

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2015

Thompson Nicola Regional District

Prepared by: Mandy Ross, WildSafeBC Community Coordinator



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WildSafeBC TNRD Year End Report | 2015

Executive Summary

The 2015 season started off relatively quiet for human-wildlife conflict in the TNRD and picked up in the fall. By the end of the season the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) had recorded numerous wildlife calls including: 227 black bear, 44 cougar, 5 coyote, 31 deer and 7 moose.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) attended many farmers markets and other community events throughout the region to share information on how to reduce conflicts with all of the aforementioned species. Brochures covering safety and attractant management for all of these species were available for the public at all events. Seasonal wildlife information posters were posted on info boards in communities all the way from Lytton to Chase to Blue River.

The WCC also gave numerous presentations to school groups, adults and campers, and helped to run an electric fencing demonstration for the community of Pinantan Lake.

The Bear-Resistant Bin Loan Program was rolled out in Merritt with great success and high demand for more bins in Merritt, as well as interest from other communities. Garbage tagging and door-to-door canvassing was continued this year with focus on Merritt. This year wildlife calls were down in Merritt, which we hope is, at least in part, due to increased effort in that community.

In Merritt and in other communities around the TNRD the media played an important role in helping to spread information about wildlife safety, sightings and attractant management.



Figure 1. WCC Mandy Ross talking about possible attractants at the Raft River Viewing Platform, Clearwater, 2015.

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Presentations

Presentations are a great way to convey detailed information about the basics of wildlife biology and behaviour. This helps to provide insight into the reasons human-wildlife conflict occurs and what we can do to reduce it. Presentations were developed for adults, park visitors and children's camps this season. In the fall, once the Junior Range Program was rolled out, all students spoken to were signed up as Junior Rangers to get them to help spread the word about wildlife safety. These presentations included a Junior Ranger Kit with a pencil, ruler/bookmark, sticker, ID card, button and oath card. WildSafeBC TNRD gave 30 presentations to the following audiences this season:

- Eureka Science Camp -Clearwater
- Eureka Science Camp -Barriere
- Simpcw Nation
- Harmon Lake Interpretive Talk
- Raft River Salmon Viewing Station – Visits from Raft River Elementary, Simpcw Elementary (3 days)
- Lytton Elementary School – Gr. K, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7
- Merritt Bench Elementary – Gr. K, 1, 2
- Pinantan Elementary – Gr. 2, 3, 4, 5
- Sun Peaks Scouts Group
- Clearwater Homeschool group

Garbage Tagging and Door-to-Door Education

WildSafeBC regularly receives phone-calls from Conservation Officers, Bylaw Officers and concerned residents reporting neighbourhood garbage issues. In response to these calls and postings on WARP, the WCC targeted the reported neighbourhoods with garbage tagging inspections and/or door-to-door visits to encourage responsible attractant management. Merritt was the main focus of this effort as a new garbage bin bylaw was enacted in that community in the early spring of 2015. WildSafeBC conducted garbage tagging inspections throughout the season, placing bright yellow “Wildlife Attractant” stickers on bins put out too early. We also visited homes throughout the season to give residents information about wildlife in the area or to discuss neighbourhood attractant issues.

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Displays

Educational displays at local events were popular with children and adults alike, and provided a great opportunity to discuss local wildlife issues with residents (Figures 2 and 3). These displays provided area residents with a place to voice concerns or observations about local wildlife activity and share attractant management success stories. The WSBC display is inviting and engaging, and residents are drawn in to learn more. The WCC gave out and applied the popular temporary tattoos to children at these events, and this was a great opportunity to speak to them one-on-one about wildlife safety. WildSafeBC spent 28 days at the following local events:

- Ashcroft Fun Fair
- Chase Market (3 visits, one rained out)
- Clearwater Market (2 visits)
- Spences Bridge Market (2 visits)
- Lytton Market (2 visits)
- Sun Peaks Market (3 visits)
- Chase Cornstalk Fest
- Clearwater TNRD Trunk Sale
- Chase TNRD Trunk Sale
- Merritt Canada Day Celebration
- Sun Peaks Concert Series
- Ashcroft Wellness Fair
- Merritt Market (2 visits)
- Ashcroft Market
- Logan Lake Day
- Highland Valley Copper Open house
- Spences Bridge Desert Daze festival
- North Thompson Fall Fair (3 days)



Figure 2. WCC Mandy Ross discussing the claws of the black bear, Merritt Canada Day Celebration, 2015.

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Challenges of the 2015 Season

Unsecured garbage and fruit trees continued to be the biggest attractants in the 2015 season. A slower start to the bear season may have led people to believe that attractant management was no longer a concern. Door-to-door canvassing and garbage tagging helped to remind people to lock up attractants.

The Bear-Resistant bin program in Merritt was popular, so the bins went quickly. Residents would like to see an expanded program and were frustrated with the small supply of bins. The delivery of the bins needs to be handled by a local contractor, so that residents can pick them up more easily. This year, to get the program up and running, the WCC made the trip from Kamloops to deliver bins. Although all attempts are made to do this in conjunction with other events, the hours of the Public Works Yard restricted flexibility. This should be easy enough to change now that the program is up and running.

The WCC heard from many people that they would like to see the WildSafeBC program start earlier in the year to address spring human-wildlife concerns.



Figure 4. WildSafeBC Provincial Coordinator giving an electric fencing demonstration in Pinantan Lake, 2015.

Goals for 2016

Looking forward to the 2015 season, WildSafeBC hopes to continue to collaborate with community partners to make concrete solutions available for local wildlife attractant issues.

- Expand the Merritt Bear-Resistant Bin program.
- Make WildSafeBC an integral part of the TNRD. Expand the reach of WildSafeBC messaging through use of social media, traditional media, increased community events and informative workshops.
- Increase TNRD's resident's use of WARP as an educational tool.
- Expand our program's presence in Logan Lake and other smaller communities.
- Work with the TNRD to research and update their bylaws in relation to bear attractants and attractant management in general.

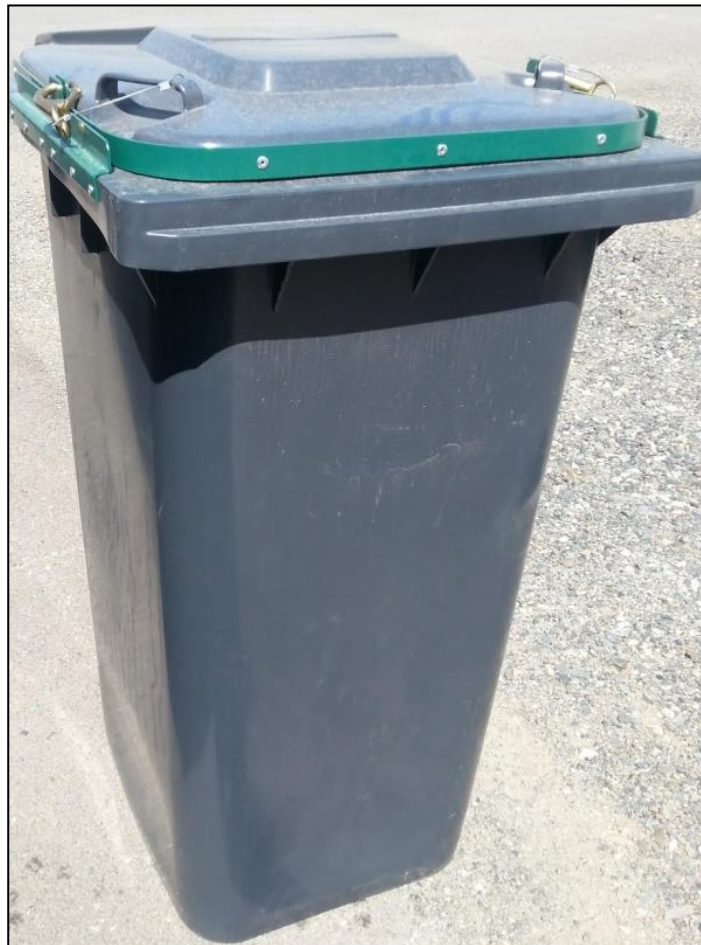


Figure 5. Bear-Resistant bin for the Merritt Loan out program, 2015.

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Acknowledgements

On behalf of the WildSafeBC program, I would like to thank the Thompson-Nicola Regional District, the Ministry of Environment, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation for funding this years' program and activities.

I would also like to acknowledge the various media outlets that ran stories to help spread the WildSafeBC message. These include the Clearwater Times, the Merritt Herald, the Barriere Star Journal and Q101.1 Merritt.

Special thanks to Adriana Mailloux, Denise Roberts and Jamie Vieira of the TNRD; Frank Ritcey of the WildSafeBC program; and Barb Waters, Roseanna Niedziejko, Tami Kendall and Jen Bellhouse of the British Columbia Conservation Foundation and the WSBC Volunteer, Andrew Corks.

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!



British Columbia Conservation Foundation