

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2021

Cariboo Regional District

Prepared by: Ted Traer, BSc RPF

WildSafeBC Cariboo Coordinator



BRITISH COLUMBIA
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Cariboo
Regional
District



CITY OF
Quesnel

District of 100 Mile House



Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Cariboo Program between May 11th and November 30th, 2021. The program was delivered in the Cariboo Regional District (CRD), which includes the traditional territories of the Northern Secwépemc te Qelmūcw (NsTQ), Southern Carrier / Dakelh member First Nations as well as the T̓silhqot'in Nation territories and declared title lands. The region covers an area of 80,262 square kilometres and many of the residents and visitors are aware they are sharing their living space with wildlife (Figure 1).

The CRD includes both municipal and rural boundaries and is made up of 12 electoral areas and four incorporated member municipalities. It includes Quesnel, Williams Lake, 100 Mile House, and Wells. The population is just under 62,000 residents, based on the 2016 population census.

Wildlife is abundant with black bears being the most reported species, followed by deer and cougar. While black bear reports increased in 2021, the breakdown in communities helps identify opportunities for future program delivery. The most common attractant reported for black bears remains to be garbage followed by residential fruit trees. Reports for both attractants were similar in 2021 compared to 2020, with fruit tree reports increasing by 90% and garbage reports reduced by 29%. Interestingly, the data shows an increase in black bear reports in Williams Lake, 100 Mile House and 108 Mile Ranch while a slight decrease in Quesnel when compared to 2020 reports. The observations in the southern part of the region were impacted by significant wildfires in the summer which would have reduced natural food source availability.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activity with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community. 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.

- 28 WRP presentations and 838 youth reached
- 3 presentations given to community groups with 42 participants
- 490 people reached through door-to-door in person and 128 door hangers left
- 2 bin tagging outings and 42 of bins tagged, 95% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey did not repeat the behaviour
- 1,166 people reached through display booths
- WildSafeBC Cariboo Facebook page now has 440 followers and has reached over 14,000 people from January 1, 2021 to November 29, 2021
- The BC Goes Wild event reached 102 people
- 1 business signed a WildSafeBC Business Pledge
- The Bare Campsite Program was introduced in the region

There was an effective collaboration with the Conservation Officer Service. The WCC attended numerous Farmers' Markets together with their Wildlife Safety Response Officer. This was an effective collaborative effort as both organizations have a similar message.

In 2021, the key challenges included: the overall size of the program area with the significant distances between communities; the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; and uncertainty as a result of wildfire evacuation orders and alerts. Attractant management with seasonal focus should remain a priority in terms of education efforts. Virtual presentations and programs such as bin tagging and door-to-door conversations and hangers are opportunities that allow a safe program delivery in the future. Any opportunity to discuss attractant management with residents at their residence is an effective method to educate people. With numerous new residents seeking a rural lifestyle, additional efforts highlighting the merits of electric fencing would be beneficial. 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 Province of British Columbia.



Figure 1. WildSafeBC Cariboo Program coverage area.

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Photo Credit: David Law

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Highlights from the 2021 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, 2021 (Figure 2). There were 787 black bear reports which is a 33% increase compared to 2020 with 592. Reports of other species were down slightly from 2020. The increase in bear reports might be a result of decreased natural food availability as the result of warm summer temperatures which impacted natural food sources. Early summer reports were down, likely as a result of a moist spring and sufficient natural foods.

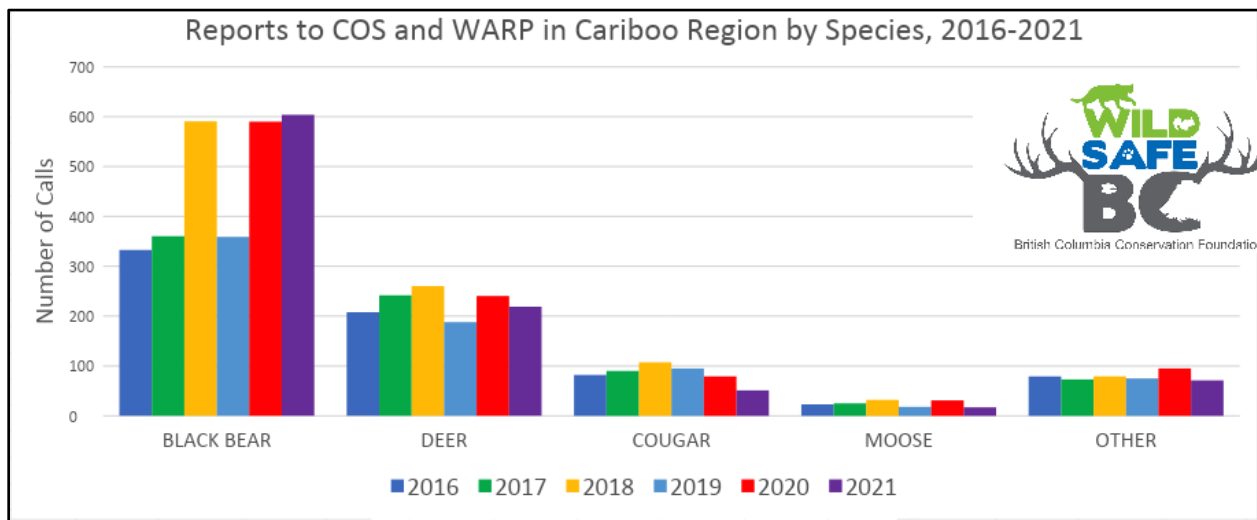


Figure 2. Reports to COS and WARP in Cariboo region by species from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

August and September were record months for black bear reports which is similar to what was experienced in other communities (Figure 3). This is likely related to drought conditions that impacted natural foods and extensive forest fires in the region that would have displaced animals. While black bears are found throughout BC, they prefer more forested habitats where they can find security cover.

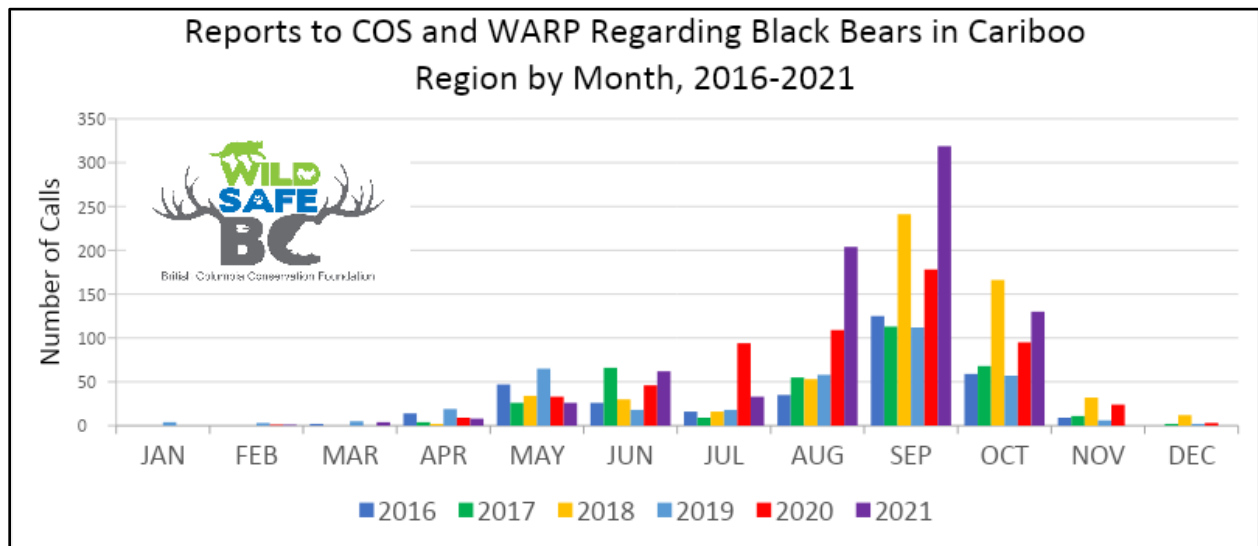


Figure 3. Reports to COS and WARP in Cariboo region regarding black bears by month from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

Residential garbage remained the most reported attractant in 2021 at 49% (Figure 4). The number of reports associated with garbage being an attractant has decreased by 1% from 2020. Fruit trees are the second most reported attractant representing 22%. This was an overall increase of 24 % compared to 2020.

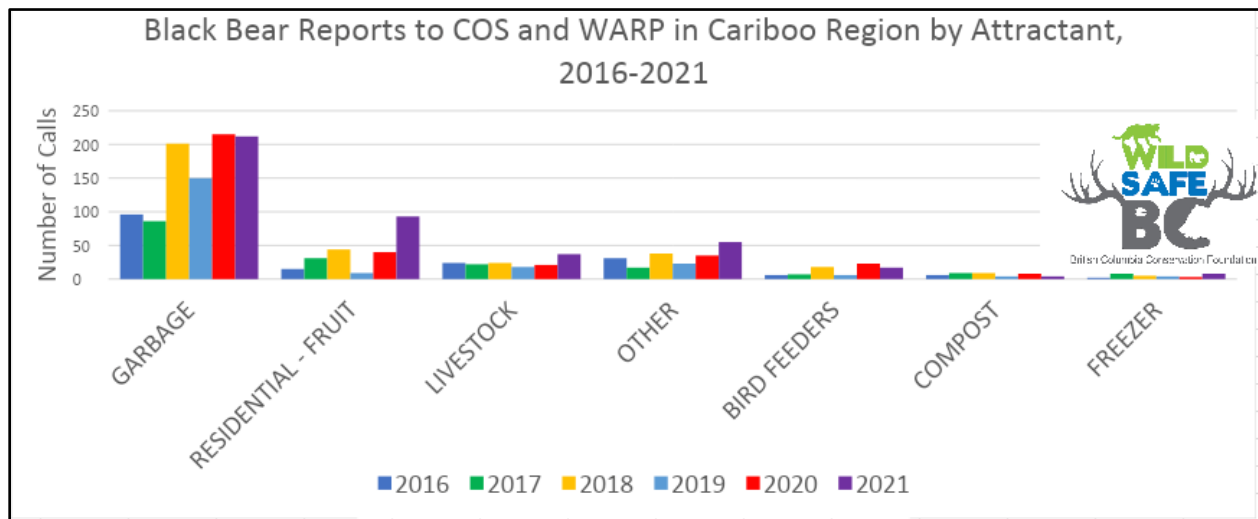


Figure 4. Reports to COS and WARP in Cariboo region regarding black bears by attractant from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

Quesnel is historically the community with the highest report of black bears, however reports decreased substantially in 2020 (Figure 5). The 2021 data indicates some relative increases in the other three other communities in the Cariboo Regional District. This could be an increase in awareness regarding the reporting line as this is the third season for WildSafeBC working in the area, or it could be the impacts of habitat loss and natural food availability.

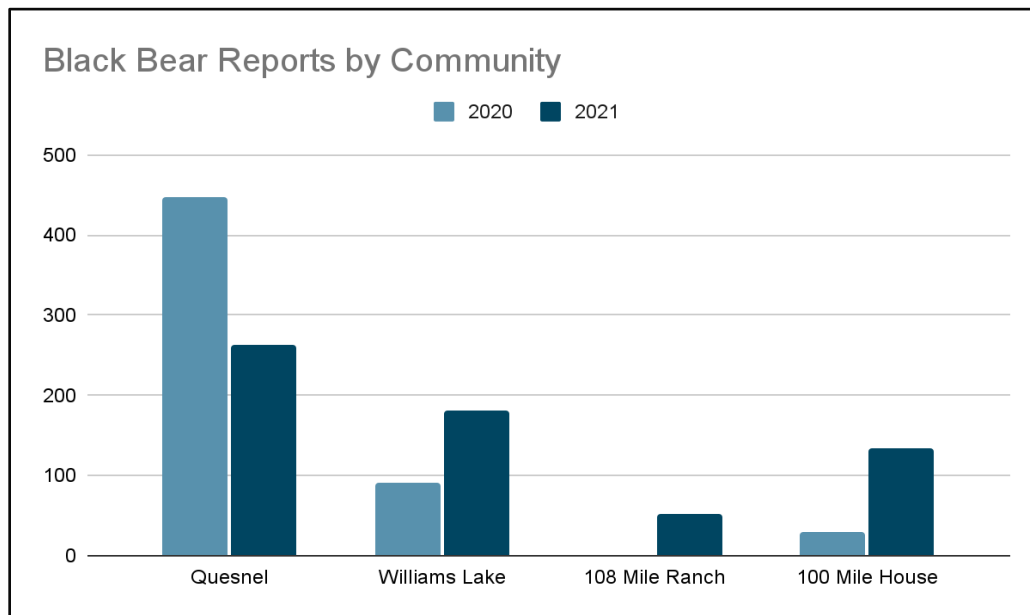


Figure 5. Black bear reports by Cariboo RD community in 2020 and 2021.

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 or in open air venues with physical distancing in place. WildSafeBC adapted and modified requirements as the Province moved through various changes to health orders. 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 (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. A total of six schools participated in the WRP through presentations that allowed for physical distancing (Table 1). A total of 838 students became WildSafe Rangers through 28 presentations and received kits.

Table 1. Schools that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2021.

School	Grade	Students	Extended
Bouchie Lake Elementary	K to 7	172	No
108 Mile Elementary	K-7	167	No
100 Mile Elementary	K-7	191	No
St Anne's Elementary	K-7	120	No
Dragon lake Elementary	K-7	188	No

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave a total of 3 presentations through webinars and outdoor presentations to 42 participants including: Quesnel Rotary (18); an electric fence presentation (8) at the Bouchie Lake Country Store; and a kids camp at the Cariboo Memorial Complex (16) in Williams Lake (Table 2).

Table 2. Presentations and workshops to groups

Group	Number of Participants
Quesnel Rotary	18
Electric Fence	8
Kids camp	16

Display Booths

The WildSafeBC display was a popular feature at numerous events and the WCC often partnered with the COS' Wildlife Safety Response Officer (Figure 6).

The WCC attended a total of 10 events in 2 communities and set up one display booth at the Quesnel transfer station (Table 3). A total of 1,166 people were reached.



Figure 6. Display booth at Williams lake Farmers Market with Blake Knibbs COS WildSafe Safety Response Officer.

Table 3. WildSafeBC Booth locations, dates and interactions with the public.

Event	Date	Number of People Reached
Quesnel Farmers Market	June 26	91
Williams Lake Farmers Market	July 20	143
Quesnel Farmers Market	July 31	300
Williams Lake Farmers Market	August 4	160

Quesnel Tourist Information Centre	August 13	40
Quesnel Farmers Market	September 4	102
Quesnel Landfill	September 10	15
Bouchie Lake Country Store	September 26	110
Williams Lake Farmers market	October 1	102
Quesnel Farmers Market	October 2	103

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Through door-to-door education, a total of 490 people were reached during in-person conversations and 128 people were reached with door hangers. The South Lakeside neighborhood of Williams Lake, the area around the Quesnel Golf Course, Red Bluff neighbourhood and the Abbott Heights neighbourhood of West Quesnel were prioritized for this activity due to high levels of wildlife activity.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection. During 2 outings, a total of 42 bins were tagged in the City of Quesnel in two neighbourhoods and only 2 residences received stickers more than once. On a return visit to the same neighbourhood, 10 new residents were identified. The effectiveness of garbage tagging for changing behaviours is demonstrated by the 95% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey and then were not found on the curb again during the second survey (Figure 7).

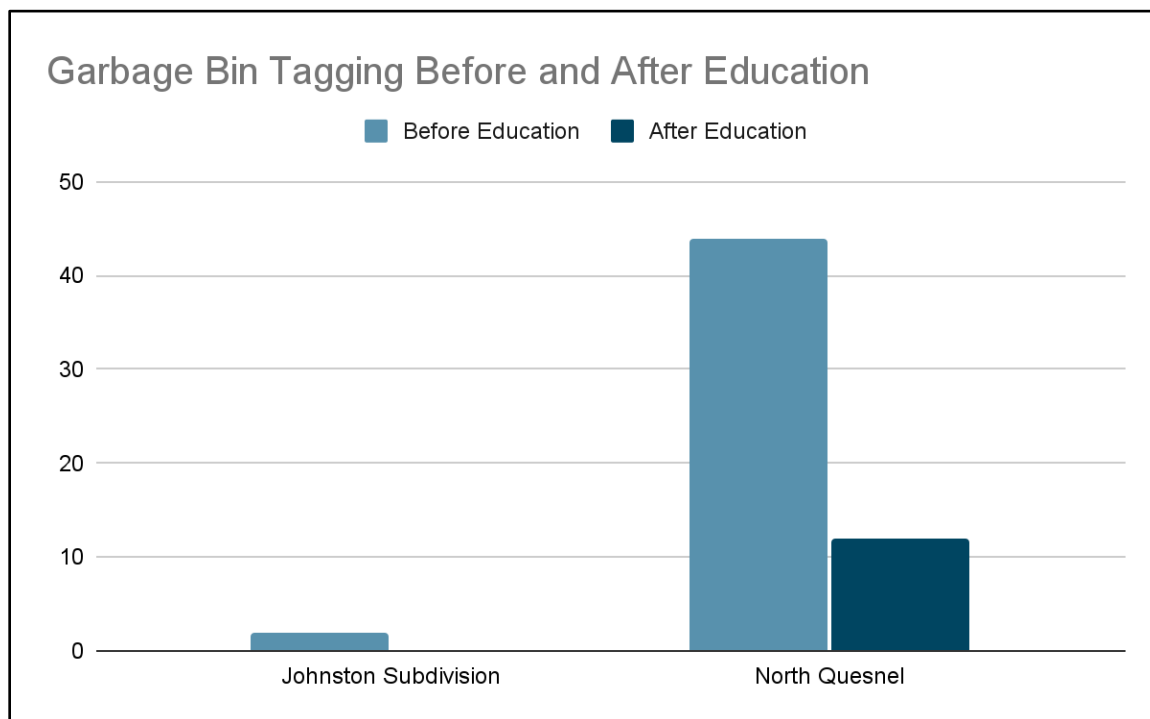


Figure 7. Number of carts placed out early for collection before education activities and after education in Quesnel, BC.

Social Media and Press

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, and CBC Radio (Daybreak North and Kamloops). 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](#), and attractant management in the fall ([fruit trees and garbage](#)). There were two phone interviews held with CBC radio: CBC Daybreak Prince George and Kamloops. The WildSafeBC Cariboo Valley page has increased from 374 page followers in 2020 to 440 in 2021 which is an overall increase of 17 %.

Wildlife in Area Signs

Signs were installed in several neighbourhoods in the Quesnel area (Figure 8) and the template was provided to the 100 Mile House Municipal office which were printed and erected in areas with high bear sightings.



Figure 8. Installation of a bear-in-area sign.

Collaborations

The main collaboration this year was with the Bouchie Lake Country store as it provided a venue for a variety of events as well as an opportunity for a static display through most of the season. Also the Conservation Officer Service was a significant partner for communications with the public as we both have a similar message.

WildSafe Business Pledge

The WildSafe Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses good examples in their community on how to safely co-exist with wildlife. To take the pledge, a business is required to follow best practices in solid waste management, provide adequate training to staff and support WildSafeBC's safety and conflict reduction information. In return, WildSafeBC will provide ongoing support to the business in the form of staff training, WildSafeBC materials (subject to budget constraints) and a WildSafeBC Business Pledge poster. One business signed the pledge this year, the Bouchie Lake Country Store.

WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

Through the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program, WildSafeBC is able to provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife. While no campsites are currently participating in the Bare Campsite program in the CRD one campsite was approached about the program.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

Efforts were made to collaborate with local First Nations on a campground near the Nazko First Nation around attractant management. This is an ongoing area of development for the program.

Special Initiatives

Guidance was provided to a local non-profit that has been managing garbage at two local lakes to insure that they were informed of bear-resistant container options and best practices. As a result three new bear-resistant bins were installed (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Installation of bear-resistant garbage bins by Bouchie Lake Water Stewardship Society
Photo Credit: David Law

"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. The WCC hosted a bear spray demonstration and apple pressing demonstration in collaboration with the Wildlife Safety Response Officer (COS) with a harvest festival at the Bouchie Lake Country Store (Figure 10). A total of 102 people participated in the event.



Figure 10. BC Goes Wild Event at Bouchie Lake Country Store with bear spray and apple pressing demonstrations.

Challenges and Opportunities

Some challenges faced in 2021 included the size of the region and finding opportunities to physically go to the various communities in the region. Opportunities to collaborate with other organizations were considered. An effective opportunity was realized this year to partner with the Conservation Officer Service as they had a dedicated staff member who was available to attend display booths at various venues. Another challenge were the wildfire notices and alerts that made accessing parts of the region challenging for a lengthy portion of the summer season.

Fruit trees continue to be a source of attractants in the community that draw wildlife into residential areas. Bears have been reported damaging fences and accessing backyard chickens and other domestic livestock which impacts the safety of neighbourhoods. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community and would benefit from increased education and fruit gleaning activities. To address the abundance of fruit in the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2022:

- Electric fence demonstrations & presentations
- Education campaign focusing on the hazards and solutions through social media, news articles, workshops, flyer in municipal tax information

- Engage food banks and other non-profits for use of excess fruit
- Connect residents through a social media food sharing group
- Increase door-to-door campaigns and bin tagging in hotspots and key neighbourhoods

Acknowledgements

The WCC wishes to thank: the BCCF team for their continued support and expertise; program sponsor Solid Waste Manager Tera Grady; Conservation Officers Blake Knibbs and Ryane McIntyre; Simon Turner of Quesnel Rotary; and Heloise Dixon Warren and the Bouchie Lake Country Store. WildSafeBC is grateful to attend the Quesnel and Williams Lake Farmers' Markets. Thank you to Sue Hemphill from Scout Island Nature Centre and Herb Roodenberg from Quesnel for the loan of some wildlife artifacts.