

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2018

## Fraser Valley Regional District

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Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy



## Executive Summary

This year's focus was on education through public outreach with events and community groups. Through the summer there were numerous presentations with educational summer camps. This provided education to children ranging from ages 5 to 12. A total of 8 presentations were given to a total of 208 participants. Key events included Family Fishing Day and the Fire Life and Safety Event in Mission. A total of 1128 participants were reached through public booths. There was continued participation in different community events ranging through Mission, Abbotsford, and Chilliwack.

In the fall, activities were concentrated on garbage tagging and public education with a variety of community groups. There were 684 people reached through door-to-door campaigns and garbage tagging. This brought a focus on attractants in the areas, how to better manage them and the reasons for increased human-wildlife conflict in the fall.

The majority of human-wildlife conflicts were with black bears in Abbotsford, Mission, and Chilliwack. There were also increases in bobcat activity throughout the Fraser Valley. Reports were received the Conservation Officer Service 24/7 Report All Poachers Polluters (RAPP) line as well as reports to the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) at events.

Topics of community concerns that were commonly raised were on trail safety, understanding how to use bear spray and fears by new members and families to the community. Many lacked knowledge of local species and how to behave appropriately if they encountered wildlife. As a result, a special focus was put on education and community outreach through presentations. Topics included how to reduce human-wildlife conflict, signs of wildlife in the area, how to prevent encounters, and what to do if an encounter happens.

Work will continue until the end of the contract at the end of February 2019. Through this time there will be more education with the Junior Rangers Program as well as speaking with different community groups to educate about trail safety, proper bear spray usage and reducing attractants. Through the winter, trail safety will still be highlighted around cougars. Time will also be spent in creating concrete plans for the Spring/Summer of 2019 for garbage tagging and door-to-door education and beginning to set 2019 goals in motion.

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## Highlights from the 2018 Season

### Key Events

The Family Fishing Day in Abbotsford was the most successful event resulting in outreach to 567 people. This was due to the event itself creating a draw prize entry for everyone who returned a card having been marked for visiting every booth. This increased engagement so that almost all visitors came to each table. The second busiest event was the Fire Life and Safety Event in Mission with an outreach to 263 people. This event was a big draw for families as it allowed kids to interact with all sorts of emergency vehicles and equipment.

In terms of community engagement through group presentations the Chilliwack Outdoors Group had the most positive feedback to the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) directly from members in person as well as on Facebook.

### Wildlife Activity

The Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) contributed to 702 calls regarding wildlife in 2018 to the Conservation Officer Service RAPP Line from January 1<sup>st</sup> to November 30<sup>th</sup> (fig. 1). Of those 702 calls, Abbotsford contributed the most at 301 calls, Mission was second at 214 calls, and Chilliwack accounted for 153 calls. Calls regarding bears were below average provincially and this was reflected in the FVRD numbers as well. However, the mild weather and access to unnatural foods has likely contributed to bears still being active into December. As of the writing of this report, bears are still active in the Mission area. Also, a young boy was attacked by a cougar in Cascade Falls Provincial Park on December 17. This resulted in the temporary closure of the park. Unlike bears that mostly hibernate over the winter, cougars remain active year-round.

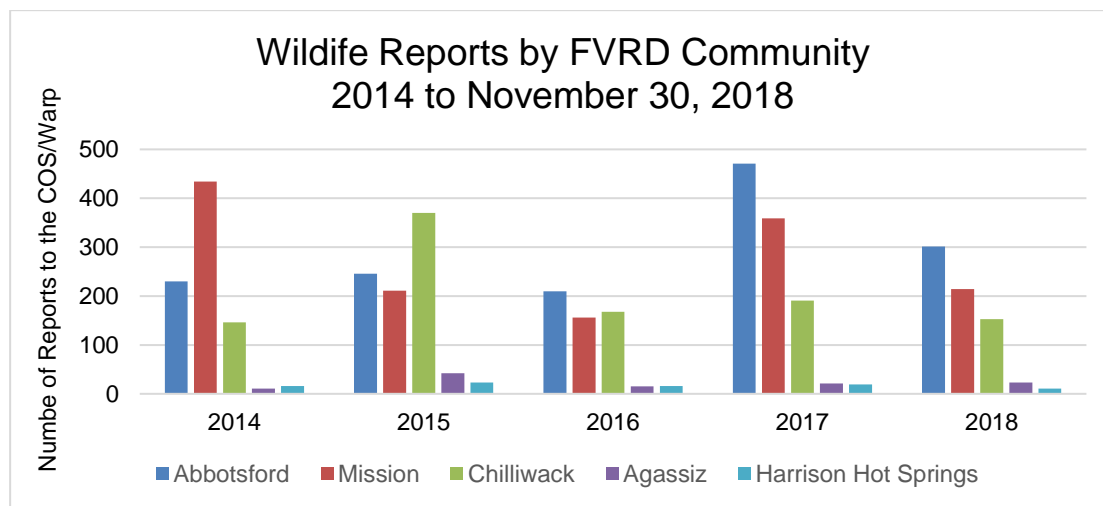


Figure 1. Reports to the COS and WARP from 2014 to November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018 regarding wildlife in the FVRD.

Just as in previous years, black bears remained the most reported species with 422 calls, followed by cougars with 99 and deer with 74 (fig. 2).

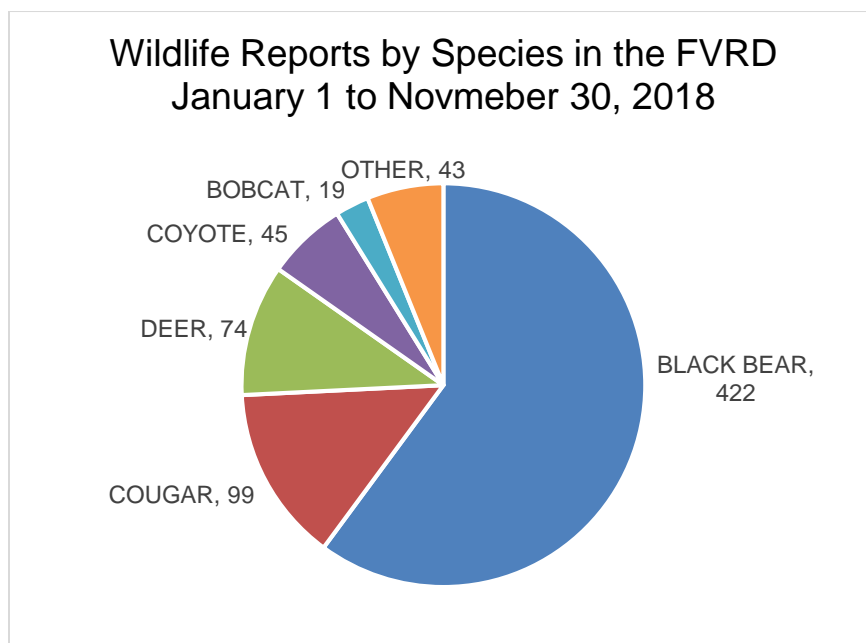


Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding Wildlife from January 1<sup>st</sup> to November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2018.

## Presentations to Schools and Community Groups

The WCC for the FVRD community gave a total of 8 presentations to over 200 participants including:

- Prospera Summer Camp
- BC SPCA Summer Camps
- Mission Community Services Family Place Picnic In The Park
- Chartwell Cedarbrooke Retirement Residence
- Chilliwack Outdoors Club
- Vedder Middle School's Outdoor Education Classes
- Fraser Valley Women's Hiking Group
- AD Rundle Middle School's Outdoor Education Class

## Door-to-Door Education and Garbage Tagging

The WCC for the FVRD Community engaged in door-to-door education and garbage tagging 7 times, which resulted in outreach to 684 homes throughout problem areas in Mission, Chilliwack and Abbotsford. Garbage tagging in Mission was used to educate residents about Mission's solid waste management bylaw 3.4 "Garbage, Recyclables and Compostables must only be set out between 5:00 a.m. and 8:00 a.m. only on the designated day of Curbside Collection as per the District's Collection Schedule." This bylaw promotes best practices around attractant management and reduces the easy access by wildlife to non-natural foods.

## Public Displays and Events

The WCC for the FVRD Community attended 8 public events with an outreach to over 1,100 participants. Events included:

- Family Fishing Day
- Mission Folk Music Festival
- Deroche Farmer's Market
- Stave Falls Community Festival
- Chilliwack Garlic Festival
- Rally In The Valley
- Electric Fencing Demo
- Fire Life And Safety Event

## Social Media

The WCC for the FVRD Community made over 32 posts on social media resulting in an overall outreach of over 4,200 people (not including the Wild Wednesday video posts shared from the main WildSafeBC Facebook Page).

Of those posts the top three with the biggest outreach were:

- Abbotsford warning about resident bears – 887 people reached
- Post asking for volunteers for the Mission Folk Fest – 508 people reached
- Harrison Hot Springs warning about a bobcat – 379 people reached

The post with the most comment engagement was a discussion about how to identify bear scat. Posts regarding specific animal warnings received the highest reach whereas posts announcing community events had an average of 100-170 people respond. While posts regarding online conflicts or sightings garnered the most online engagement, social media remains an important method in announcing community events. The use of Facebook groups helped in the promotion of events, outreach, and in educating the public about safety as well as reducing attractants.

## Partnerships

Many events were done in cooperation with various other organizations that also provided networking opportunities. New community contacts were made and the WCC is planning activities based on events held successfully in the past. The focus for 2018 was on reaching out to specific community groups such as outdoors clubs, hiking groups, and other organizations. These WCC will continue to collaborate with these groups to find ways to deliver our messaging and provide their members with knowledge and safety education.

## Challenges for the 2018 Season

The main challenge for the 2018 season was not having WildSafeBC Canada Summer Jobs Ambassadors to assist in the delivery of the program. Resources were stretched thin to cover such a large area. Activities such as garbage tagging require a volunteer or another WSBC employee as a safety precaution. The WCC did benefit from the assistance of city summer students that put door hangers in areas of wildlife conflict or on homes that were not managing their fruit trees.

With the lack of a consist WCC in the 2017 season there were issues around inventory and information management which made it challenging for the WCC to get up to speed quickly.

Forest fire smoke impacted the ability of the WCC to do outdoor work safely such as garbage tagging and door-to-door canvassing. As well, inclement weather resulted in cancelling BC Goes Wild Weekend events.

## Goals and Opportunities for 2019

The WCC will be continue to work until the end of February 2019 with a focus on school education delivery using the WSBC Junior Rangers Program and Outdoor Education classes. There will also be ongoing outreach with different community groups and an online presence within social media.

Goals for 2019 would be:

- Have a predetermined door-to-door areas based on 2018 conflict areas
- Pre-map garbage tagging routes based on city pickup schedules
- Have a better foundation for finding volunteers
- Make recommendations to the city of Chilliwack and Abbotsford to add a solid waste management bylaw with regards to unsecured garbage and compost placed on the curb the night before collection
- Support and work with the District of Mission in their pursuit for Bear Smart Community status
- Start the year off with pre-made scheduled Facebook posts
- Come up with photographic media content to work with Facebook posts
- Create more posts on Facebook of WARP alerts
- Ensure there is better online organization for the FVRD materials
- Work with the cities of Abbotsford, Chilliwack and Mission to develop plans to reduce conflict
- Increase social media engagement with incentives/contests
- Highlight businesses/people “doing the right thing” on social media



## Acknowledgements

The WCC would like to thank the District of Mission and Jennifer Meier for their help making this year's program run more smoothly. They perceived ways for the city and the program to help one another. Jennifer facilitated face-to-face meetings with bylaw officers and the WCC to work collaboratively on reducing attractants. A special thank you goes to District of Mission summer student Lauren Young for assisting with garbage tagging as well as the District of Mission for allowing Lauren to assist with the program on her paid time. The majority of the garbage tagging would not have been possible if it hadn't been for her continued help.

Thank you to the City of Chilliwack for their support and by providing office space and equipment as well as the City of Abbotsford for coordinating and booking a space for our electric fencing demo.

Thank you to the Conservation Officers Service for their continued support and to Conservation Officer Don Stahl for his communication on areas in conflict.