

# **WildWise Yukon 2019 Door-to-Door Outreach: Mount Sima Subdivision**

## **Project Summary and Results**

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## Summary

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In July and early August, WildWise Yukon conducted door-to-door outreach in the Mount Sima neighbourhood. The goal of this outreach was to educate residents about wildlife attractants, and to conduct a survey to collect data about wildlife attractants including bird feeders, chicken coops, garbage and compost. The survey was created in collaboration with Environment Yukon and the City of Whitehorse, and results will be shared between organizations. Mount Sima was chosen in collaboration with Conservation Officers as 2018 was a particularly high conflict season in Mount Sima, and the neighbourhood was identified as having had high numbers of bear sightings this year.

WildWise Yukon Education and Outreach Coordinators and Environment Yukon Conservation Officers visited approximately 102 homes in the subdivision. We received 51 responses to the survey, as not all residents were home at the time of surveying between 4 and 7pm on weekday evenings. Two residents were not interested in doing the survey. The main takeaway points from the survey are:

- 58.8% (n=51) of residents do not have bird feeders.
- 52.4% (n=21) of people with bird feeders do not feed birds in the summer, and 90.5% (n=21) said that they would be willing to put feeders away during the summer.
- Only 4 homes had chicken coops. 3 of these homes had working electric fences, while the fourth coop was currently vacant and the owner said they would consider installing an electric fence if they got more chickens.
- 27.5% (n=51) of residents composted on the property. All of these residents removed items such as meat and dairy from the compost to reduce wildlife attractants.
- 54.9% (n=51) of residents haul garbage to the Landfill, 25.5% use dumpsters provided by local waste haulers on contract, and 19.8% haul their garbage to a dumpster at their workplace.
- 65.1% (n=51) of residents said that they keep garbage in the garage or the house until they haul it to the Landfill, while 25.6% of residents store garbage in dumpsters or plastic/metal garbage cans outside. Only one of four dumpsters had a metal locking lid.
- 68.6% (n=51) of residents said they would invest in a certified bear resistant enclosure for garbage. There was interest in a central facility, city pickup, incentives for building personal enclosures, and in paying for a bear resistant lid for existing dumpsters. Many of those who were not willing to invest already store garbage in the garage or house and so do not think they need an enclosure.
- The main motivator for behaviour change around storing attractants was concern for bear and human safety. Seven residents had had bear incidents with their garbage and had improved their attractant management, while four said that nothing would motivate them to store attractants differently.

## 1.0 Introduction

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For the summer of 2019, WildWise Yukon focussed door-to-door outreach on the Mount Sima neighbourhood. We conducted a survey to help us understand how residents are managing wildlife attractants on 51 properties over the course of 8 sessions. The goal of this survey was to educate residents about lesser-known bear attractants, such as bird feeders, and to collect data about how residents in an area used frequently by bears are managing attractants. This data will be sent to WildWise Yukon, Environment Yukon, and City of Whitehorse, as each organization contributed questions to the survey.

## 2.0 Methods

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This year, the door-to-door project took place in the Mount Sima subdivision, which Conservation Officers had indicated as an area with high bear activity in the spring of 2019, and which records indicated as an area with a high number of Human-Bear Conflicts in 2018. All residential areas of the subdivision were visited during 8 evening sessions of door-to-door work during July and early August. Where residents were not home, we left a project explanation, a property checklist and contact information, and we made note of obvious attractants, such as dumpsters, bird feeders and other attractants.



*Figure 1. Map of the Whitehorse Copper subdivision. We visited the residential areas of the Mount Sima neighbourhood, on the west side of the Alaska Highway.*

This was a voluntary survey that was developed in collaboration with Conservation Officer Services, and the City of Whitehorse. It focussed on bird feeders, chicken coops and electric fencing, garbage and compost disposal, and behavioural motivators for attractant storage.

Surveys were conducted by WildWise Yukon Education and Outreach Coordinators, with several sessions conducted in partnership with Yukon Conservation Officers.

A link to the survey can be found at:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSefEccWU\\_BPeuLQQoaSyuacNkYYbTJbjZv0KbQ1FubMj-SbwQ/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSefEccWU_BPeuLQQoaSyuacNkYYbTJbjZv0KbQ1FubMj-SbwQ/viewform?usp=sf_link).

## **3.0 Results and Discussion**

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Throughout the course of 8 evening sessions, we were able to visit approximately 102 homes. Of these, we collected 51 survey responses from people who were at home. Two people declined to do the survey.

### **3.1 Bird Feeders**

41.2% (n=51) of homes surveyed had a bird feeder on their property. Of these, 52.4% (n=21) did not feed birds in the summer, and one home had had a bear access the bird feeder (this was not reported to CO services).

90.5% (n=21) of homes with bird feeders said that they would consider putting the feeder away from early April to late October to reduce conflict with bears. 2 respondents said that they would not stop summer bird feeding because they didn't find it necessary, and because the feeder keeps the birds away from berries in the garden.

### **3.2 Chicken coops and electric fencing**

Four homes, or 7.8% (n=51) of respondents, had a chicken coop on the property. 88.2% (n=51) did not have one and were not planning on setting one up. This was mainly due to the effort required to set up and maintain a coop, and concerns about bears and other wildlife getting into the coops, as many bears have been spotted in the area.

Of the residents with coops, 75% (n=4) had a working electric fence and reported that costs ranged from \$500 for a small coop, to \$1000 for a fence around the property. Fences were on at all times when chickens were in the coops. There were no maintenance problems reported, and no bears had breached these fences. Owners tested the charger daily (one fence had a constant voltage reading displayed), weekly, or once a summer.

The one coop without an electric fence did not currently have chickens. Two respondents did not have a chicken coop but were considering setting one up, and said that they would both also consider setting up an electric fence around the coop.

### 3.3 Compost and garbage

Only 27.5% (n=51) of respondents managed organic waste by composting on the property. Of these, 100% said that they only put vegetable matter in the compost, and remove items such as meat and dairy to reduce wildlife attractant risk.

54.9% (n=51) of respondents in Sima self-haul their garbage to the Whitehorse Landfill. 25.5% (n=51) have contract hauling services with a dumpster on their lot, or a shared dumpster on another neighbourhood lot, and 19.8% (n=51) of respondents use a dumpster at work.

43.1% (n=51) of respondents said that they store their garbage in the garage until they removed it from their property. 22% said that they keep garbage in the house until they take it to the landfill or a work dumpster – these respondents said they take garbage bags from the house as soon as they were full, and 10 have work dumpsters. 13.8% of respondents store their garbage in a dumpster provided by local waste haulers on contract - only one of which had a metal, locking lid, and another of which was inside another fenced enclosure. 11.8% of respondents keep garbage outside in metal/plastic garbage cans, while 8% keep garbage in wooden or plastic enclosures.

#### Dumpster Observations

Most dumpsters had plastic lids and many were non-locking. Three people had asked about bear-resistant lids for their dumpsters – **one respondent said that they were on a 200-person waiting list for a lid.** Only one respondent had a metal, locking lid, and they had connections to the contracting company. Many people were prepared to pay more for dumpsters with bear resistant lids.

On properties where residents were not home, the most common attractants observed were dumpsters, garbage cans and fuel. One property had multiple outdoor fridges that were not secured with locks.

### **3.4 Investing in bear resistant enclosures for garbage**

68.6% (n=51) of respondents in Sima said that they would consider investing in a certified bear-resistant enclosure for garbage. Of the 31.4% who said they would not invest in a bear-resistant enclosure, 81.3% (n=16) said they did not think it is not needed or would not make a difference, as these respondents kept garbage in their garage or house already and were not using a dumpster.

12.5% (n=16) said that they did not want to pay money for an enclosure. Reasons given were that they already had a system and/or felt that they currently pay too many taxes without waste disposal services.

Comments from those who said they would consider paying more, included feedback on what types of system they would invest in. Suggestions included rebates or funding for bear-proof enclosures, a neighbourhood garbage enclosure, and city waste hauling of bear resistant bins.

### **3.5 Behaviour change around attractant storage**

Only 3 homes remembered doing a previous attractant audit, and 2 of these had done the audit with CO's when they had a bear incident.

58.8% (n=51) of respondents had not changed the way that they stored attractants on the property since moving in. 13 of these responses were from people who already stored garbage in their garage or house, and knew a lot about wildlife attractants. Four responses were from people who had had bear incidents with garbage and other attractants, but were not intending to change their behaviour. One respondent stated they were in support of trapping and moving or shooting bears, not in managing attractants.

41.2% of respondents had changed the way that they store attractants. 18 of these behaviour changes were motivated by high bear traffic in the area and neighborhood reporting of human-bear conflict on social media and by word of mouth. Two people had added chickens or bees to their properties in the last three years and had put up electric fences to secure the coops and hives. Seven respondents indicated that they had had bears get into dumpsters and garbage enclosures in the past several years, and this had motivated them to change the way that they store attractants

## **4.0 Suggestions and possible next steps**

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The optimal time to find residents at home during this door-to-door survey was between 4 and 6:30pm. A second recommendation for carrying out future door-to-door is to have two representatives scheduled to carry out door to door. For safety reasons, two people should work together to conduct surveys. It was difficult to collaborate during the busy summer season and to find a second person to conduct outreach with. More sessions and more neighbourhoods could be covered in the same amount of time if a second person was available to conduct the surveys. I recommend having two dedicated people on board to do the outreach from the beginning.

Many people that we talked to were very motivated by bear and human safety, and were knowledgeable about storing wildlife attractants. Most of the properties that we visited had minimal attractants outside. One suggestion around chicken coops and electric fencing is to supply information on proper maintenance of these fences, as one respondent to the survey was only testing the fence once a month.

Neighborhoods which are more established may have a more ingrained pattern of attractant mismanagement. We suggest that future education and outreach efforts around attractant management might be directed at older neighbourhoods and those with a recent history of conflict.

Grizzly Valley is an expanding subdivision in an area that is surrounded by agricultural activity including a high density of small livestock operations. There are many properties in various stages of development and the subdivision has been hard hit by bears this summer already. Based on evidence that recent conflict with bears encouraged residents in Mt. Sima to clean up their properties, we think this might be a good time to help residents in Grizzly Valley plan for good attractant management. We recommend focusing on this area for the next door-to-door effort.