

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2021

## Town of Princeton and RDOS Area H

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## Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) for the WildSafeBC (WSBC) Princeton Program between April 12<sup>th</sup> and November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021. The Program covers the Town of Princeton and started branching out into some areas of the Regional District of Okanagan Similkameen (RDOS) Area H (Figure 1). WildSafeBC respectfully acknowledges that activities conducted in the program area took place on the traditional and unceded territories of the Upper Similkameen Indian Band.

During this dry, hot and fiery 2021 season, between January 1 to October 31, there were 95 reports made to the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). Black bears were the most reported wildlife at 38 reports. Closely followed by deer at 36. Following that are minimal reports of cougar 4, moose 3, raptor 3, other 3, bobcat 2, coyote 2, mountain goat 2, rattlesnake 1 and wolf 1. It is worth noting that in speaking with the public there are many more human-wildlife interactions and conflicts throughout the Town than are reported.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activity with the goal of educating the public about wildlife in the area, how to stay safe in wildlife country, and how to manage your home and landscape to prevent human-wildlife conflict. 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.

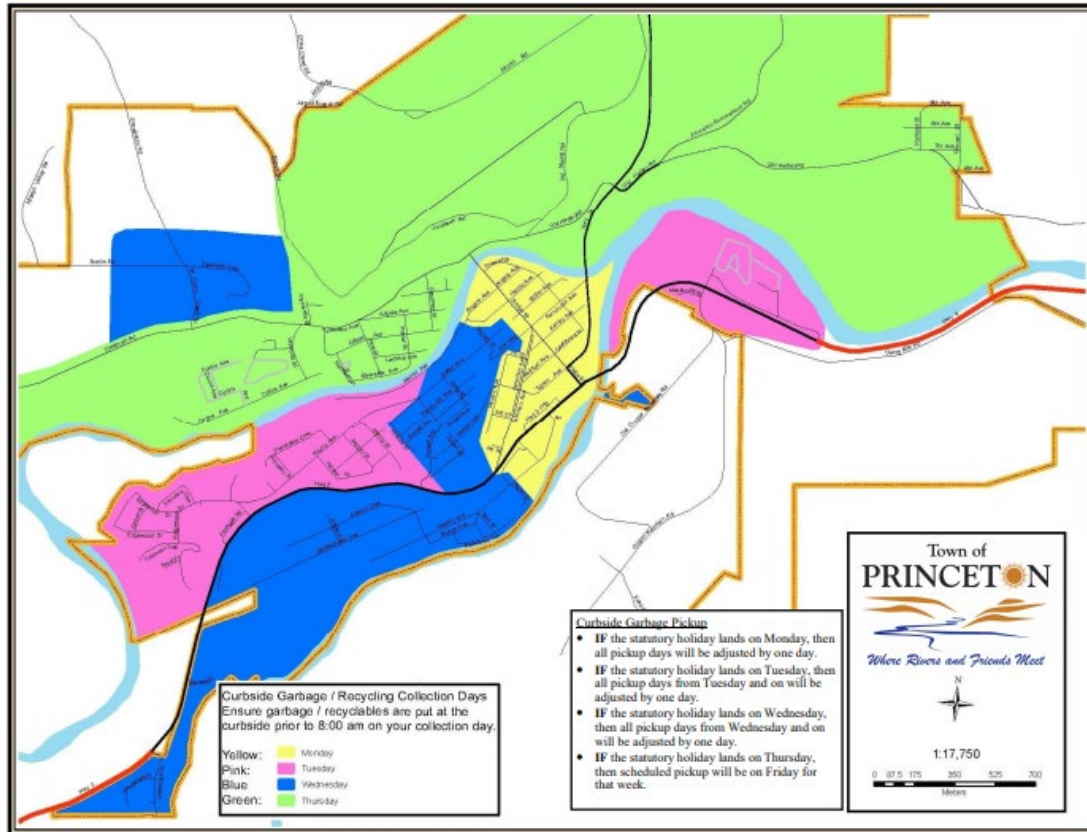
The following summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the season:

- 22 WildSafeBC Ranger Program presentations (WRP) reached 364 youth
- 2 presentations given to community groups reached 33 participants
- 250 homes were reached through door-to-door education
- 29 garbage tagging outings and 138 bins tagged
- 14 educational booths reached 932 people
- 592 Facebook posts plus 122 new page followers; a growth of 60%
- 4 businesses signed WildsafeBC Business Pledges
- Martins Lake Campground participated in the Bare Campsite Program

This year new collaborations and opportunities for education developed between the WildSafeBC Princeton Program and the Princeton Library, Princeton Ground Search and Rescue, Tulameen and Erris Fire Departments, RDOS and the Upper Similkameen Indian Band. These are set to grow next season. The month-long BC Goes Wild September Scavenger Hunt was popular again this year and doubled in entries while shining a spotlight on Princeton's Visitor Center. An increase in garbage tagging saw beneficial results as many neighborhoods worked to improve their safety by having the least amount of garbage out and businesses built enclosures around their large bins.

While working with the community the WCC would like to thank all the residents for their respect, open dialogue, and efforts to manage their attractants. A huge thank you to the Town Staff, Mayor and Council, Province of BC and BCCF for helping out with anything the program needed and understanding the importance of having an education program to reduce human-wildlife conflict. Thank you for helping to keep wildlife wild and the community safe.





## WildSafeBC Princeton & RDOS Area H Program Coverage

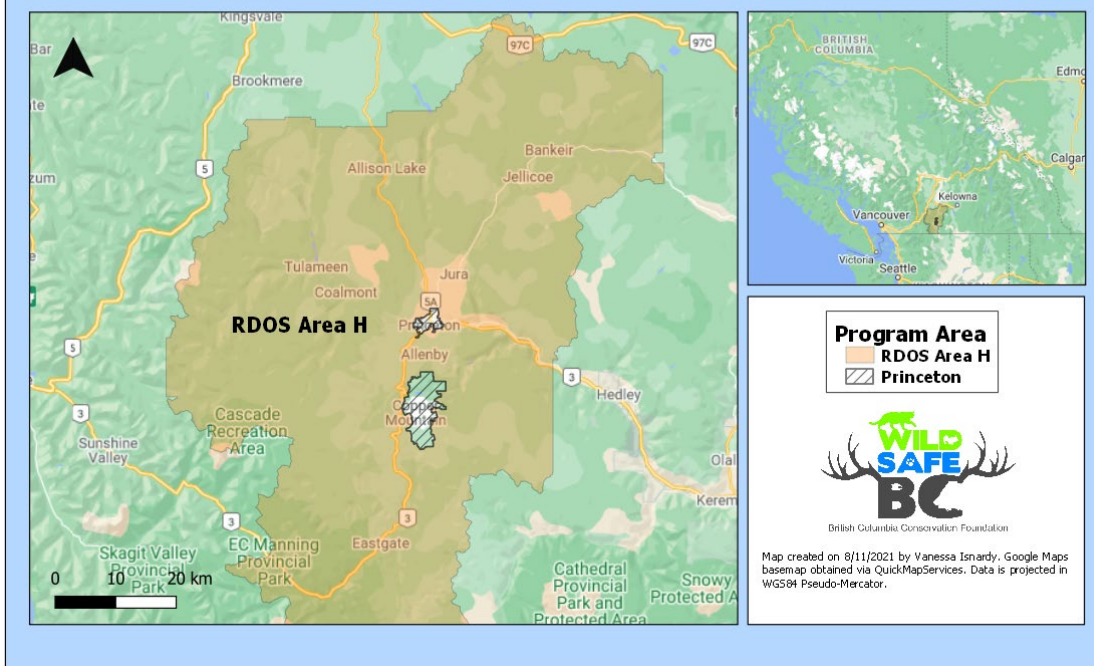


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Town of Princeton program coverage area (above) and Area H (below).

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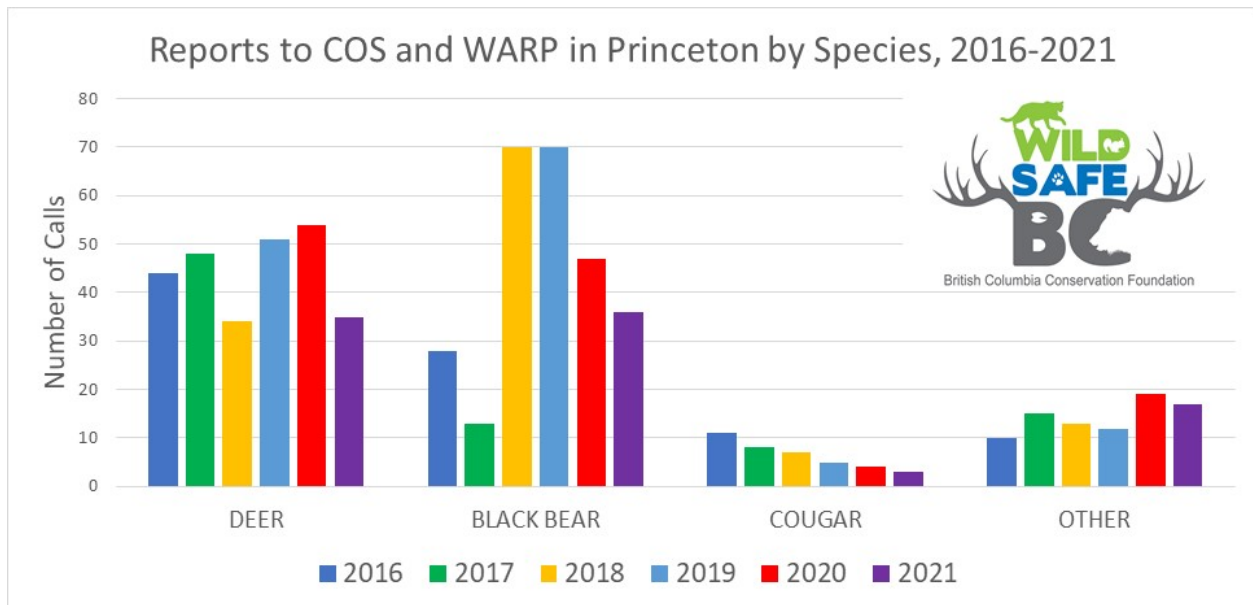
**Cover Photo:** The WCC presenting to students at Vermilion Forks Elementary.

## Highlights from the 2020 Season

### Wildlife Activity

The Town of Princeton has multiple natural wildlife corridors with two rivers, the Kettle Valley Railway and greenspace on hillsides between the valleys. The RDOS Electoral Area H surrounding Princeton is an expanse of ranches, large acreages and crown land. Both areas see an abundance of wildlife passing through. A total of 95 reports were made to the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) between January 1 to October 31, 2021. These reports are recorded and updated daily from the Conservation Officer Service (COS) RAPP line at 1-877-952-7277 or <https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/> and submitted online by the general public. The majority of the report (93 of the 95 reports) are from calls made to the RAPP line.

Deer and black bears are consistently the most reported wildlife in the Town of Princeton, although many residents have become accustomed and complacent to seeing them in and around Town and rarely report interactions with them (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Reports regarding wildlife to WARP by year in Princeton, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 to October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021.**

Anecdotal aggressive conflict was experienced with deer this season and frequent sighting of black bears passing by our schools and along the rivers. Reports to WARP consisted of 41% for Injured/Distressed wildlife, 21% sightings, 13% Food Conditioned, 9% Aggressive, 3% Confined, 3% Pets or Livestock injured or killed, 3% Near School or Playground and 2% Damage to Property (Figure 3).

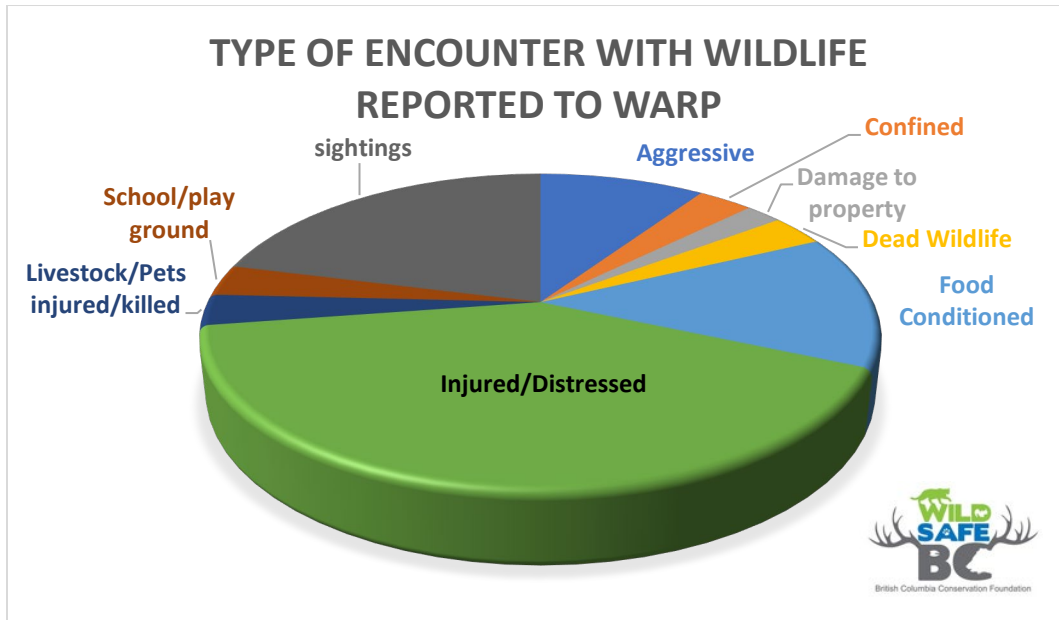


Figure 3. Type of encounter with wildlife reported to WARP.

This year BC experienced drought conditions impacting food availability for wildlife. Multiple forest fires were burning during July, August and September and many communities across BC experienced higher than usual bear activity (Figure 4). There were 38 black bear reports in 2021 which is lower than the last three year average of 60 (Figure 2), showing that although the Province was experiencing an increase in conflict the Town of Princeton was actually improving. This significant change can be attributed to the installation of 16 bear-resistant garbage cans in our parks and trails, implementation of a Wildlife Attractant Bylaw, consistent WildSafeBC education and an increase in garbage tagging.

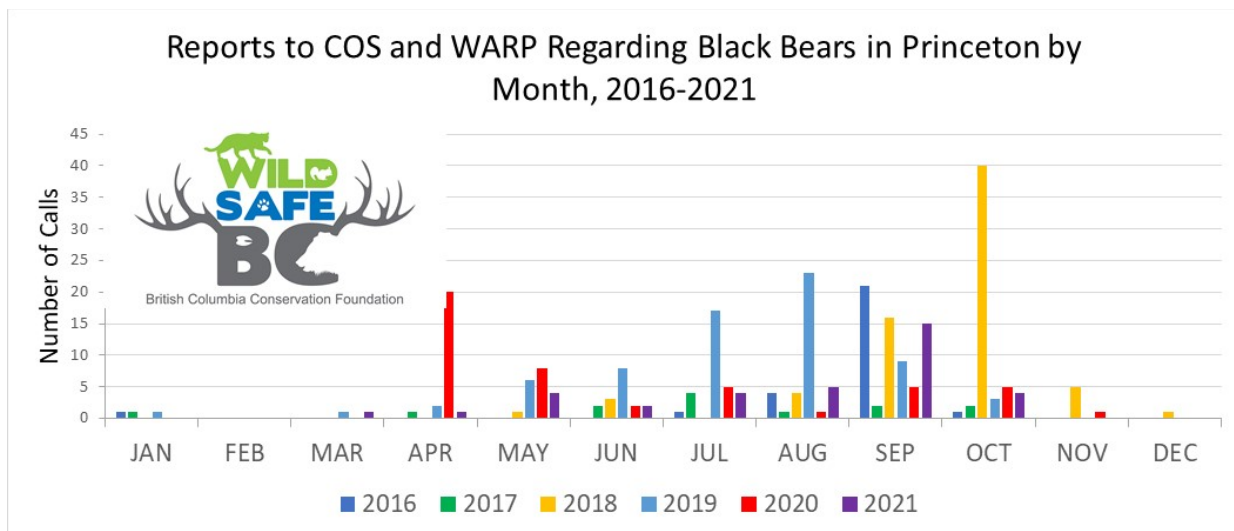


Figure 4. Black bear reports to WARP by month in Princeton from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 to October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021.



Garbage remained the most reported wildlife attractant although steadily declining (Figure 5), followed by fruit trees, bird feeders and pets. Other attractants are items such as recycling, freezers or unspecified.

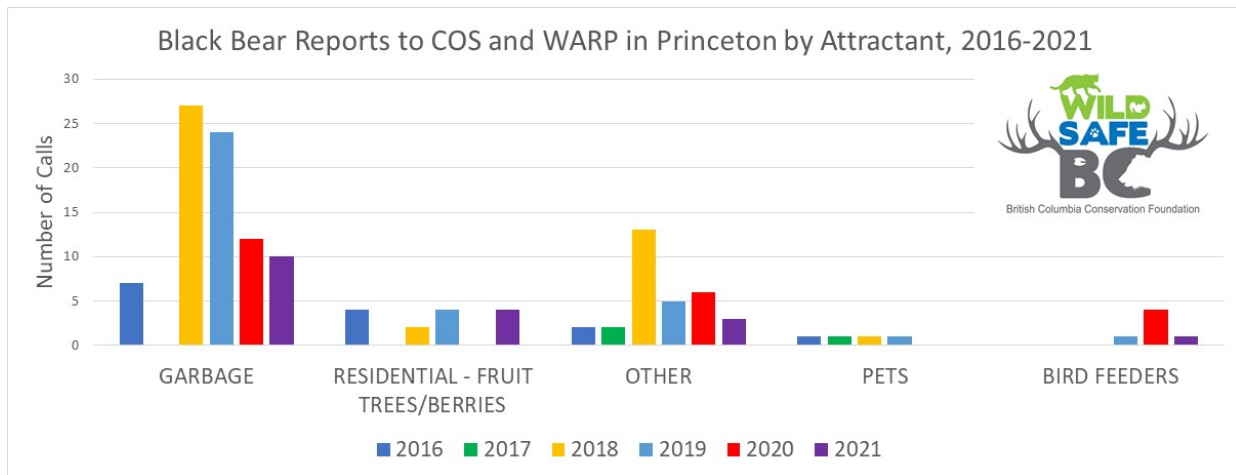


Figure 5. Reports to WARP by attractant from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2016 to October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021.

## WildSafe Ranger Program

Educating youth through the WildSafe Ranger Program shapes the future of our community by building awareness and understanding about wildlife. Focus is placed on Staying Safe in Wildlife Country with awareness and what to do in a wildlife encounter, how being in a community impacts wildlife and people, and what is attracting wildlife into our neighbourhoods and how we can change that (Figure 6). A total of 364 youth received presentations over 22 presentations (Table 1).

Table 1. WildSafe Ranger presentations provided in 2021.

Event	Presentations	Grade/Age	Youth
Princeton Library	2	Age: 6 - 12	25
Summer Fun Zone	4	Age: 6 - 14	40
J.A. Elementary	8	Grade: K - 3	87
Vermilion Forks Elementary	6	Grade: 4 - 7	192
Hedley Family Place	2	Age: 1- 12 & Adults	20



Figure 6. Youth that participated the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2021.

## Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave 2 outdoor presentations to 33 people with more requests that have been scheduled for next year. One presentation about Wildlife Awareness and Attractant Management was given in collaboration with FireSmart Princeton in Glenview Park to the Mine Subdivision neighborhood. A second presentation was to Princeton Ground Search and Rescue for a Wildlife Awareness, Safety and Bear Spray Workshop.

## Display Booths

A great way to reach people this season was outdoor educational display booths. The WCC hosted 14 WildSafeBC booths and reached 932 people (Table 2). A regular appearance at the Princeton Community Market in Veteran's Square became the WildSafeBC Princeton Program unofficial "Outdoor Office" where residents would come to ask questions about wildlife, how to reduce human-wildlife conflict, and share their personal wildlife encounters (Figure 7).

**Table 2. Booths held at various locations in Princeton and Area H.**

Location	No. Of People	Date
Veteran Square	48	June 12, 2021
Veteran's Square	36	June 19, 2021
Veteran's Square	26	July 3, 2021
Veteran's Square	36	July 24, 2021
TDFD	400	July 31, 2021
Veteran's Square	25	August 7, 2021
Veteran's Square	28	August 14, 2021
Veteran's Square	26	August 21, 2021
Veteran's Square	30	August 28, 2021
Veteran's Square	65	September 4, 2021
Veteran's Square	15	September 11, 2021
Princeton Visitor Center	45	Sept.10 - Oct.7, 2021
Erris Fire Hall	65	October 16, 2021
Hedley Library	18	October 21, 2021



**Figure 7. WildSafeBC education and outreach booth.**

## 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. The WCC hosted the September Scavenger Hunt that was open to all ages throughout the whole month of September in collaboration with the Princeton Visitor Centre. The scavenger hunt covered the entire Town of Princeton and featured wildlife statues, bear-resistant garbage cans, wildlife-related items and attractants. During the event, the WCC posted educational social media articles about wildlife awareness and safety relevant to the scavenger hunt with information about the area and how to reduce human-wildlife conflict. The WildSafeBC banner was hung across the Brown Bridge and many posters were put up in multiple businesses and offices across town. A prize table and posters for the scavenger hunt were on display at the Princeton



Visitor Centre where the brochures could be picked up and dropped off. Prizes were generously donated by the Princeton Visitor Centre and Recreation Department, The Loonie Bin, Jody Foster Photography, Fletcher Home Building Center and the WCC (Figure 8). There were 32 scavenger hunt brochures picked up from the Visitor Centre and 250 handed out to students with a total of 19 complete forms submitted.



**Figure 8. Some September Scavenger Hunt 2021 prize winners at Princeton Visitor Centre.**

## Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Providing door-to-door canvassing and garbage bin tagging to educate residents on how to reduce human-wildlife conflict is an essential part of delivering the WildSafeBC Program. These activities get the WCC out in the community talking with people and helping them come up with solutions on how to stay safe and remove attractants. It also expands the WCC's knowledge of wildlife activity in the area and allows the WCC to share this information with residents and wildlife officials. This helps everybody become more aware and knowledgeable and make better decisions.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection as a reminder to not put garbage outside unsecured until the day of pick-up (Figure 9). During 29 outings between 9 pm and midnight, a total of 138 bins were tagged in the Town of Princeton (Figure 1). As the season progressed many neighborhoods had no garbage out on the curb at all which illustrated the benefit of the program and the commitment of the community. In addition many businesses that had been tagged in 2020 have started consistently locking their large bins and/or have built enclosures around them. This continued effort from education the about managing garbage properly is reflected in the attractants reported to WARP and COS (Figure 5).

Door-to-door education reached 250 homes with 148 in person and 102 that received door hangers. This was focused on neighborhoods with high numbers of garbage bins out the night before pick-up including Edgewood Drive, Allison Flats, Johnson Rd, Luard Ave, Allison Ave, Auburn Crescent, Similkameen Ave, Lynnwood MHP, Brandlemayr Gate and Deblyn MHP.



Figure 9. Garbage bins out the evening before garbage pick-up.

## Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Princeton page grew 60% in 2021 from 182 to 302 followers thru 592 educational posts relevant to seasonal wildlife activity, community events, reported wildlife activity and best practices to manage attractants. A total of three newspaper articles from the WCC were published reaching 3603 subscribers.

## Wildlife in Area Signs

Bright yellow “Deer in Area” and “Bear in Area” signs were placed around the community following reported wildlife activity to encourage people in the areas to use caution, secure their attractants, and be aware of their surroundings (Figure 10). Signs were up for 7 days following a sighting whether reported on WARP or personally to the WCC and then taken down. High traffic wildlife corridors included Harold Ave, JA Elementary, Lynnwood MHP, Vermilion Forks Elementary, Edgewood Drive, 2<sup>nd</sup> Bench and China Creek Bridge.



Figure 10. Wildlife in Area signs in the Town of Princeton

## Collaborations

This year new collaborations and opportunities for education were developed with Princeton Library and they have requested regular WildSafe Ranger presentations next year. As well, Princeton Ground Search and Rescue would like yearly Wildlife Awareness, Safety and Bear Spray Workshops. The Tulameen and Erris Fire Departments appreciated additional educational booths at their events. As well, the RDOS was appreciative of WildSafeBC Princeton branching out into the rural areas around Princeton as it is difficult to reach such a



large area. WildSafeBC looks forward to working with the Upper Similkameen Indian Band who have expressed interest in developing a WildSafeBC Program in their communities.

## WildSafe Business Pledge

The WildSafe Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses to be 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. A total of 4 businesses signed the pledge this year (Figure 11).



**Figure 11. Businesses that participated in the WildSafeBC Business Pledge.**

## WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

The WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program is able to provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife. Martin's Lake campground followed these guidelines, installed signage, and regularly connected with the WCC.

## Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The Town of Princeton is located within the unceded territory of the Upper Similkameen Indian Band who was interested in providing more Bear Smart information to their clan. High numbers of black bears entering the community in the fall prompted action after fires had caused delays in starting the program. WildSafeBC Princeton provided resources and set up a meeting with USIB Housing Manager Michelle Jacobs, Hedley Improvement District Manager, WildSafeBC RDOS Shelley Fiorito, Princeton WCC and a member of the community. This was followed by the WCC doing two presentations to youth groups and co-hosting a booth at the Hedley Library to get the conversations started in preparation for next year.

## Special Initiatives

The WCC branched out into Area H with WildSafeBC booths to bring awareness about managing wildlife attractants to the more rural areas around Princeton.

The month-long BC Goes Wild September Scavenger Hunt is unique to Princeton and generates lots of fun and interest in the month that typically has the highest amount of human-bear conflict.

The WildSafeBC Business Pledge was a new initiative for Princeton in 2021 and successfully had four businesses participate. This initiative is set to expand next year.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Many people and businesses are making changes to their lifestyles and improving how they manage garbage and fruit trees. They are following the great examples set by the Town of Princeton with bear-resistant infrastructure, a Wildlife Attractant Bylaw, and consistent wildlife safety and attractant management education.

While great improvements have been made it will be necessary to continually educate the public, especially ones new to the community, as relevant information is needed to maintain the extra effort required to consistently manage garbage and combat the intentional and unintentional feeding of wildlife such as fruit trees, feeding squirrels, bird feeders and composters.

To address these issues in the community, the following initiatives are recommended for 2022:

- Regularly scheduled garbage tagging
- Door-to-door education in hotspots and for new residents and Area H
- Educational booths at events in Princeton and Area H
- Link a Wildlife Safety information and attractant management page to the Town of Princeton website
- Bear Hazard Assessment and/or Deer Hazard Assessment for the Town of Princeton
- Recruit more businesses to the WildSafeBC Business Pledge
- Implement the Bare Campsite Program in the municipal campground

## Acknowledgements

The WCC is grateful to all the residents for their respect, open dialogue and efforts to manage their attractants. A huge thank you to the Town Staff, Mayor and Council, Province of BC and BCCF for helping out with anything the program needed and understanding the importance of having an education program to reduce human-wildlife conflict. Thank you for helping to keep the wildlife wild and community safe.