

WildSafeBC Year End Report 2015

Grand Forks, BC

Prepared by: Brydie Todd, BSc., WildSafeBC Community Coordinator



Photo: Mark Windsor



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Executive Summary

WildSafeBC delivered its second year of programming in Grand Forks, BC, with Brydie Todd taking over as WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) in June, 2015. The season began in May 2015 with a major focus on reducing wildlife-human conflict, with its primary focus in Grand Forks being on deer. The expanded scope of the WildSafeBC program to include all wildlife is paramount to the efforts of the WCC in Grand Forks. With 221 deer counted within the city limits in the fall of 2015, it is evident that managing the urban deer issue is of increasing importance in the community. The WCC developed signage to inform residents about deer activity and about the new deer feeding bylaw in the community and worked to educate the community about the negative outcomes of feeding through educational displays, community presentations, door-to-door outreach, and media releases.

Although the season started off relatively quiet in terms of bear sightings, there was a sharp increase in reports in August which continued through the fall. Fruit trees were a notable attractant, as well as unsecured garbage. The WCC worked to keep attractant management at the forefront of residents' minds through educational displays, door-to-door visits, community presentations, media releases, and a community Facebook page. Responsible attractant management is the only effective long term solution to reducing human-wildlife conflict in the Grand Forks area.



Figure 1 WildSafeBC Grand Forks Coordinator, Brydie Todd

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Highlights from the 2015 Season

In its second year in Grand Forks, the WildSafeBC Program was able to become more established in the community and more widely recognized by community members. Residents appreciated the availability of a designated coordinator to address any and all wildlife-related questions and concerns. Keeping WildSafeBC and its messages of attractant management in the public eye was the focus this season as well as providing concrete solutions to reduce human-wildlife conflict using the following tools:

Presentations

Understanding the basics of wildlife biology and behaviour helps residents to understand and prevent human-wildlife conflict. Presentations were developed for a wide range of audiences this season to provide insight into the reasons human-wildlife conflict occurs and what we can do to reduce it.

WildSafeBC Grand Forks gave 33 presentations to the following audiences this season:

- Grand Forks Rotary Club
- Sunshine Valley Community Centre
- Grand Forks Government Retirees Club
- Grand Forks Public Library (3 presentations)
- Grand Forks ATV Club (2)
- Grand Forks Brownies Club
- Grand Forks Girl Guides Club
- Rock Creek Elementary School (entire school)
- Christina Lake Elementary School (Grades: 4-5, 6-7)
- Hutton Elementary School (Grades: K(x2), 1-2(x2), 2-3, 3-4, 4-5(x2), 4-6, 5-6, 6-7(x2))
- Perley Elementary School (Grades: 2-3(x3), 4-5(x2), 6-7(x3))



Figure 2: WSBC Provincial Coordinator Frank Ritcey and WCC Brydie Todd setting up for an electric fencing demonstration.

Displays

Educational displays at local events were once again a big hit with local children and a great place to discuss local wildlife issues with residents (Figure 3). These displays provide area residents with a place to voice concerns or observations about local wildlife activity and share attractant management success stories. As always, residents were able to access information and solutions for their own attractant challenges. The WCC fielded questions regarding all forms of wildlife commonly encountered in the area, and heard a wide range of input regarding the urban deer issue in Grand Forks. WildSafeBC spent 21 days at the following local events:

- Grand Forks Farmers Market (11)
- Grand Forks International Baseball Tournament (3)
- Grand Forks Canada Day Festivities
- Blue Joint Rec Site Grand Opening
- Greenwood Founder's Day
- Grand Forks Car Show
- Rock Creek Fall Fair (2)
- Grand Forks Harvest Festival



Figure 3: Educational display at the Rock Creek Fall Fair, September 2015.

Media Coverage

WildSafeBC Grand Forks appeared in print in the Grand Forks Gazette 5 times; online in the Boundary Sentinel 5 times; as well as many local event calendars. CBC Radio West interviewed the WCC to reach more than 60,000 listeners. The WCC more than doubled the reach of the local WildSafeBC Facebook page, achieving a total of 278 likes. Many posts reached over 6000 views and were shared upwards of 100 times, informing the local community about attractant management and wildlife sightings.



Figure 4: WCC Brydie Todd applying a temporary tattoo at the Grand Forks Canada Day Festivities, 2015.

Door-to-Door and Garbage Tagging

The WCC responded to reports of wildlife sighting and human-wildlife conflict by going door-to-door to discuss concerns with local residents and to offer informational brochures and advice on reducing human-wildlife conflict. Residents were eager to discuss deer and bears in particular, but rattlesnakes, raccoons, and other wildlife were also discussed frequently. Garbage tagging efforts were conducted where bright yellow “Bear Attractant” stickers were left on garbage cans that were put out too early, reminding residents that unsecured garbage is a major wildlife attractant.

Deer Committee

The WCC provided monthly reports at the Grand Forks Deer Committee meetings and participated in semi-annual Deer Counts. With the input, the Deer Committee put forth a motion to city council to apply for permits to cull up to 80 deer in the city. Signage was developed and implemented to inform residents about fawning and deer crossing areas and to discourage deer feeding. Deer count data was analyzed and a summary prepared for submission to Grand Forks City Council. The WCC attended the Regional District of the Okanagan/Similkameen Deer Meeting on behalf of the Grand Forks Deer Committee to provide input and to discuss urban deer management in the province.



Figure 4: Doe and three fawns and local resident on 68th Avenue, Grand Forks.

Challenges of the 2015 Season

Unsecured garbage/compost and unpicked fruit were the largest attractant problems for bears in 2015. WildSafeBC hopes that the door-to-door visits, public presentations, Facebook discussions and published press releases will assist to educate residents to reduce the attractants available to wildlife in the community in the future.

Deer-feeding residents, availability of un-fenced plants, and lack of deterrents were the largest attractant problems for deer in 2015. The issue remains a challenge as many feeders are resistant to change without bylaw enforcement. Although a deer feeding bylaw is now in effect for Grand Forks, its complaint-driven format has made enforcement a challenge.

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 causes thousands of dollars of property damage, high insurance rates and the unnecessary death of animals.

Goals for 2016

Looking forward to the 2016 season, WildSafeBC hopes to continue to collaborate with community partners to make concrete solutions available for local wildlife attractant issues through education by:

- Liaise with the local community regarding the potential for an urban deer cull in Grand Forks. This is likely to be a contentious issue in the community and the WCC will play a key role in providing neutral and evidence-based information to local residents.
- Increase the efficacy of the deer feeding bylaw with increased signage and increased enforcement.
- Expand the WildSafeBC Program to include the Regional District of the Kootenay Boundary Areas C, D, and E. This would allow outreach to the rural areas of Grand Forks as well as Christina Lake, Greenwood, Midway, and Rock Creek where the presence of a WCC has been in high demand.
- Continue to offer outreach and education to a wide range of audiences, offering human-wildlife conflict presentations targeting wildlife species that cause concern locally.



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Finally, thank you to all those residents who 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!