



**wild
wise**
YUKON



**Progress
Report**
May 31, 2018

Special thanks to the following people for their significant contributions to WildWise Yukon in 2017. Through contracts and partnerships, each has improved our understanding of the work at hand and our ability to meet it head on.

Aja Mason
Brandon Drost
Joe Collier
Jessica Norris
Ashley Cunningham
Karla Dahlgren

2017 Board Members:

Lindsay Caskenette – President
Scott Gilbert – Vice President
Pam Brown – Treasurer
Aimee Schmidt – Secretary
Cassandra Andrew – Director

We live and work in the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.

The WildWise Board of Directors is a volunteer, working board. In 2017, members formed three subcommittees: Communications, Education & Outreach and the Grizzly Bear Management & Conservation Plan review committees. Members each contributed 50-100 hours of volunteer service. WildWise programs would not be possible without this in-kind support and we are grateful to the incredibly insightful and energetic people who have joined this year.

We hope they stay on board in 2018 and we welcome additional enthusiastic members for this new year. Please visit our News and Events page for information about our 2018 AGM and contact us if you are interested in 'getting on board'!



Hello Friends, Members and Supporters,

WildWise has been hard at work this year addressing the root causes of human-wildlife conflict. In 2017, over 60 bears were destroyed throughout the Yukon Territory as a result of conflict with people. Another 160 were reported in conflict and were either relocated or moved on. These bears could easily have been destroyed as well and people around them seriously injured. At least 70% of conflicts reported were due to mismanagement of garbage. A third of them occurred within the Whitehorse Conservation Officer District where the majority of Yukoners live. Bird feeders, chicken coops, meat caches and pets also present significant challenges to the human-bear systems and will continue to be involved in conflict if we don't learn to make the spaces we live and play in safe for wildlife and people together, a goal which is fully achievable. In addition, people frequently report conflicts with foxes, deer, moose, caribou and even birds, rodents and other small mammals.

Many approaches are required to solve the problem. WildWise endeavours to provide accurate information to the public and to other agencies about reducing conflict. We strive to include aspects of research, education and outreach into everything we do. We set out to expand our programs to all Yukon communities in 2017 and took on some fairly large tasks. The result is a much greater network of partnerships and a more solid understanding of where we need to go from here.

Thank you for taking some time to read through this year's accomplishments, none of which would be possible without help and support from Yukon residents as well as visitors, businesses, volunteers, and some very dedicated agencies and contractors.

We are now embarking on another year of problem solving and look forward to meeting and working with you.

Heather Ashthorn
Executive Director

*Learning to be good
neighbours at our
Electric Fencing
Workshop.*



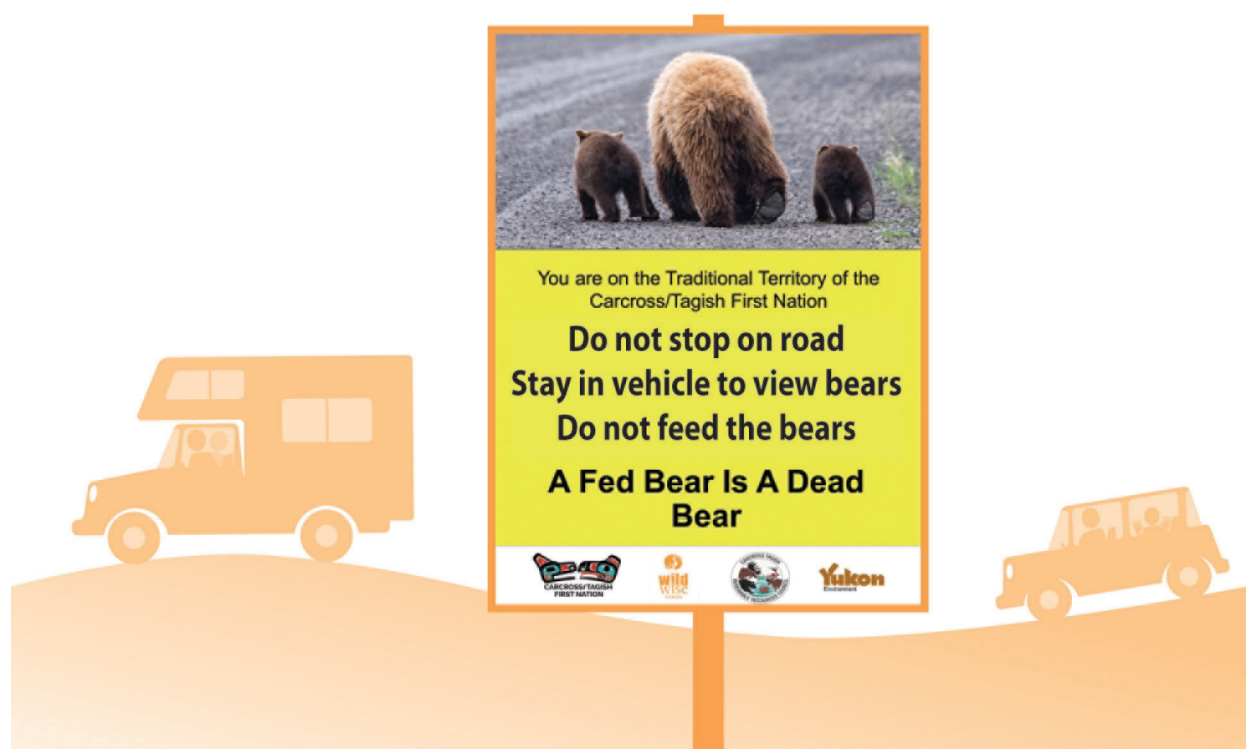


Visit our website www.wildwise.ca to find out more about each of the initiatives outlined here.

Investigating food conditioning of bears in a wildlife-viewing hotspot

The South Klondike Highway is a popular destination for local and visiting travellers. Many Skagway-based tour operators spend their summer guiding cruise ship passengers on interactive and sight-seeing tours along this breath-taking gateway to the Yukon. Wildlife viewing is a popular activity for tourists and local travellers and bear viewing is common in this area. It is rich habitat for grizzly and black bears. With the opportunity to see these majestic animals comes the possibility of negative encounters, including those that result in food conditioning. Bears are highly intelligent, fast learners and will quickly associate humans with food and return to wherever they got their last treat and defend food resources if they have to. They will also look for like situations, which means if they get a treat from one traveller, they will try the next traveller out for another reward.

After repeated reports from the public and agencies about the possibility of bears being fed along the Skagway Road and concerns about road safety due to “bear jams” when vehicles stop on the highway shoulders to get a good look at bears feeding and crossing, we set out to investigate and to find out what travellers need to consider to stay safe and reduce conflict. We talked with travellers and tour operators to find out where the gaps in knowledge are and collaborated with Carcross/Tagish First Nation to develop road signs with the intent of improving safety. This project has opened the door to many opportunities to collaborate, with tour operators, government agencies, Renewable Resource Councils and non-profit organizations. Please visit our website over the summer months to see where this project leads us!



Helping tourists and tour operators protect wildlife

We welcome your calls and emails, suggestions, comments, concerns and ideas. Please be in touch.

Tourism and wildlife viewing are becoming increasingly important industries in the Yukon Territory. Developing a tourism industry based on wildlife viewing comes with a responsibility to protect wildlife and to keep people safe while viewing wildlife.

To follow up to the work we did along the Skagway Road, which identified the need to work closely with the tourism industry, we developed a comprehensive list of tour operators working with the Yukon Territory and asked them to participate in a survey to help us learn what tour operators are currently doing to reduce HWC and what they are willing to do in future. We are using the results of our survey to identify opportunities for further educational resource development. We are excited about our growing relationship with the people and agencies involved in this important and growing industry.

The cold, hard facts

Environment Yukon is responsible for responding to human-wildlife conflicts reported by the public. The records kept by Conservation Officers serve as a means of investigating what the root causes of conflict are and, therefore, to be able to predict and prevent conflicts in future. WildWise worked with C.O. Services this year to compile information derived from conflict reports dating back to 2012.

This project has given us a more thorough understanding of how to address the current human-wildlife conflict situation as well as an evidence based approach to working with other agencies, governments and businesses. We participated in a media release about the project in November and continue to work with the City of Whitehorse to interpret the statistics and take action on bear smart waste management. Action can include replacing existing non-bear-resistant garbage receptacles with bear resistant ones, improving our waste and animal control bylaws to allow bylaw services to enforce bear smart management of wastes on residential and commercial properties and consideration for wildlife through planning processes such as the Parks Master Plan and the Local Food and Urban Agriculture Strategy.

What's working in other places?

British Columbia, Alberta and parts of Alaska have developed and implemented programs to reduce human-bear conflict and can provide insight into what is working and what isn't. The City of Whitehorse proclaims that we live in "The Wilderness City", but we have a long way to go to demonstrate tolerance for wildlife and to peacefully coexist with wildlife in the City. Decision makers need to have access to evidence based information in order to fully understand how to improve our existing services, laws and systems. To this end, we embarked on a cross-jurisdictional investigation of "Bear Smart" programs and measures. We included 7 communities and compared their municipal services and educational efforts to ours here in Whitehorse. Through this project we have developed a current list of contacts and learned a great deal about bear smart programs and collaborations that work. The report has spurred conversation with City of Whitehorse departments, Yukon Government and the non-profit sector. We hope that it is useful to the public as a means of education and advocacy. Please read it! It can be found, along with most of our work, on our website.

*You can read
the report on
what we found
out on our
website.*



*Setting up
electric fencing
in our May
workshop.*



*We have an
electric fencing
guide online.
Check it out!*

Electric fencing education

Electric fencing is a safe and effective way to reduce negative encounters with bears and other wildlife and is appropriate for many applications including farming and food production, wilderness camping, industrial camps, securing attractants such as compost, garbage, fish camps, meat caches and pet food. Electric fencing can keep wildlife out and livestock in a designated area. WildWise is dedicated to helping Yukoners learn the merits of electric fencing and techniques used to make it as effective as possible.

WildWise Yukon organized and co-hosted an electric fence technique workshop with EMR through the Ag. Branch in May, 2017. The workshop took place at Castle Mountain Farm on the Sawmill Rd. The farm has both permanent and portable electric fencing in use and the owner/operator gave participants a detailed description of materials and methods. Participants had a chance to get their hands dirty setting up a temporary electric fence.

In addition, we reviewed and submitted recommendations to COSB throughout the development of their electric fence manual. The manual (*Reducing Wildlife Conflict with Electric Fencing: A Beginner's Guide*) is now in circulation and can be found on our website on the electric fencing page: <http://wildwise.ca/tips-and-resources/#electric-fencing>

We also updated our own *Electric Fencing For Chicken Coop Information Sheets* which we distribute through the Whitehorse feed stores and through our door to door initiatives.

Door to door education

WildWise progress is rooted in outreach and education. We believe it is essential to engage person to person with Yukoner's to find out how people are living with wildlife and what the opportunities are to reduce conflict. Showing up on the doorstep is a direct means of sharing and exchanging information. In 2017 we expanded our door to door project from the Southern Lakes to four Whitehorse neighborhoods and to Carmacks. We spent over 120 hours 'in the field' offering attractant audits and tips and advice for securing attractants. We conducted over 70 audits and revisited several properties to investigate whether any changes were made. The project helped solidify our understanding that education alone will not change behaviour, an important finding which informs our ability to share information with the City about the need for a top-down (bylaw and enforcement) approach to work alongside education and outreach. We continue to advocate for improvements to the City's waste management and bylaw systems to increase our consideration of wildlife in "The Wilderness City".

Trail sign project

Trail signs are another way to reach out to people and share information. In 2017 we worked with Environment Yukon's Y2C2 to install bear aware trail signs throughout Whitehorse. Our trail signs, which are accessible in four language via a QR code on the actual sign which takes smartphone users to translations, were well received in Carcross and Carmacks and we hope to promote their use in several other communities in 2018. We erected two 'giant bear' signs in Riverdale with support from the Riverdale Community Association. Take your kids and dogs on a treasure hunt to find the bear signs and please remember, using a leash protects your pets from surprise encounters with bears and bears from surprise encounters with your furry friends.

Bear learning module

Kids make great environmental ambassadors. WildWise aims to find opportunities to share information with kids, knowing that they will then share information with their families. We are working on our long term vision of developing opportunities for kids to learn about the human-bear system and coexistence with wildlife. This year we met with several RRCs, schools, First Nations, C.O's and RCMP to identify opportunities in Yukon communities to develop and deliver locally relevant attractant management and bear conflict reduction education. We look forward to working in schools and communities throughout the Yukon in 2018.

We do try to be seen and heard!

This year we talked to dozens of school children, hopefully convincing them to be garbage ambassadors at home and in their schools. We hosted a "Bear Aware" event in November at the Beringia Centre, 'weasled' our way into the Biodiversity Forum in March, showed our faces and our colours at the Fireweed Market and travelled all the way to Tennessee to participate in an international human-bear conflicts workshop. Look for us again in 2018 at the Fireweed Market and visit our News and Events page frequently to find out what we are up to.



*Planning
processes
provide
opportunities
for WildWise
and our
supporters
to fulfil our
mandate.*

*We encourage
you to get
involved
wherever
possible.*

*Remember,
there is a
municipal
election in
2018!*

New waste management bylaw for Whitehorse

Approved by City Council, spring 2018

Waste bylaws define how waste is handled on residential and commercial properties. The current bylaw does not provide strong enough direction to residents to secure attractants and is not enforceable by bylaw officers.

ACTION: WildWise addressed City Council to recommend strengthening wording to hold people accountable for securing wildlife attractants. We recommended, in lieu, that the City develop a Wildlife Attractants Bylaw to deal with mismanagement of wastes and other attractants (bird feeders, pet refuse, petroleum products, etc). The City of Whitehorse approved the draft waste bylaw put forward by City staff and did not commit to further consideration of a wildlife attractants bylaw.

Purchase of residential garbage bins by the City of Whitehorse

March, 2018

The current bins provided by the City are not bear resistant and contribute to food conditioning of bears, often resulting in destruction of bears by Conservation Officers.

ACTION: WildWise asked the City Council to hold off on the recommended purchase of additional garbage bins until a thorough investigation of bear resistant options had been undertaken by the City and a scan of bear smart measures in other jurisdictions had been provided by WildWise. We asked City Council to designate one City employee to the Whitehorse Bear Working group and to make the group a committee of council to improve Council's timely access to information. City Council approved the garbage bin purchase and did not commit to further research or the Bear Working Group but did commit to having a bear focused CASM meeting within the six months following.

City of Whitehorse Local Food & Urban Agriculture Strategy

In process

This strategy is being developed to promote food security and economic benefits for the community. However, flocks, bees and gardens are major wildlife attractants. Careful consideration for wildlife needs to be addressed in the plan to ensure local food producers take responsibility for securing these attractants.

ACTION: We have been consulting with the City and reviewing parts of the plan as they are being developed to ensure provisions are included to reduce conflict. We recommend that all coop and apiary permit holders be required to use electric fencing to reduce conflict with bears and other wildlife. Our bear friendly flock program will help determine the public interest in mitigating the addition of attractants to the urban landscape in the Wilderness City.

*Do we want
our Wilderness
City to include
wildlife?*

City of Whitehorse Parks & Recreation Master Plan

Plan development in process. Review period scheduled for June 2018.

Parks, trails and recreation areas in and around Whitehorse are shared by humans and wildlife. The plan can help define our tolerance for interacting with wildlife and steps we take to reduce conflict.

ACTION: We attended the Parks & Rec “jam” in February to encourage the City of Whitehorse to keep wildlife in mind throughout the plan and to acknowledge the recommendations for reducing human-wildlife conflict detailed in the Whitehorse Bear Hazard Assessment which assessed risks to humans and bears in and around Whitehorse.

Grizzly Bear Conservation & Management Plan

Draft plan proposed to be available for review in June 2018

Grizzly bear conservation is becoming increasingly important as their habitat becomes more fragmented and their food resources harder to find. Conflict with humans increase when our activities expand into grizzly habitat. The plan can direct our efforts to protect grizzlies, in part by reducing conflict.



ACTION: We were invited to participate in a community group workshop in 2016 and submitted suggestions to draw on First Nations and Traditional Knowledge to direct the plan and provide the Yukon public with information about how to coexist with grizzlies. We also recommended that Yukon Government make clear its policy to not compensate farmers for damages caused by grizzlies and encourage farmers to take proactive measures to secure their bear attractants.

Yukon Tourism Development Strategy

Consultation phase closed. Plan development beginning spring/summer 2018.

Yukon Government actively promotes wildlife viewing and wilderness to increase the tourism economy. These activities have potential to lead to habituation and food conditioning of wildlife. Leveraging wildlife should be accompanied by a clear plan to mitigate potential conflict.

ACTION: We submitted written recommendations directly to the planning team. We recommend that Yukon Government draw on examples from communities such as Banff, Jasper and Whistler, which have a wealth of experience mitigating the negative effects of tourism on wildlife. We also recommended that training opportunities for tour operators be developed in partnership with government, non-government and tour operators to enhance their ability to reduce their impact and provide their clients with a quality experience and accurate information about Yukon wildlife.



RRCs

We are pleased to be building strong relationships with Renewable Resource Councils throughout the Yukon. In 2017 we met with the Dan Keyi, Carcross & Tagish, Dawson and Laberge RRCs and attended the RRC Annual General Meeting to discuss opportunities to work together in future. We believe that the RRCs are instrumental in connecting people with decision makers and in developing grassroots programs in communities. We are grateful for the insights that RRC members are able to provide as we develop our understanding of human-wildlife relationships in each community.

Parks Canada

Parks Canada is instrumental in promoting conservation of wildlife throughout parks in the Yukon. In 2017 we responded to concerns from many agencies, including PC about food conditioning of bears along the Skagway Road, adjacent to the Chilkoot Trail. The Skagway Road is a hot spot for bear viewing for visitors and locals and PC staff were worried that bears being fed along the road were then looking for treats on the Chilkoot Trail, necessitating closures and creating very unsafe conditions for both bears and human travellers in the area. Our collaboration with PC has developed into a good working relationship and interagency collaboration with Alaska's dynamic bear managers. Watch for more collaboration in 2018!

Tourism

Our tourism operator research resulted in a growing relationship with the Wilderness Tourism Association of Yukon, Yukon Tourism Education Council and the Skagway Interagency Bear Group, which offers education to Skagway-based tour operators.

Yukon College

We partner with Yukon College on many initiatives. We actively seek board participation from College staff and students. This year we worked with college students to:

- Develop and distribute a survey for bird watchers to gauge level of interest and opportunity to reduce availability of bird feed during bear season.
- Produce human-bear conflict maps of three Yukon communities using human-wildlife conflict data provided by Conservation Officer Services.
- Conduct research along the Skagway Road to help us understand the impacts of food conditioning and design future outreach initiatives for travellers and tour guides.



Website, Social Media and Radio

WildWise Yukon has a strong commitment to providing information and education to the public. We have established a media presence to help us with this task. We are followed through social media, on Facebook and our website, and in partnership with Environment Yukon, we release wildlife bulletins and event postings. We participated in several CBC radio interviews and were heavily pursued throughout the bear season for updates on our projects and comments on the high conflict year.



Our work this year focused primarily on reducing conflict with bears. We directed our efforts towards projects that combined opportunities to conduct research and develop education and outreach initiatives. The result is that we have a much greater understanding of what, where and why the problem exists and what our role is in reducing it.

This year's projects have set the path for our work in 2018. Our plans for this year include the following projects:

- Development of educational materials and resources for tour operators and their clients to reduce human-wildlife conflict;
- Community education and outreach, including collaboration with schools, RRCs and other agencies to deliver bear aware education and events;
- Development of a bear safe egg and apiary certification program;
- Development of road signs for Skagway Road, Southern Lakes and other key wildlife areas.

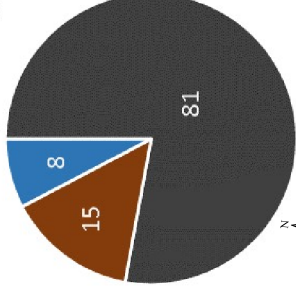
It takes teamwork!

2017 was a very productive year for WildWise. Support from the Yukon Fish & Wildlife Enhancement Trust Fund, the City of Whitehorse, Environment Yukon and the Riverdale Community Association made all of our activities possible and we would like to extend a hearty shout out to these groups for their dedication to reducing human-wildlife conflict.

Human Bear Conflict 2012-2017

Dawson City

Species Type



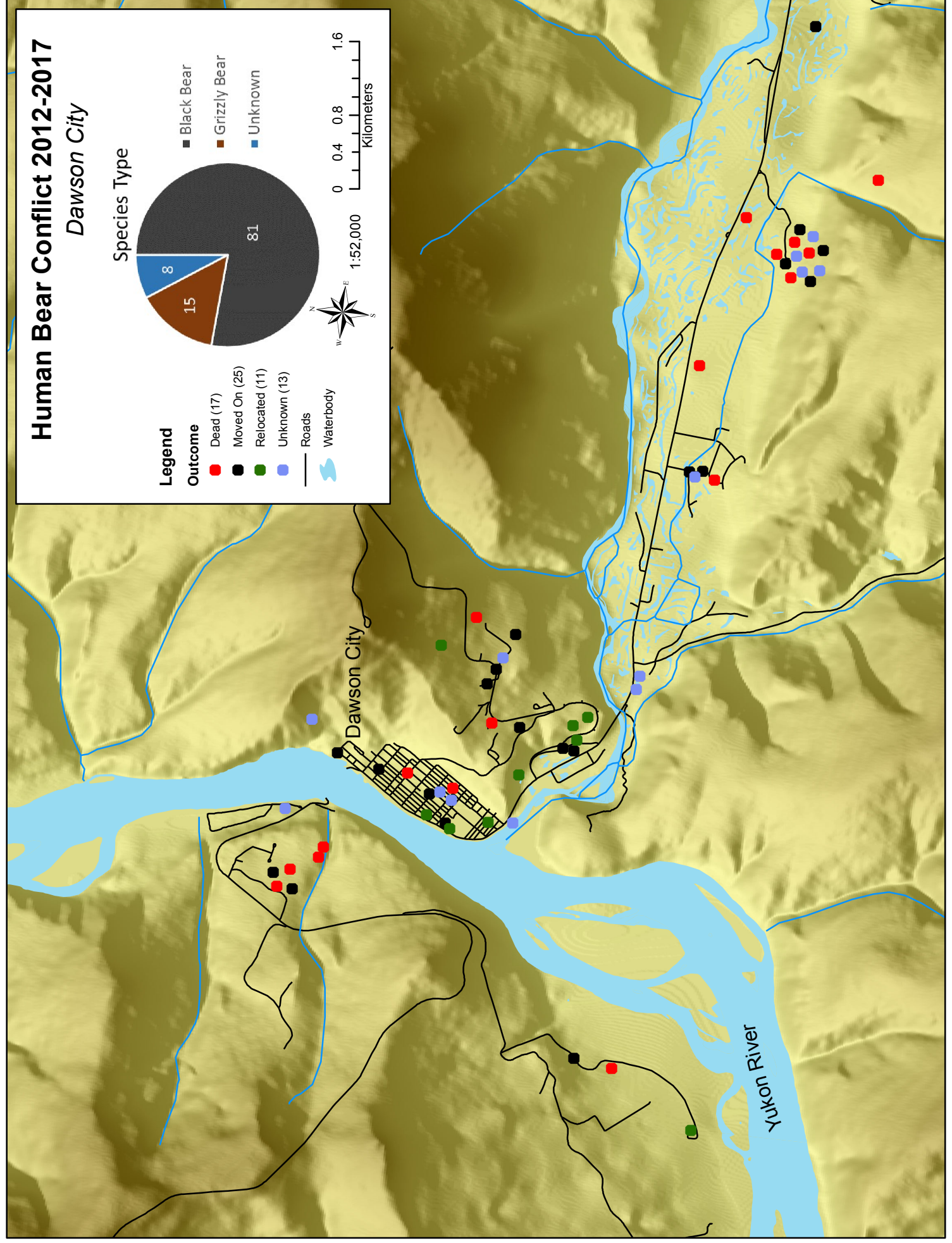
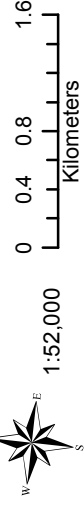
Legend

Outcome

- Dead (17)
- Moved On (25)
- Relocated (11)
- Unknown (13)

Roads

Waterbody





Wild Wise YUKON

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 *WildWise Yukon*