

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2015

Fraser Valley Regional District

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Student Ambassadors at Stave Family Fun Days



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Executive Summary

The 2015 season started out very quiet. The summer was hot and dry with few bear sightings across the Fraser Valley. However, in the early fall with fewer berries than normal, bear sightings increased as bears came into neighbourhoods looking for easy meals.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) noted many instances of garbage stored improperly and of fruit trees left unpicked. This careless attractant management lead to many conflicts. The WCC and Ambassadors (two students working under the Canada Summer Jobs program) worked proactively to keep attractant management at the forefront of residents' minds through educational displays, presentations and media releases. Responsible attractant management is the only effective long term solution to reducing human-wildlife conflict in the Fraser Valley.

With our expanded scope residents are happy to engage with us on all species from raccoons and geese, to cougars and bears.



Figure 1 - WildSafeBC Ambassadors Hailey Deptuck and Gavin Noa at the Agassiz Farm Fresh Market.

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Highlights from the 2015 Season

The WildSafeBC (WSBC) program in the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) covers many communities. We make an effort to reach all areas based on the conflicts and needs of each community. Over 11,000 people were contacted this season (Table 1) as we continued to increase awareness of the WildSafeBC program and provide valuable advice to recreationists, businesses, and residents on how to reduce human-wildlife conflict.

Table 1 - Breakdown of how and where people were contacted in the 2015 season

2015	Events	Presentations	Door to Door	Total
Abbotsford	2,808	507	1,703	5,018
Chilliwack	363	546	1,062	1,971
Cultus	164	0	52	216
Harrison	381	188	180	749
Mission	1,298	749	440	2,487
Agassiz	523	0	0	523
Deroche	71	0	60	131
Total	5,608	1,990	3,497	11,095

Garbage Tagging and Door-to-Door Education

Door to door consists of delivering face-to-face education in areas facing frequent human-wildlife conflicts. Neighbourhoods are chosen based off of information on our Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP), requests by the conservation officers, or the public. Residents are informed of recent sightings and attractant management methods. This season we reached 3,497 residents. Where garbage is a major attractant WildSafeBC conducts garbage tagging inspections by placing bright yellow “Wildlife Attractant” stickers on bins put out too early. We selected neighbourhoods based on conflict history in WARP and also by request of residents and city officials.

Delegation to Mission Council

WildSafeBC was approached by the Mission Environmental Coordinator to speak about human-wildlife conflicts in the District to the Council members. This was in coordination with bringing a new waste management bylaw forward to add wildlife attractant management requirements and attached fines. A new bylaw would greatly enhance our education efforts in the District of Mission.

Presentations

Presentations are an important tool for educating large groups and conveying a lot of information. School presentations prepare our next generation to lead more wildlife-aware lives and community group or council meetings can influence policies and organizations. A range of different audiences were reached this season totalling 1,990 people (Appendix A).



Figure 2 - Mission Ambassador, Hailey Deptuck, presenting to Sons of Norway Heritage Camp.

Day Camp

We designed a Day Camp program with Mission's Adopt-A-Block to educate children and their parents about human-wildlife conflicts and the outcomes of littering. We led an animal tracking scavenger hunt, litter audit, WildSafeBC Jeopardy, and crafts. Parents expressed great interest in the program and we hope to offer more activity days like this one in 2016.



Figure 3 - Explaining how to play WildSafeBC Jeopardy.

Community Events

Educational displays at various locations are always popular with kids and allow residents to discuss local wildlife issues and successes. Through these displays the WCC gains a better understanding of local issues and can provide advice to many residents. WildSafeBC attended various events and contacted 5608 people (Appendix B).



Figure 4 - Abbotsford Ambassador, Gavin Noa, at the Mission Children's Festival.

Media

The WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Facebook page was updated throughout the season to provide information on status of conflicts, attractant management, and where to see us at events.

This year the WildSafeBC message was spread even further through the help of local media outlets by publishing press releases in papers and social media. The support and interest of these outlets is much appreciated.



Figure 5 - Community Coordinator, Rebecca McMurray, presenting at the Hick's Lake amphitheatre

Challenges of the 2015 Season

The Fraser Valley Regional District encompasses many communities all with their unique challenges. However, there were common themes throughout the season.

Late Season

Each year many conflicts begin to arise in late April/early May. Unfortunately the program did not start its season until June, forcing a reactive rather than proactive approach to reducing conflicts. Conflicts continue into the winter when WildSafeBC is out of commission, extended hours or an earlier start date would benefit communities facing these conflicts.

Size

The FVRD covers an area of 13,361.74 km² and has a population of roughly 278,000 people making it difficult to stay on top of all the wildlife conflicts and reach all residents. The Wildlife Alert Reporting Program and information from residents and Conservation Officers help to prioritize time distribution. The use of local newspapers and social media is also important for reaching those we cannot speak to directly. The summer student Ambassadors make it possible to more effectively manage the area as a single community coordinator could not do it alone.

Garbage and Fruit Trees

Unsecured garbage continues to be a huge issue and several bears were destroyed as a result. Often older homes do not have an enclosed garage for residents to store garbage; manual pick up in all communities makes use of a bear resistant bin challenging. Neighbourhoods in Promontory, Mission, and Sumas Mountain have been visited repeatedly over the years but continue to leave attractants unmanaged. The Chilliwack Waste Management bylaw encourages residents to place garbage out the night before collection leading to confusion.

Fruit trees became a prevalent issue in the fall as well. Strata and privately owned fruit trees were left unpicked and an absence of fruit gleaning groups in some areas made it difficult to remove unwanted fruit.

Unawareness of Green Space

Many residents move into green space areas not realizing that animals use those places as shelter and are surprised when we inform them of conflicts. Realtors and Welcome Wagon could be helpful in education efforts as well as the Home Ambassador program.

The Region

Wildlife conflicts are reported to the RAPP line and are available to the public on the WildSafeBC website. The overall number of wildlife conflicts reported in the Fraser Valley Regional District has decreased since the WSBC program started in 2013 (Fig. 6 & 7).

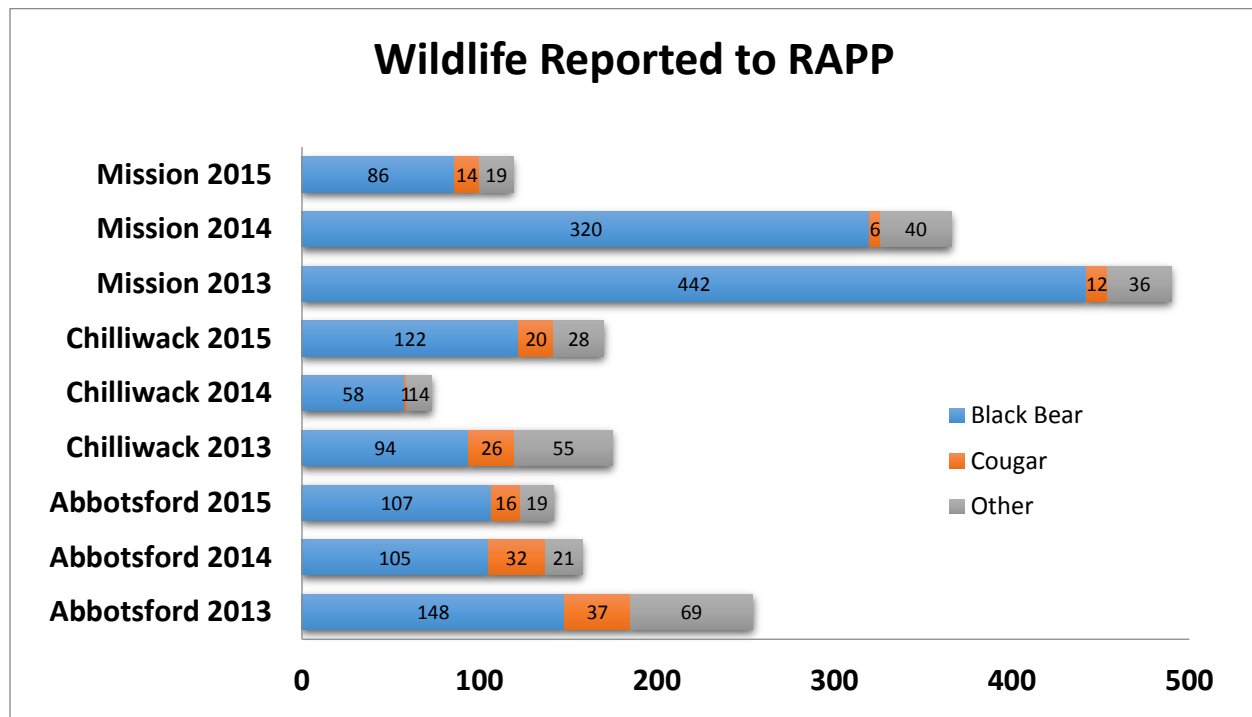


Figure 6 – Wildlife sightings reported to RAPP since the WildSafeBC program began in 2013. Black bears are the most reported animal in the Fraser Valley. These numbers represent the number of animals reported and do not necessarily reflect actual wildlife populations. Reported conflicts have decreased since the WildSafeBC program started in 2013.

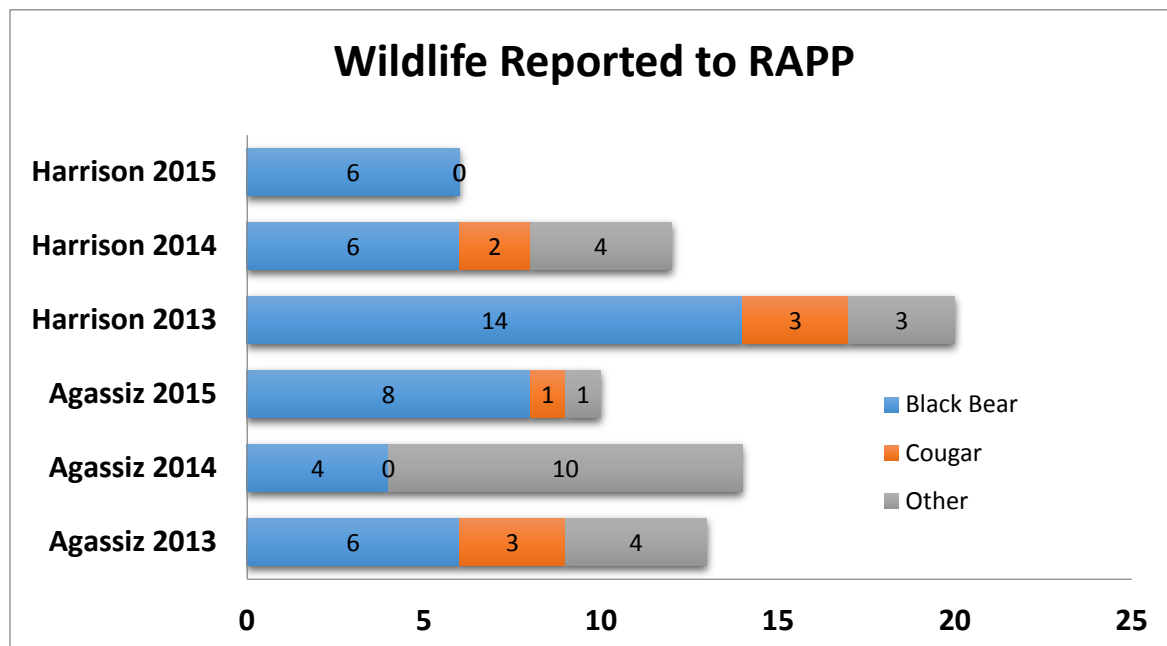


Figure 7 - Wildlife sightings reported to RAPP since WildSafeBC began in 2013.

Goals for 2015

- Continue building community recognition through relationships with local groups.
- Encourage a WildSafeBC Home Ambassador program and involvement in Block Watches to expand our reach across the large region.
- Expand on community workshops and activities provided by WildSafeBC.
- Approach the City of Chilliwack about an improved Waste Management Bylaw and facilitate the transition of Mission's new bylaw.
- Acquire a second set of animal display items to allow for multiple events and presentations to be attended simultaneously
- Expand upon approaches to increase awareness and compliance of wildlife attractant management

Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Regional District is grateful for the generous support the program receives from its sponsors, partners and volunteers. Thanks to our sponsors: The BC Ministry of Environment, British Columbia Conservation Foundation, and the Fraser Valley Regional District.

Our community partners have provided invaluable support and guidance. A big thanks to Christina Vugteveen at the Fraser Valley Regional District, Shawn Gurney at the City of Abbotsford, Jennifer Meier at the District of Mission, Lydia Koot with the Hope Mountain Black Bear Committee, and Debra Key with the Village of Harrison.

Thank you to the Conservation Officer Service, especially CO Don Stahl. A huge thanks to the incredibly hard working and creative Canada Summer Job Students, Hailey Deptuck and Gavin Noa, who were indispensable to this year's program.

To all the volunteers who helped with tagging, door-to-door, and events we truly appreciate your help. Finally, thank you to all those residents who made an effort this season to remove wildlife attractants from their properties. Let's keep wildlife wild and our communities safe!

Appendix A – Groups Presented to by WildSafeBC

- Hick's Lake Campground
- Sons of Norway lot owners and children's camp
- BCWF Go Wild! Youth Event
- Camp Luther
- District of Mission Council
- Camp Wanarok
- Promontory Heights Elementary
- Vedder Middle School
- A.D. Rundle Middle School
- Abbotsford Middle School
- Mission Beaver Scouts
- Terry Fox Elementary
- Fraser Valley Home School Students
- Abbotsford Cub Scouts
- Sardis Elementary
- Edwin S. Richards Elementary
- Dewdney Elementary
- Mission Beaver Scouts
- Chilliwack Scouts
- Prince Charles Elementary
- Hatzic Elementary
- Mountain Elementary
- Mission Central Elementary
- FVRD RACS

Appendix B – Events Attended by WildSafeBC

- Agassiz Farm Fresh Market (x7)
- Abbotsford Farmer's Market (x3)
- Mission Children's Festival
- Rec on Tour (x3)
- Waterloo Farm Festival
- Sasquatch Days
- Canada Day Mission & Abbotsford
- Deroche Farmer's Market
- Berry Beat Festival
- Jam in Jubilee (x4)
- Family Fun Day at Stave Powerhouse
- Mission Folk Festival
- Parks Day at Cultus
- Harrison Dragonboat Festival
- Chilliwack Canadian Tire
- Abbotsford AgriFair
- Mission Superstore
- Southside Rocks the River (x3)
- MissionFest
- Kilby Visitor Appreciation Summer Carnival
- Taves Family Farm
- Maan Farms Fall Festival
- Maan Farms Pumpkin Patch (x2)
- Chilliwack Garlic and Rockabilly Festival
- Harrison Great Canadian Shoreline Clean Up
- Chilliwack River Clean Up
- Abbotsford Arbor Day
- Mission Fire, Life, and Safety Fair
- Abbotsford Street Tree Party
- Cottonwood Mall
- Fraser Valley Bald Eagle Festival
- Harrison Hot Springs Open House
- Great Blue Heron Reserve Salmon Watch