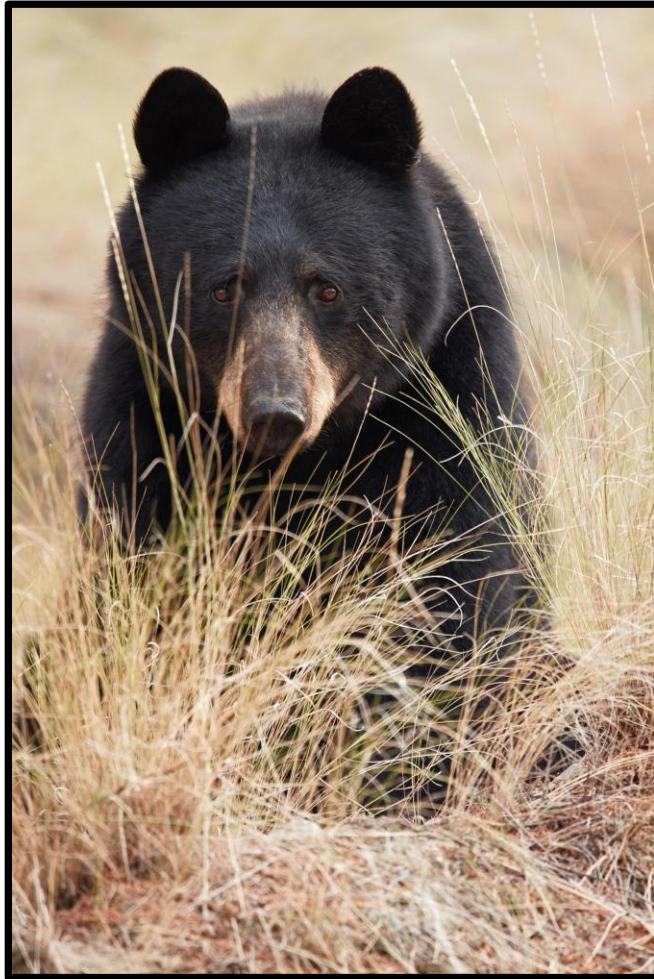


WildSafeBC Annual Report 2016

District of Tumbler Ridge

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Executive Summary

WildSafeBC began its second year in the District of Tumbler Ridge following a week of training in May for the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC), Amanda Wamsteeker.

Evolved from the Bear Aware program, the BC Conservation Foundation's WildSafeBC is designed to reduce human-wildlife conflict through education, innovation, and cooperation. The program is continuing to grow throughout BC, with more and more communities participating every year. The Community Coordinator in the District of Tumbler Ridge provided education to residents and tourists through display booths at community events, door-to-door discussions, garbage tagging presentations to local students, and organizing local events for the first annual BC Goes Wild weekend. Due to a declining population and reduction in public events **in the fall?**, the main focus for the 2016 season was through door-to-door conversations.

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Presentations

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator focused on the education of the young residents in the District of Tumbler Ridge during the 2016 season. Presentations, including the Junior Ranger program, focused on best practices for attractant management and human-wildlife conflict avoidance and were made to the Summer Reading Club, Library Lapsit Program, and Tumbler Ridge Secondary School's Outdoor Education classes.

Public Displays

The education of the public in ways to reduce human-wildlife conflict continued with public displays at community events. A booth consisting of a display board with wildlife attractants, wildlife photos, informational brochures on local species, a black bear skin, 3D printed black bear paw, and prints of several common wildlife species to encourage track recognition.

This booth was on display at the following locations in 2016:

- Canada Day celebrations
- Grizfest Music Festival
- Volunteer Appreciation Lunch
- Fall Fair



Figure 1 Canada Day celebration booth

Door-to-door Discussions

Past efforts as discussed with the local Conservation Officers proved that door-to-door canvassing has the greatest effect in this community and so was the main focus for the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator in 2016. Neighbourhoods reporting wildlife sightings were targeted for discussions of attractant management and bringing awareness of the wildlife in town. Approximately one thousand people were contacted via door-to-door canvassing which proved to be the most valuable tool in spreading WildSafeBC's message. One-on-one discussion allowed for the opportunity to increase residents' awareness of local wildlife and the best practices for managing attractants. Due to past efforts by the 2015 Coordinator, the District of Tumbler Ridge residents had a positive view on WildSafeBC and were receptive to the program.

Garbage Tagging

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator initiated garbage tagging in the community in 2016. Garbage bins placed out the night before collection day were tagged with a sticker warning the residents that garbage placed outside was a wildlife attractant. The results seemed positive with less than 5% of bins placed on the street for pickup early; however, the coordinator did notice that majority of residents did not store their garbage bins in secure, wildlife-resistant areas such as a shed or garage. Bins were primarily stored alongside houses or behind a fence throughout the week.

Junior Ranger Program

The Junior Ranger Program was delivered to Grade 7 and 8 Outdoor Education classes, as well as the older children's group of the local library's Summer Reading Club. In addition, approximately 85 students swore the oath to become Junior Rangers and help 'keep wildlife wild and communities safe'. A Junior Ranger kit which included a colouring book, pencil, pin, bookmark, and temporary tattoo, with activities to engage families by recognizing attractants and their management was sent home with each child. Basic bear behavior and encounter strategies were also discussed with the Outdoor Education students.

Media

WildSafeBC in the District of Tumbler Ridge utilized social media in 2016. Throughout the 2016 season, the WildSafeBC District of Tumbler Ridge Facebook page number of 'Likes' increased almost 120%, increasing the number of people who see the page's posts. Many residents tend to prefer reporting wildlife sightings on Tumbler Ridge Facebook groups. As a follower of these groups, the WildSafeBC Coordinator was able to report sightings and incidents to the Conservation Officer Service (COS).

Trent Ernst, the editor of the local newspaper, Tumbler Ridge News, is a strong advocate for WildSafeBC and often includes wildlife themed articles in the paper. He was very helpful increasing the reach of WildSafeBC's messaging in combination with a local Conservation Officer's input during a period with a significant number of bear sightings.

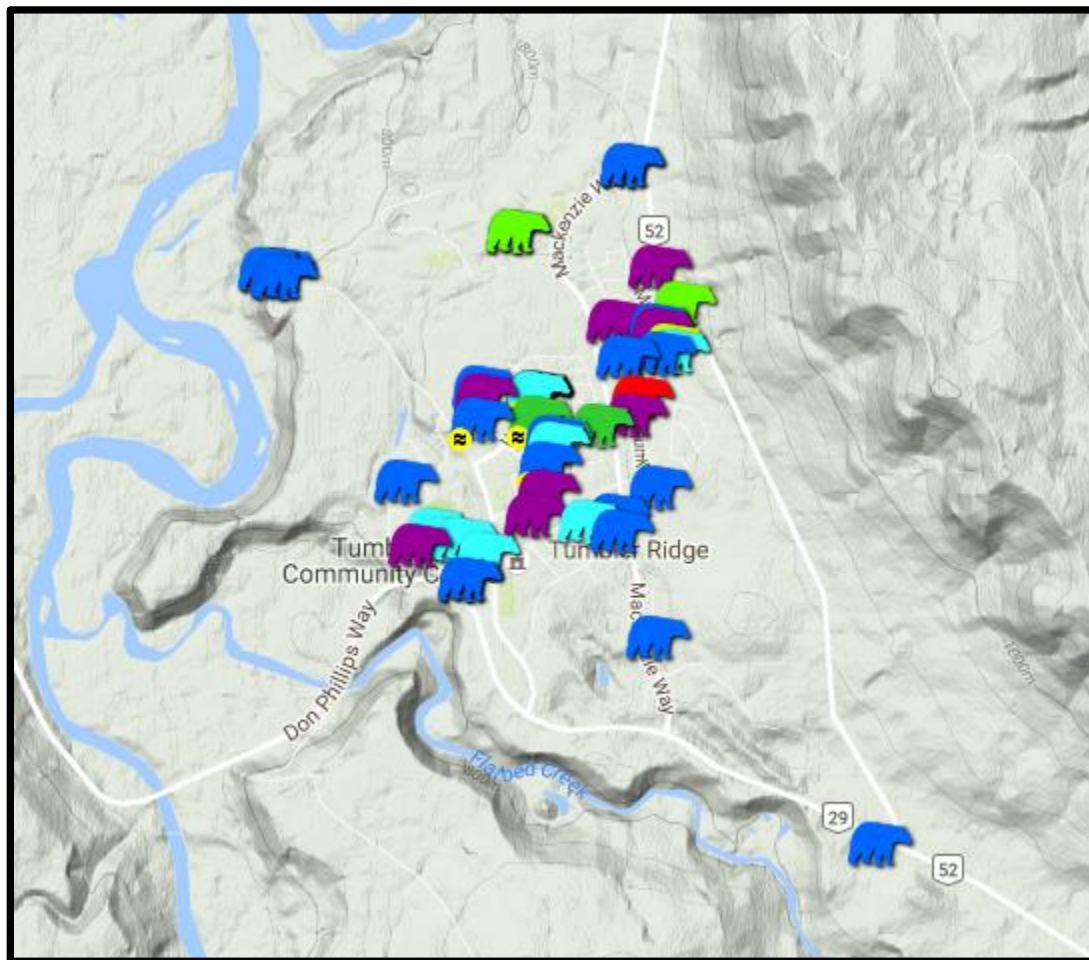


Figure 2 Black Bear sightings reported to RAPP in the District of Tumbler Ridge Jan.1-Nov. 5, 2016. Colours represent different attractants wildlife are drawn to, i.e. pink – BBQ, red -garbage, purple – residential fruit trees, green – bird feeders, light blue – pet food, Light green – Berry bushes, dark blue –

unknown. Data retrieved from www.wildsafebc.com/warp.

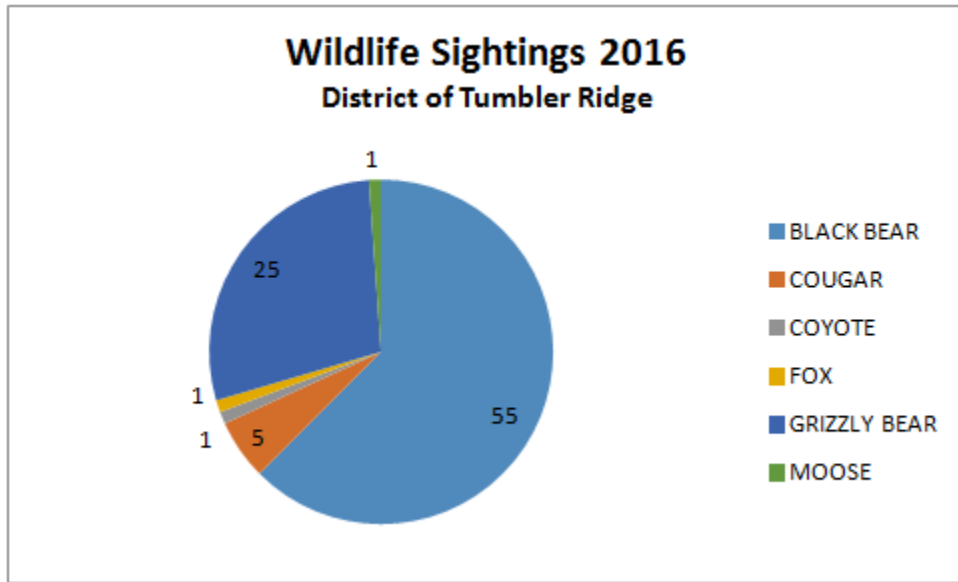


Figure 3 Wildlife sightings reported to RAPP in the District of Tumbler Ridge Jan.1-Nov. 5, 2016.

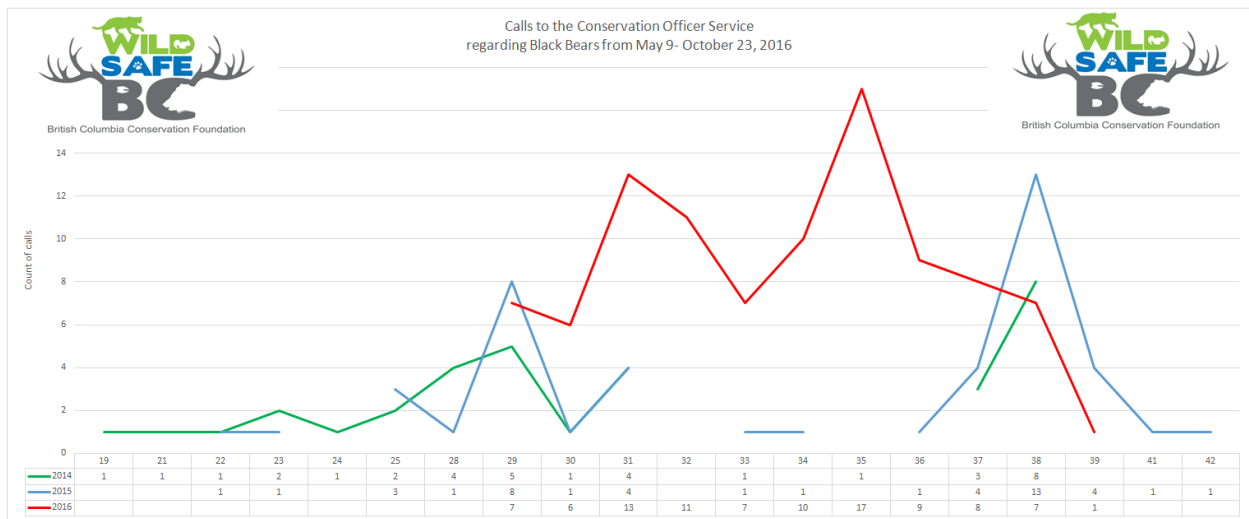


Figure 4 Black Bear reports to RAPP in 2016 compared to 2014 and 2015.

BC Goes Wild

WildSafeBC held its first annual BC Goes Wild weekend September 17 and September 18th. The BC Goes Wild weekend encourages people to safely enjoy wildlife in the wilds. By emphasizing the fact that wildlife should be in the wilds and not in our urban areas, WildSafeBC hopes that people will help the program meet its goal of "keeping wildlife wild and communities' safe."

WildSafeBC's BC Goes Wild Weekend was full of awareness activities and included three provincial contests. They consisted of a BC Goes Wild Count Contest, Photo Challenge and Colouring Contests. Locally, the District of Tumbler Ridge WildSafeBC Community Coordinator partnered with the Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark for puppet shows, interpretive wildlife signs along geopark trails close to the community, and a film festival.

For the puppet show there was a raven, bear, and eagle that dialogued a scene involving crabapple trees and garbage for the Tumbler Ridge Library's Lapsit and Storybook sessions. These events were well received during the week leading up to the weekend on September 15th and September 16th.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator also hung informative signs along several hiking trails close to town. Several local businesses donated prizes for a draw prize of those that registered at the Tumbler Ridge Visitors' Information Center; however, advertisement of the event was not broadcast wide enough and few people participated.

A small group came to watch two Nature of Things documentaries: Wolverines: Ghost of the Northern Forest and Moose: The Year in the Life of a Twig Eater. This was held in a room donated by the Tumbler Ridge Community Center with a concession run by the Tumbler Ridge Youth Center. Feedback was positive from the attendees with the suggestion of using different methods of advertising to draw a larger crowd.

Challenges and Recommendations for the WildSafeBC Program

Due in part to the previous year's coordinator efforts, the residents welcomed the program this year and embraced its goal of providing education and raising awareness of the reduction of human-wildlife conflict.

In 2016, it is possible that an increase in logging in the surrounding area and a decrease in human population in the district combined with an abundant year for fruit and berry producing plants in and around town resulted in an increased number of wildlife sightings.

The largest wildlife attractants within Tumbler Ridge were unharvested crabapple trees in yards, native berry bushes in greenbelts, and unsecured garbage. This year, a black bear sow and cub were destroyed by the COS. These bears began their path towards food-conditioning and habituation by feeding on apples and then eventually discovering unsecured garbage bins.

As a result of this conflict, several recommendations were made to the District regarding wildlife attractant management for electric fencing around henhouses, naturally occurring berry bushes, and planted crabapple trees in yards:

- Include in the appropriate bylaw that hen keepers must install electric fencing surrounding henhouses.
- Strictly enforce a fruit tree management bylaw by which fruit trees are removed completely, picked immediately as fruit ripens, or alternatively ensure trees are heavily pruned or sprayed with a hose to remove blossoms in spring to reduce fruit production.
- It should be noted that the COS can issue Dangerous Wildlife Protection Orders or Attracting Dangerous Wildlife tickets under the BC Wildlife Act..
- Remove the berry bushes and reduce the undergrowth in the green belts, or spray the blossoms with a hose before they set in the spring with a hose to reduce berry production. The greatest areas of concern are along the Pioneer Loop, Mackenzie, Chamberlain, behind Peace River Crescent, and the cemetery area.
- Provide bear-proof garbage bins to the residents or change the garbage bylaw to restrict garbage set-outs to set hours when bins are allowed outside and enforce fines on those storing bins in an unsecure manner.

Goals for 2017

WildSafeBC is looking forward to further developing the existing partnerships as well as working together to find new solutions to reduce human-wildlife conflict by educating the public wildlife attractant management in and around city limits. The list below provides a more accurate description of goals for 2017.

- Continue to complete educational programming through the Junior Range Program
- Continue door-to-door education and begin early with the goal of changing poor attractant management habits early in the season
- Connect with Bylaw Enforcement Officers and Conservation Officers further on reconstructing/amending bylaws
- Collaborate with existing community groups to increase local capacity for volunteers

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC program is supported by numerous organizations and individuals throughout the community of the District of Tumbler Ridge. The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator would like to acknowledge the Ministry of Environment, District of Tumbler Ridge, Chetwynd and Dawson Creek Conservation Officer Service, Tumbler Ridge Global Geopark, Tumbler Ridge Chamber of Commerce and Visitor Information Center, local businesses that displayed brochures and posters, School District #59 for allowing WildSafeBC to present to the students, and the residents of Tumbler Ridge for its support of the program.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator would also like to thank the British Columbia Conservation Foundation, specifically Jen Bellhouse, Trina Radford, and Frank Ritcey, for the guidance and support of the WildSafeBC program in the District of Tumbler Ridge.