

# WildSafeBC Year End Report 2014

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## Williams Lake

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## Executive Summary

In June of 2014 WildSafeBC, a program designed to reduce conflict between humans and wildlife in communities throughout British Columbia, began for the first time in Williams Lake with Dylan Matheson as the community coordinator.

The summer of 2014 saw almost no bear calls, but there were still numerous calls regarding other wildlife such as cougars. In Williams Lake cougars are spotted year round, while bears tend to only come into town during the fall months.

This year fruit trees were the biggest attractant for bears throughout the fall, but garbage was overall the greatest attractant.

The only other animals that were a problem were deer; calls for other animals such as coyotes were almost non-existent.

This report contains a summary of the activities conducted by WildSafeBC Williams Lake, along with the challenges faced, and the goals for next season.

Species	Count
BLACK BEAR	43
BOBCAT	1
COUGAR	11
COYOTE	1
DEER	26
LYNX	1
MOOSE	2
OTHER	1
RAPTOR	1
UNKNOWN	1
WILD SHEEP	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>89</b>

**Table 1.0 Counts of calls to the RAPP line, Williams Lake, Jan. 1 – Nov 21, 2014**

## Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	2
Highlights from the 2014 season .....	4
Door to Door, and Working with the COS.....	4
Public Displays.....	4
Introduction of the WARP System .....	5
Media .....	5
Presentations .....	6
Garbage Tagging .....	6
Challenges in 2014 .....	7
Goals for 2015.....	7
Acknowledgments.....	8

## Highlights from the 2014 season

Being the program's first year in Williams Lake the main focus was on reaching out to the public, and talking to residents. Overall the program was very well received and many residents were pleased that we now had WildSafeBC in town.

## Door to Door, and Working with the COS

Door-to-door canvassing was a major aspect of the program this year. Throughout the early months when bears weren't around WildSafeBC Williams Lake's Community Coordinator (WSCC) targeted areas that were subject to high call activity last year. When calls did start to come in the WSCC was able to work with the Conservation Officer Service in order to canvas areas where bears were causing problems, and inform residents of how they could reduce the chance of a bear visiting their yard. Through door to door efforts WildSafeBC reached 550 residents.

## Public Displays

Public displays were very effective in sharing WildSafeBC's messaging. There were several markets in Williams Lake which the WSCC managed to attend on at least a bi-weekly basis, along with Williams Lake's annual stampede street fair, and the annual Christmas Craft Fair at the Elks Hall. The displays included bookmarks, tattoos, informational pamphlets (cougar, bear, coyote, deer, and raccoon), a display board with pictures and bear attractant information, two black bear skulls, a hide, and a claw, along with a grizzly claw, and a cougar skull. This all helped to bring in many interested people. Through the public displays this year WildSafeBC Williams Lake reached over 950 interested residents.



Figure 1: WildSafeBC's booth at the 2014 Street Fair during the Williams Lake Stampede

## Introduction of the WARP System

The Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) is a new tool developed through WildSafeBC to allow the public to monitor wildlife activity in their area and add their own wildlife sightings. I included its use in several Facebook posts, and many people at farmer's markets were very interested in its applications.

## Media

During the season I managed to receive over 100 likes on the new WildSafeBC Williams Lake Facebook page, which I used to inform the public of upcoming WildSafeBC appearances, provide tips to reduce attractants, and answer questions. WildSafeBC Williams Lake Was also featured on Shaw TV's *go! Williams Lake*, for an interview regarding bear attractants, safety, and the WARP system.

## Presentations

WildSafeBC Williams Lake did 19 presentations at the local elementary schools in 2014, the main target was grades 4 and 5, but due to the number of split classes many grade 3's and 6's were also included. The following list includes the schools and number of students.

- Nesika Elementary – 152 students (Including French Immersion)
- Cataline Elementary – 81 students
- Chilcotin Road Elementary – 73 students
- Marie Sharpe Elementary – 61 students
- Williams Lake Senior Secondary – 25 students
- Sacred Heart Catholic School – 45 students

WildSafeBC Williams Lake also presented 6 times outside of schools to a variety of groups on the topic on bears, their attractants, and how to manage them. These included a daycare, 2 Girl Scout groups, 2 day camp groups at the local park, Scout Island, and a group of adults at Scout Island. The latter presentation also included a demonstration of the WARP system. Through other presentations WildSafeBC Williams Lake reached 114 people.

## Garbage Tagging

Garbage tagging involves placing bright yellow stickers on the lids of garbage cans that are out the night before garbage collection. The results were mixed, one night roughly 75% of houses had their garbage placed out, while on another night there was only about 20%. Overall the average was closer to 40%. This year no neighborhoods were revisited so it's difficult to say if there was any significant change due to garbage tagging.

## Challenges in 2014

In 2014 WildSafeBC was brand new to Williams Lake, this in itself was a challenge because nobody was aware the program was available to offer help, do presentations, or answer questions. Therefore WildSafeBC Williams Lake had no established relationships with local groups.

Another large obstacle was the lack of bylaws preventing residents from engaging in habits that may attract bears, such as placing garbage out early, leaving garbage in an unsecured area, and cleaning up fruit trees. This made the WSCC's work more difficult because residents only had to remove attractants if they felt the need to, or if it was severe enough that the conservation officers decided to issue a dangerous wildlife protection order (DWOP)

The garbage cans themselves in Williams Lake were also a bit of a problem. They provided no resistance to bears whatsoever with a simple flip top lid.

## Goals for 2015

In 2015 WildSafeBC Williams Lake wants to speak to the City of Williams Lake regarding three things. Foremost the City of Williams Lake would benefit in terms of conflict reduction if they were to consider creating a bylaw that wouldn't allow residents to place their trash out before a certain time and also introduce some sort of bear-resistant bins for residents. There are numerous ornamental fruit trees along the boulevard in several neighbourhoods, these trees are unwanted by many residents but were planted by the city, on city property. WildSafeBC Williams Lake would like to talk to the city about having these trees removed at residences where they are not wanted.

In the coming year WildSafeBC Williams Lake will also focus more strongly on media such as radio, and newspapers to spread the word on the program, and put on several larger public presentations, possibly including activities such as nature walks.

## **Acknowledgments**

On behalf of WildSafeBC Williams Lake I would like to thank the City of Williams Lake, the Ministry of Environment, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation providing this year's funding.

WildSafeBC Williams Lake would also like to thank Ms. Jack of Lake City Secondary for providing the program with a cougar skull and a bear skull.

I would also like to thank the community of Williams Lake for receiving the programs so well.