

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2021

Fraser Valley

Prepared by: Jocelyn Buehart,
WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Coordinator



Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC (WSBC) Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) Program between May 17, 2021, and November 30, 2021. The program covers a multi-jurisdictional region of southwest British Columbia (Figure 1). The FVRD includes the municipalities of Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Harrison Hot Springs, Hope, Kent, and Mission as well as eight unincorporated Electoral Areas (Appendix I). The traditional territories of the Coast Salish and Stó:lō Indigenous Peoples are located within the FVRD and extend well beyond FVRD boundaries; the FVRD contains reserve land belonging to 33 unique Bands.

Wildlife activity in the FVRD during the 2021 season (January 1, 2021, to October 31, 2021) resulted in 925 wildlife reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). Abbotsford, Mission, and Chilliwack accounted for most wildlife reports made within the FVRD this season. The top three species reported during this season in the FVRD were black bear (553 reports), Cougar (125 reports), and Deer (100 reports). Included in this data are COS/WARP report data from 32 FVRD communities (Appendix II). Garbage was the most reported attractant from January 1, 2021, to October 31, 2021, accounting for 40% of the total call volume.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activities 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. The following summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the season, as of November 30, 2021:

- There were 25 WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) presentations and 554 youth reached
- A single presentation given to a community group with 25 participants
- A total of 151 people reached through DTD in person and 3,998 of door hangers left
- There were 4 bin tagging outings and 99 bins tagged
- There were 5 display booths with 689 people reached
- A total of 56 Facebook posts and 70 new Facebook page followers from January 1 to November 28

Additional activities conducted by the WCC include the 6th Annual BC Goes Wild event. The WCC created and organized a nature scavenger hunt which took place around Mill Lake in Abbotsford on September 24, and had a turnout of 12 people.

Thank you to the numerous sponsors and volunteers who made the WildSafeBC Fraser Valley 2021 season possible. A key challenge for the season included the size of the program coverage. The COVID-19 pandemic created uncertainty within the community, but with these challenges came future opportunities such as display booths outside of stores. As per municipal sponsor requests, in-person school presentations were discouraged during May and June 2021, however, were encouraged come September 2021. The WRP presentations in elementary schools across the Fraser Valley were highly successful from September to November. Relationships between the WCC and sponsors were strengthened over the season by constant communication. Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help keep wildlife wild and our communities safe.

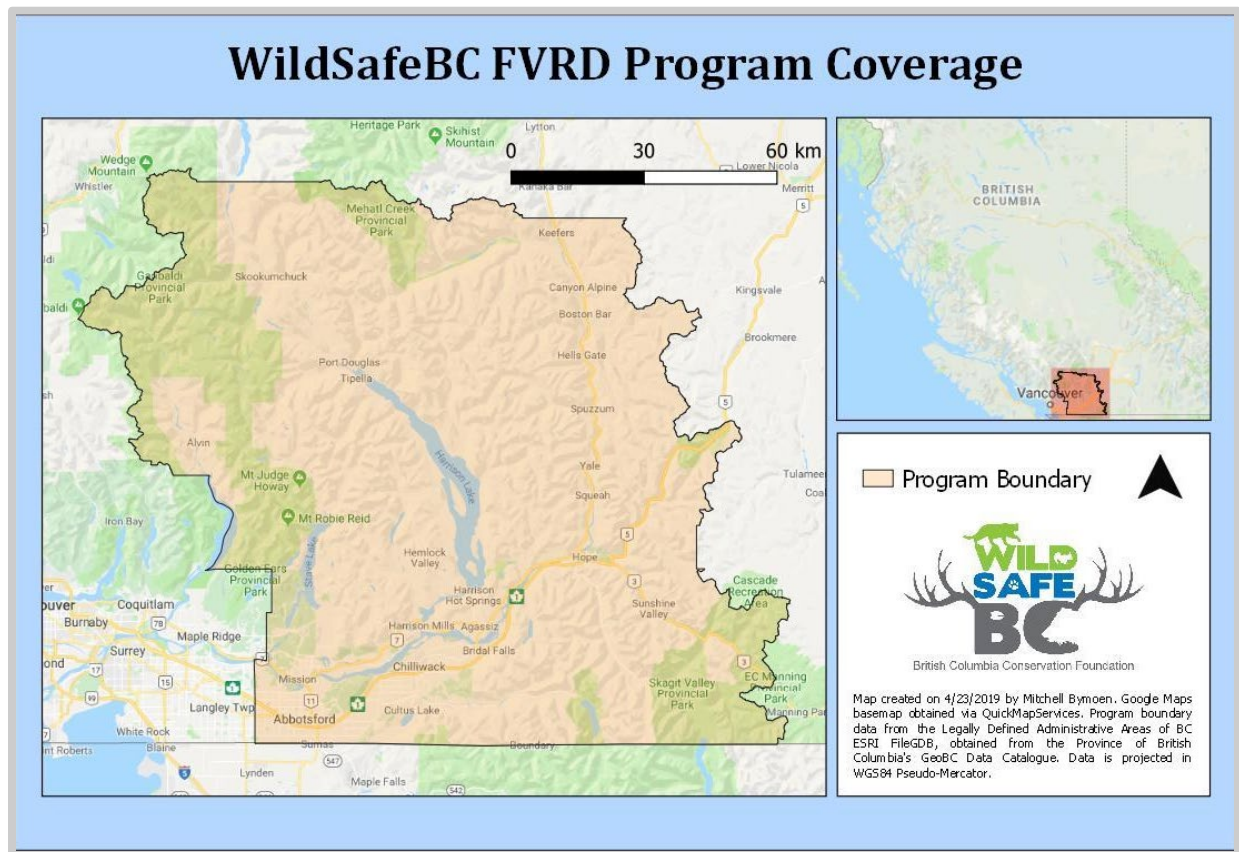


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Regional District program coverage area.

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Cover Photo: Fraser Valley Community Coordinator, Jocelyn Buchar, with the WildSafeBC display booth outside of Save On Foods in Mission, BC. Photo by Jaimie Jagpal (used with permission).

Highlights from the 2021 Season

Wildlife Activity

Reports made to the COS through the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line (1-877-952-7277) or online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). This data is updated daily and this report for the FVRD includes data from January 1, 2016, to October 31, 2021 (Figure 2). As of October 31, 2021, there were 553 black bear reports which is average for the last five years (Figure 3). Black bear reports in May and June spiked within the FVRD, which is comparable to other areas of the province. However, what is notable is that June reports tend to be higher than September which is unusual compared to the overall Provincial averages. Other species reports were also average for the last five years (Figure 2).

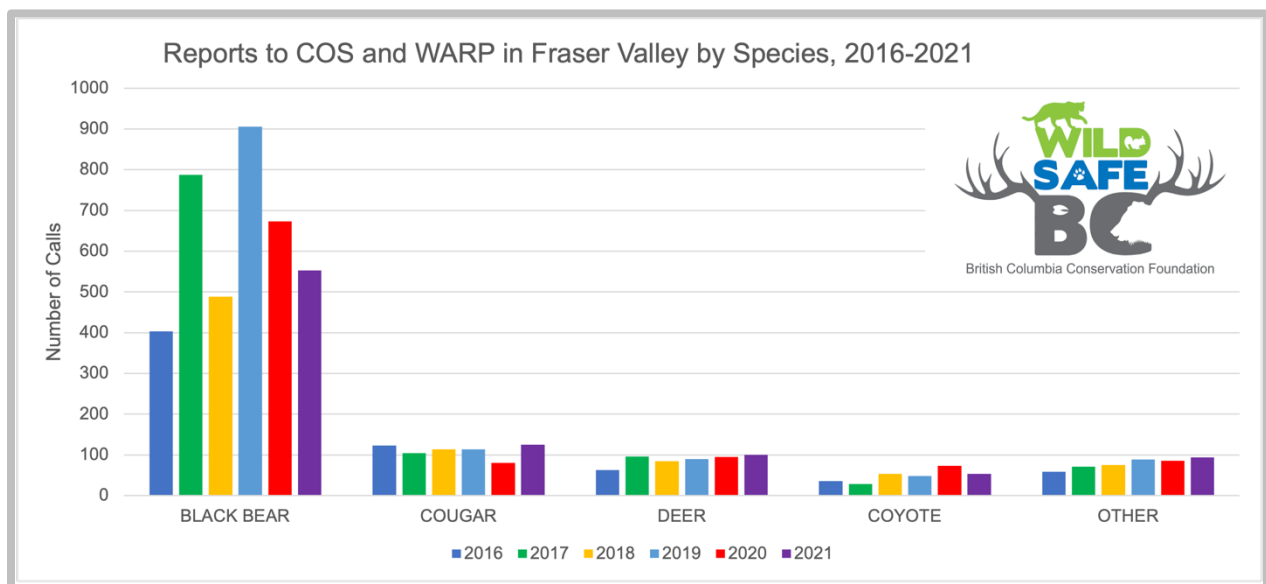


Figure 2. Species reported to the COS and WARP in the FVRD from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

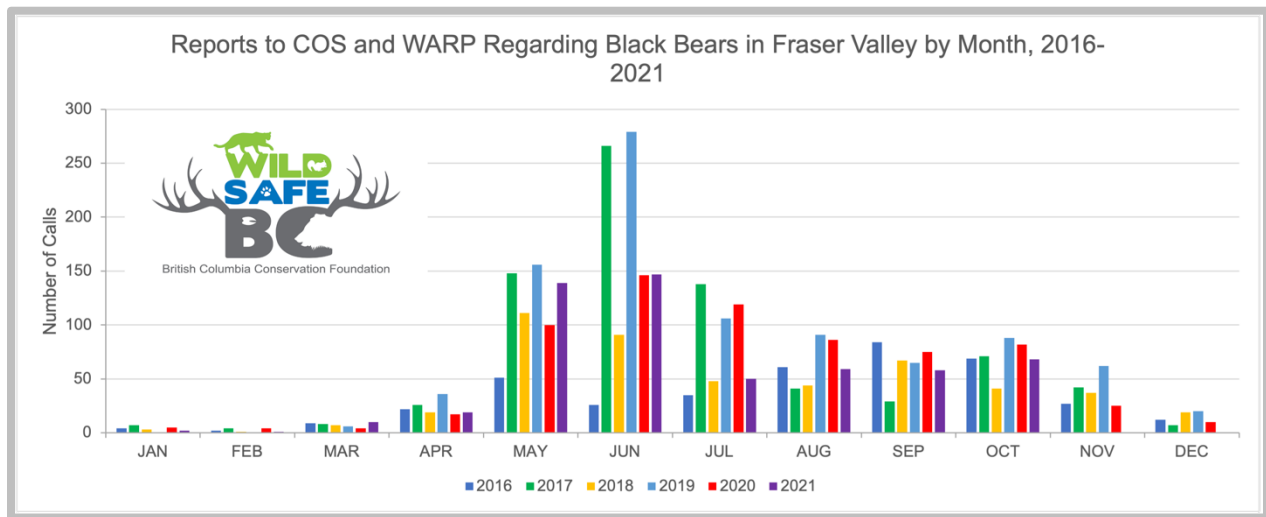


Figure 3. Black bear reports to the COS and WARP in the FVRD from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

Garbage remained the most reported attractant, accounting for 40% of total 2021 call volume, followed by residential fruit trees/bushes at 20%, “other” attractants at 17%, and livestock at 12% (Figure 4).

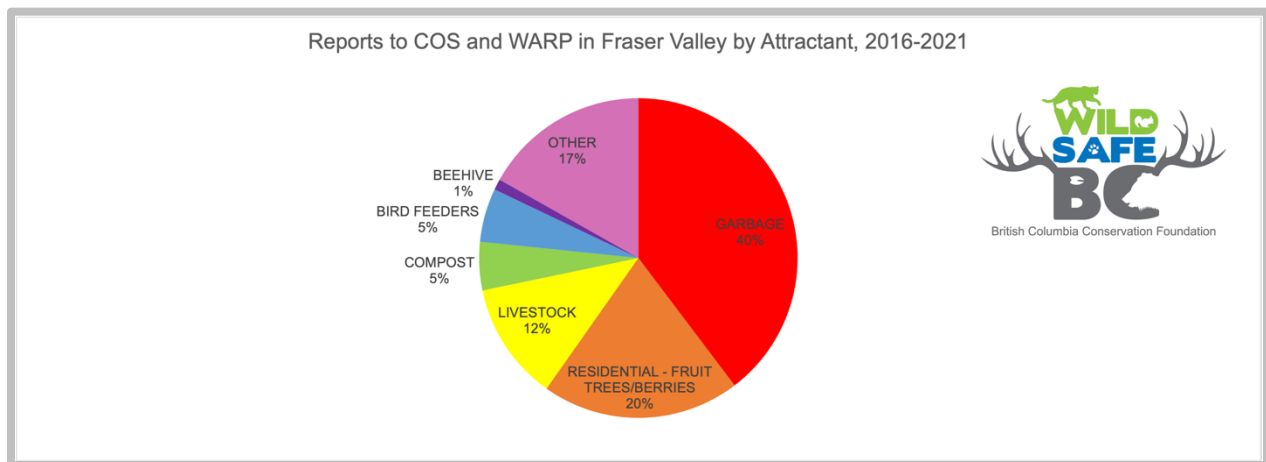


Figure 4. Wildlife reports to COS and WARP from January 1, 2021 to October 31, 2021 by attractant type.

Examining total call volume for 2021 by municipality indicates that most wildlife reports made to the COS were regarding wildlife activity in Abbotsford, Mission and Chilliwack, accounting for a slightly lower number of wildlife reports made to the COS and WARP in the FVRD (Figure 5). Total call volume for 2021 is comparable to 2020, but lower compared to 2019, which was a high call volume year.

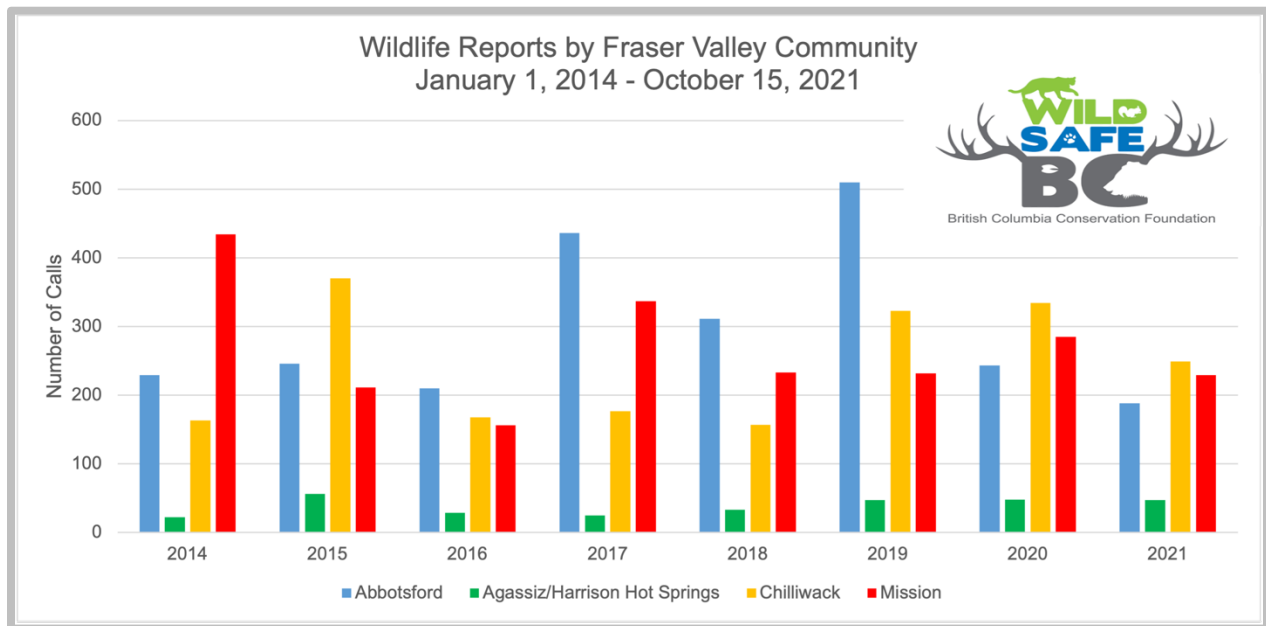


Figure 5. Year-over-year reports for all wildlife from January 1, 2014 to October 15, 2021 in the FVRD communities.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WRP introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict while also teaching them about wildlife attractants and how to stay safe in wildlife country. From July 27 to November 30, a total of six schools and three other organizations participated in the WRP (Table 1). Other organizations included summer camps and Chilliwack Beaver Scouts. From July 27 to November 9, over 550 students became WildSafe Rangers (Table 1).

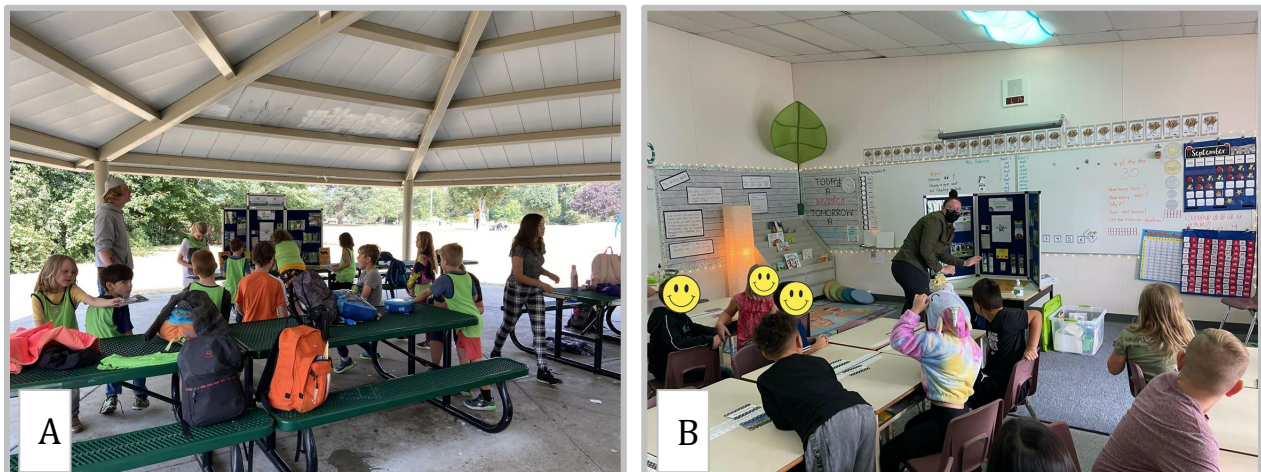


Figure 6. a) Abbotsford Ridge Wilderness Adventure Program Summer Camp kids touch props. b) The WCC and Mountain Elementary school students during a WRP presentation.

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

School/Organiz ation	Grade/Age Group	# Of Presentations	Students	Extended
Great Blue Heron Nature Reserve Summer Camp, Chilliwack	Ages 7-10	1	7	No
Ridge Wilderness Adventures Summer Camp, Abbotsford	Ages 7-12	1	25	No
Mountain Elementary, Abbotsford	Grades 2-4	4	95	No
Beavers Scouts, Chilliwack	Ages 5-7	2	52	No
Auguston Traditional Elementary, Abbotsford	Grades 2-3	3	72	No
Stave Falls Elementary, Mission	K-Grade 6	5	109	No
Matsqui Elementary, Abbotsford	K-Grade 1	2	42	No
Hatzic Elementary, Mission	Kindergarten	2	40	No
Mt. Lehman Elementary, Abbotsford	K-Grade 5	5	112	No
Total		25	554	

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave a total of one Wildlife Awareness and Safety presentation to Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada/Government of Canada, through a webinar presentation to 25 participants on June 24.

Display Booths

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, many events in the FVRD were cancelled. The WCC worked with City of Mission summer students and local retail and grocery stores to facilitate hosting five display booths over the season. These were successful in reaching 689 people (Table 2).



Figure 7. a) The WCC at a display booth at Save On Foods, Mission. b) The WCC at a display booth at Canadian Tire, Mission.

Table 2. Public display booths in the FVRD in 2021.

Event	Date	# of People Reached
Canadian Tire, Mission	June 25, 2021	166
Canadian Tire, Mission	July 16, 2021	192
Save On Foods, Mission	July 29, 2021	115
Save On Foods, Mission	August 5, 2021	82
Canadian Tire, Mission	August 13, 2021	134
Total		689

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Door-to-door education was modified this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic to consist of leaving door hangers; the WCC did not knock-on doors as has been done in the past. However, if people were outside of their homes, the coordinator was still able to have in-person conversations while maintaining a 2 m separation.

Through door-to-door education, a total of 151 people were reached during in-person conversations and 3,998 people were reached with door hangers. In Abbotsford, 2,156 door hangers were left with the help of Abbotsford summer students. The Sumas Mountain neighborhoods in Abbotsford were prioritized for this activity due to high levels of wildlife activity. In Mission, 595 door hangers were left, and the Williams Avenue and Badger Avenue/14th Avenue neighborhoods were prioritized for this activity due to high levels of wildlife activity. In Chilliwack, 1,126 door hangers were left, and the Chilliwack Mountain, Marble Hill, and Eastern Hillside neighborhoods were prioritized for this activity due to high levels of wildlife activity. In Electoral Area F, 121 door hangers were left, and the Hatzic Prairie area was 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 curbside containers the evening before collection day. During four outings, a total of 99 bins were tagged in the Fraser Valley.



Figure 8. a) The WCC door-to-door canvassing in Abbotsford, BC. b) The WCC bin tagging in Abbotsford, BC.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Facebook page grew 10% from January 1 to November 28, from 709 to 779-page followers and reached over 9,700 people. In preparation for display booths and events, the WCC posted in numerous community groups on Facebook. Posts were also shared on many of the local municipalities' Facebook pages.

The WCC submitted a news article to Abby News, the Mission City Record and The Chilliwack Progress about the WildSafeBC Fraser Valley program, which was well received and generated several emails which lead to further education opportunities.

(<https://www.abbynews.com/community/wildsafebc-campaign-looking-to-reduce-wildlife-conflicts-in-fraser-valley/>; <https://www.theprogress.com/community/wildsafebc-campaign-looking-to-reduce-wildlife-conflicts-in-fraser-valley/>; <https://www.missioncityrecord.com/community/wildsafebc-campaign-looking-to-reduce-wildlife-conflicts-in-fraser-valley/>)

The WCC wrote an article for Macaroni Kid Abbotsford titled “Black Bear Safety”. Macaroni Kid Abbotsford is a free resource for parents to find local family friendly events and information in and around Abbotsford.

(<https://abbotsford.macaronikid.com/articles/615beb9675615d27b0c8bc31/black-bear-safety-from-wildsafebc>)

Collaborations

The WCC partnered with many other groups, such as City of Mission Bylaw officers, City of Mission summer students, and the Conservation Officer Service.

Conservation Officer Service and Bylaw Officers

The WCC and numerous Conservation Officers (COs) (Marc Plamondon, Eric Tyukodi, Don Stahl, Todd Hunter, Alicia Stark, and Jolene Bull) communicated throughout the 2021 season. The COs would inform the WCC of areas of concern and the WCC would implement door-to-door canvassing in that area. Katelyn Dyck, Wildlife Safety Response Officer, and the WCC discussed ways to help the Stave Lake Recreation Sites in Mission. The WCC gave Katelyn advice on what to discuss with recreation site operators, signage options, and brochure options. Black bears were drawn into the Stave Lake Recreation Site area due to poor wildlife attractant practices, particularly garbage.

City of Mission bylaw officers would contact the WCC with areas of concern. The WCC would focus on these areas when educating the community via door-to-door canvassing.

Mission Summer Students

The summer students for the City of Mission were integral in helping with many WildSafeBC activities which include display booths, garbage bin tagging, and door-to-door canvassing.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The WCC responded to a few inquiries and questions from local First Nations which included Sts'ailes First Nation.

Special Initiatives

"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. In the third week of September, the WCC hosted a nature scavenger hunt in collaboration with the City of Abbotsford. Prizes were generously donated from the City of Abbotsford and WildSafeBC. A total of 12 people participated in the event. Participants thoroughly enjoyed the event and inquired if more events would happen again soon.



Figure 9. Participants during the BC Goes Wild scavenger hunt at Mill Lake, Abbotsford, BC.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Fraser Valley encompasses a vast area with a large population and many human-wildlife interactions with a potential for conflict. It is challenging to meet all the requests over as a part-time coordinator and limited season. Partnerships with local government summer students are invaluable to assist in covering more ground and reaching more people. The WCC is grateful for volunteers that played an integral role in helping the WCC with public outreach and education. The Bare Campsite Program, Business Pledge program, events, and school presentations should be a focus for the WCC during the 2022 season.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought on many challenges throughout the 2021 season. Many events were cancelled due to changing restrictions. Door knocking during door-to-door canvassing was not allowed, which resulted in less conversations with community members.

Garbage, livestock, and fruit trees continue to be the top attractants in the community that draw wildlife into residential areas. Bears have been reported damaging property and remaining in people's yards which impacts the safety of the neighbourhood. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community and would benefit from increased education. To address

the abundance of garbage, livestock and fruit trees in the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2022:

- Electric fence demonstrations
- Bear spray demonstrations
- Attendance at events if they proceed
- Increased number of school presentations
- Education campaign focusing on the hazards and solutions through social media, news articles, and workshops
- Increased door-to-door campaigns in hotspots.

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Program is made possible through funding support from the Province of British Columbia, the BC Conservation Foundation, and the Fraser Valley Regional District. Additional funding support was provided by the City of Abbotsford in 2021 for additional hours and delivery.

The 2021 season was successful due to the many supporters and collaborators which the WCC was lucky enough to work with. The WCC is grateful for the support of local governments that made the program successful including their summer students and volunteers. This includes Christina Vugteveen, David Urban and Meghan Jackson at the FVRD office; Jennifer Meier and Cassidy Russbueldt at the City of Mission, Mission Summer Students Jaimie Jagpal, Elyse Lindgren, and Stefan Halas; Nicole MacDonald and Shawn Gurney with the City of Abbotsford, Abbotsford Summer Student Gabrielle Logan; Marc Sole and Sydney Raison with the City of Chilliwack; and to each FVRD municipality that hosted WSBC activities in the 2021 season. Thanks to BCCF staff for their support and guidance. Special thanks to Lydia Koot of the Hope Mountain Black Bear Committee for delivering bear awareness/safety and attractant management messaging and activities in Hope B.C.

Appendix

32 FVRD communities included in COS reports and WARP database

- Abbotsford
- Boston Bar
- Bridal Falls
- Canyon Alpine
- Chilliwack
- Choate
- Cultus Lake
- Deroch
- Dewdney
- Dogwood Valley
- Emory Creek
- Harrison Hot Springs
- Harrison Mills
- Hatzic Prairie
- Hatzic Island
- Hemlock Valley
- Hope
- Kent
- Laidlaw
- Lake Errock
- Lindell Beach
- McConnel Lake
- Mission
- Nicomen Island
- North Bend
- Othello
- Popkum
- Ruby Creek
- Spuzzum
- Sunshine Valley
- Weaver Creek
- Yale