

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2020

Cariboo Regional District

Prepared by: Mareike Moore, WildSafeBC Cariboo Coordinator



Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Cariboo Program between May 11th and November 30th, 2020. The program was delivered in the Cariboo Regional District, which includes the traditional territories of two large Indigenous nations — Northern Secwēpemc te Qelmūcw (NstQ) and T̓silhqot'in, and the Southern Carrier / Dakelh First Nations.

The Cariboo Regional District (CRD) covers an area of 80,262 square kilometers with large areas of forests, fields and wilderness (Figure 1). Wildlife is abundant with black bears being the most reported species, followed by deer and cougars. While black bear reports increased in 2020, the breakdown in communities helps to show where opportunities for future program delivery lay. The most reported attractant for black bears remains to be garbage followed by residential fruit trees. Reports for both attractants grew in 2020 compared to 2019, with fruit tree reports increasing by over 300%. Interestingly the data shows a reduction in black bear reports in Williams Lake, 100 Mile House and 108 Mile Ranch while a strong increase in Quesnel can be noted when comparing reports to 2019.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC), performed outreach activities with the goal of preventing human-wildlife conflict in the communities. The large geographic area and low population density offered some challenges for program delivery. Following COVID-19 safety precautions, several of the standard WildSafeBC program activities were modified to ensure proper sanitization and physical distancing measures were in place. In her first year, the WCC delivered 21 WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) presentations and reached 502 youth. Two online presentations were given to community groups with 25 participants. A total of 1,356 people were reached through door hangers and bin tagging, and 344 people were reached at display booths. The 'WildSafeBC Cariboo' Facebook page gained 199 new followers which represents growth of over 114%. The BC Goes Wild events reached 38 people.

In 2021, the size of the program area, as well as COVID-19 may continue to present challenges. Attractant management with seasonal focus should remain a priority in terms of education efforts and virtual presentations and programs such as bin tagging and door hangers are opportunities that allow a safe program delivery in the future. The program has been well received in all communities and moving forward these initiatives and collaborations will help "keep wildlife wild and our communities safe". The WCC would like to thank its sponsors, The Cariboo Regional District, the BC Conservation Foundation and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

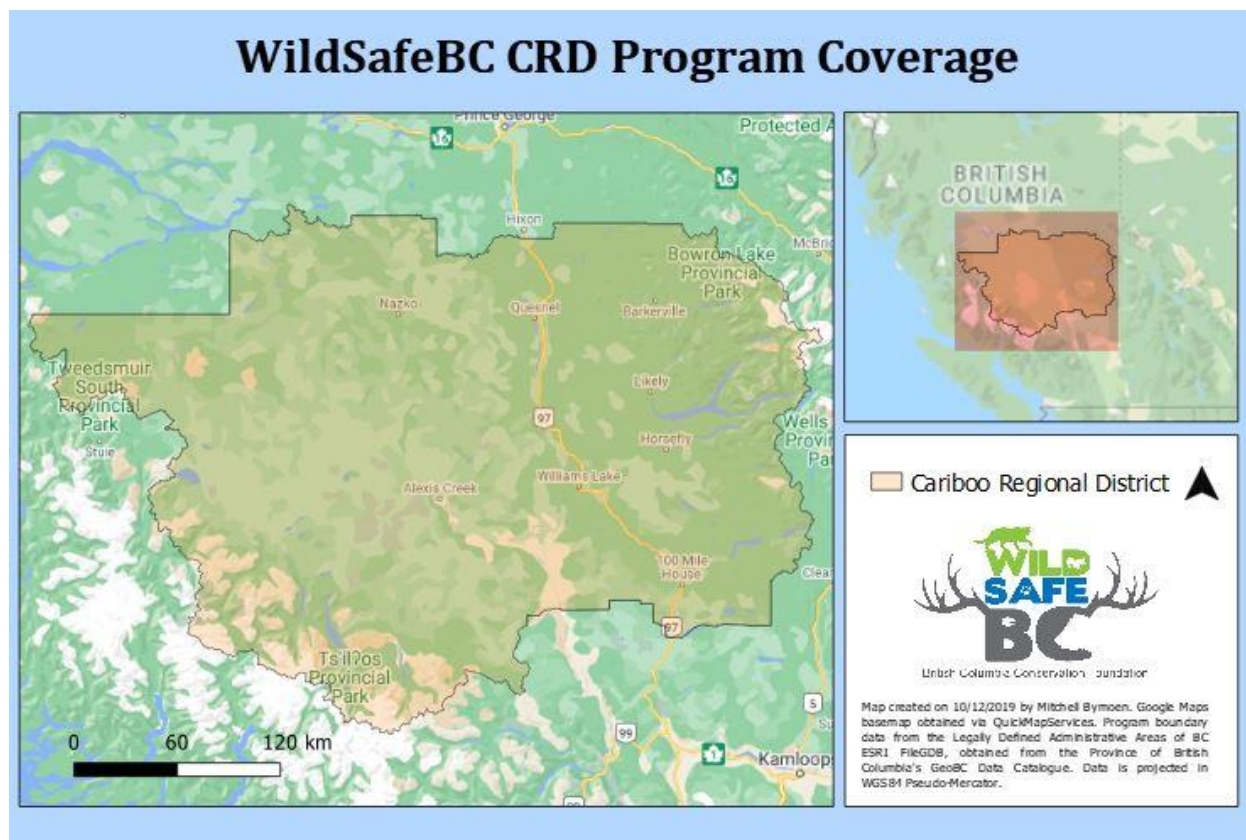


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Cariboo program coverage area.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Highlights from the 2020 Season	4
Wildlife Activity	4
WildSafeBC COVID-19 Mitigation.....	5
WildSafe Ranger Program.....	5
Presentations to Community Groups	6
Display Booths	6
BC Goes Wild.....	7
Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging	9
Social Media and Press.....	11
Wildlife in Area Signs.....	11
Collaborations	12
Challenges and Opportunities	12
Acknowledgements.....	13

Table of Figures

Figure 1. WildSafeBC Cariboo program coverage area.....	2
Figure 2. Reports to COS and WARP in Cariboo region by species from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.	4
Figure 3. Year-over-year reports for black bears in from January 1 to October 31, from 2016-2020 by Cariboo community.....	4
Figure 4. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding attractants for black bears from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.	5
Figure 5. The WCC doing a WildSafe Ranger classroom presentation.	6
Table 1. WildSafeBC Cariboo WCC attendance at events and display booths.....	6
Figure 6. Family at the WildSafeBC booth at the Williams Lake Farmers Market.	7
Figure 7. The WCC with a family at the BC Goes Wild event in Williams Lake.....	8
Figure 8. 100 Mile House resident Dennis Tupman before and after cleaning his garbage bin... 8	
Table 2. Number of residences covered through door hangers by community.	9
Figure 9. The WCC leaving door hangers, close up of door hanger with letter.	9
Figure 10. Number of carts placed out early for collection before education activities and after education in the Cariboo Regional District 2020.....	10
Figure 11. Bear in Area signs in Williams Lake.	12

Cover Photo: WildSafeBC Cariboo Coordinator Mareike Moore at the Farmers Market in Williams Lake, photo credit Kristi Denby.

Highlights from the 2020 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 Cariboo Regional District includes data from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020 (Figure 2). There were 563 black bear reports which is a 56% increase compared to 2019, while reports of other species remained constant. The increase in bear reports might be a result of decreased natural food availability as the result of a wet and cold spring.

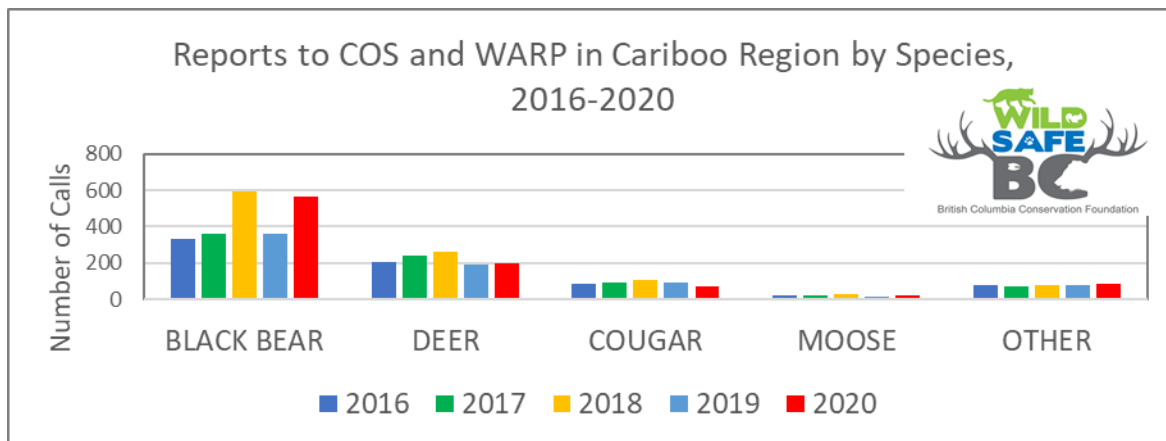


Figure 2. Reports to COS and WARP in Cariboo region by species from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.

As can be seen in Figure 3, Quesnel is historically the community with the highest report of black bears and the 2020 increase originates from that community, while the other three bigger communities in the Cariboo Regional District showed a decrease.

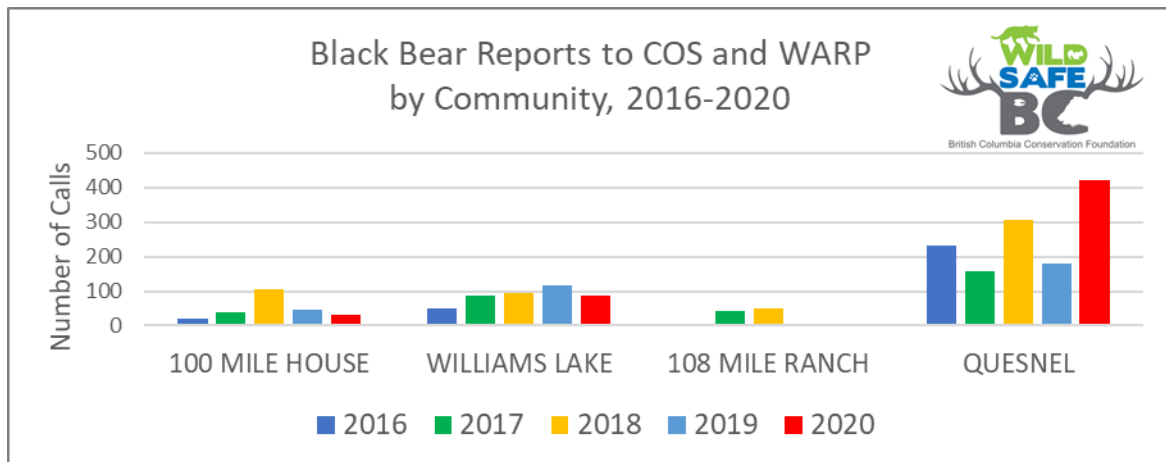


Figure 3. Year-over-year reports for black bears in from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020 by Cariboo community.

Garbage remained the most reported attractant in 2020 with 62% (Figure 4). The number of reports associated with garbage being an attractant has increased by 36% from 2019. Fruit trees are the second most reported attractant representing 12%. This was an overall increase of 300% compared to 2019.

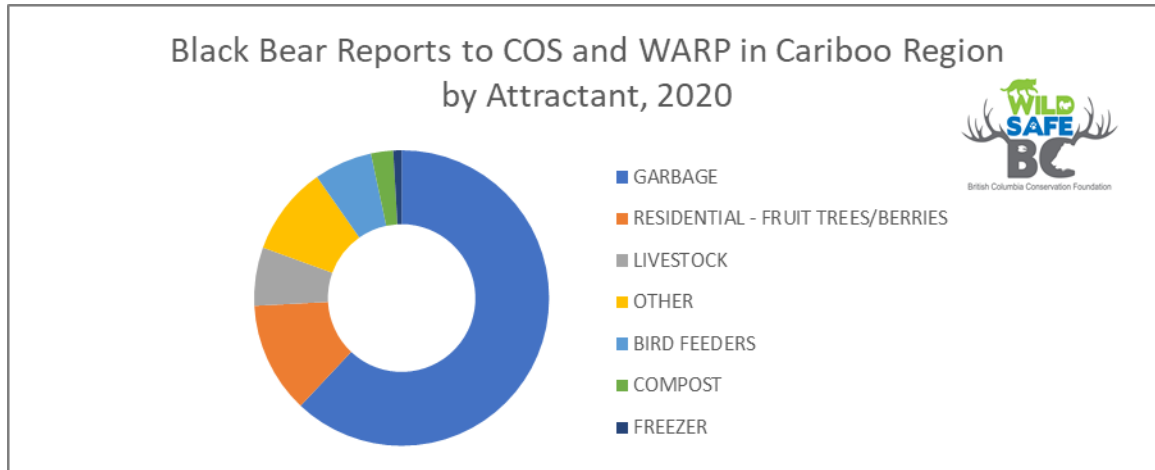


Figure 4. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding attractants for black bears from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.

WildSafeBC COVID-19 Mitigation

All of the activities performed this season followed safety guidelines provided by the Province, WorkSafeBC and/or the BC Conservation Foundation's Safety Coordinator. The WCCs were required to provide safety plans if they were organizing events where people would congregate. Wherever possible, in person activities were replaced with video conferencing. WildSafeBC adapted and modified requirements as the Province moved from Phase 1 to Phase 3. The WCCs worked closely with their local communities to ensure that all local requirements and restrictions were respected.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. Due to the exceptional situation caused by COVID-19, there was a shorter school year and a higher resistance from schools to do classroom presentations.

Nesika Elementary School and Cataline Elementary School in Williams Lake participated with a total of 21 classes of children in the WildSafe Ranger Program in the classroom format where physical distancing was required (Figure 5). Over 488 students from grade 1 to 6 became WildSafe Rangers and received kits. Furthermore, the Girl Guide group "Sparks" from Williams Lake also received an outdoor presentation where 14 girls and 4 adult leaders were present.

In addition to the WildSafe Ranger Powerpoint presentation, the WCC used props such as a black bear hide, different skulls, a bird feeder, apples, a bag of garbage etc. and had the kids guess which skull belongs to which animal 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. Each student received a kit which included bookmarks, stickers, an activity book, a colouring sheet and a certificate.



Figure 5. The WCC doing a WildSafe Ranger classroom presentation.
Photo credit: Nesika Elementary School teacher

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave 2 presentations through webinars to 25 participants including the Rotary Club in Quesnel and the Cariboo Chilcotin Partners for Literacy (CCPL) in 100 Mile House. In both cases the participants received a Wildlife Awareness and Safety presentation.

Display Booths

The WildSafeBC display was a popular feature at many events. The WCC attended a total of five events in two communities and set up one event unrelated display booth at the Central Cariboo transfer station (Table 1).

Event	Date	Number of people reached
Williams Lake Farmers Market	July 28	58
	August 14	72
	September 11	61
	September 29	41
South Cariboo Farmers Market	October 2	73
Central Cariboo Transfer Station	August 7	39

Table 1. WildSafeBC Cariboo WCC attendance at events and display booths.

Due to COVID-19, market formats looked slightly different and led to fewer visitors than in previous years. Questions about how to avoid bears from coming into peoples' yards as well as how to behave when seeing a bear on a hike or mountain bike ride were among the most discussed topics (Figure 6). The colouring contest and the displayed skulls and animal hides were a great conversation starter to get children involved.



Figure 6. Family at the WildSafeBC booth at the Williams Lake Farmers Market.

BC Goes Wild

BC Goes Wild is a campaign to celebrate wildlife in BC and it occurs in September which is typically the month when human-bear conflicts are at their highest in BC. To avoid a larger gathering and limit the spread of COVID-19, the WCC provided one-on-one WildSafe Ranger presentations to five families in the City of Williams Lake in their own back yards on September 13th (Figure 7). Each family spent one hour with the WCC learning about wildlife, attractant management and how to stay safe in bear country. The children had time to ask questions, tell wildlife stories and each received a WildSafe Ranger kit. The event was able to reach 18 people.



Figure 7. The WCC with a family at the BC Goes Wild event in Williams Lake.
Photo credit: Kristi Denby.

As part of BC Goes Wild, the WCC also organized a bin cleaning contest for all residents of the Cariboo Regional District (Figure 8). The prizes were generously donated by the CRD, the City of Williams Lake, the District of 100 Mile House, and MM Happy Creations. The five winners reported that the contest had given them the needed motivation to clean their bins and reduce the scent for bears this fall. All participants appreciated the initiative.



Figure 8. 100 Mile House resident Dennis Tupman before and after cleaning his garbage bin.
Photo credit: Raechel Tupman.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Door-to-door education was modified this year to consist of leaving door hangers; the WCC did not knock on doors as had been done in the past. However, if people were around while leaving the door hangers, the WCC engaged in conversations to further the education efforts.

Door hangers were distributed to inform people of current wildlife issues in the area or preventatively help residents to reduce human-wildlife conflict. The WCC left a door hanger, a neighbourhood specific letter that had been written in accordance with the CRD, and a related wildlife brochure at residences. Several neighbourhoods in communities were prioritized for this activity due to the high level of wildlife activity. Table 2 shows the communities and number of people reached through this program:

Table 2. Number of residences covered through door hangers by community.

Community	Number of people reached
100 Mile House	199
Williams Lake	534
Quesnel (CRD area) & Bouchie Lake	229

Overall, this program was very well received, and people appreciated the information as they were not often aware of wildlife being in their neighborhoods (Figure 9).



Figure 9. The WCC leaving door hangers, close up of door hanger with letter.
Photo credit: Trevor Moore

Another program that was delivered by the WCC was garbage bin tagging. It consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection. Communities where the program was delivered include 100 Mile House (615 residences checked), 108 Mile Ranch (1,134 residences checked) and Williams Lake (249 residences checked). While garbage bin tagging is in its second year for the first two communities, it was new to Williams Lake where the neighborhood of 11th and 12th Avenue North was prioritized due to a high level of wildlife activity in the fall 2019. The goal was to remind people that garbage is a strong attractant for wildlife, specifically bears, and to help prevent human-wildlife conflict by proper attractant management.

The number of bins tagged decreased by 52%, on average, after education (Figure 10). The results demonstrate a change in behaviour by the number of residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey and then were not found on the curb again during the second survey. For 100 Mile House that is 89%, for 108 Mile Ranch it is 82% and for Williams Lake it is 74%. The lower number in Williams Lake may be explained by the novelty of this program delivery in the area.

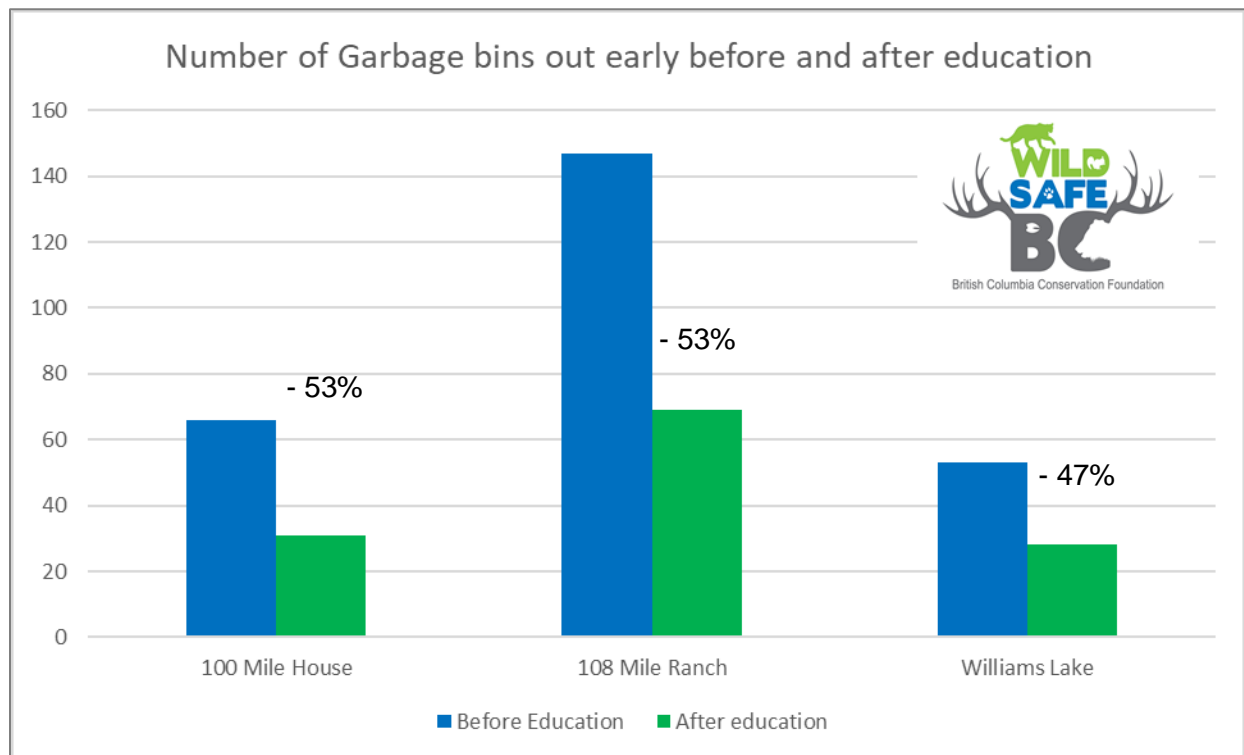


Figure 10. Number of carts placed out early for collection before education activities and after education in the Cariboo Regional District 2020.

Social Media and Press

The total number of people that follow the 'WildSafeBC Cariboo' Facebook page increased from 175 at the beginning of May to 374 by mid-November, a 114% increase. Several individuals and community groups shared the posts and helped grow the reach of our messaging, as well as encouraging more people to follow. For the future, it should be a goal to further increase the following as Facebook is an easy way to reach people from different communities in a fast and efficient way.

The WildSafeBC Cariboo program was well supported by local media platforms including the Williams Lake Tribune, the Quesnel Cariboo Observer, the 100 Mile Free Press, the Green Gazette and Vista Radio. Several articles were printed in the Williams Lake Tribune, the Quesnel Observer and the 100 Mile Free Press. They covered topics such as introducing the new Cariboo Coordinator, garbage bin tagging, general WildSafeBC programs, attractant management in the fall (fruit trees and garbage) and the Cariboo bin cleaning contest. Links to some of the articles can be found here:

<https://www.quesnelobserver.com/news/wildsafebc-hires-new-co-ordinator-for-cariboo-region/>

<https://www.wltribune.com/news/wildsafebc-launches-new-bear-awareness-campaign-this-summer/>

<https://www.100milefreepress.net/community/be-bear-aware-as-hibernation-approaches/>

One article was published in the summer issue of The Green Gazette, a print and digital independent magazine for the Cariboo and Chilcotin area, covering wildlife attractants and how to avoid human-wildlife conflict. Press releases were also shared through the websites of the Cariboo Regional District, the City of Williams Lake, and the District of 100 Mile House.

The Goat, a local Vista Radio station included parts of an interview with the WCC in their broadcast to help spread WildSafeBC's messaging. My Cariboo Now, the associated website also published an article on garbage bin tagging. Furthermore, the Cariboo Regional District included a note about the local WildSafeBC program in their mailout to residents.

Wildlife in Area Signs

Two "Bear is in Area" signs were placed in the Williams Lake Westridge area after several residents had reported a black bear in the neighbourhood (Figure 11). The WCC left door hangers and set up the two signs at a busy park and playground as well as at a popular walking trail to raise peoples' awareness and remind them to be cautious when in the area.



Figure 11. Bear in Area signs in Williams Lake.

Collaborations

The WCC was able to establish a good working relationship with the Conservation Officer Service (COS) in 100 Mile House, Williams Lake and Quesnel throughout the season. The COS has been very supportive of WildSafeBC's initiatives and supported the WCC with their knowledge of hotspots and areas where education is needed.

The Scout Island Nature Center in Williams Lake lent several skulls and two hides to the WCC for educational purposes during the course of summer and fall. These proved to be a great attraction for children and adults at events and in WildSafe Ranger presentations.

Challenges and Opportunities

COVID-19 presented a challenge this year that made it necessary to change program delivery in several ways. Leaving door hangers was a fast way to get information out, while door-to-door canvassing provided a better chance to engage with residents. However, given the circumstances, door hangers proved to be a great way to inform a larger group of people.

Virtual meetings also made it possible to do presentations for groups that could not or did not want to gather in a closed room. The option to use a camera and to share a screen made it possible to keep delivering WildSafeBC Safety and Awareness presentations for the WCC. Due to the unforeseen future, this type of presentation might continue to be popular throughout 2021 as well. Another benefit is that the WCC can also reach groups of people that are a far distance away. In a large area such as the Cariboo Regional District this can be very efficient and effective.

There had been a large reduction in events this year, which gave the WCC fewer opportunities to have a display or booth. If large events are permitted next year, this will be a great way in which the WCC can reach people, especially in smaller communities in the area.

A new opportunity for 2021 lies in the recently launched WildSafe Bare Campsite Program, which provides clear guidelines and resources for campsite operators to maintain a safe campground for both people and wildlife. With several campgrounds in the Cariboo Regional District, the WCC will have the chance to offer this program and help prevent human-wildlife conflict.

Furthermore, the WildSafe Business Pledge Program can be used to encourage businesses to adopt practices that will reduce conflict with wildlife. With the training and support from the WCC, a business owner/manager in the Cariboo Regional District can become a role model for their staff and customers in the community by keeping their attractants secure and providing their staff with free training. In return, the business owner/manager will be able to promote that they have taken the WildSafe Business Pledge and they will be given a poster for display in their business.

Fruit trees continue to be a source of attractants in Williams Lake, Quesnel and other communities that draw wildlife into residential areas. Reports about bears damaging fences or trees and remaining in people's yards continue to present a safety issue in certain neighbourhoods. These areas would benefit from increased education and being connected to people who are willing to help with picking fruit in the community. An electric fence demonstration in the Quesnel area might be helpful to reduce human-wildlife conflict in regard to fruit trees as well as livestock issues.

Garbage remains the most reported source of attractants in the Cariboo and this should play a focus role in next year's education efforts. Continuing garbage bin tagging in the communities of 100 Mile House and 108 Mile Ranch has shown to be effective. Paired with an education campaign such as door hangers or events in hotspot areas and communities, this program is a great opportunity to remind people to manage their attractants. For the community of Williams Lake, more areas should be approached and be targeted for this education effort.

Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC Cariboo would like to acknowledge the ongoing support from its sponsors including Tera Grady with the Cariboo Regional District, Kim Dressler with the City of Williams Lake, Joanne Doddridge with the District of 100 Mile House, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation team and the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.

Additionally, the WCC would like to thank the following people who have contributed to our success: CO Joel Kline, CO Murray Booth, CO Christopher Ford, CO Justin Millett, CO Jeff Tyre, volunteers Kristi and Tala Denby, Sue Hemphill from Scout Island Nature Centre, and many more.