

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2019

## Thompson Nicola Regional District

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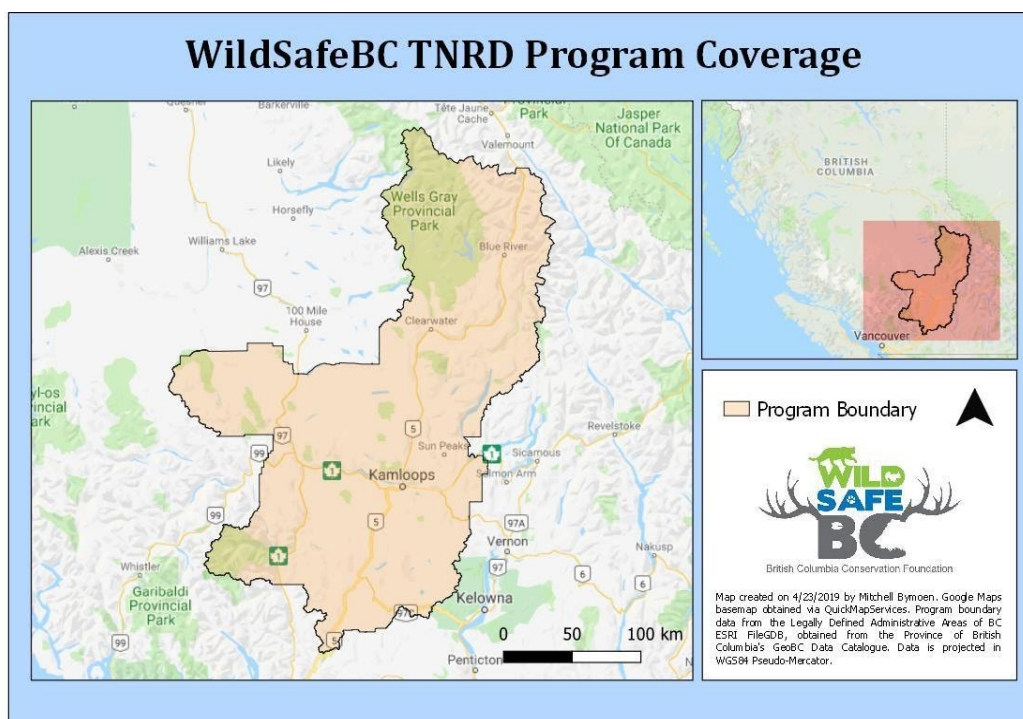


## Executive Summary

This WildSafeBC (WSBC) program was delivered to the Thompson Nicola Regional District (TNRD) (Figure 1) by WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC), Rhiannon Guerra. To engage residents within the large geographic area of the region, innovative solutions were needed. Given the large number of black bear reports this year, continued outreach campaigns were coordinated to educate residents about proper attractant management to prevent conflict with wildlife.

In her third year of program delivery, the WCC provided WildSafe Ranger Program presentations to over 700 students, delivered two presentations to adult community groups, engaged with 130 people at Eco Depot Visits, and attended 10 public events with the WildSafeBC display booth. Additionally, the reach of the WildSafeBC TNRD Facebook Page grew and the number of followers increased to 286.

Human-wildlife conflict varies between the communities in the TNRD and it is important to monitor local regions to provide up-to-date information on conflict resolution. Shared challenges across the TNRD include: improperly managed fruit trees, intentional feeding of wildlife, and misinformation on bear spray. To address these challenges, additional collaborations are needed with gleaning programs, urban deer programs, and other organizations. Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help “keep wildlife wild and our community safe”.



**Figure 1. WildSafeBC TNRD Program Coverage Area\*.**

*\*Note that for the purposes of the featured data on this report the Thompson Nicola Regional District is defined as the following communities: Merritt, Lower Nicola, Brookmere, Kingsvale, Aspen Grove, Quilchena, Douglas Lake, Lytton, Spences Bridge, Logan Lake, Ashcroft, Cache Creek, Walhachin, Savona, Cherry Creek, Monte Creek, Monte Lake, Westwold, Pritchard, Chase, Sun Peaks, Heffley Creek, Heffley Lake, McClure, Darfield, Barriere, Louis Creek, Little Fort, Clearwater, Chua Chua, Simpcw, Clinton, 70 Mile, Jesmond, Vavenby, Blue River, and Avola. Note that programming is not delivered in Kamloops because Kamloops has its own program.*

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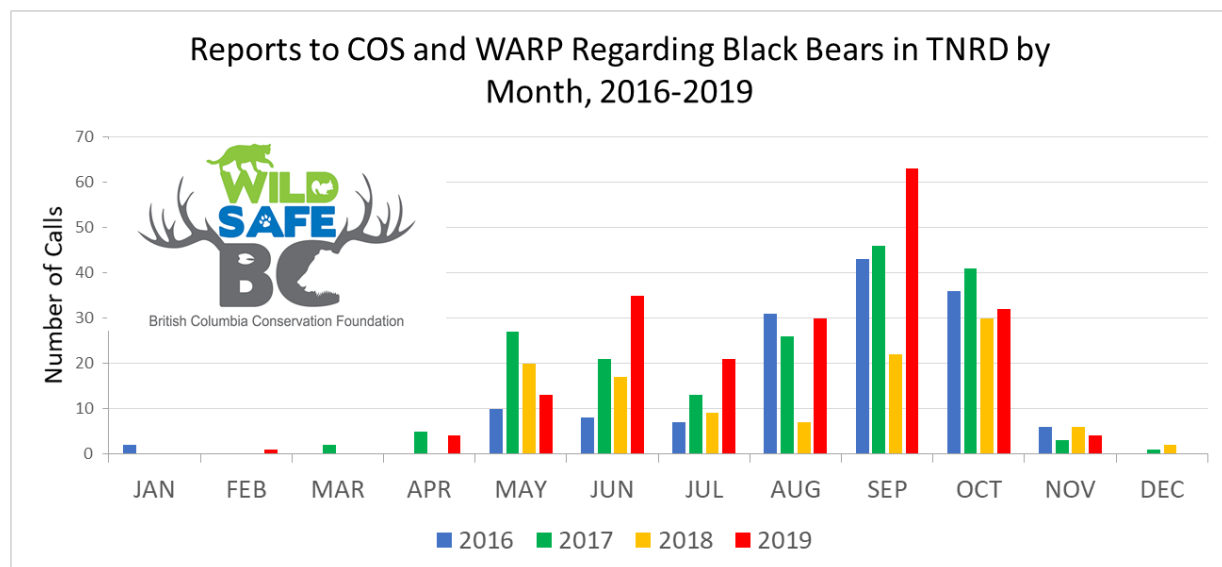
Cover Photo: WCC attends BC Parks Day at Moul Falls (credit: BC Parks)

## Highlights from the 2018 Season

### Wildlife Activity

Calls made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). This data is updated daily and this report for the TNRD includes data from January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019.

There were 367 total wildlife reports to WARP in 2019 compared to 2018 which was 266 reports. Black bears are still the number one wildlife species reported in the TNRD with deer and cougar reported often as well (Figure 4). Black bear reports tend to spike when black bears are experiencing hyperphagia during September to October (Figure 2). In 2019, we saw a large increase in black bear reports in June and July compared to the previous three years. These reports can be due to a number of factors and may represent sightings or wildlife in conflict.



**Figure 2. Reports to COS and WARP regarding black bears in TNRD by month, January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019.**

The attractant types reported with the wildlife are showing decreases in most types with the exception of fruit trees (Figure 3). This corroborates anecdotal information provided to the WCC by residents about fruit trees and gardens within the community not being tended or left out for wildlife. Door-to-door canvassing as well as Eco-Depot site visits were made in these communities that cited issues with backyard gardens and/or fruit trees.

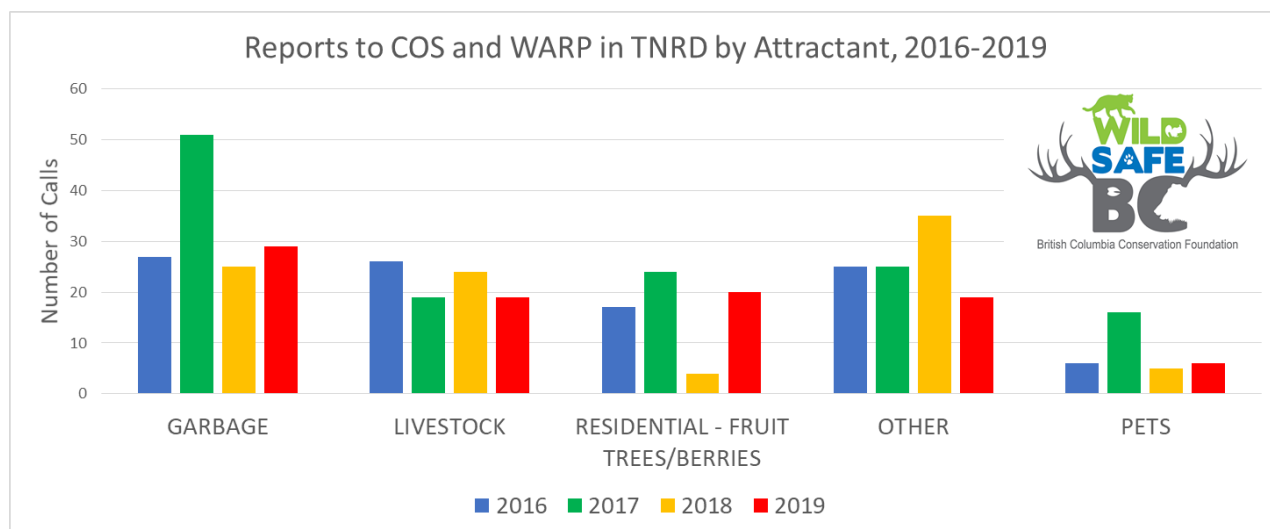


Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP in TNRD by attractant, January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019.

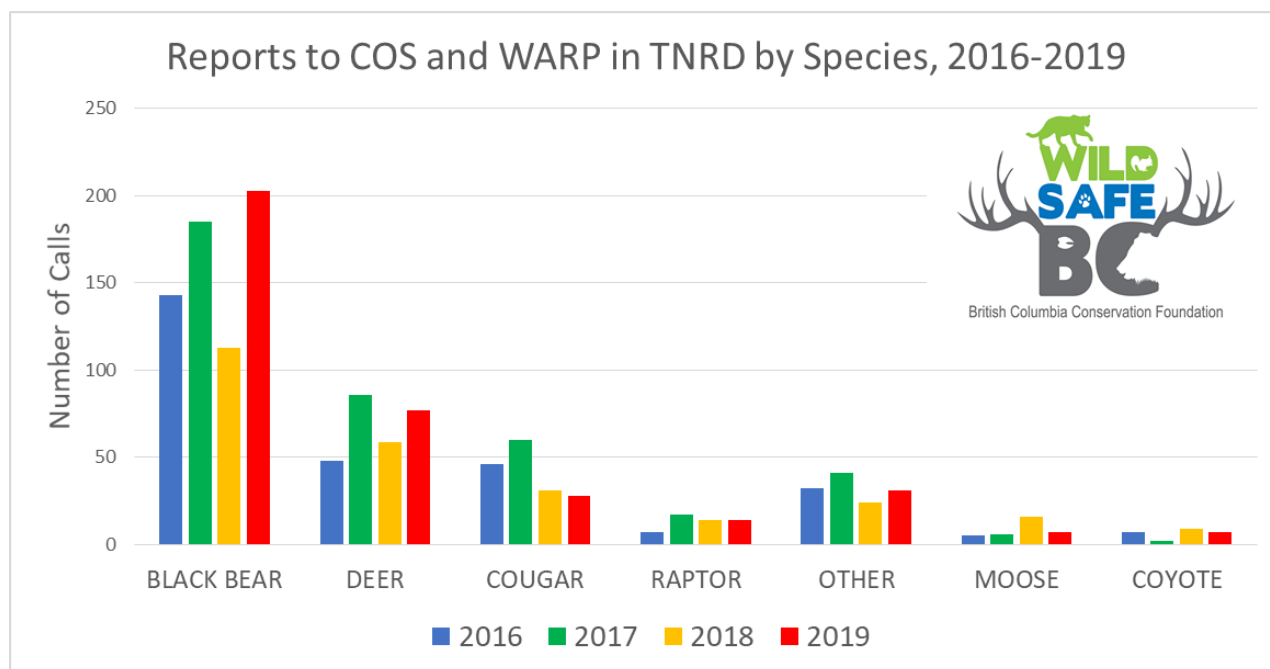


Figure 4. Reports to COS and WARP in TNRD by species, January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019.



## WildSafe Ranger Program

This year the Junior Rangers Program was changed to the WildSafe Rangers Program. While the format and materials may have grown, the concept remains the same; offering human-wildlife conflict and attractant management education to elementary schools in the area. This gives the future generation of TNRD residents a head start on reducing conflict and understanding local wildlife. The WCC for the TNRD gave a total of 31 WildSafe Ranger presentations to over 700 students (Table 1, Figure 5).

**Table 1. WildSafe Ranger Program presentations 2019.**

Schools Visited	# of Presentations	# of Students	Age Group
Barriere Elem	11	304	Grades K-6 (Extended Program with Grade 5-6)
Vavenby Elem	2	18	Grades K-4
Blue River Elem	2	14	Grades K-5
Clearwater River Raft Elem	7	208	Grades K-7
Logan Lake Elem	5	104	Grades K-4
Heffley Creek Elem	1	23	Grades K-3
Pinantan Elem	3	57	Grades K-4
Savona Elem	4	47	Grades K-7



**Figure 5. WildSafe Ranger Program at Logan Lake Elementary, 2019.**

## Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC provided general wildlife presentations to adults and community groups outside of the school system which foster a better understanding and preparedness for encountering wildlife throughout the TNRD. The WCC for the TNRD provided two presentations to 23 participants (Table 2).

**Table 2. Summary of Presentations to Community Groups.**

Organizations Visited	# of Participants
Blue River Safety Presentation Mike Weigle Helicopter Lodge	20
BC Goes Wild Bear Spray Workshop in Clearwater	3

## Door-to-Door Education and Garbage Tagging

The TNRD has a unique solution to delivering the door-to-door aspect of the program within the TNRD for the many rural communities. Traditionally door-to-door makes traveling from house to house difficult and timely with a low impact in connecting with people face to face. In 2018 the Eco-Depot site visits were used as a surrogate for the door-to-door activity in the more rural and wide-spread communities in the TNRD. Eco-Depot sites or transfer stations are found in many rural communities in the TNRD instead of curbside waste collection. The residents are expected to deliver their garbage to these sites which are then shipped elsewhere. These sites can see 25 to 70 people in a four hour time period and offer a comparable conversation starter in regards to garbage as a wildlife conflict issue. Door-to-door is still used in the larger municipalities such as Logan Lake and Merritt where housing density closely resembles larger cities and receives curbside garbage collection. There were 31 households canvassed door-to-door in Merritt. The WCC was able to have conversations with 130 people at the following Eco-Depot site visits:

- Knutsford
- Clearwater
- Lower Nicola
- Louis Creek
- Clinton

Garbage tagging involves placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on carts placed on the curb the day before curbside collection is scheduled. Placing carts early is a bear attractant and can lead to increased conflict in communities. As such, many communities have Bear Smart bylaws which require that carts not be placed on the curb prior to 5 am on the day of collection. Merritt was visited in Zone 2 where 24 residents of the total 673 houses had put their bin out early. This is a decrease in the number of bins put out early from 2017 which was 33.

## Public Displays and Events

Attendance by WildSafeBC at events and offers both a quick exchange with event-goers and detailed one-on-one time with adults and children who stop by to learn information or to ask some questions regarding local wildlife activity of all kinds. The WCC and WSBC booth have had a reach of almost 3,000 people at functions attended in 2019.

The WSBC public display booth is always a favorite at many TNRD events which included:

- TRU Back to School Barbeque with BCCF and Kamloops WCC
- Logan Lake Day at the Community Hall
- Highland Valley Copper Open House in Logan Lake
- Nicola Valley Merritt Farmers Market
- Canada Day event in Riverside Park with Kamloops WCC
- Skwlax Wellness Fair Chase
- Green Living Expo Sandman Centre (Figure 6)
- Moul Falls BC Parks Day
- Barriere North Thompson Fall Fair and Rodeo (Figure 7)
- Chase KFair



Figure 6. Display booth at the Green Living Expo.



Figure 7. Display booth at the North Thompson Fall Fair.



## Social Media and Press

The Sun Peak Independent News reached out to the TNRD WCC for information on mountain biking and bear safety which was published in their paper: <http://sunpeaksnews.com/black-bear-encounters-up-across-province-33336.htm>.

The WildSafeBC TNRD Facebook Page was used to share information about local events within various communities in the TNRD. The number of page followers increased from 271 to 286 this year.

## Wildlife in Area Signs

The WCC had worked with the TNRD as well as the Louis Creek Eco-Depot in the summer of 2018 on badger stewardship. The transfer station had issues with a local family of badgers being aggressive to people who were at the site to dispose of their garbage. The badgers were believed to be at the site due to a large population of marmots as a food source. The Ministry of Forest, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development travelled with the WCC in 2018 to assess and study the at risk species. WSBC worked on designing large signage for the Louis Creek Eco-Depot to post when the badgers were at the site to encourage safety for the public and wildlife (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Badger in Area Signs.

## Collaborations

The COS continues to be a source of guidance and support for the TNRD from the Kamloops, Merritt, and Clearwater offices.

Discussion with Merritt COS about urban deer has shown a number of calls or concerns have been reported from within Logan Lake on aggressive deer. WildSafeBC has made efforts to expand educational reach to Logan Lake on urban deer issues.

## Province-wide Initiatives for 2019

WildSafeBC focused on two initiatives in 2019: increased use and acceptance of bear spray and increased Indigenous awareness and engagement.

### Bear Spray

To increase public acceptance and use of bear spray, WSBC provides education on the safe use of bear spray and allows participants to practice using inert bear spray. In 2019, one bear spray workshop was provided in Clearwater (Figure 9).

WSBC has also started a bear spray partnership initiative to encourage local businesses to carry bear spray in stock along with informational resources. The WCC proposed this initiative to three outdoor based businesses in Merritt that already sell or would like to offer bear spray in the future. This could be a promising start to collaborative projects in 2020.



**Figure 9. Practice using Inert Bear Spray in Clearwater.**

## Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

Building on training provided in 2018, the WCC continued to learn about how to build relationships with Indigenous Peoples through a training webinar and a research project to learn more about the local Secwépemc Nation. Additionally, the WCC attended the Skwllax Wellness Fair in Chase.

## Challenges and Opportunities

The TNRD saw an increase in the number of wildlife reported this season. While many factors can be at play when it comes to human-wildlife conflict and its causes, there were many anecdotal stories being told to the WCC or seen on social media groups that could indicate some challenges for effect attractant management. Some of these include:

- Backyard fruit trees left unattended in backyards, or overgrown fruit-bearing plants occupying neighbourhoods.
- The purposeful feeding of wildlife in backyards or out on hiking trails/campsites.
- Misinformation on bear spray and its proper use and transportation.

More education and action in these fields would help mitigate these issues.

Some goals for the program in the future would be to increase awareness of the program within the municipalities such as Merritt and Logan Lake. These areas are seeing more emigration from other parts of BC and beyond and a continued reminder of wildlife education is a must for new and existing residents. This can be achieved through innovative signage, door-to-door and Eco-Depot canvassing, and workshop organizing.

Another goal would be to set up active programs or partnerships in many of the TNRD communities such as urban deer programs, Bear Smart Status achievement, volunteer fruit gleaning projects, bear spray sponsorship contracts with local businesses, and continue a healthy communication with other governing bodies such as Bylaw, the Conservation Officer Service, and the Provincial government so that education can be quick in regions that need it most per recent happenings.

## Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC TNRD would like to thank the following for their continued support for the delivery goals of the program in 2019: the British Columbia Conservation Foundation team; the Thompson Nicola Regional District, Andrew Roebbelen and staff; Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy; The City of Merritt; The District of Logan Lake; the many teachers and event organizers that offer their space to us; and the TNRD residents who have welcomed the program each year and have given WSBC the opportunity to help keep wildlife wild and our communities safe.