

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2016

Powell River Regional District

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Photo: Francine Ulmer



Executive Summary

The Powell River Regional District experienced severe human-wildlife conflict in 2015. As a result, the community called for action and WildSafeBC was able to deliver a second year of programming for the period of May through November. Through cooperation, innovation, and education the WildsafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) worked with community partners to forge new relationships that will prove to be fruitful as the working relationships grows.

Many residents voiced their concern that the local government should get more involved in working toward local solutions to bear conflicts since 38 bears were destroyed by the end of 2015. As a response to resident concerns, and based on data collected in 2015, the WCC presented the idea of Powell River becoming a Bear Smart Community as a potential pathway toward conflict reduction. The Bear Smart Community program is a concerted effort that addresses the root cause of conflicts. Through a series of presentations, event display booths, local print articles, radio PSA's and interviews, the Bear Smart Community program was presented to the community along with WildSafeBC attractant management messaging.

Human-Wildlife Conflict Overview

The following statistics can be viewed in the figures located in “Additional Resources” at the end of this document.

- 244 human-wildlife conflict calls to the RAPP line from January through October (Fig 9)
- 180 black bear calls, 21 cougar calls, 20 deer calls, 6 grizzly calls, 6 wolf calls (Fig 9)
- Garbage was the top wildlife attractant with 16% of calls (Fig 6)
- Livestock/feed (including chickens) was the second top attractant with 9% of calls (Fig 6)
- Fruit trees/berry bushes were the third greatest attractant with 8% of calls (Fig 6)
- Compost was the fourth largest attractant with 4% of calls (Fig 6)
- 4 black bears destroyed by COS, 1 grizzly destroyed by a home owner, 2 injured black bears euthanized by RCMP (source: COS)
- Westview had a large volume of garbage and fruit tree conflicts (Fig 7)
- Townsite and Cranberry had a large volume of urban chicken conflicts (Fig 8)
- 58% of wildlife conflict calls did not indicate an attractant at the time of the call (Fig 6)
- 65 calls reported food conditioned bears (Fig 10)
- 12 bear calls reported killed or injured livestock/pets (Fig 10)
- 8 bear calls reported an aggressive bear (Fig 10)
- 3 bear calls involved a school/park/playground (Fig 10)
- 6 bear calls reported damage to property (Fig 10)
- 1 man had a physical encounter with a black bear and suffered minor injuries (Fig 10)

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Highlights from the 2016 Season

Backcountry Wildlife

In May, the first highlight of the season came by accompanying the local Conservation Officers into the backcountry for the release of four black bear cubs who were orphaned in 2015. The release was a reminder that the effects of a high conflict year go beyond the initial year.

Another highlight was multiple sightings of three grizzly bears in the backcountry. Sightings tracked their movement out of the Eldred River valley. Ultimately these bears came into conflict with humans and one young male grizzly attacked a goat and was killed by a resident in Stillwater. A second bear had been reported foraging around Lang Creek.

Wolves have been regularly seen at Myrtle Point Golf Course and the surrounding area resulting in several dogs going missing in the area. The presence of wolves has been noted over the past few years, however, this year they were documented closer to the community and were sighted more frequently. The increase in grizzly and wolf sightings is something to monitor in the future.



Figure 1: Backcountry bear cub release.

Photo: F. Ulmer

Bear Smart Community Program

After the June series of Bear Smart Community presentations the council of the Tla'Amin First Nation government passed a motion in July to officially seek Bear Smart Community status. As a first step in initiating the program the Tla'Amin Natural Resource Committee formed a Bear Stewardship Committee and began Phase 1 of Problem Analysis. A series of meetings were geared towards gathering information for conducting a Preliminary Hazzard Assessment. The survey conducted by WCC and summer students gathered data on the nature of garbage conflicts and backyard attractants. Wildlife Biologist, Clayton Apps, was brought in to discuss bear habitat within the community and begin outlining areas of bear hazards for the assessment.

Powell River is in the process of considering joining Tla'Amin in becoming a Bear Smart Community. Meanwhile, there are considerable improvements in waste management being made that are worth a mention. The City continued to install bear resistant garbage bins in city parks. This year the Regional District joined the effort and converted several garbage bins in their parks. Sunshine Disposal has committed to converting dumpsters to a metal lid system to exclude bears and will be continuing this effort. These moves are crucial for the community to complete Step Five in the Bear Smart process (the developing of a bear-proof municipal solid waste management system).

The Waste Management Education Team collaborated with WildSafeBC to design and print a poster on "How to be a Bear Smart Community" with local tips and resources. Additionally, the new Community Organics Recovery Exchange (C.O.R.E.) program promotional materials include messaging about wildlife attractants. Information on compost attractant issues was collected from residents over the month of October at the compost drop off depot in the Town Center Recycling station.

The Regional District has invited the WCC to participate on the Solid Waste Management Plan Review Committee where the plan under review contains section 7.15 on Bear-Human Conflict Management. The acknowledgement in this section of human-wildlife conflict is consistent with Step Three in the Bear Smart Community Program where a community revises planning and decision-making documents. The work of the Waste Management Education Team, as well as the opportunity to include a consideration for wildlife in the Solid Waste Management Plan, show positive Bear Smart steps within the Regional District.



Figure 2: Bear Smart Community logo can be used once status is achieved.

Presentations

In June, Provincial Coordinator, Frank Ritcey, came to Powell River and delivered a series of presentations about the process of becoming a Bear Smart Community. Members from local government as well as local residents participated. The following community groups and school classes received a variety of WildSafeBC presentations.

- Bear Smart Presentation with Provincial Coordinator Frank Ritcey, City Councillor and staff, Regional District staff, Tla'Amin First Nation staff, Sunshine Disposal
- Bear Smart Presentation with Frank Ritcey for Tla'Amin First Nation staff
- Bear Smart Presentation with Frank Ritcey for local residents
- Sunrise Rotary Club
- Evening Rotary Club
- Bear Smart Community Presentation for Mayor and Council
- Zero Waste Forum presentation on waste management and Bear Smart Program
- Electric Fence Workshop and Demonstration with Frank Ritcey at the Farmers Market
- Year End Report and Bear Smart Community presentation for the Regional District
- Regional District Solid Waste Management Plan Review Committee
- Local Elementary Schools- 12 classes across the district participated in a Junior Ranger scavenger hunt or received a power point presentation on bear biology, bear safety, and attractant management. Over 300 students participated, bringing the messaging home to families.

Displays

Display booths were set up at the following events.

- Lund Shellfish Festival
- Father's Day Family Fishing Weekend
- Canada Day Celebration at Willingdon Beach
- Logger Sports (all 3 days)
- Edible Garden Tour and electric fence demonstration
- Fun In The Sun Kids Day Camp
- Fall Fair and electric fence demonstration (2 days)
- Farmers Market
- Zero Waste Forum



Figure 3: Local Conservation Officer Andrew Anaka (left), PR Tourism mascot (center), Powell River Regional District WildSafeBC Community Coordinator Francine Ulmer (center), local Conservation Officer Gerry Lister (right) at Inland Lake Fathers Day Family Fishing Weekend.

Door-to-Door Education

Door-to-door canvassing targeted the following areas experiencing wildlife conflict;

- Larson Road in Lund experienced a break and enter bear with multiple homes being entered causing property damage and serious safety concerns for residents with children.
- Tla'Amin summer students and the WCC canvassed door to door in the village, and along Klahanie Drive, letting residents know about the community seeking Bear Smart Community status. A survey of household garbage management practices and household attractants was delivered in order to inform Tla'Amin government on possible changes or improvements to the waste collection system.
- Several Sunshine Disposal dumpsters with poly lids were targeted by bears and the WCC responded by addressing the owners, advocating for more frequent pick-ups and consistent locking procedures.
- Residents in Westview who experienced wildlife conflict were provided with attractant management advice. Garbage, compost, fruit and nut trees were the main attractants.

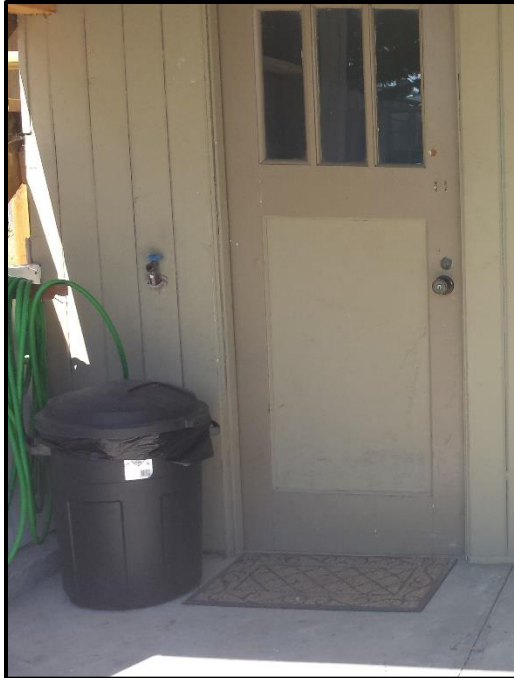


Figure 4a: Powell River does not have bylaws about garbage storage or set out restrictions.

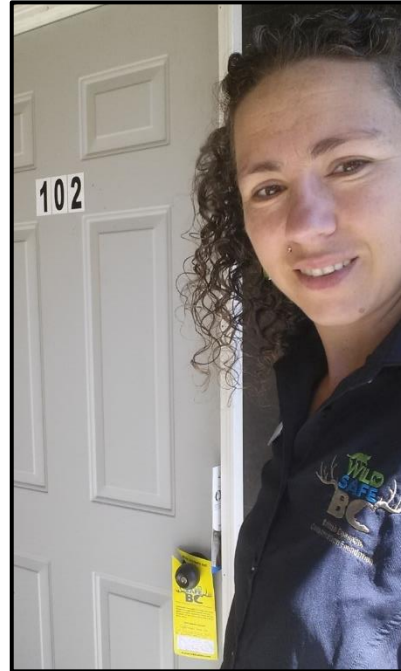


Figure 4b: Door to door canvassing the central Westview house shown in Figure 4a because they called to report a bear getting into their garbage.

Media

Print media, radio, and Facebook are outlets that helped spread the WildSafeBC message about bear safety and attractant management. Regular interviews with CJMP and CoastFM helped break local news and reach a broad audience with PSA's about attractant management.

Facebook was used to weigh in on issues in real time through regular posts on community pages as well as the WildSafeBC Powell River page. Facebook allows the WCC to reach out to residents experiencing a wildlife conflict who are using social media to address the issue rather than calling the RAPP line.

An article in the September edition of Powell River Living Magazine about the Bear Smart Community program accompanied another article by a resident who experienced a bear break and enter into her house. This pair of articles perfectly highlighted the human-wildlife conflict problem and a potential solution.

Challenges of the 2016 Season

Several challenges presented themselves over the 2016 season.

- Residents are calling the Conservation Officers and the WCC to report their neighbors' problems with attractant management. A lack of Bear Smart bylaws means that the complaint initiated process for bylaw enforcement can't be used as a tool to access resources and assist residents. Without garbage bylaws, garbage tagging is not possible as part of program delivery.
- Another challenge was that people want to get involved and volunteer for WildSafeBC but local opportunities have yet to be developed. The necessity of maintaining a neutral stance on wildlife management, and the challenge of fully understanding the complexity of the problem, make recruiting and training volunteers a challenge.
- Although we promoted Skookum Gleaners as a fruit management option, the program was not set up to accommodate the volume of fruit in the community and make a meaningful impact on wildlife conflict reduction.
- The most frustrating challenge of the season came from the theft of Bear in Area signs rendering this portion of the program less effective than anticipated.



Figure 5: This sign was one of 4 signs stolen along Manson Avenue this season.

Goals for the 2017 Season

- WildSafeBC is collaborating with Skookum Gleaners, Sycamore Commons, and the Food Security Project to redesign and expand the gleaning efforts in Powell River. This new partnership will allow for a more concerted effort around gleaning and will offer WildSafeBC volunteers an opportunity to get involved in attractant management efforts in the community.
- The Bear in Area signs are very popular with residents and act as a valuable tool for communicating with the public about recent bear activity. Due to theft, this portion of the program will need to be evaluated and improved. Working with community partners the WCC will look at possible signage options to promote safety and awareness about attractant management.
- In the spring of 2017 the city will be rolling out the pilot project for the curbside compost collection program. The WCC will work with the Regional District Waste Management Education Team to educate residents about compost, garbage, and windfall fruit as a bear attractant. Door to door canvassing and garbage tagging will be used to help residents learn to use the new system with minimal wildlife conflict.
- As Tla'Amin moves towards becoming Bear Smart, WildSafeBC will continue to support with information and resources, bringing best practices to the community to inform the process.
- Support the City of Powell River with a bylaw review in order to assist in development of bylaws that protect the new curbside compost collection program and the eventual curbside garbage collection.
- Continue to participate on the Regional District Solid Waste Management Plan Review Advisory Committee in order to collaborate on the management plan for solid waste, waste diversion, and disposal activities. WildSafeBC can contribute to the revision and/or expansion of Section 7.15 on Bear-Human Conflict Management.

Acknowledgements

The continuity of WildSafeBC programming relies on community partnerships. We are grateful that the Regional District has sponsored the program for a second year. Many thanks to Abby, Tai and Inger-Lise of the Let's Talk Trash Team for co-creating the *How to be a Bear Smart Community* poster and the *5 Easy Tips for Composting in Bear Country* brochure.

Resources can be found at <http://letstalktrash.ca/>

<http://letstalktrash.ca/resources/bear-smart/>

http://letstalktrash.ca/wp-content/uploads/composting_brochure_2016.pdf

A significant contribution from the Powell River Community Forest boosted this years' program and allowed for the extended season. WildSafeBC acknowledges that the City of Powell River contributed to WildSafeBC since the City is the sole shareholder of the Powell River Community Forest.

Thanks to the British Columbia Conservation Foundation staff for the training, resources, and visits from the Provincial Coordinator.

Thank you to Conservation Officers Andrew Anaka, Gerry Lister and Dean Miller for your advice and technical expertise.

Thank you to volunteers Liz Douglas and Joel Ulmer for assisting with Junior Ranger Scavenger Hunts and busy summer display booths. As a retired teacher Liz is wonderful with the children. With a background in Ecology, Joel is able to answer complex questions about population dynamics and biology from visitors at the display booth.



Additional Resources

Human-wildlife conflict calls to the Conservation Officer Service RAPP line are logged into the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) for mapping and data analysis purposes. Anyone can access WARP by going to <https://wildsafebc.com/warp/>. Sign up for WARP Alerts to get notification of wildlife conflicts in your area. Data from the following chart, maps and tables were all derived from WARP for the period of January to October 30th, 2016.

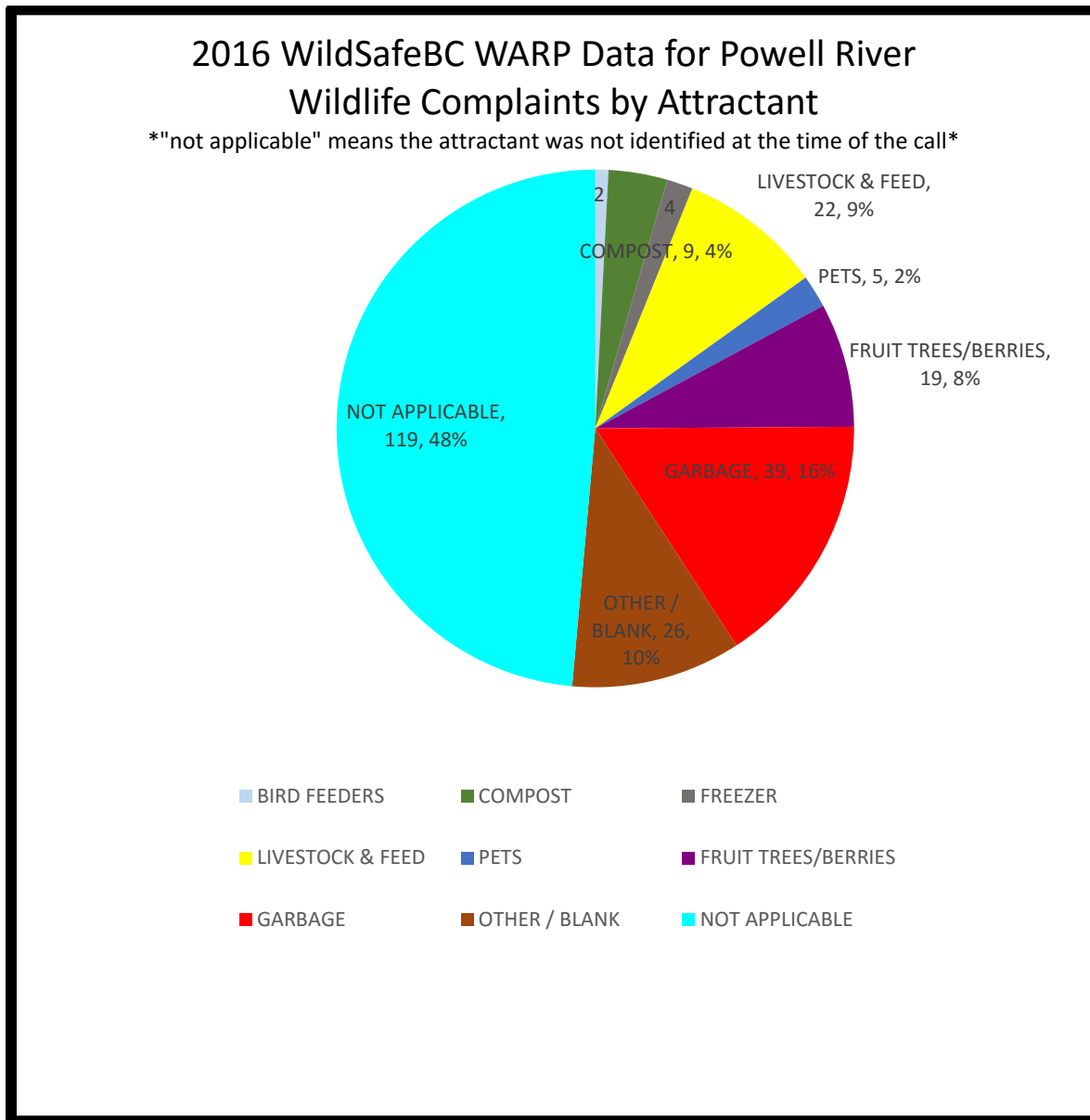


Figure 6: A total of 244 calls to the Conservation Officers RAPP line show garbage as the top wildlife attractant. Livestock and feed, fruit trees and berries are a close second and third. A large proportion of callers do not identify an attractant at the time of the call.

2016 Westview WARP Map of Bear Attractants

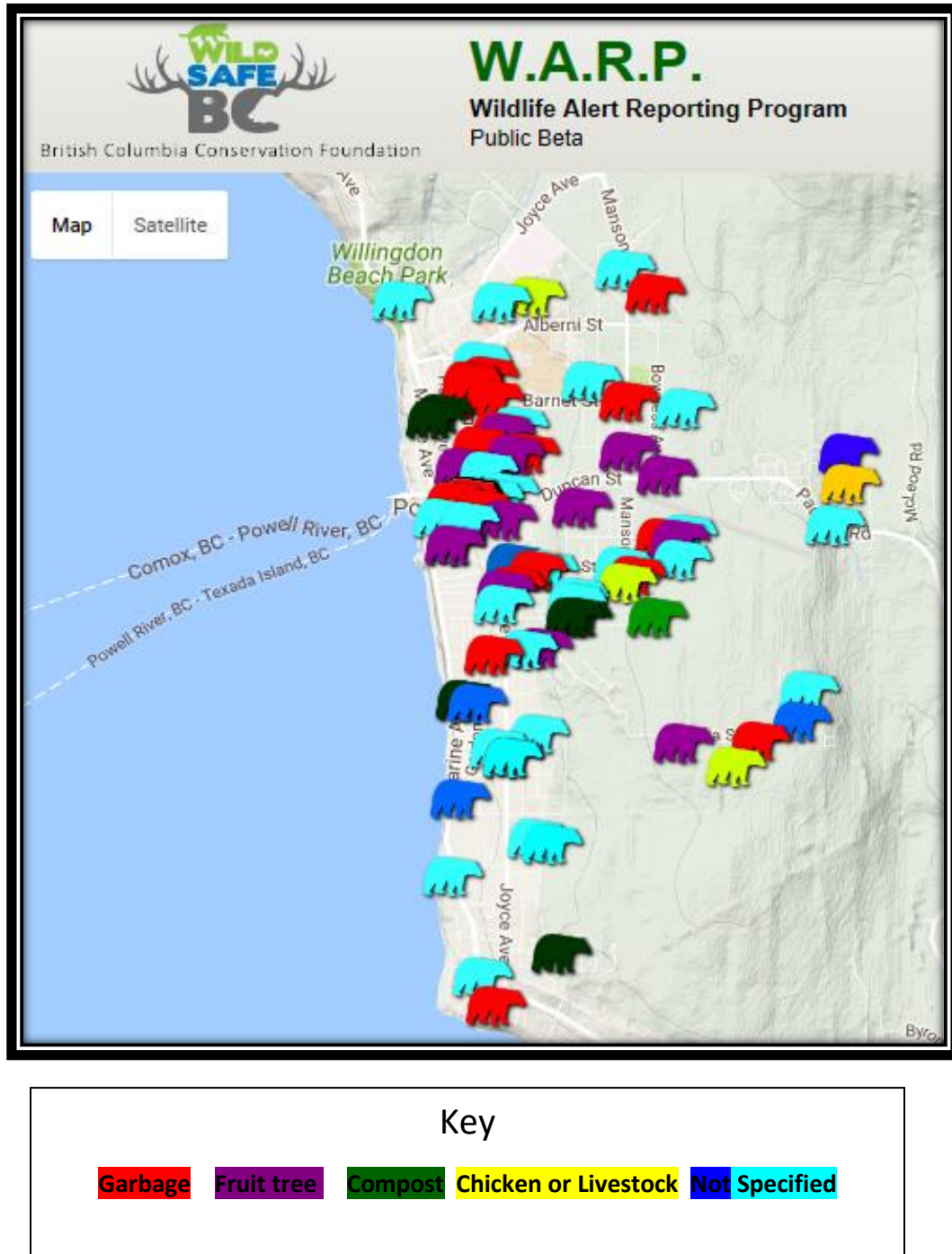


Figure 7: WARP map shows bear icons color coded by attractant. Westview has garbage and fruit tree management challenges.

2016 WARP Map of Bear Attractants Cranberry, Townsite, Wildwood and Tla'Amin Village

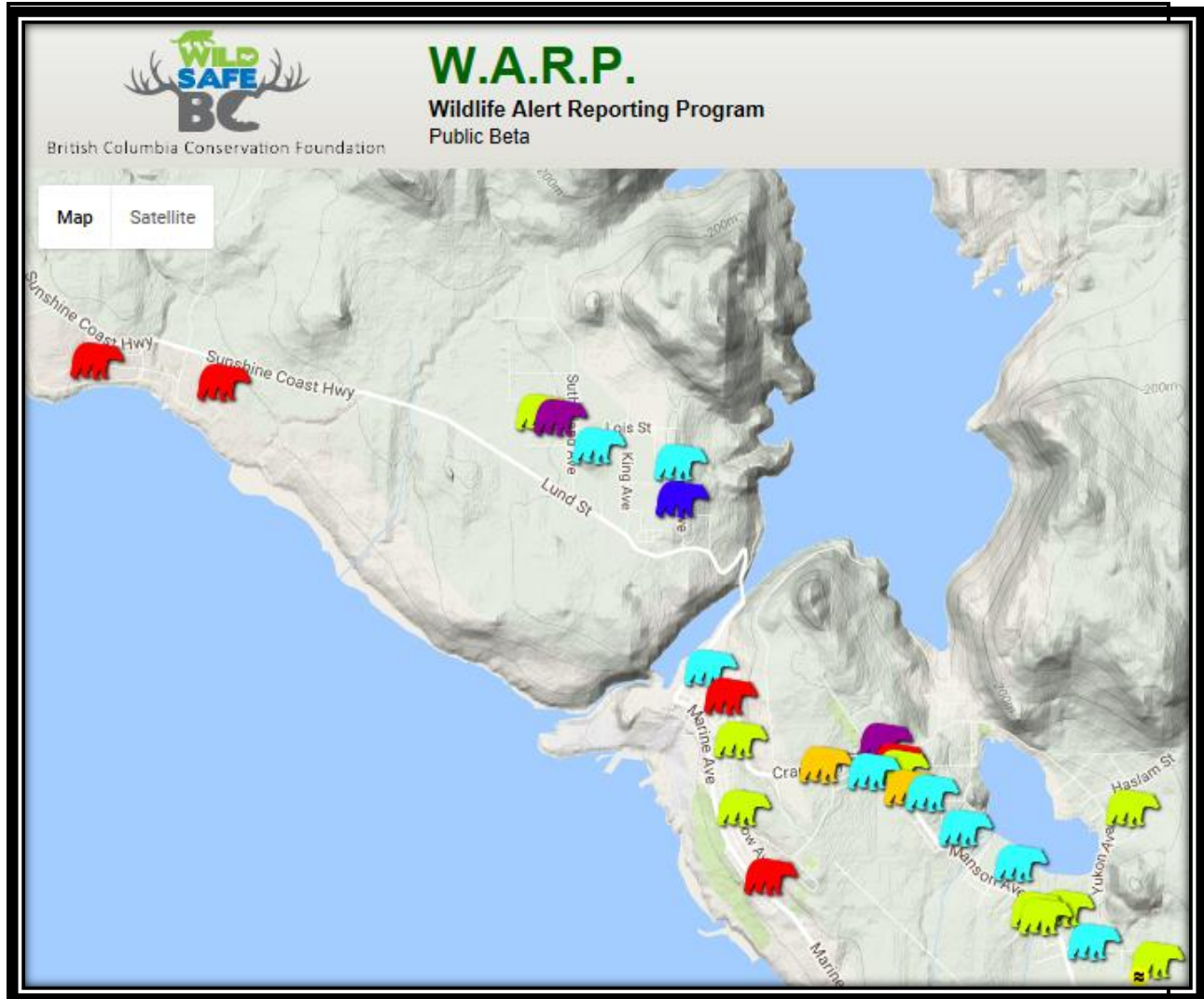


Figure 8: WARP map shows Cranberry and Townsite had high numbers of wildlife conflicts where urban chickens were an attractant for food conditioned bears.

2016 RAPP Calls by Species

SPECIES	SUM OF CALLS
BLACK BEAR	180
COUGAR	21
COYOTE	1
DEER	20
GRIZZLY	
BEAR	6
OTHER	7
RAPTOR	1
UNKNOWN	2
WOLF	6
Grand Total	244

Figure 9: The majority of RAPP calls were for black bears which is consistent across the province. Notable sightings were wolf and grizzly bear.

Nature of Black Bear Conflicts Reported to RAPP

NATURE OF HUMAN-BEAR CONFLICTS	SUM OF ENCOUNTERS
AGGRESSIVE	8
CONFINED	1
DAMAGE TO PROPERTY	6
DEAD WILDLIFE	2
FOOD CONDITIONED	65
HUMAN INJURY/DEATH	1
INJURED/DISTRESSED	21
LIVESTOCK/PETS - KILLED/INJURED	12
ORPHANED	2
SCHOOL/PARK/PLAYGROUND	3
SIGHTINGS	59
GRAND TOTAL	180

Figure 10: Viewing the conflicts by the nature of the encounter shows the severity of the safety issues for both humans and wildlife.