

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2017

Fraser Valley Regional District

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Booth display at Kilby Lake Pirate Day event



Ministry of
Environment

Executive Summary

The goal of the WildSafeBC program is to reduce human-wildlife conflict through education, innovation and cooperation throughout BC. WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) strives to achieve this goal from Hope through to Mission.

The 2017 WildSafeBC FVRD program was staffed this season by WildSafeBC Community Ambassadors (WCA) Joshua Domino and Kelly Corley-Smith from May 30 to August 30, as well as WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) Jenna Belhumeur from September 1 to November 30.

Throughout the 2017 season WildSafeBC FVRD was able to engage with over eight thousand people in the FVRD via door-to-door canvassing, garbage tagging, community events as well as school presentations. There were a high number of human-wildlife conflicts reported within the FVRD to both the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line and the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP).

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Highlights from the 2017 Season

The Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) spans many communities from Hope to Mission. The WCC and WCAs made every effort to evenly spread their time between communities for a variety of outreach methods such as public events, presentations and door-to-door canvassing.

The 2017 WildSafeBC FVRD program was staffed this season by WildSafeBC Community Ambassadors (WCA) Joshua Domino and Kelly Corley-Smith from May 30 to August 30, who were employed through the Canada Summer Job's program. From September 1 to November 30 the program was staffed by WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) Jenna Belhumeur, who continued to deliver outreach and education and the Junior Ranger program.

The WCC completed a ride along with the Conservation Officer Service (COS), particularly CO Robin Sano to learn about the objectives of the COS and to further develop strategies for collaboration between the COS and WildSafeBC FVRD (Figure 1). The WCC also worked with the Abbotsford Parks, Recreation and Culture representative Shawn Gurney to install deer crossing signs in areas of high deer reports. The WCC also assisted in the distribution of notices to residents in response to bear conflict in the District of Mission on behalf of Jennifer Meier the Environment Coordinator for the District of Mission.



Figure 1. The WCC assists in the relocation of a COS bear trap

This season the WildSafeBC program was able to directly engage over eight thousand people within the community to present the WildSafeBC messaging of 'keeping wildlife wild and communities safe'. Table 1 presents the number of community members engaged by the WCC and WCA's as well and the location and method of engagement.

Table 1 Number of people talked to in an event and location

Location	Door-to-Door	Events	Presentations	Total
Abbotsford	236	3956	340	4532
Chilliwack	0	0	30	30
Cultus	150	403	135	688
Harrison	11	848	70	929
Mission	279	994	355	1628
Agassiz	0	351	30	381
Other (Langley)	0	130	0	130
Total	576	6,682	960	8,216

Community Events

WildSafeBC FVRD attended 31 events and contacted over five thousand people at various events throughout the course of the season. A typical event set-up includes an educational booth with toolkit materials designed at assisting the WildSafeBC messaging. The FVRD educational booth included a bear pelt, several replica wildlife skulls and a collection of rubber scat to provide an interactive approach to engaging the community. Pamphlets, bookmarks and magnets providing species and attractant management information were also made available. The WCC and WCA's provided wildlife knowledge to community members and listened to stories and feedback regarding human-wildlife conflict. Public events are a great opportunity to talk one-on-one with members of the community and to learn local concerns.

New community groups that the WildSafeBC FVRD program was able to engage with during the 2017 season were the Northern Spotted Owl (NSO) breeding program, which is delivered by the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF), as well as the Stillwood Camp in Chilliwack.

During 2017 the following public events were attended by the WCC and WCA's:

- Mission Children's Festival
- Deroche Farmer's Market (x 3)
- Jam in Jubilee (x 4)
- Mission Folk Fest (x 2)
- Cultus Lake Days
- Family Fishing Day
- Sasquatch Days (x 2)
- Abbotsford Airshow (x 3)
- NSO Breeding Program Fundraiser
- Yarrow Farmer's Market
- Abbotsford Canada Day
- Berry Beats Festival
- Parks Day at Cultus
- Cultus Lake Amphitheater (x 2)

- Kilby Pirate Day
- Picnic in the Park
- Mission Fire Department Fire Safety Day
- Cabela's Fall Great Outdoors Day
- Kilby Heritage Day
- Fraser Valley Bald Eagle Festival
- Cabelas Ladies Day



Figure 2. WCC Jenna Belhumeur at the Cabela's Fall Great Outdoors Days

Door-to-door

Door-to-door consists of the WCC, WCA's and community volunteers canvassing a neighbourhood by visiting individual properties and discussing wildlife attractants and conflict incidents with residents. Residents were provided with printed information in the form of various WildSafeBC pamphlets. The WCC and WCA's found that black bear and cougar were the most popular species discussed with residents. Where residents were not at home, a WildSafeBC door-hanger was left detailing the purpose of the visit.

Door-to-door canvassing activities occurred in response to wildlife reports in urban and residential areas. Reports of wildlife were provided to the WCC and WCA's by COS, the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) or directly from the public. Figures 2 and 3 below provide the areas close to green spaces or habitat corridors that received the most door-to-door canvassing.

In Mission over 100 notices were distributed by the WCC and WCA's for the Mission bylaw officers, with information about early garbage set out. The WCC and WCA's worked closely with the District of Mission Environmental Coordinator Jennifer Meier to distribute bylaw information and to cover the highest priority areas within the Mission community.

Figure 2 and 3 provided the location within Chilliwack, Mission and Abbotsford that received door-to-door canvassing. A total of 410 houses were visited in the FVRD during 2017 over a total of 16 door-to-door events (five events in Mission, four visits in Abbotsford, and six visits in Chilliwack).

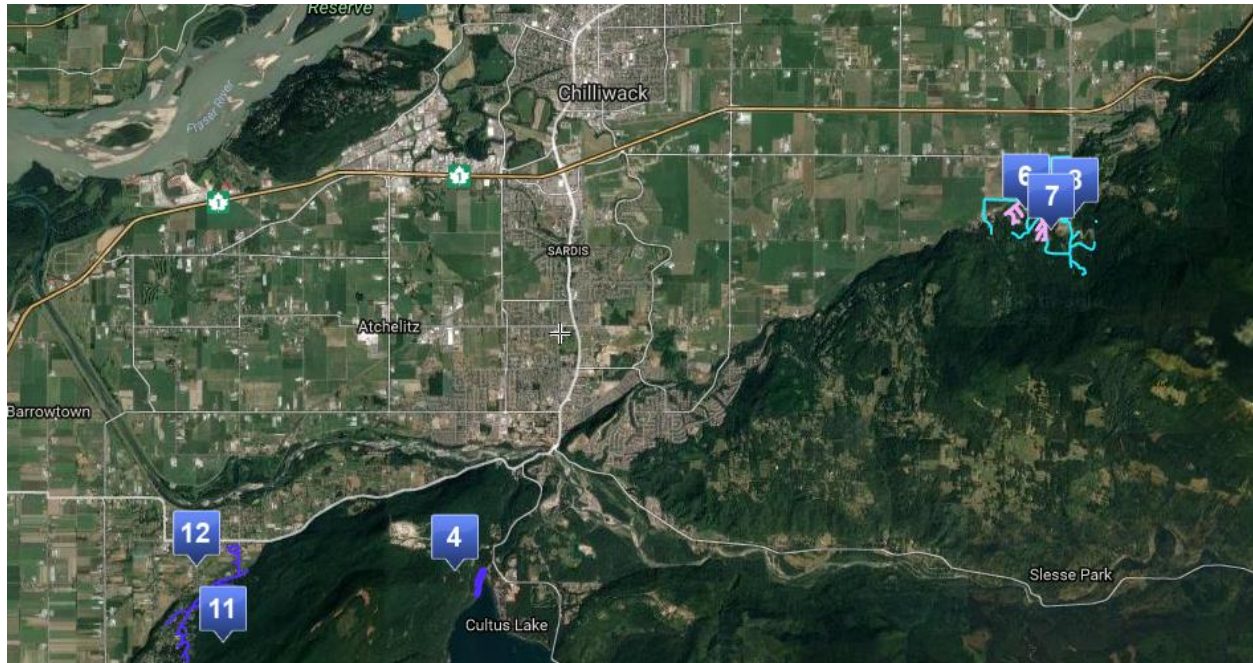


Figure 3. Door-to-door in Chilliwack

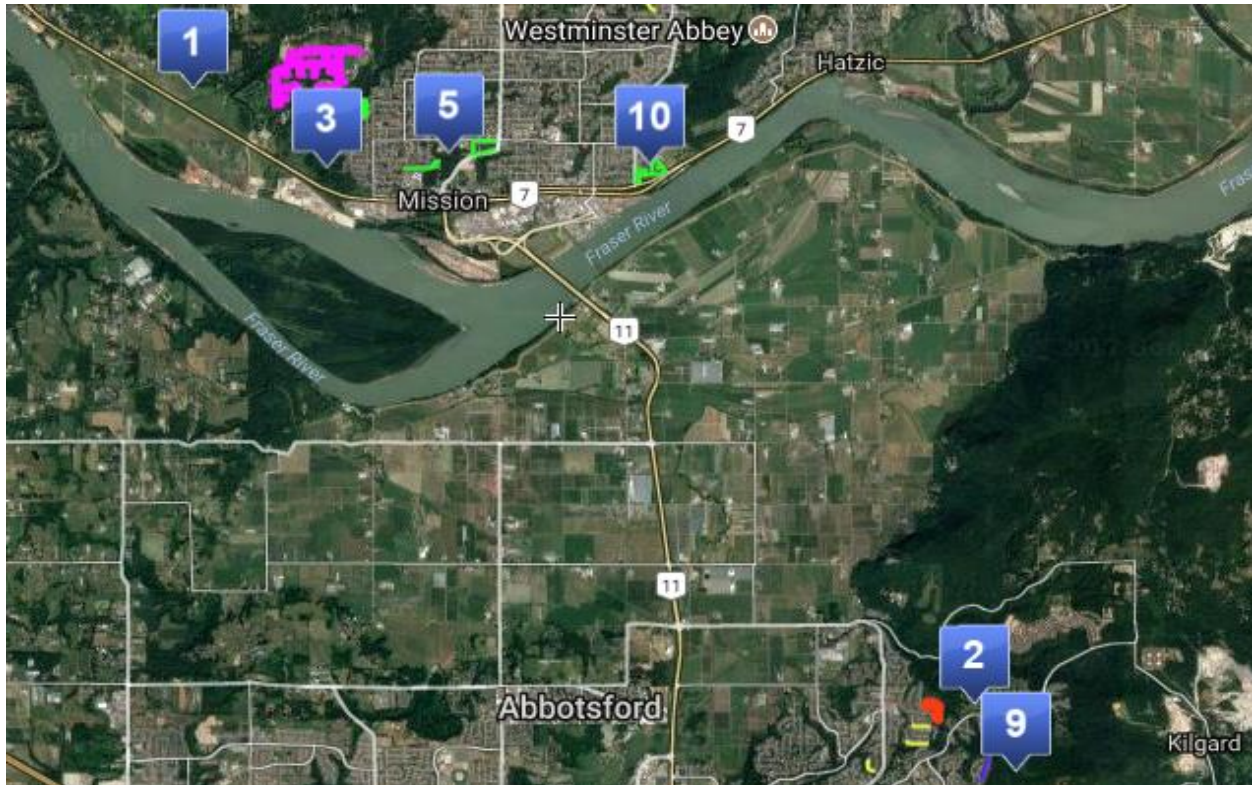


Figure 4. Door-to-door in Mission and Abbotsford

Presentations

The WildSafeBC FVRD program delivered 28 presentations to schools, camps and libraries, and engaged over 960 people. Presentations are an effective way to reach out to large audiences and convey consistent messaging. Presenting the WildSafeBC program to school groups is a proactive approach to reducing human-wildlife conflict as children bring home messaging to their parents and family members. The following groups were presented to during the 2017 season:

- Mission Litter and Wildlife Day Camp (x 2)
- SPCA Summer Camp (x 3)
- Great Blue Heron Reserve Society (x 4)
- 4th Mission Scouts Group
- Abbotsford Christian Elementary School
- Heritage Park Childcare Centre
- Harrison Elementary School
- University of the Fraser Valley Science Rocks! Camp (x 6)
- Abbotsford Summer Camps 2017
- Mission adopt-a-block
- Chilliwack Library
- Sardis Library (x 2)
- Dewdney Elementary School
- AD Rundle Middle School
- Brownies and Sparks Agassiz
- Nature Kids Explorer Day



Figure 5. WCA Kelly Corley-Smith presenting to a elementary school group

Garbage Tagging

Garbage tagging consists of the WCC or the WCA's visiting a neighbourhood in the evening (approximately 10:00 pm the night before curbside collection) and placing a bright yellow "Wildlife Attractant" sticker on the garbage cans put out early. During the 2017 season garbage tagging activities were limited as the WCC and WCA's focused their time predominately on public events and presentations. To date, four garbage tagging events have been undertaken in 2017, and during these events there were noticeable signs of wildlife accessing garbage as well as compost. A priority of the 2018 program will be to increase garbage tagging efforts and to collaborate with the FVRD and partners to identify key areas to be targeted.

Social Media

The WildSafeBC FVRD Facebook page is used to promote events, provided attractant management messaging and to provide information regarding the location of wildlife reports within the FVRD. The WCC and WCA's made efforts to increase the number of posts published on the Facebook page and as a result the number of likes for the page increased from around 260 to over 450 during the 2017 season (see Figure 3).

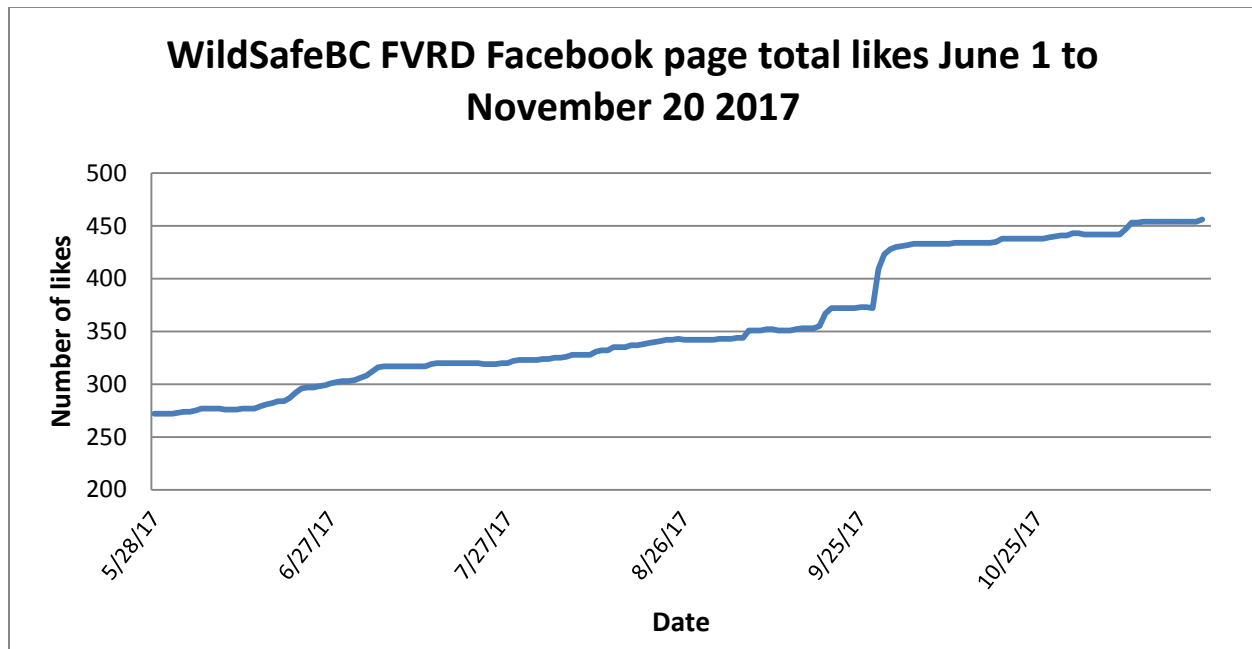


Figure 6. WildSafeBC FVRD Facebook page statistics

WARP

The Wildlife Alert Reporting Program can be used to provide statistics of wildlife reports through the COS RAPP line and directly to WARP. In the 2017 season, Black bears continue to be the most reported species with 75% of all reports relating to black bears (Figure 4). In Mission and Abbotsford, it was found that garbage is the most commonly identified attractant for black bears followed by compost and residential fruit trees. Black bear reports in the Chilliwack area cluster around the Eastern Hillside with garbage and compost listed as the most common attractants. The Chilliwack area also experienced a number of coyote, deer and cougar reports.

There is an increasing trend in black bear reports from 2014 to 2017 across the FVRD (Figure 5). This could be due to a number of influences including an increase in reporting activities by residents. Figures 6 to 8 provide the trends in black bear reports from 2014 to 2017 for the individual communities of Abbotsford, Chilliwack and Mission.

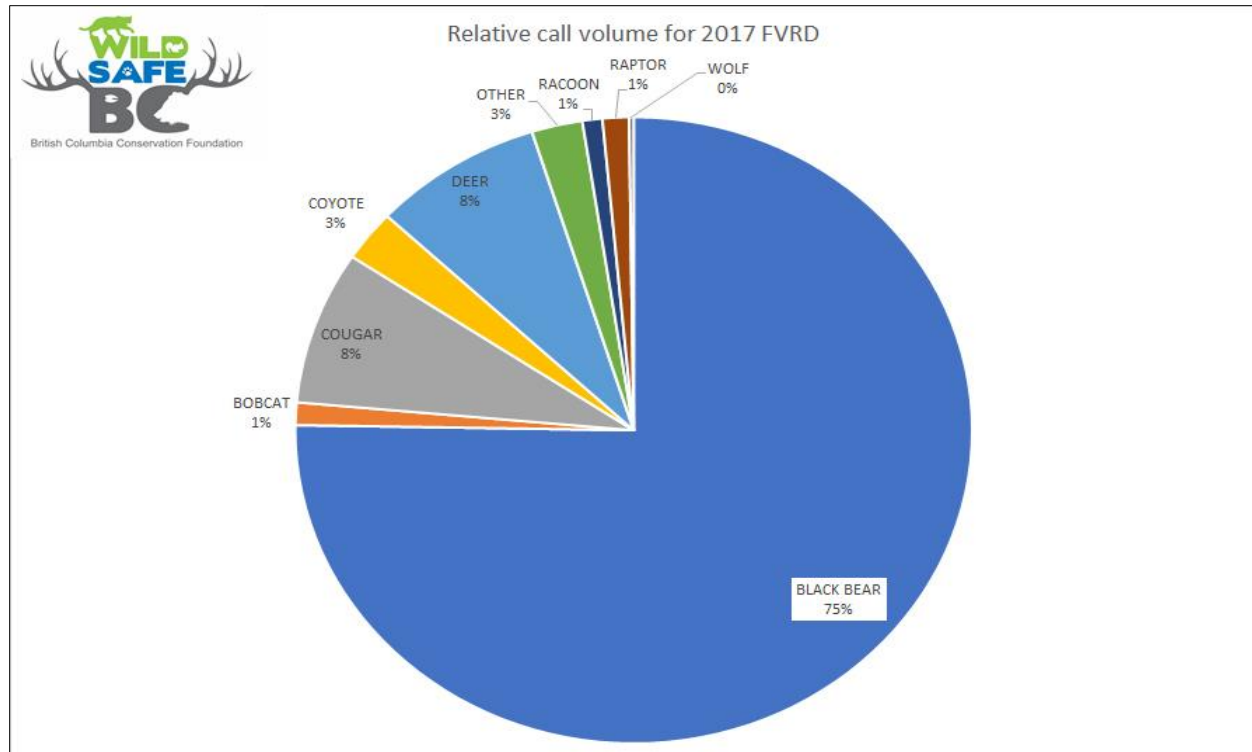


Figure 7. WARP reports by species for 2017

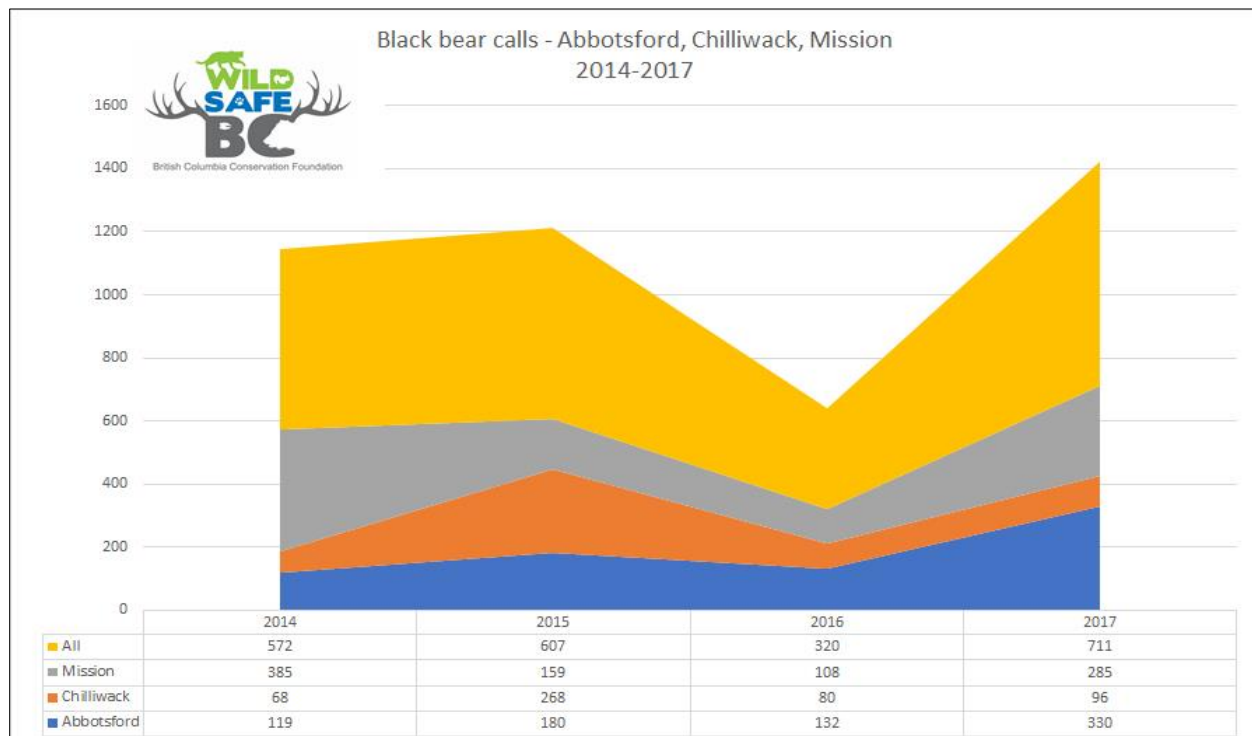


Figure 8. WARP report for black bear in the FVRD 2014 to 2017

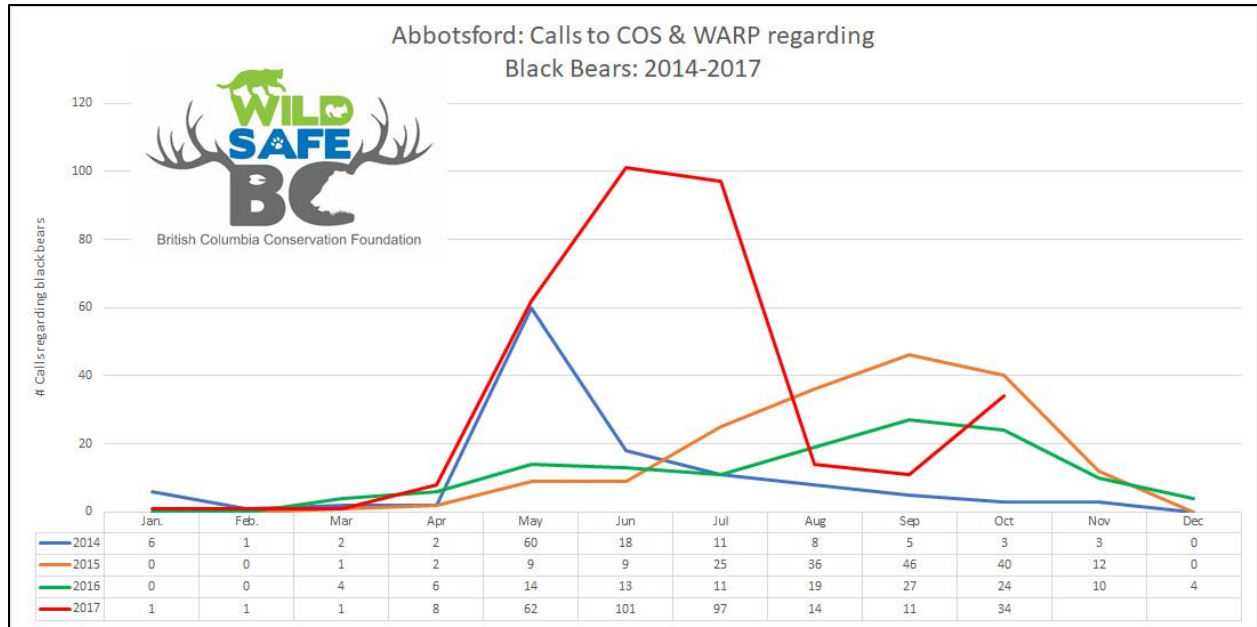


Figure 9. Abbotsford black bear reports 2014 to 2017

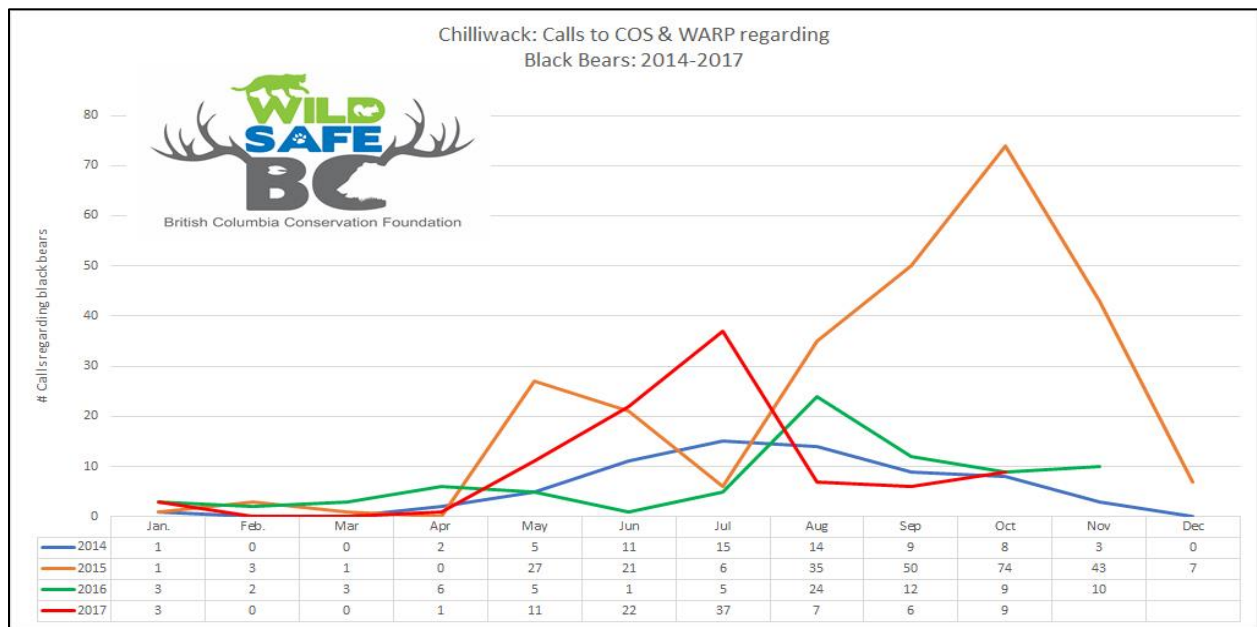


Figure 10. Chilliwack black bear reports 2014 to 2017

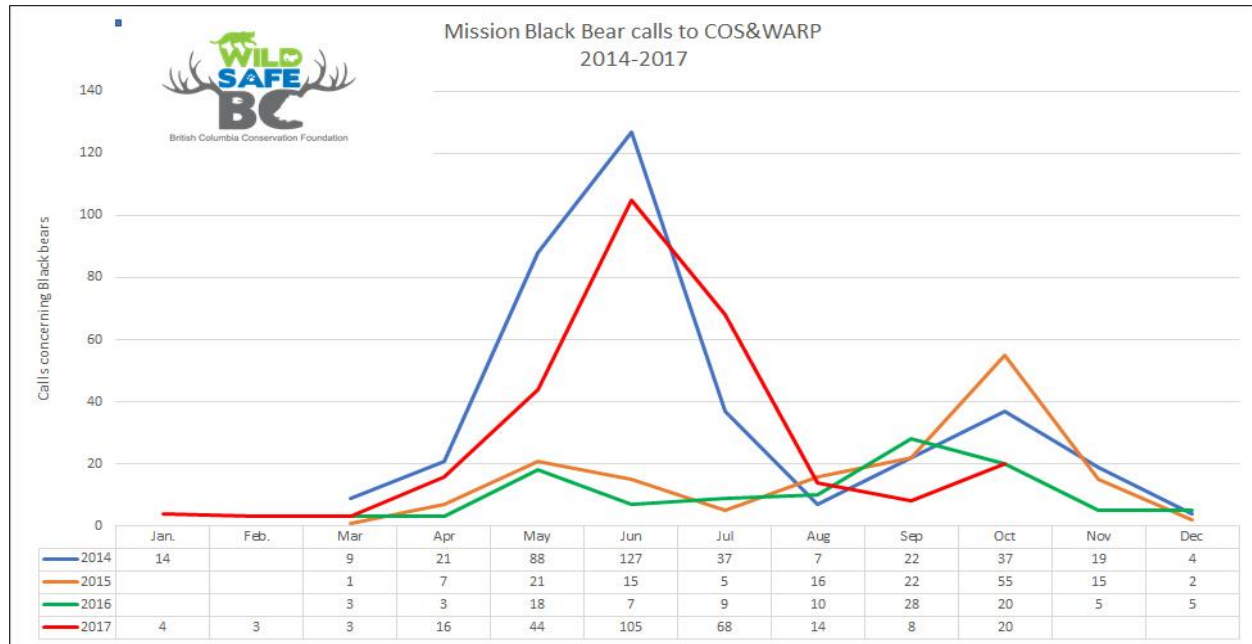


Figure 11. Mission black bear reports 2014 to 2017

Challenges of the 2017 Season

The FVRD encompasses a very large area with a diverse population. The common challenges that were experienced this year were staffing the WildSafeBC program, community size and public perception through community feedback.

Program Delivery

There were staffing difficulties experienced in the WildSafeBC FVRD program during the 2017 season. Several attempts were made to employ a WCC from the beginning of the season on May 1; however recruitment efforts were unsuccessful with the brief employment of three separate individuals to fill the WCC position between May 1 and July 10. A permanent WCC began on September 1st and with a small overlap with one of the WCA's who was primarily employed through the Canada Summer Jobs program.

The limited staffing resources during the season combined with the size of the Regional District proved challenging for the WildSafeBC FVRD program to adequately cover the communities it encompasses. Ideally next season, the WildSafeBC Coordinator will begin in early May 2018 and be able to coordinate the program delivery in collaboration with the WCA's and the WildSafeBC Provincial Coordinator.

Community Size

The FVRD is over 13 thousand square kilometers, and is home to approximately 280,000 people. As a result, the WCC and WCA's were required to prioritize areas for program delivery

as well as the particular activities undertaken. Prioritization was led by WARP reports as well as feedback from bylaw staff in the FVRD and the COS.

Public events and presentations were the focus of the 2017 season as these were seen as an efficient and effective way to reach large audiences. Door-to-door canvassing and garbage tagging were undertaken less during 2017 than in previous years.

The success of the WildSafeBC FVRD program will be improved through the employment of a WCC from May to November in the 2018 season, as well as the valuable program support from the WCA's.

Community Feedback

There continued to be incidents this season where both the WCC and WCA's were met with varied views on wildlife reporting and the need to report. The WCC and WCA's experienced numerous instances where community members in Abbotsford were unaware of wildlife occurrences in residential areas or what to do if they did come in to contact with wildlife. This indicates that sightings are not being reported to either the RAPP line or WARP and the value of the program as a tool for public awareness is underutilized. Residents of Abbotsford were often surprised by door-to-door visits or by seeing the WildSafeBC FVRD booth at events. The WildSafeBC FVRD program will need to increase its efforts in Abbotsford to raise awareness of the program.

The WCC and WCA's also experienced reluctance from residents of Harrison and Agassiz to report wildlife sightings and conflicts due to the perception that wildlife would be destroyed if reported. This is a common opinion observed by all communities across the WildSafeBC program and tends to cluster in certain communities. A lack of reporting in these communities makes it difficult to establish statistics on human-wildlife conflict and the response required by the WildSafeBC FVRD program.

Attractant Management

Garbage continues to be the primary attractant for wildlife, particularly black bears in the FVRD. Many older houses in the FVRD do not have a secure enclosure for storing garbage.

Publications pertaining to do-it-yourself garbage enclosures were a major source of discussion this year with residents. Promontory, Sumas Mountain, and green space areas of Mission tend to experience the highest conflicts with bears and garbage. The District of Mission has experienced a reduction in early set outs for garbage due to the introduction of the Solid Waste Management Bylaw 5526-2015. There has been some community discontentment with the changes to garbage pick up schedules in Mission and Abbotsford to biweekly pick up rather than weekly. This may pose further challenges to promoting securing garbage in the upcoming seasons. The City of Chilliwack's lack of a bylaw pertaining to garbage set out times was again a challenge to the WildSafeBC FVRD program delivery.

Many people in the FVRD have unmanaged fruit trees or gardens which attract wildlife into residential areas. Further efforts to promote local gleaning groups and the use of electric fencing in 2018 may reduce the amount of conflict with residential fruit trees.

Goals for 2018 Season

The WildSafeBC FVRD program has the following goals for the 2018 season:

- Continue to build upon community partnerships and forge new relationships with community groups, local businesses and other non-profit groups with the goal of making WildSafeBC a familiar and integral part of our community.
- Continue to offer educational presentations to a wide range of audiences, offering our existing human-bear conflict presentations as well as developing new presentations targeting wildlife species that cause concern locally (e.g. cougars, coyotes, raccoons).
- Use project funds to purchase new animal display items. The addition of a second set of display materials would allow for multiple events and presentations to be attended simultaneously.
- Expand volunteer base across the FVRD, specifically in Mission.
- Continue to develop and expand upon methods to increase community awareness and compliance of wildlife attractant etiquette.
- Increase visibility in the local media and Facebook.

Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC FVRD is grateful for the generous support the program receives from its sponsors, partners and volunteers. Thanks to our sponsors: the Fraser Valley Regional District, Canada Summer Jobs and the Ministry of Environment. A big thanks to Christina Vugteveen of the Fraser Valley Regional District, Shawn Gurney at the City of Abbotsford, Jennifer Meier at the District of Mission, Lydia Koot with the Hope Mountain Black Bear Committee, and the Village of Harrison. Thank you to the Conservation Officer Service, especially CO Don Stahl and CO Steve Jacobi for their advice and information. A huge thanks to the incredibly hard working and creative Canada Summer Job Students; Joshua Domino and Kelly Corley-Smith who managed this year's summer program. To all the volunteers who helped tag, went on door-to-door visits and helped at events we truly appreciate your help!