvy" and were pleased to see an attempt to mitigate a long standing problem in the community. They were eager to engage in discussion of the problems and solutions at every opportunity.

PRESENTATIONS AND DISPLAYS

Presenting the factors that cause human – wildlife conflicts in the urban environment in a clear and concise manner and supporting that message with interesting and attractive display and hand-out materials is critical to reinforcing the message of wildlife protection and management. The use of props such as black bear, grizzly bear, coyote and bobcat furs made for many inquiries and interest from those attending the displays.



Dennis Girodat and Emma Alexander at Farmer's Market Display

In 2014, all of the Quesnel WildSafeBC displays were attended by staff at community events and presentations and were often partnered with the COS or other NGO volunteer groups. Due to labour issues in the educational field, school presentations were not possible until well into the fall. Despite this, the following presentations and displays were conducted this season.

- 12 Quesnel Farmer's Markets
- 2 days at Quesnel's "Billy Barker Days" Fair
- 1 day at Quesnel's Fall Fair
- 1 presentation to Nazko First Nation elementary age children
- Daily presentations at 2 -7 day local "Kids Eco Camps"
- 2 presentations at weekly Eco Camps for preschool ages (1 with local Conservation Officer)
- 1 co – presentation / display / scavenger hunt for children on BC Rivers Day in partnership with local Baker Creek Enhancement Society
- 13 local Elementary School presentations (October/November)



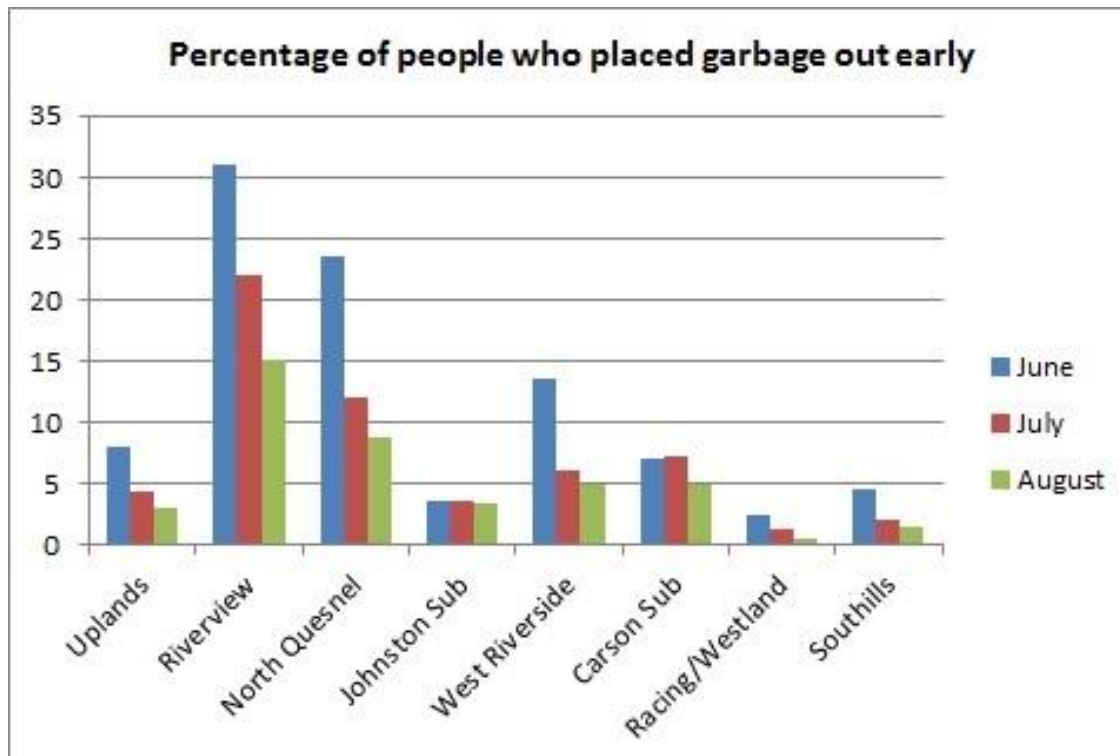
Presentation to BCES's Children's Eco Camp with CO Ryane McIntyre and WildSafeBC

WILDLIFE ATTRACTANT BYLAWS

Discussions with Bylaw staff, City Councilor Laury – Anne Roodenburg and Conservation Officer Ryane McIntyre indicated that there is a strong interest in developing a bylaw to assist in dealing with wildlife attractant issues in Quesnel over and above the authority of the Wildlife Act. To that end, examples of various bylaws in force in other municipalities in B.C. were obtained from various WildSafeBC Community Coordinators and forwarded to Quesnel City Council for consideration and possible implementation in the future.

GARBAGE TAGGING

An intensive garbage tagging program was implemented in early June as a mechanism to get the message of wildlife attractant problems in the community. From early June to the end of August, WildSafeBC staff and volunteers conducted the tagging program for nearly every scheduled pickup by checking the areas on the evening prior to scheduled pickup. Initial results showed a high level of non compliance with the City “Guidelines” and the standardized containers were an early source of bear problems in some areas adjacent to green belts and interface areas. Through the use of Media information by WildSafeBC, the City of Quesnel and the Conservation Officer Service and due in no small part to the tagging program, compliance levels rose to nearly 100% in many areas by the end of August. Spot checks thereafter indicated a continuation of this trend.



Changes in Compliance in Early Garbage Placement

ELECTRIC FENCING

There were only a few instances where WildSafeBC staff (along with Quesnel Bylaw staff) dealt with electric fencing proposals within the City. Informational resources and advice was provided to the proponents and there have been no problems identified to date. There were a fairly large number of inquiries fielded by WildSafeBC staff about electric fencing issues and these mostly arose at the Farmer’s Market displays. Many were from persons living in the outlying areas and involved in agricultural operations of various sizes and types.

FRUIT GLEANING

A fruit gleaning program was tried for the first time in Quesnel with WildSafeBC coordinating the program. In many ways it was a success in that it raised awareness of the problem within the local area. There were some issues with WildSafeBC not being able to respond to requests from outlying areas (outside the City limits). This was partly mitigated by partnering with a local business who was able to respond to some of the out of town requests.

Wherever possible, fruit collected that was of “food quality” was separated, packaged and delivered to local charities and food banks. Nearly all of the remainder went to local agricultural operators for animal feed. Nothing was disposed of at the local landfill. A total of 15 requests were dealt with in one form or another. Another limitation encountered was a lack of available volunteers



Fruit Gleaning apples - South Quesnel

CHALLENGES OF THE CURRENT SEASON

Quesnel has always been a “Wildlife Wise” community and the main “Challenge” was to set up the infrastructure of the WildSafeBC program and familiarize the citizens of Quesnel with the program’s goals and objectives. “Getting the word out” was the initial priority and once that was done, keeping a high level of awareness within the community was all that was needed to make the program work. This continues to be a work in progress.

If there was a difficulty encountered, it would be a shortage of volunteers. Those that stepped up did invaluable service, but like many organizations these days, “volunteer fatigue” presents an ongoing problem for service delivery that depends on volunteers.

The limitation of being restricted to the City of Quesnel municipal boundary was also very problematic. There is a large peripheral area of urban development all around Quesnel and obviously these areas encounter wildlife conflict issues even before the wildlife ends up in Quesnel. By not being able to address these issues on the “outskirts” of Quesnel City limits makes for a more difficult solution once wildlife enter the City’s boundary often already habituated to humans.

OBJECTIVES AND GOALS FOR THE 2015 SEASON

Obviously, a continuation and enhancement of the WildSafeBC program for Quesnel (and hopefully the surrounding area) is absolutely essential. A broadening of the wildlife / human interaction concept to include all forms of wildlife is needed to bring other species than just bears into the equation.

Continuation and broadening of partnerships with local government agencies as well as NGO’s and citizen groups is needed to continue the dissemination of concepts of Wildlife Attractant management within the community.

Development and implementation of a “Wildlife Attractant Bylaw “ to deal with issues such as domestic garbage management, fruit and vegetable accumulations and early garbage can exposure on the street will go a long way to curtail any problematic locations.

The continuation of the “WildSafeBC Ambassador program” would insure a comprehensive public information and educational program by allowing for participation in summer programs for both adults and children.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WildSafeBC Quesnel would like to acknowledge the assistance and support the program received in its inaugural season from its sponsors, partners and volunteers.

Thanks to our sponsors: British Columbia Conservation Foundation and the City of Quesnel. Thank you to our community partners who provided invaluable support and guidance. Thanks to Conservation Officer Ryane McIntyre, CO Jeff Piwek and CO Joel Kline. Many thanks to City of Quesnel's Mayor - Mary Sjostrom and the Quesnel City Councilors, in particular Councilor Laury-Anne Roodenburg for her support and direction. Thanks to Adele Wilson and the City of Quesnel Bylaw Officer staff as well as the Public Works staff. Thanks to Tracy Bond and the Baker Creek Enhancement Society (BCES) for their assistance and cooperation.

Acknowledgement must be made to our small core of dedicated volunteers: Mrs. Alexander, A. Charbonneau, J. Girodat, S. Bruce and C. Poore. and last but not least to the BCCF staff whose guidance, training and patience were invaluable in making things work smoothly.