

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2019

Cariboo

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Executive Summary

The WildSafeBC (WSBC) program was delivered in the Cariboo Regional District (CRD) by WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) Amber Gregg. In her first year of program delivery, The WCC delivered 19 presentations to over 450 participants and engaged in conversations with over 400 people at 7 events in the area. The large geographic area and low population density offered some challenges for program delivery so events were specifically selected to reach as many residents as possible from outlying areas such as Horsefly, Likely, Wells, Forest Grove, and Lac La Hache (Figure 1).

The WSBC program is relatively new to the CRD area. Most residents recognized the parent program, “Bear Aware”, which was often a good jumping off point to introduce current ideas around attractant management for multiple species and present wildlife safety education. The program has been well received in all communities and will continue to be effective moving forward as further education, activities, and outreach are provided.

The WCC established connections with local the Conservation Officer Service (COS) in Quesnel, Williams Lake, and 100 Mile House through meetings and events. This collaboration has proved to be valuable for sharing information and increasing effectiveness of the program. The COS was able to provide information on poor attractant management hotspots and a timeline for common wildlife activity.

Overall the program was successful at introducing education in the CRD area regarding managing attractants and reducing human-wildlife conflict. The majority of residents have a high tolerance for wildlife in the area and are very cognizant of managing attractants to increase safety.

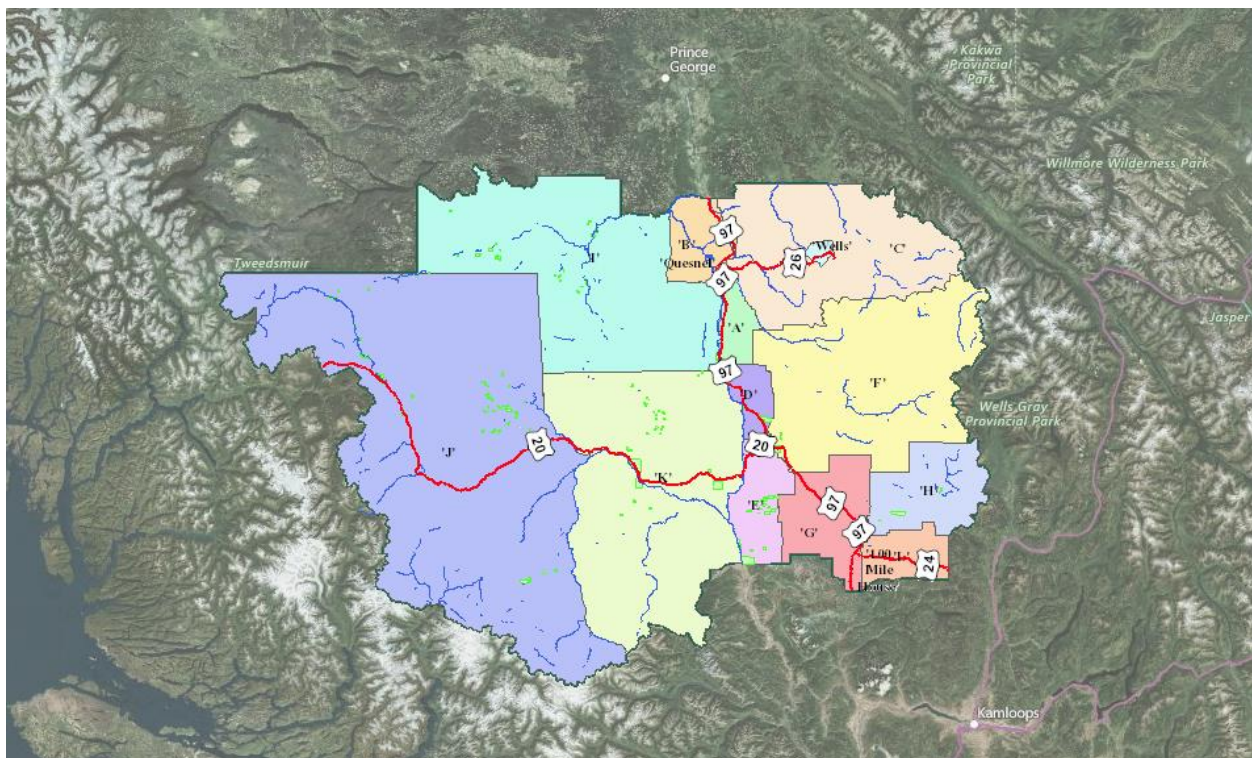


Figure 1 Coverage area of the WildSafeBC Cariboo Program (Source: publicmaps.cariboord.bc.ca)

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Cover photo: WCC Amber Gregg teaching WildSafe Rangers at 108 Mile Elementary School

Highlights from the 2019 Season

Program introduction

As the WSBC program was new to the CRD for 2019, it was important for the WCC to establish relationships with local organizations such as the COS and Scout Island Nature Centre to aid in effective delivery of the program. Residents were made aware of the program through media releases, social media, and interacting at local events.

Wildlife Activity

Overall there was a decrease in calls to the COS RAPP line compared to 2018 which was a higher than average conflict year (Figure 2). The majority of calls were for black bear (362), deer (202) and cougar (97). These numbers may be a reflection of the effect of the 2018 wildfires on wildlife activity in the area as the reports in 2018 were higher than the 3 year average. Black bear reports peaked in September (112), while May, August and October ranged from 57 to 65 reports per month. Deer and cougar reports occur yearround but tend to increase slightly in late summer and fall. Garbage remained the most reported attractant for black bears at 150 calls followed by livestock at 18.

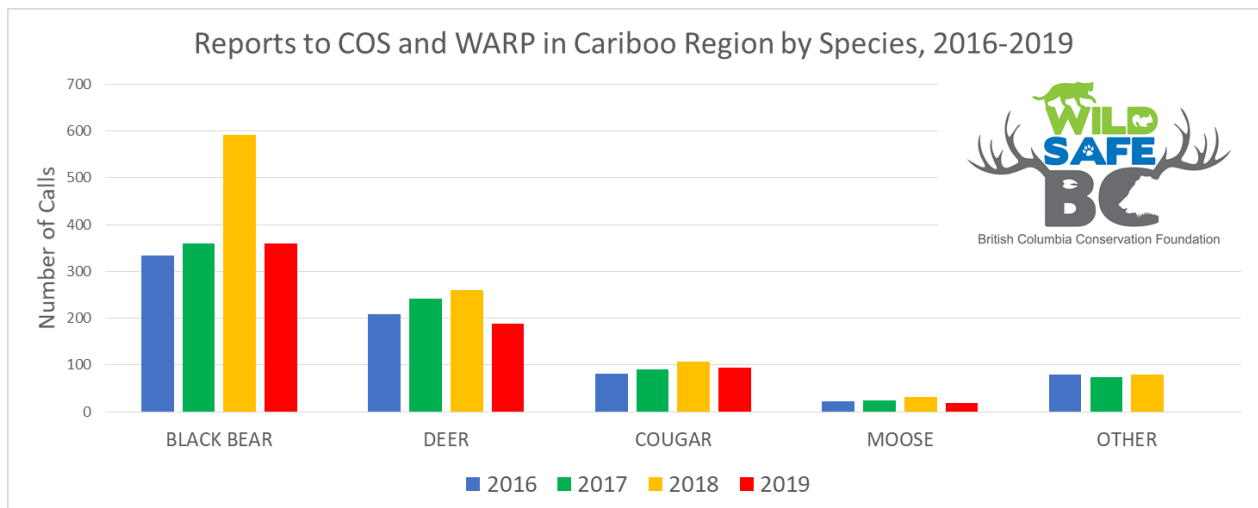


Figure 2: Reports to COS and WARP in the CRD by species from January 1, 2014 to November 30, 2019.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WCC gave a total of 19 WildSafe Ranger presentations given to over 475 Kindergarten to Grade 7 students including:

- 108 Mile Elementary School, 108 Mile Ranch
- Lakeview Elementary School, Quesnel
- Cataline Elementary School, Williams Lake

In addition to the WildSafe Ranger Powerpoint presentation, the WCC used props such as a stuffed toy salmon, chicken puppet, bird feeder, jar of honey, etc. and had the kids guess if the item was an unnatural or natural food source and how to manage the items identified as common attractants around the home. All presentations were well received and the students showed enthusiasm for the subject matter.

Garbage Bin Tagging and Door-Door-Canvassing

Garbage bin tagging was a very effective method for reaching residents in key bear activity areas. The program had a powerful impact in the communities it was carried out in and sparked valuable conversations between resident and municipal leaders.

Garbage bin tagging activity was carried out in the 108 Mile Ranch and 100 Mile House areas. There was a drastic improvement in garbage bin behavior in the 108 Mile Ranch, presumably resulting in fewer calls to the COS service.

Garbage tagging was carried out in each of the two 108 Mile Ranch pick up areas once per month from June until September. In one neighborhood, the first round resulted in a decreased number of bins being put out early of 30 bins in July to only 7 in September. It is likely that the increased awareness around garbage as a major bear attractant affected the amount of calls to the COS RAPP line for black bear encounters from 47 reports August – October 2018 to only 4 reports August 2019 – October 2019.

The 100 Mile House CO Joel Kline reported a total of 91 black bear calls since April 1, 2010. Of those, 43 were for attractants such as garbage, fruit, pet food, birdfeeders, etc. In 2019, there were no calls to the COS in the 108 Mile Ranch area in September and October, and only 38 in 100 Mile House for the same months.

Public Displays and Events

The WCC was able to borrow a bear hide and skulls through a collaboration with Scout Island Nature Centre. This increased interest in the WildSafeBC booth and facilitated conversations during attendance at events. The WildSafeBC display was a popular feature at many events, including:

- Lion's Pig Roast, 108 Mile Ranch
- Senior's Resource Fair, 100 Mile House
- Stampede Street Party, Williams Lake
- CRD Information Fair, Forest Grove
- Farmer's Market, Quesnel
- Boys and Girls Club Street Party, Williams Lake (Figure 4)
- CRD information Fair, Williams Lake (Figure 5)

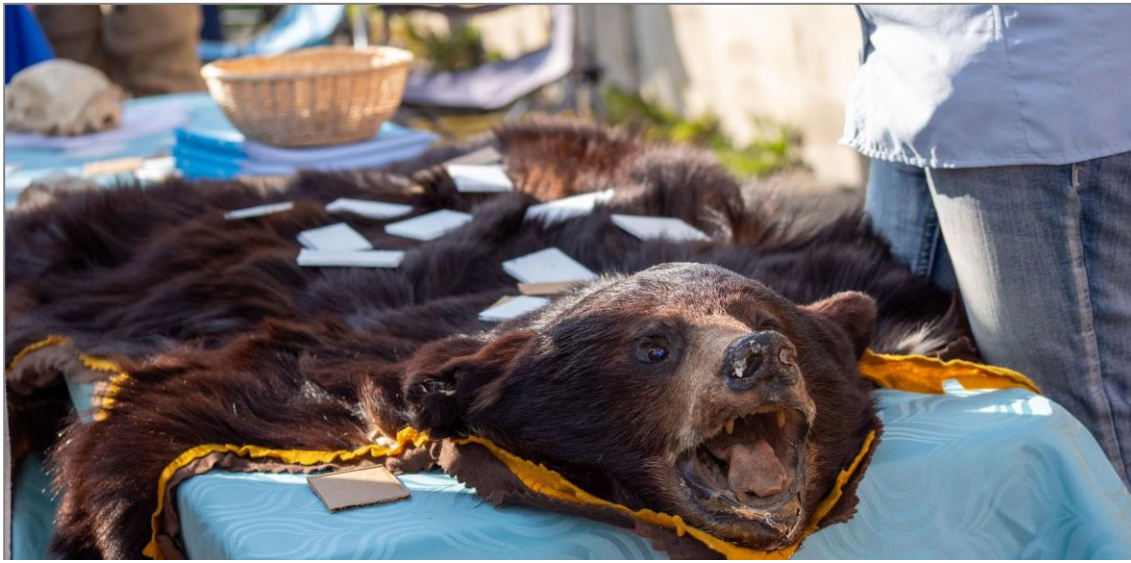


Figure 3: Bear hide on display at the Boys and Girls Club Street Party. The WCC had the kids turn over cards with food items on them and decide if they were natural or unnatural food sources.
Photo: Boys and Girls Club Williams Lake



Figure 4: Cariboo Regional District Information Fair. *Photo: Cariboo Regional District*

Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Cariboo program was well supported by local media platforms including the Williams Lake Tribune, CBC Daybreak North, and Vista Radio. The local Facebook page was renamed in June from WildSafeBC Williams Lake to WildSafeBC Cariboo in order to encompass the program's delivery scope. There are an extensive number of groups and pages providing wildlife information and encounters on social media for the CRD area. This created additional challenges for sharing information on the WildSafeBC Cariboo page, however page followers saw an increase from 150 in April to 176 in November (17% increase). The most popular post was the promotion of the WildSafeBC booth at the Quesnel Farmer's market on August 17th.

Challenges and Goals

The large geographical area created challenges for reaching all areas in the Cariboo Regional District. Outlying areas such as Horsefly, Likely, Barkerville, Wells, Horse Lake, Lone Butte, Lac La Hache are areas that would be valuable to target in the future through door-to-door canvassing. The WCC tried to attend as many events as possible with a large attraction for outlying areas to reach those residents.

It would be valuable to increase garbage tagging activity in Quesnel and Williams Lake neighborhoods for the 2020 season. Door-to-door canvassing in Quesnel neighborhoods without curbside pickup would also be useful in reducing attractants in those areas. Additional WildSafe Ranger classroom sessions would be valuable in all communities.

Overall the 2019 WildSafeBC Cariboo season was very successful. Communities were receptive to the education and improvements were made in both 100 Mile House and 108 Mile Ranch. Moving forward, this program will continue to be successful in reducing human-wildlife conflict.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the CRD for supporting the WildSafeBC Program and funding the program this season. Also, the WCC appreciated the support of the BC Conservation Foundation staff, the Conservation Officer Service and all of the community organizations and schools that supported the delivery of the program.