

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2023

Cariboo Regional District

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Cariboo Program between May 31st and November 30th, 2023. The program was delivered in the Cariboo Regional District (CRD), which includes the traditional territories of the Northern Secwēpemc te Qelmūcw (NsTQ), Southern Carrier / Dakelh member First Nations, as well as the T̓silhqot'in Nation territories and declared title lands. The CRD includes both municipal and rural boundaries and is made up of 12 electoral areas and four incorporated member municipalities. It includes Williams Lake, Quesnel, 100 Mile House, and Wells. The region covers an area of 80,262 square kilometers and many of the residents and visitors are aware they are sharing their living space with wildlife (Figure 1).

Wildlife is abundant with black bears being the most reported species to the British Columbia Conservation Officer Service (COS), followed by deer, grizzly bears, and cougar. The number of black bear reports increased significantly in 2023 according to COS data. The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed the following outreach activities with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community in 2023:

- 5 WRP presentations and 297 youth reached.
- 2 presentations given to community groups with 13 participants.
- 160 people reached through DTD in person and 64 door hangers left.
- 1 bin tagging outing in 1 neighborhood with 75 bins tagged.
- 4 display booths at community events reached over 1200 people.
- 20 Facebook posts with 550 followers, reaching over 3,000 people.
- 2 campgrounds interested in participating in Bare Campsite Program for next season and 2 others were contacted.

The WCC attended the Horsefly Salmon River Festival, which was a two-day event, reaching residents and visitors with a WildSafeBC display booth. Collaborations were made with the Quesnel River Research Center (QRRC) with the WCC attending their Open House and making connections within the Likely Community.

In 2023, key challenges included the overall size of the program area with significant distances between communities and increased wildfire activity. Education within the area should continue to focus on attractant management. In person presentations and programs, such as bin tagging and door-to-door education offer opportunities to deliver programming safely. Opportunities to discuss wildlife attractant management with residents at home is an effective method to educate people, with numerous new residents seeking a rural lifestyle. The WildSafeBC Program was 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 and its member municipalities, the BC Conservation Foundation, and the Province of British Columbia.

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Cover Photo: Display at Williams Lake Farmers Market

Highlights from the 2023 Season

Wildlife Activity

Calls made to the British Columbia 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 was updated daily until the end of 2022 and this report includes WARP data from January 1st, 2017 to October 31, 2022 (Figure 2). This data shows that majority of the reports made to the COS pertain to bears and deer.

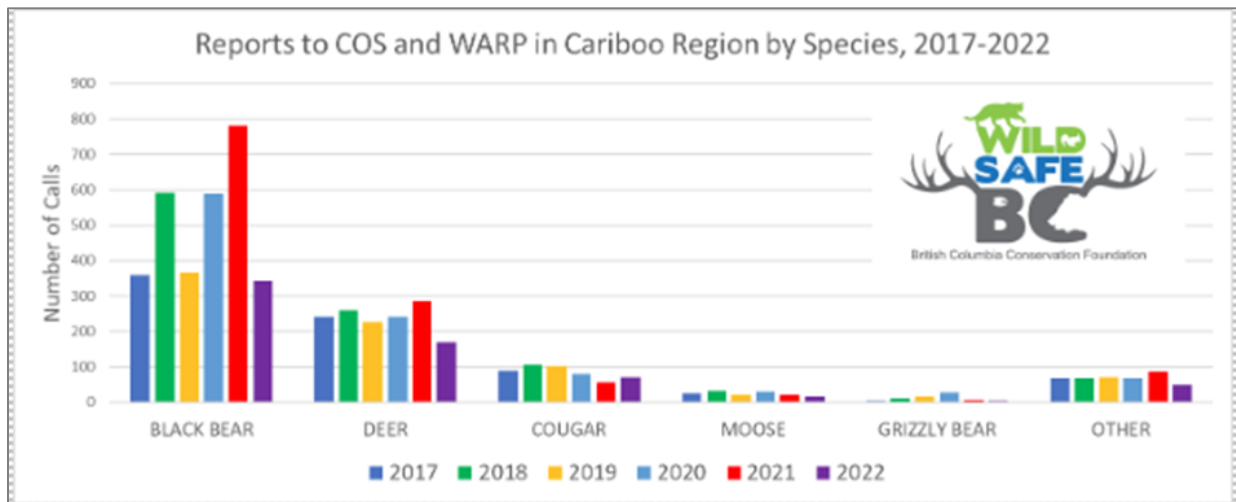


Figure 2. Reports to the BC Conservation Officer Service and WARP in the Cariboo region by species from January 1, 2017 to October 31, 2022.

WARP was not available for the 2023 season, so the WCC obtained data directly from the local COS pertaining to Human-Wildlife Conflict Reports received through the RAPP Line. This data shows that there is a significant increase in the number of reports for bears this year compared to any former year (Figure 3). The reports for deer are on average with previous years. The WCC also received several public phone calls regarding bear and deer sightings, including grizzly sightings in the Likely Area. According to the COS, a significant increase in wildlife reports this year can be attributed to accessible wildlife attractants (i.e., garbage) on residential properties, a decrease in natural food availability, and a significant increase in wildfires.

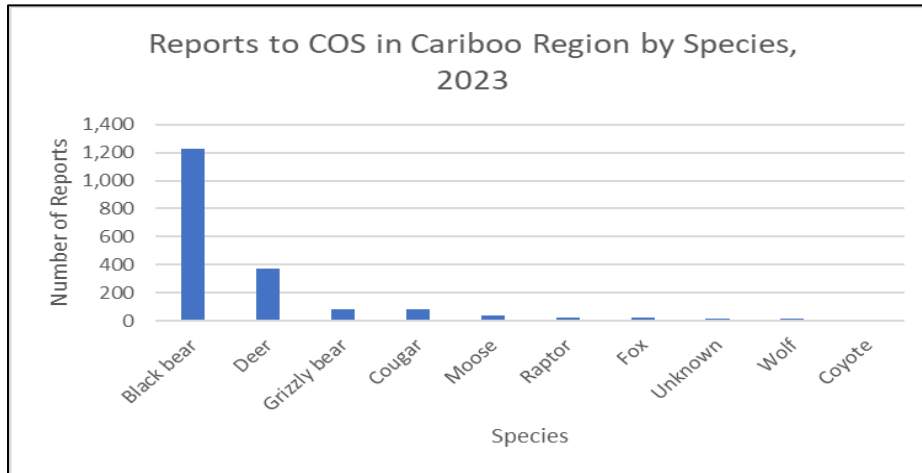


Figure 3. Wildlife reports made to the BC Conservation Officer Service from January 2023 to October 2023 by species.

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 with 297 students becoming WildSafe Rangers and receiving kits with interactive activities (Table 1; Figure 4). Two schools received an extended program with classes receiving additional interactive activities for students over multiple visits.

Table 1. Schools that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2023.

School	Grade	Students	Extended
150 Mile Elementary	K-7	160	Yes
Boys and Girls Club	K-2	16	No
100 Mile Forest School Collaborative	K-7	26	No
Parkland Elementary	K-6	73	Yes
Likely Elementary	K-6	22	No
Total Participants		297	



Figure 4. Wildsafe Ranger presentation delivered in 100 Mile House.

Presentations to Community Groups

WildSafeBC can deliver educational presentations on a variety of topics including wildlife safety, bear spray, and electric fencing. The WCC delivered 2 Wildlife Safety and Awareness presentations through to 13 participants including (Table 2).

Table 2. WildSafeBC Wildlife Safety and Awareness presentations provided to groups in 2023.

Group	Number of Participants
Likely Community	7
Williams Lake Boys and Girls Club	5
Total Participants	13

Display Booths

The WildSafeBC display booth was a popular feature across the Cariboo (Figure 5). The WCC attended 3 events in 3 communities, reaching more than 1200 people (

Table 3). The largest reach was achieved at the 2-day Horsefly Salmon festival (Figure 6). This was a very popular event in the Cariboo and WildSafeBC should attend on an annual basis.



Figure 5. WildSafeBC Display Booth at the Williams Lake Farmers Market.

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

Event	Date	Number of People Reached
Williams Lake Farmers Market	July 4	300
Williams Lake Farmers Market	August 4	429
Horsefly River Salmon Festival	September 9/10	530
Total People Reached		1,259



Figure 6. WildSafeBC Display Booth at the Horsefly Salmon River Festival in 2023.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Door-to-door education reached a total of 160 homes with door hangers and 25 people through in-person conversations. The West Quesnel and Uplands neighborhood as well as the Carson /Johnston Subdivision, were prioritized due to high levels of bear activity reported by the COS. Several residents reported feeling safer and more educated on human-wildlife conflict and reduction after in-person conversations with the WCC.

Bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection (Figure 7). Bin-tagging is a challenge in this region due to the distance

between communities with curb side collection. A total of 75 bins were tagged during one outing. The WCC received phone calls from some residents whose bins were tagged and had effective conversations regarding reducing attractants accessible to wildlife.



Figure 7. Bins placed out the night before pickup that received a WildSafeBC bin tagging sticker.

Social Media and Press

The WildsafeBC Cariboo program was well supported by local media platforms with several articles published in the Williams Lake Tribune (Figure 8), the Quesnel Cariboo Observer, the 100 Mile Free Press. In addition, two phone interviews were held with The Goat FM radio. Articles covered topics including attractant management in the fall. The WildSafeBC Cariboo Facebook page was also well receive and grew 12% from 440 to 550 followers with over 20 posts created and a total reach of 9,095.



Figure 8. Photo courtesy of; Ruth Lloyd from Black Press Media used in the Williams Lake Tribune and taken at the Horsefly Salmon River Festival.

Wildlife in Area Signs

Wildlife in Area signs can be placed in areas with high wildlife activity. No signs were installed this year due to signage already being posted by Bylaw Services in several areas.

Collaborations

WildSafeBC continued to collaborate with the COS this season. This included information sharing regarding wildlife activity reports. Further, the WCC, COS, and the Quesnel River Research Center (QRRR) collaborated to provide public education at an open house held at QRRR. The WCC attended this event and made valuable connections with the Likely Community.

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 safety and conflict reduction information. In return, WildSafeBC will provide ongoing support to the business in the form of staff training, WildSafeBC materials, and a WildSafeBC Business Pledge poster. No businesses pledged this year due to limitations from the size of the program area. The WCC should plan to reach out earlier next season to start the Business Pledge process.

WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

Through the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program, WildSafeBC can provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife. While no campsites participated in the program this season, two campgrounds were approached about the program and are interested in participating next season.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

In 2023, the WCC completed an online training course called “Working Effectively with Indigenous Peoples” through Indigenous Corporate Training. The WCC learned about Indigenous culture, history, and reconciliation through this course.

Special Initiatives

“BC Goes Wild” is an annual campaign to celebrate wildlife in BC in September, which is typically when human-bear conflicts are the highest. The WCC attended a 2-day event at the Horsefly Salmon River Festival which was well attended (Figure 9). In addition, the WCC made efforts to help residents find fruit gleaning for their trees in Quesnel and Williams Lake.



Figure 9. WildSafeBC BC Goes Wild Event at Horsefly Salmon River Festival.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges in 2023 included the size of the region and the ability to travel to the various communities. Increased wildlife activity also proved to be a challenge in delivering outdoor programs. Attractant management also continues to be a challenge with fruit trees continuing to be a significant attractant drawing wildlife into residential areas. To address the abundance of fruit in the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2024:

- Electric fence demonstrations & presentations.
- Education campaigns focusing on hazards and solutions through social media, news articles, workshops and flyers in municipal tax information.
- Engage food banks and other non-profits for use of excess fruit.
- Connect residents through social media to local food sharing groups.
- Share with elected officials the challenges of managing wildlife attractants.
- Increase door-to-door campaigns and bin tagging in hotspots and key neighborhoods.

This season, the WCC had the greatest reach through display booths with a successful event at the Horsefly Salmon River Festival. This event should be attended by future WCCs.

Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC is grateful for the generous support the program receives from sponsors, partners, and volunteers. Thanks to our sponsors: The Province of British Columbia, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation, and the Cariboo Regional District.

Thank you to program collaborators and supporters: Conservation Officers – Mark Wallkosky and Jeff Tyrre; Solid Waste Manager – Tera Grady; Horsefly Salmon River Festival Coordinator – Dina Stephenson – Coordinator of the, Barb the of the Williams Lake Farmers Market Coordinator, Williams Lake Tribune, The Goat Radio, My Cariboo Now, and Black Press Media. A special thanks to volunteer, Austin Lorde.

Finally, thank you to everyone for trying to be a good neighbor this season by removing wildlife attractants from their properties and preventing human-wildlife conflict when out in recreational areas. Let's keep wildlife wild and our community safe!