



**wild
wise**
YUKON

Progress Report

May 31, 2019



Centre for Human-Wildlife Conflict Solutions

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Hello Friends, Members and Supporters,

WildWise Yukon continues to find new ways to encourage Yukoners and visitors to reduce human-wildlife conflict. We are learning more about the what, where and why of the problem every year and responding by developing practical solutions through education, outreach and collaboration with the public, businesses, other non-government and government organizations. We are ever expanding what we do. You may notice this when you visit our website. What was once a simple site to navigate is becoming a matrix of resources and information. When you visit there, please don't forget to pay a visit to our news and events page. There is often something going on in the WildWise world and YOU are invited!

We have new initiatives to celebrate, such as our Bear Friendly Egg Producer Program, as well as much work ahead. Reducing conflict, particularly with bears, takes effort on all of our parts. Please have a look at the human-bear conflict map on our bear page. It clearly shows that, wherever people are, there is conflict with bears. Changing the way we do things is sometimes challenging. The good news is, there are simple things we can change that do make a difference. This is a shout out to all of the people we have seen carrying bear spray this spring. This is a noticeable shift in the way we are travelling through bear country. So, way to go Yukon people, for taking this one by storm!

Just as recycling is an important (yet the least effective) link in the reducing and reusing chain, carrying bear spray is wise but we can do more to reduce the chance of a close encounter around our communities. Consistent attractant management helps keep bears in areas where it is safe to be bears and humans safer in our neighborhoods. Garbage is still our biggest problem, so let's work together on making sure bears don't come looking for it.

Do you have an idea for a WildWise approach or program? We would love to hear from you. Please don't be shy to contact us by phone or email. In 2019 we will have increased capacity to respond to community requests as we will have a WildWise Education/Outreach Program Coordinator on board through the 'bear season'. They will be found at Visitor Information Centres, community events and markets. They will be demonstrating bear spray and electric fence set-up, talking about safe wildlife viewing practices and more.

We wish everyone a safe and enjoyable coexistence with wildlife in 2019.

Heather Ashthorn
Executive Director

Lindsay Caskenette
President

*Have your bearspray
on your body in case
you are separated
from your bike.*



Board of Directors:

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Scott Gilbert – Vice President
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The WildWise Board of Directors is a working board. In 2018, board membership hit an all-time record of 10 members! Board members formed three subcommittees: Communications & Translations, Education & Outreach, and a Consultation & Planning review committee. 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 live and work in the traditional territory of the Kwanlin Dun First Nation and the Ta'an Kwäch'än Council.



Garbage, compost and more garbage

Most human-bear conflicts happen when bears access garbage and compost on residential properties. Bears learn quickly and will seek food rewards from backyards if they have had a reward even once.

We continue our commitment to provide information to the City of Whitehorse and other municipalities about bear-resistant waste management options. In 2018 we staged a trial of four certified bear-resistant bins that are compatible with the City of Whitehorse's current waste hauler trucks. Most models are manufactured in the southern US and have not been tested in a cold climate. We are very pleased with Rehrig Pacific's performance. This product is designed specifically to deal with the problem at hand and has our stamp of approval!

Citizen action is needed!

Are you concerned about the non-bear-resistant bins currently supplied by your municipality and the potential for them to attract a bear to your property? Are you wondering why, with all of the information that WildWise has made available to them, your Mayor & Council has not decided to act and improve safety? Two great ways to voice your concerns and ideas are to speak up up at City Council meetings (Monday nights at 5:30 in Whitehorse) and to write to Mayor & Council with your concerns and ideas (mayorandcouncil@whitehorse.ca).



The numbers

Human-wildlife conflict is sometimes reported to Yukon Conservation Officers directly or through the TIPP (Turn in Poachers & Polluters) Line. Officers then respond to incidents and report on the nature of the incident and outcome. In 2017 and again in 2018, we worked with Environment Yukon to determine which calls fit the criteria for being conflict. We reviewed all of the conflict reports and put together a database with all the information given in them so that Conservation Officers can compare the numbers year to year; how many garbage incidents, how many translocations, etc. The initiative benefits WildWise by providing insight into the what, where, why and when of the problem, which helps us to determine what we should be working on. For example, we learned that in 2018, black and grizzly bears came into a record high degree of conflict related to bird feeders and chicken coops in and around Whitehorse. While the vast majority of bears are coming into conflict because of garbage mismanagement, these other attractants are posing a very real threat to both human and bear safety in our neighbourhoods. With this information in hand, we are better able to develop practical solutions to reduce incidents related to these attractants.

Please note: WildWise Yukon does not own or have permission to share any information related to this database. Inquiries about human-wildlife conflict statistics should be directed to Environment Yukon.

If you are involved in a conflict with wildlife, please call the TIPP LINE 1-800-661-0525



We are interested in your feedback and hope you will visit the map here: <http://wildwise.ca/bears>

Getting our message into planning processes

Human-bear conflict map

Mapping is a great way to find out how to get to our goals. One of our common misperceptions is that we don't have a problem if there is not a conflict in our own backyards. When we set out to map the human-bear conflicts reported to Conservation Officers we did not know where it would take us. What we have learned is that conflict is everywhere that people spend time and the problem is all of ours to fix.

This project is still in progress. This year, with financial support from the Community Development Fund, we have met with several Renewable Resource Councils to collect feedback and ideas about how to make our mapping project meaningful and useful. The tool can be used to look at distribution of conflicts on the landscape, seasonal trends, conflict themes (does one area have more of a problem with garbage and another with something else?) and outcomes. We have used information provided by C.O. Services from 2012-2017. So far, the Whitehorse, Haines Junction, Dawson, Old Crow and Mayo C.O. districts are represented on the map. We have included most of the common attractants; garbage, compost, chicken coops and bird feeders. We should also include human food (freezers, smokers, BBQs, fish racks etc.), wildlife-vehicle collisions and pets, which account for many more incidents every year. Some RRCs have suggested that we should include other species.

Public review engagements

Communities that have experienced some success reducing human caused conflict with wildlife have approached the issue through a concerted effort to coordinate inclusion of 'bear smart' steps in municipal and provincial planning processes. There are many opportunities that have surfaced in 2018 through the City of Whitehorse's and Yukon Government's consultations to remind decision makers about the need to include steps toward reducing conflict in all of our planning documents.

We focused a great deal of time and effort into submitting WildWise response and recommendations to several review processes this year including: City of Whitehorse Parks Master Plan, Bylaw Services, Zoning Bylaw and OCP reviews and Urban Food Planning Strategy, Conservation Plan for Grizzly Bears in Yukon, Government of Yukon Agriculture Policy review, Parks planning and Tourism Development Strategy. We brought recommendations from the Whitehorse Bear Hazard Assessment forward in each of these engagements and strongly encouraged alignment of messaging throughout all planning processes.

Electric fencing education

Electric fencing is emerging as a standard solution to securing a wide range of attractants on residential and agricultural properties. Each year we work with Yukon Government's Agriculture Branch (EMR) to host an electric fence technique workshop. This provides an opportunity for people planning a new agricultural pursuit, large or small, or wanting to secure an existing one, to learn about and practice electric fence set-up. It allows us to assure people that electric fencing will not harm children or pets and to help increase confidence in set up and routine maintenance. Our goal is to see bears and other wildlife excluded from all areas where livestock are being raised and witness the demise of livestock related human-wildlife conflict.



Learn about Electric Fencing Workshop

Keeping your chickens safe.

Visitor Info Centres

We were present at the Whitehorse Visitor Information Centre several times over the summer to demonstrate bear spray use and talk with drivers, paddlers and hikers about wildlife viewing. This helped us understand what visitors are interested in learning about wildlife, what information is out there and how we can help fill any gaps. In response, we developed three rack cards which we have translated into 6 languages. One addresses respectful roadside wildlife viewing tips, a second demonstrates bear spray use and the third details bear smart cabin tips. Look for these cards on our website, in rental vehicles, at VICs and call us if you have an idea for distribution.

Bird feeder info

We learned through compiling this year's conflict reports that bird feeders have become a major attractant, resulting in 14 separate conflicts with bears, involving 16 individual bears and 5 dead bears in 2018 alone. In response, we have developed a one-page flyer with tips for people who love to feed the birds. These tips offer practical advice based on the earliest and latest dates of conflict available and have been developed in collaboration with bird lovers and borrowing tips from other jurisdictions who are working on this problem in common. It can be found on the bear, bird and seasonal tips pages on our website.



Community Events

To find out more about B.C.'s Bear Smart Communities Program and Wildsafe BC, visit their website here: <https://wildsafebc.com/bear-smart/>

We hosted scavenger hunts and other activities for families at Marsh Lake and in Beaver Creek. Showing up at events is a great way for us to share information and find out what people are seeing and experiencing in their neighborhoods. In Beaver Creek, for example, we heard about roadside feeding of bears. Families are concerned that their community is no longer safe for free-roaming children. We developed a series of posters with kids in the school to inform people travelling through about the ongoing dangers associated with food conditioned bears.

In Whitehorse, we initiated and co-hosted an opportunity for government stakeholders to learn about Bear Smart Communities. Vanessa Isnardy from Wildsmart BC and Mike Badry from B.C.'s Conservation Officer Services spoke about B.C.'s Bear Smart Communities Program and the ongoing education and outreach that makes it work. We hope this was a solid step forward to getting as many decision makers on the same page about what needs to be done as possible.



Renewable Resource Councils

As the voice of wildlife management within Yukon communities, RRCs provide valuable insight into what happens on the land and in communities and which issues need to be addressed. We attended the RRC AGW in Teslin, consulted all RRCs on all of our funding proposals, gained letters of support from many of them for various projects and exchanged information with some about the multitude of review engagements that we participated in this year. We are pleased to have growing relationships with many Yukon RRCs and look forward to working further with those that are identifying ways to reduce human-wildlife conflict in their regions.

Yukon Wildlife Preserve

We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute to the YWP newsletter on a regular basis. The YWP often receives and rehabilitates wildlife that have come into conflict with people and dogs and we are developing a solid relationship with them through board involvement.

Parks Canada

We continue to appreciate our collaborative relationship with Parks Canada. In 2018 we shared information and messaging for safe wildlife viewing. Parks Canada supported our funding applications to hire a dedicated Education/ Outreach Program Coordinator and we plan to work with PC summer staff this year on a wildlife appreciation event and, perhaps, other initiatives to reduce conflict in the backcountry.



photo: Phil Timpany

Our goal is to educate visitors to Yukon about bear behaviour and the negative consequences associated with feeding wildlife.

Tourism

We believe that visitors to Yukon can become great advocates for wildlife conservation. Many come here to see wildlife; bears in particular. There are few accessible, dedicated bear viewing areas in Yukon, however, because roadsides offer rich feeding ground for bears it is likely that people travelling the roadways will encounter a bear. In 2017 we learned that the farther away people live from bear habitat the less they know about bears and we assume that this means, the less they know about safe travel in bear country. Bears can be easily habituated to humans, especially with repeated exposure and no negative consequences, which is often the case when people pull over to see bears on the side of the road. Unfortunately, one of the lingering effects of habituation may be that bears are no longer scared of humans and more apt to wander closer to where we live. Humans are less tolerant and tend to leave attractants lying around our properties, further encouraging close contact. Things don't go well for bears (and sometimes humans) when they come close to our homes. In 2018, many bears had to be killed by Conservation Officers or members of the public on residential properties to protect human safety.

We have a growing relationship with Skagway-based tour operators. We hosted an information exchange in the spring in Carcross, attended by a handful of tour bus operators, Parks Canada and Carcross/Tagish First Nation representatives. Discussion ensued about how CTFN can be involved with educating travellers about local perspectives on bears and other wildlife, giving tour operators an opportunity to enrich the services they provide their customers and reducing roadside feeding and habituation of bears. We have met with CTFN and plan to continue this collaboration in 2019.

Our work on the Skagway Road spurred discussion within Yukon Government's Tourism and Wildlife Viewing, about messaging for safe viewing practices. We met twice as a group to discuss how we can work together to reduce roadside feeding and viewing.

Yukon College

The work we do is backed by a growing body of research facilitated in partnership with Yukon College. We actively seek board participation from College staff and students. This year we engaged college students to:

- Produce a comprehensive map product for human-wildlife conflict data. This is one of our most prominent projects currently. We have funds from CDF to consult all communities about the map and hope to update it with all other community and 2018 data. RRCs and First Nation governments have provided valuable feedback that will guide the next steps.
- Develop a guide for bear friendly bird feeder tips.



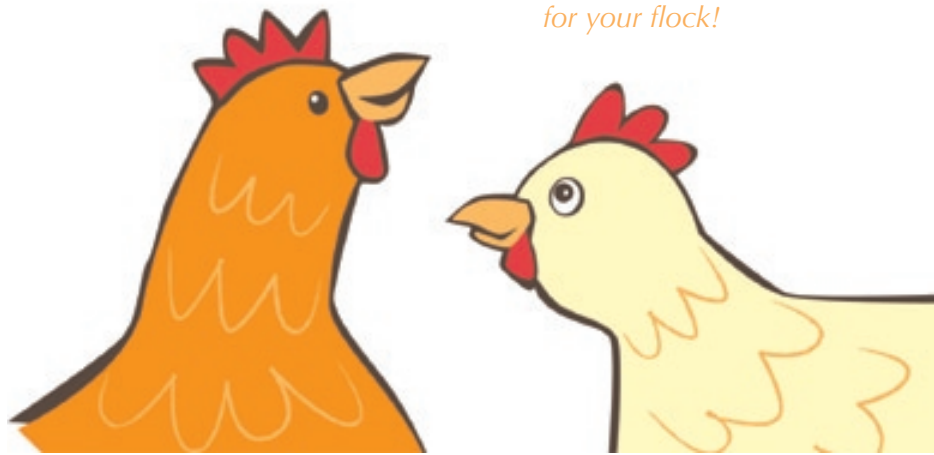
Protect your Chickens!

We have a new program this year. Are you a backyard chicken enthusiast? Are you a well established farmer raising egg layers? Do you eat eggs? Then this program is for you!

Urban agriculture is endorsed by Yukon Government and the City of Whitehorse. There are many benefits to growing our food close to home. In Whitehorse, residents are taking backyard chickens seriously and people in well established agricultural areas are telling us about more conflict with bears in places they have never had conflict. There are many variables that affect rates of conflict from year to year including the availability (or lack of) natural forage, breed success, weather, expansion of urban development and recreational activities in bear country and garbage management practices. Unfortunately, bee hives and chickens are highly attractive to bears and an easy target if they are not well secured.

Our Bear Friendly Egg Producer Pilot Program set out to find out what supports egg producers need in order to secure their flock from bears and bears from their flock. We are learning as we go and we hope to attract more egg producers to this program in 2019. Please visit our website here to read more about it: <http://wildwise.ca/bear-friendly-flock-program>

Get a free, on-site consultation
to help you plan a secure area
for your flock!



How do we stay afloat?

We have a number of generous financial contributors. A yearly contribution from Yukon Government covers many of our operational costs. Program and project funds are found in many other places. In 2018 we received funds from the City of Whitehorse, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Fund, the Yukon Fish & Wildlife Enhancement Trust Fund and from the Community Development Fund. These contributions enable us to address the problem in many ways.

<i>Fund/Grant</i>	<i>Amount requested</i>	<i>Projects included</i>	<i>Amount Approved</i>
Yukon Government	\$40,000	YG funds are used to cover contract fees and operational costs.	\$35,000
City of Whitehorse Envirogrant	\$12,850	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Picnic table, campground attractant management signs for Robert Service Campground• Neighborhood signage to inform residents about bear activity and attractant management• Bear Smart Business program development	\$2000
Yellowstone to Yukon	\$5000	Education & Outreach in Yukon communities	\$4000
Yukon Fish & Wildlife Enhancement Trust Fund	\$14,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bear friendly egg producer pilot program• Education & Outreach in Yukon communities	\$7,800
EMR	\$1000	Coordination of electric fencing workshop	\$1000
Community Development Fund	\$19,460	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Information sharing with tourists• Human-bear conflict mapping project	\$19,460
Total funds received in 2018 <i>* Please note, CDF funding continues into 2019.</i>			\$69,260

Additionally, we would like to thank those who purchased memberships, bought locks for their garbage bins and/or made a donation to WildWise this year. Your contributions are greatly appreciated and work towards making our communities safer for humans and bears.



We are learning and growing every year.

In 2018 we made significant progress with developing connection and partnership with many governments, councils and other NGOs. We made a focused effort to submit a consistent WildWise response to every public review and engagement that had a place for addressing human-wildlife conflict. We were successful in securing funds every time we sought them and so were able to take on projects that greatly increase our presence and understanding of what to do next.

Our plans for 2019 will focus for the most part on outreach and education and will include the following efforts:

- Early season door to door wildlife attractant reminders;
- Community event planning in collaboration with First Nations, government departments and NGOs;
- Promoting use of bear friendly bird feeders, electric fencing and increased participation in the bear friendly egg producer program;
- Collaboration with tour operators and VIC staff to align messaging about wildlife viewing.
- Continuing conversation with public and governments about Bear Smart communities;
- Continued advocacy for adoption of bear resistant waste management practices within Yukon municipalities.



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