

# WildSafeBC Quesnel Annual Report 2015

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## Executive Summary

The 2015 WildSafeBC season entered its second year within the city of Quesnel. Funded by the city of Quesnel along with the BC Ministry of Environment, the primary goal of this program was to reduce human-wildlife conflict. With extra support from the local Conservation Officer Service along with the Bylaw office, the WildSafeBC program continued within the city of Quesnel and was once again well-received.

Heightened bear activity accompanied a warm and early spring. Bear sightings slowly decreased throughout July and increased late-August and into September with the steady presence of cougars. The WildSafeBC program worked diligently from mid-June and into September tagging garbage containers placed out the night prior to scheduled pick-up and when necessary performed door-to-door canvassing. Along with this, educating the general public with regard to wildlife attractant management was carried out via public displays, presentations and media releases.

Fall came early and so did the ripening of fruit. With the newly formed Quesnel Fruit Exchange Facebook page, we were able to utilize this resource to aid in picking and distributing fruit, resulting in less waste and less human-wildlife conflict.

This year saw a dramatic decrease in bears destroyed by the COS with 12 bears destroyed all year compared to 12 bears destroyed in September 2014 alone.

Of note, equivalent bear and cougar sightings were reported within CRD Area A - Red Bluff/Quesnel South. The requirement to expand the WildSafeBC program to this area is imperative for future success.

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## Highlights of the 2015 Season

The WildSafeBC program was conveyed via displays at various public events as well as through PowerPoint presentations to a variety of local groups and clubs. Management of wildlife attractants such as bird feeders, barbecues, fruit/berries, garbage and compost was highlighted. Awareness of the WARP online wildlife mapping program was provided for additional information and public utilization.

### Public Events

Educational displays at local public events including the Farmer's Markets, Canada Day celebrations and Fall Fair were well-received by all in attendance. Wildlife photographs as well as bear and cougar skulls and claws were enticing for the children and adults alike. These displays provided residents as well as visitors with valuable information regarding wildlife attractant management. Informative pamphlets were handed out as well as bookmarks and tattoos for the children.

In addition, residents were able to discuss their concerns, observations and personal accounts as well as offer suggestions. For example, the use of "Bear in Area" signs; it was brought to our attention that often these signs are up in areas for long periods of time. It has been suggested to post a date indicating when the signs were placed in specific areas; this has been forwarded onto the Bylaw office.



Photo 1 - Canada Day Celebrations Le Bourdais Park



Photo 2 - Bear and Cougar Skulls and Claws



## Presentations

All presentations included bear and cougar awareness and when applicable, moose. As attractant management is the greatest issue with regard to human-wildlife conflict, this was emphasized during all presentations. Education regarding bear and cougar encounters and how to manage such situations was reviewed as well. WildSafeBC presentations included the Rotary Club, local elementary schools, Baker Creek Enhancement Society's Eco Sprouts and Eco Camps as well as private organizations.



Photo 3 - Baker Creek Enhancement Society's Eco Camp



Photo 4 - Parkland Elementary School

## Media

The 2015 season began with a news release via the city of Quesnel to inform the public of the return of the WildSafeBC program to Quesnel; following this, a further news release was later put forth regarding the importance of fruit gleaning. In September, an informative article was additionally released via the Quesnel Observer offering suggestions to the public on managing bear attractants this fall. The WildSafeBC Quesnel Facebook page was updated regularly and was used to highlight different events throughout the season as well as to provide information on human-wildlife problem areas throughout the city; the WildSafeBC Quesnel Facebook page accumulated an extra 75 "likes" this season. The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator also participated in three radio interviews with Cariboo Radio, the GOAT and CBC to highlight the WildSafeBC program and to address specific human-wildlife conflict issues throughout the season.

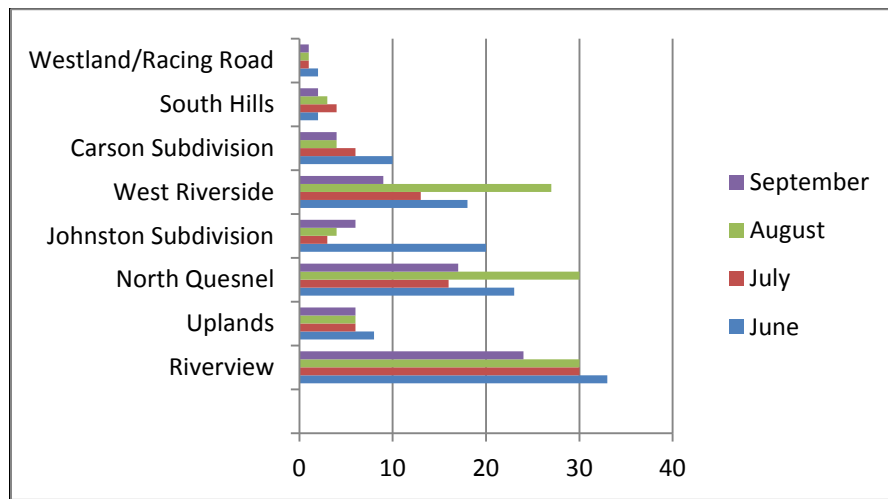
## Garbage Management

The early curbside placement of garbage was a major concern throughout the 2015 season. Tagging of garbage containers the night prior to pick-up began mid-June and continued into September. Tagging was done by placing "warning: garbage placed out early is a bear attractant" stickers on garbage containers. The intention was to have garbage compliance under control in order to reduce the instance of food-conditioned bears. There were some neighborhoods within the city of Quesnel that had consistently poor garbage compliance while other areas were relatively good. Unfortunately there were no neighborhoods with 100% garbage compliance throughout the season.



Photo 5 - WildSafeBC Garbage Stickers

Multiple dwelling homes, complexes as well as commercial dumpsters posed an issue with regard to garbage compliance and were the problem areas for bear sightings in early spring as well as into the fall. The following chart indicates garbage compliance variations from June to September in all zones for city pick-up.



Graph 1 - City of Quesnel Garbage Non-Compliance Percentages

A large number of commercial dumpsters in the city of Quesnel are not strong enough or near "bear-proof" to deter bear activity; photographs have been taken of this issue and this concern has been passed onto the city of Quesnel Bylaw office. Of note, with the new city garbage pick-up schedule changing to bi-weekly, a Wildlife Attractant Bylaw could be considered. See below.

### Wildlife Attractant Bylaw

Consideration of a Wildlife Attractant Bylaw should be strongly considered within the city of Quesnel. By instilling greater stipulations with regard to attractant management by implementing such a bylaw would benefit not only the community but the wildlife as well.

### Composting

Improper management of compost is a community-wide issue. While many independent dwellings have compost units in their backyards, many are not being used to maximum efficacy thereby creating odors and attracting wildlife. Compost education would be a beneficial step in the right direction; however, a city composting center for public drop-off would be most optimal especially with changes to bi-weekly city garbage pick-up. Not only would this dramatically reduce waste, it would increase the longevity of the city's landfill. The benefits of a city composting center would enable residents to recycle all kitchen waste including cooked food waste which would in turn dramatically reduce input into the landfill. This accumulation of compost once cured and screened could then be sold.

### Fruit Gleaning

Fall came early this year and along with it, ripening of fruit earlier than expected. While there are many groups within the City of Quesnel that have in the past and continue to pick fruit to disperse and donate to local charities, food banks and shelters, the creation of the Quesnel Fruit Exchange Facebook page was of great benefit to aid in clean-up of excess fruit within and around the community of Quesnel. This Facebook page was created late in the season and with the early ripening of fruit, it was not used to its fullest. However, as the word spreads and residents become more aware of the page, the Quesnel Fruit Exchange Facebook page will continue to be helpful for years to come.

## Challenges of the 2015 Season

The greatest challenge this season was garbage compliance. Garbage was the number one attractant throughout the season. The constant effort to educate the public with regard to managing their attractants and keeping their garbage in a secure location until pick-up is a continuing effort. While some areas within the city clearly made an effort, others made none at all. This may be in part due to the fact that it was relatively quiet with regard to bear sightings throughout the summer. Although fruit was better managed thanks to the Quesnel Fruit Exchange Facebook page, there was still fruit unnecessarily dumped and wasted. The end of the season saw approximately 95% of the city's fruit cleaned up and only a few areas with fruit left on the ground. Only one report included a bear/fruit complaint.

## Goals for 2016

- Continuation and enhancement of the WildSafeBC program within the city of Quesnel; let's work together to become a "Bear Smart" community with progressive wildlife attractant management and human-wildlife conflict awareness.
- Expansion of the WildSafeBC program into the CRD Area A- Red Bluff/Quesnel South is essential to successful management within city limits.
- Development and implementation of a Wildlife Attractant Bylaw to aid with unmanaged attractants would be extremely beneficial.
- Creation of a city composting center; this would dramatically aid in the utilization of kitchen waste and reduction in excess garbage - especially in light of the bi-weekly garbage pick-up schedule.
- Highlight and utilize the Quesnel Fruit Exchange Facebook page to aid in removal of excess or unwanted fruit. Spread the word!
- Address the city commercial dumpsters that either need repair or are not bear-proof.



## Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC Quesnel is grateful for the support from its sponsors and partners. Thank you to the Ministry of Environment, the BC Conservation Foundation, the city of Quesnel and the Bylaw office. Special thanks to Bylaw officers Adele Wilson, Ed Edwards and Willow Eyford. The support and communication from Conservation Officers Ryane McIntyre and Joel Kline served as invaluable. I would also like to acknowledge city councillor Laurey-Anne Roodenburg for her support in keeping this program running within the city of Quesnel.

An additional thank you to the residents of Quesnel as well as my garbage tagging volunteer, Marvee Jmaeff for their support of the WildSafeBC program and those who strive to help "keep wildlife wild and communities safe."