

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2022

Cariboo Regional District

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District of 100 Mile House



Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Cariboo Program between April 10th and November 30th, 2022. 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: Quesnel, Williams Lake, 100 Mile House, and Wells. The population increased to just under 63,000 residents, based on the 2021 population census which is a 1.5 % increase from the 2016 data.

Wildlife is abundant with black bears being the most reported species, followed by deer and cougar. While black bear reports decreased in 2022, the breakdown in communities helps identify opportunities for future program delivery. The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activities with the goal of reducing 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.

- 5 sessions of WildSafe Ranger Program presentations reached 606 students
- 5 presentations given to community groups with 109 participants
- 140 people reached through in person conversations during door-to-door canvassing, and 48 door hangers left for those not home at time
- 2 bin tagging outings in 3 neighborhoods found 376 bins tagged, 77% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey did not repeat the behavior; however, in two neighborhoods there was an increase in bins tagged on the second outing
- 3,022 people reached through public display booths
- WildSafeBC Cariboo Facebook page now has 522 followers from 440 and messaging has reached over 14,000 people as of November 29, 2022
- The BC Goes Wild events reached 508 people
- Efforts were made to provide information on attractant management on the Kulskus Reserve and the Nazko Cultural Camp was attended
- 1 business signed a WildSafeBC Business Pledge

There was an effective collaboration with a local health care nurse with Northern Health. The WCC attended a remote reserve and a cultural camp. Another collaboration with the Conservation Officer Service led to a joint booth at a local Kids' Day at the Park event. This was an effective collaborative effort as both organizations have a similar message. Additional activities this year included two BC Goes Wild Events with an information booth at the Horsefly River Salmon Festival and an information booth, bear spray demonstration and apple pressing demonstration at the Bouchie Lake Harvest Festival hosted at Moose Meadows Farm.

In 2022, the key challenges included the overall size of the program area with significant distances between communities and knowing that consistent and regular messaging leads to change in behaviour. The WCC was not able to attend most communities in the program area more than once, if even once. For several communities, visiting multiple times, would lead to better reach for WildSafeBC messaging.

Attractant management with seasonal focus should remain a priority in terms of future education efforts. In-person presentations and programs such as bin-tagging and door-to-door canvassing are all effective means to deliver attractant management messaging. With numerous new residents seeking a rural lifestyle, additional efforts highlighting the merits of electric fencing would be beneficial.

The WildSafeBC Cariboo program has been well received in all communities and moving forward the WildSafeBC initiatives and collaborations will help “keep wildlife wild and our communities safe”. The WCC would like to thank its sponsors, the Cariboo Regional District and its member municipalities, the BC Conservation Foundation, and the Province of British Columbia.

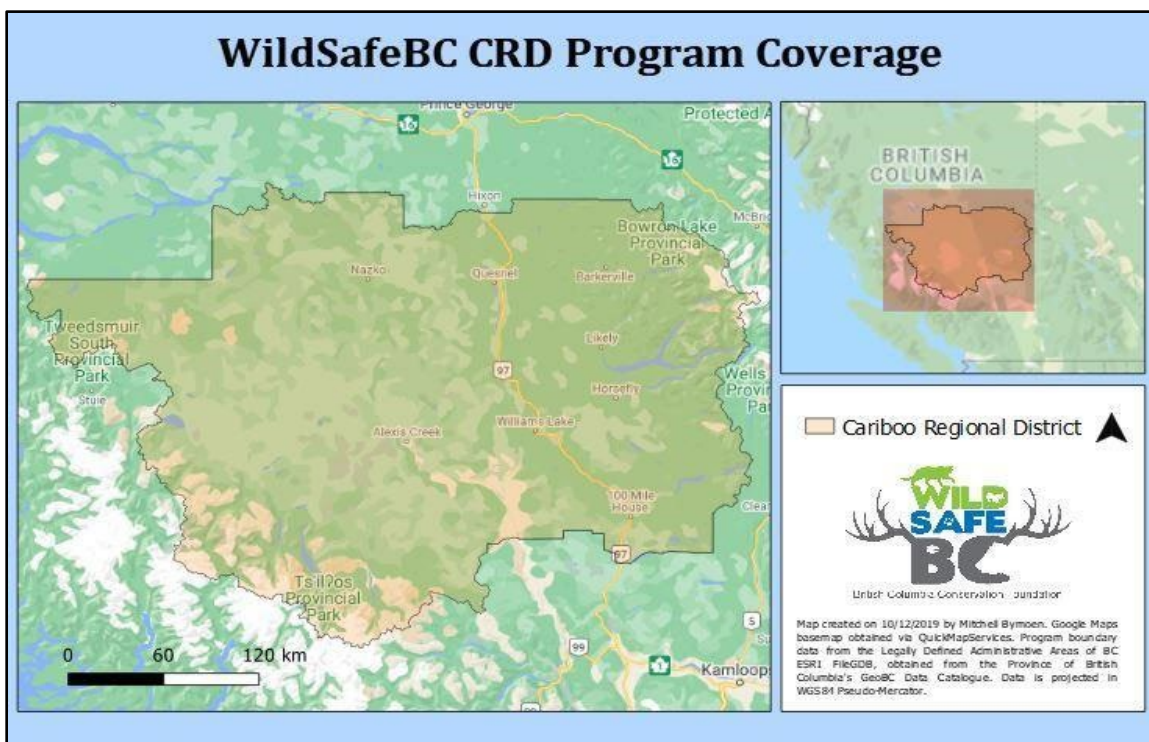


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Cariboo Program coverage area.

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Cover Photo: Display at Bouchie Lake Country Store

Highlights from the 2022 Season

Wildlife Activity

Calls made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) can be viewed by the public through the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). This data is updated daily and this report for the Cariboo Regional District includes data from January 1, 2017, to November 26, 2022 (Figure 2). There were 344 black bear reports which is a 56% decrease compared to 2021 with 782 black bear reports. Reports of other species were also down slightly from 2021 except for cougar which showed a slight increase. The decrease in bear reports might be a result of increased natural food availability following more favorable growing conditions and fewer forest fires. Early summer reports were down, likely because of moderate weather conditions and sufficient natural foods.

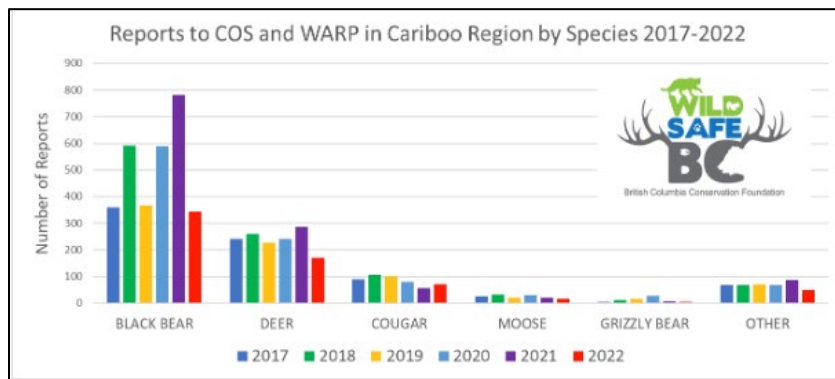


Figure 2. Reports to COS and WARP in Cariboo region by species from January 1, 2017, to November 26, 2022.

September and October were the highest months for black bear reports which is similar to previous years (Figure 3). The frequency is reduced from previous years which may be related to more favorable conditions for natural food sources.

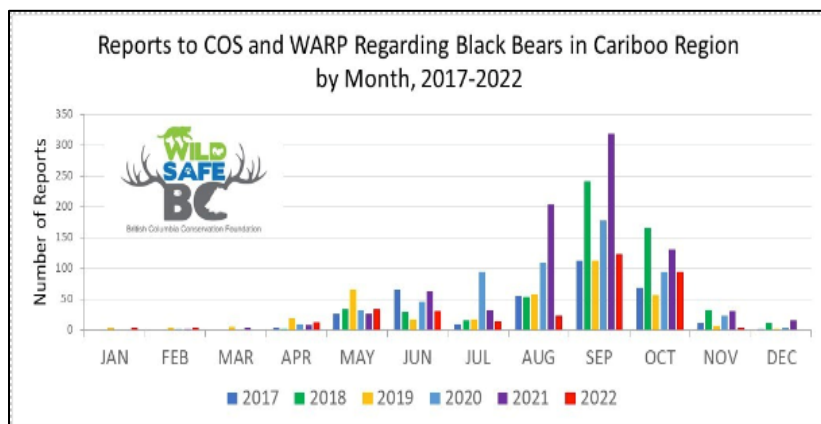


Figure 3. Reports to COS and WARP in Cariboo Region regarding black bears by month from January 1, 2017 to November 26, 2022.

Quesnel and Williams Lake saw the largest number of black bear reports within the region (Figure 4).

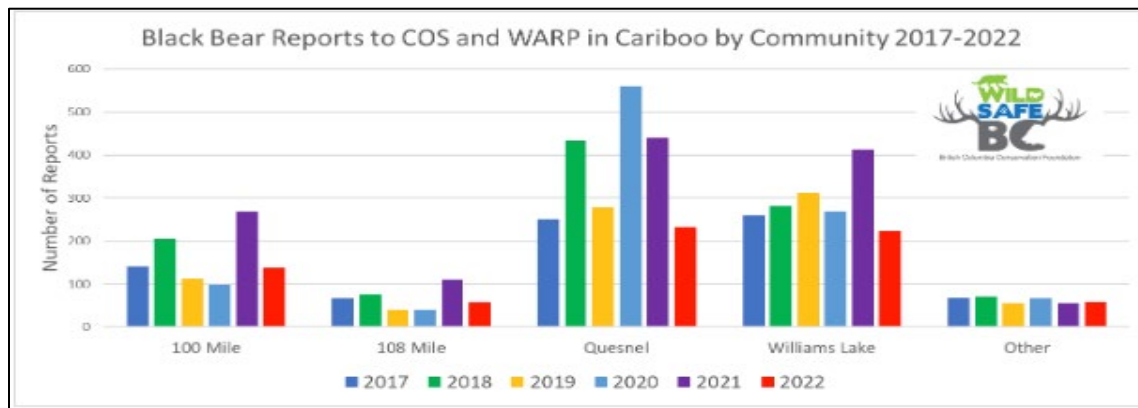


Figure 4. Black bear reports by Cariboo RD community from 2017-2022.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. A total of five schools participated in WRP through classroom presentations (Table 1). A total of 606 students became WildSafe Rangers through these five sessions and received WildSafe Ranger kits to take home (Figure 5).

Table 1. Schools that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2022.

School	Grade	Students
Kersley Elementary	K-7	50
Wells Elementary	K-7	17
150 Mile Elementary	K-7	123
Carson Elementary	K-7	190
Williams lake Elementary	K-7	206



Figure 5. WildSafe Ranger presentation at Wells Elementary School.

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave a total of five presentations through in-person, hybrid and outdoor presentations to 84 participants including: Central Interior Poultry Producers Forum (35), Quesnel Rotary (18), the Williams Lake Girls Guides prior to a significant camping trip (16), Nazko Cultural Camp (35), and a bear spray workshop in collaboration with Baker Creek Enhancement Society (15) (Table 2).

Table 2. Presentations and workshops to groups

Group	Number of Participants
Cariboo Poultry Forum	35
Quesnel Rotary	18
Williams Lake Girl Guides	16
Nazko Cultural Camp	35
Baker Creek Enhancement Society Bear Spray Workshop	15

The WildSafeBC display was a popular feature at numerous events and the WCC partnered with the COS Conservation Officer at a Kids' Day in the Park event resulting in conversations with over 250 people (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Kids' Day at West Fraser Timber Park.

The WCC attended a total of 18 events in four communities (Table 3). A total of 3,022 people were reached with the largest being the Horsefly Salmon Festival (Figure 7). It was a two day event, but due to scheduling, the WCC could only attend one day. This venue was a well-attended large event in the Cariboo and would be a key event to attend on an annual basis.

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

Event	Date	Number of People Reached
Moose Meadows Farm on Farm Market	April 23	91
Quesnel Farmers Market	June 4/July 1	185/188
Bouchie Lake Farmers Market	July 2	42
McLease Lake Farmers Market	July 17	31
Nazko Cultural Camp	July 21	35
William's Lake Farmers Market	July 26	100
West Quesnel Night Market	August 4	330
Quesnel Farmers Market	August 6	220
Bouchie Lake Farmers Market	August 10/24	59/40
Williams Lake Farmers Market	Aug 26	165
Kids' Day in West Fraser Timber Park	Sept 1	251
Quesnel Farmers Market	Sept 3	192
Horsefly River Salmon Festival	Sept 10	358
Bouchie Lake Harvest Festival	Sept 26	250
William's Lake Farmers Market	Sept 30	250
Quesnel Farmers Market	Oct 1	166



Figure 7. Horsefly Salmon Festival Booth.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Through door-to-door education, a total of 188 people were provided with WildSafeBC messaging during in-person conversations and pamphlets left behind. Door-to-door canvassing provided the WCC an opportunity to target areas that have increased wildlife activity and/or conflicts by going to each household to speak with residents and provide awareness about wildlife, attractants and how to manage them to avoid human-wildlife conflicts. The Johnston Subdivision 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 containers set curbside the day before collection (Figure 8). During two outings, a total of 376 bins were tagged in the City of Quesnel in three neighborhoods and 58 residences received stickers more than once. On a return visit to the same neighborhood, in two cases there were more bins out than the initial visit. The effectiveness of garbage tagging for changing human behaviors is demonstrated by the 77% of homeowners who did not place their bin out curbside the night before following receiving a warning tag. Two trailer parks consisting primarily of senior residents had significant numbers of bins out early during both bin-tagging outings. Discussions with city staff provided recommendations for future larger shared bins as an option to address this issue.



Figure 8. Bins placed out the night before pickup (left) and bin with multiple stickers and bite marks (right).

Many of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey were then not found to have their bin on the curb again during the second survey (Figure 9). The number of bins placed out early on the third survey were significantly reduced in two of the neighbourhoods.

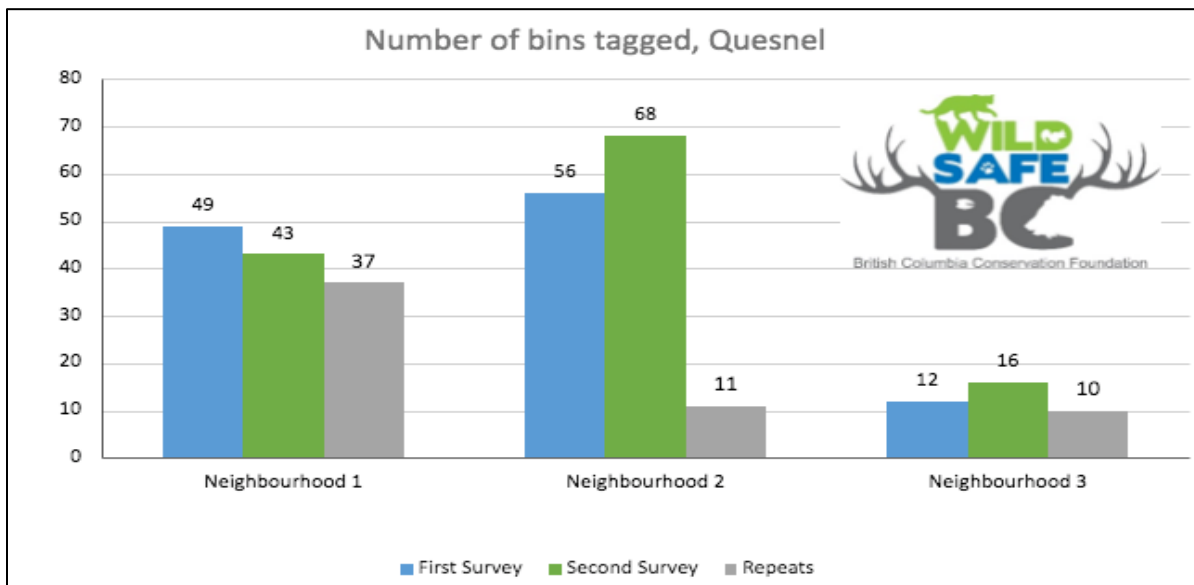


Figure 9. Number of garbage bins placed out early for collection and after education in Quesnel BC

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 The Goat FM Radio.

Several articles were printed in the *Williams Lake Tribune*, the *Quesnel Observer*, and the *100 Mile Free Press*. They covered topics such as attractant management in the fall. There were two phone interviews held with The Goat FM Radio.

The WildSafeBC Cariboo Facebook page has increased from 440 followers in 2021 to 522 in 2022 which is an overall increase of 17%. This increase in followers stems from several posts and many shared content posts to the page which focused on information about local wildlife, how to manage attractants, as well as event information.

Wildlife in Area Signs

Signs were installed in several neighborhoods in the Quesnel area and one local First Nation in areas with high bear sightings. Signage posted in targeted areas where wildlife activity is higher and/or conflicts have been reported, gives those people frequenting these areas a warning about what species have been spotted, indicates attractants to watch out for and manage properly, and connects these users to WildSafeBC and the RAPP line for more information and/or to report encounters.

Collaborations

The main collaboration this year was with Bouchie Lake Country Store as it provided a venue for a variety of events as well as an opportunity for a standing display through most of the season. They also embraced the WildSafeBC Business Pledge (see below). Also, the Conservation Officer Service was a significant partner for communications with the public as both the COS and WildSafeBC have similar messaging. Another collaboration was with Baker Creek Enhancement Society where they provided a venue and promotion for a bear spray workshop.

WildSafeBC Business Pledge

The WildSafeBC Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses to become good examples in their community for 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 the WildSafeBC safety and conflict reduction guidelines. 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 Community Coordinators can provide clear guidelines and provide resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife. While no campsites in the CRD are currently participating in the Bare Campsite program, one campsite was approached and information provided.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

There was an effective collaboration with a local health care nurse with Northern Health. The WCC attended a remote reserve and a cultural camp. Efforts were made to provide details on attractant management with local First Nations and on-site efforts were made at the Kluskus Reserve where significant attractant issues were identified and at a Cultural Camp put on by the Nazko First Nation (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Unsecured garbage bin at Kluskus Reserve.

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 the largest in BC. The WCC hosted two events, one at the Horsefly River Salmon Festival with an information booth and the other was at the 6th Annual Bouchie Lake Harvest Festival where an information booth, apple pressing and bear spray demonstrations were highlighted at Moose Meadows Farm (figure 11). A total of 608 people were able to engage with WildSafeBC messaging through these efforts.



Figure 11. BC Goes Wild Event at Bouchie Lake Harvest Festival with apple pressing and Bear spray demonstrations

Challenges and Opportunities

The main challenges faced in 2022 included the size of the region and finding opportunities to physically go to the various communities in the region with a limited budget. Another challenge were the wildfire notices and alerts that made accessing parts of the region challenging for a lengthy portion of the summer season.

Opportunities to collaborate with other organizations were recognized when the WCC attended a Culture Day put on by a local First Nation as well as at a presentation at a different reserve. The WCC managed to carpool with a local health care nurse that makes weekly visits to local reserves giving the opportunity for collaboration and sharing of ideas. Another effective opportunity was realized this year in partnering with the Conservation Officer Service at an event held in Quesnel at a Kids Day event held in the West Fraser Timber Park.

Fruit trees continue to be an attractant in the community. These trees draw wildlife into residential areas. Bears were reported damaging fences and accessing backyard chickens and other domestic livestock which impacts the safety of neighborhoods. Several areas were 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 2023:

- Electric fence demonstrations & presentations
- Education campaign focusing on the hazards of leaving attractants unmanaged and solutions for managing attractants through social media, news articles, workshops, and/or flyers in municipal tax information mail outs
- Engage food banks and other non-profits for use of excess fruit
- Connect residents through a social media food sharing group
- Share with elected officials the challenges of attractant management
- Increase door-to-door campaigns and bin tagging in hotspots and key neighborhoods

Acknowledgements

The WCC wishes to thank: the BC Conservation Foundation team for their continued support and expertise, program sponsor Solid Waste Manager Tera Grady, Conservation Officers Justin Millet 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 Herb Roodenberg from Quesnel for the loan of some wildlife artifacts which were great aids for learning and discussion.