



Progress Report

June, 2020



The WildWise Board is a working board. In 2019, 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 are always seeking board members who bring relevant experience and enthusiasm for involvement with WildWise programs.

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

Board of Directors:

Lindsay Caskenette – President
Scott Gilbert – Vice President
Babette Mueller – Secretary/ Treasurer
Pam Brown – Director
Rohit Kasbekar – Director
Emilie Dory – Director

Hello Friends, Members and Supporters,

2019 was a productive year for WildWise Yukon. We called out for support from several funders and received the support we needed to hire education and outreach specialists through the spring, summer and fall. We stepped up our presence in Visitor Information Centres, focusing on reducing conflict by promoting safe travel and respectful wildlife viewing in bear country. We worked with Environment Yukon and the City of Whitehorse to develop new terms of reference for a bear working group, which will include managers from all local governments and provide a means to develop collaborative approaches and communicate effectively with each other. We took on a leadership role in organizing the next International Human-Bear Conflict Workshop, which will happen in Tahoe, Nevada in 2021. These are just a few of the new business items that have made our board agendas this year.

This progress report focuses on our research and outreach activities. In the background we are always working away on building partnerships, responding to inquiries and providing input to planning processes. The bulk of our permanent staff time is spent organizing funding and programs and reporting to funders and the public.

2020 promises to be an equally interesting year. Although we had a busy summer of Visitor Info Centre and campground outreach sessions lined up, COVID 19 has forced us to reimagine the means by which we communicate our message. While we still hope to get around to the campgrounds and offer bear spray training and information about bear behavior, much of our outreach programming is on hold or being reinvented. Watch our FaceBook page in the coming months for tips, reminders, videos and more. And if you have a story you would like to share about living in bear country, please be in touch. We can all work together to make the territory safer for bears and people together.

We wish everyone a safe and enjoyable coexistence with wildlife in 2020.

Heather Ashthorn
Executive Director

Lindsay Caskenette
President





Door to Door

Talking with people one on one is one of our best tools to finding out what is working and what is not. Our summer education and outreach team visited residents in Mt. Sima and Grizzly Valley this year. These are both areas where residents have come into conflict with bears in the recent past.

We visited Mt. Sima in 2017, so this round was a follow up to see what has changed and to interact with new residents. The team went with a survey in hand, which asked questions about attractant management. **We want to give a shout out to Mt. Sima for cleaning up your act!** The outreach team found fewer attractants this round than we did in 2017. Thanks for making your neighbourhood a safer place for your families, neighbours and for bears!

Bear Friendly Bin Testing

We continue on our quest to find a worthy bear resistant bin for the City of Whitehorse. Our favorite, so far, is manufactured by Rehrig Pacific. Watch the bin being challenged by a large grizzly here: <https://www.rehrigpacific.com/rehrig-bear-resistant-roll-out-cart/>

In 2019 we presented three times to City Council to remind them of the importance of phasing bear resistant bins in as new developments are opened and old bins wear out. We know many Whitehorse residents are interested in having a bear resistant bin because we continue to receive your calls. Mayor and Council also need to hear your voice. Please write to them and let them know you want the City to provide bear resistant bins, or show up to a City Council meeting and tell them in person.



Meetings are on Monday nights at 5:30 in Whitehorse and you can email Mayor & Council with your concerns and ideas at mayorandcouncil@whitehorse.ca.

Minutes and agendas for council meetings can be found here: <https://www.whitehorse.ca/departments/legislative-and-administrative-services/council-meetings>

Testing a Rehrig Roll-out bin



Electric Fencing Education

Great news!: Electric fencing seems to be gaining in popularity among people raising chickens and other small livestock. In 2019 we co-hosted another electric fence technique workshop, this time at the research forest just north of Whitehorse. We are grateful for our partnership with the Agriculture Branch on this initiative and will be re-working the concept in 2020 to provide more direct support to small and large scale farmers to get a fence up. Please contact us for more information.

Visitor Info Centres

Visitor Information Centres are a hub of activity in the summer. People come from far and wide. Even locals show up! In 2019, our education/outreach team gave presentations about safe travel and respectful wildlife viewing in bear country. They educated hundreds of people about using bear spray, using inert spray for demonstrations. This is proving to be one of our most valuable activities and we look forward to expanding the program in the coming seasons.



Letting people get a feel for bear spray without an actual bear breathing down their neck.

Bear Hack

In April we hosted a hackathon at Yukonstruct. 30 participants divided into groups to come up with solutions to attractant management problems, including making the City's current waste carts bear resistant. One of the results of the hackathon is a collaboration with the University of Alberta's mechanical engineering program. One of the participants submitted a challenge for students to design a self-locking latch compatible with the trucks currently in use by the City of Whitehorse. Two groups have taken on the challenge and have developed a latch that will be tested by WildSafe BC. A successful product will have to pass their bin testing certification program. A summary of the hackathon event can be found here: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56a7bfd942f5526d03005cb6/t/5cdddbc165077e00019df788/1558043589929/WildWise+hackathon+summary.pdf>



*Philippe LeBlond
participated in our
bear resistant waste
cart Hackathon*

Bird Feeder Info

Bears love bird seed! Bird feeders continue to show up in conflict reports filed by Conservation Officers and probably represent more of an attractant than what is reported. Seeds are packed with calories and are low hanging fruit for a bear and cubs.

We have been working on providing information about how to manage bird feeders in a bear friendly way. Please visit our bear page for more info: <http://wildwise.ca/bears>

Community Events

Our summer outreach team hosted events in several Yukon communities, mainly focused on educating kids about attractant management. They further developed our outreach tools to make future school visits more efficient and relevant.

If you would like us to attend an event in your community, please give us a call or send us an email. We will appreciate the invitation and do our best to show up.

City of Whitehorse Attractant Management Flyer

The City's Waste & Water Services contracted WildWise to develop content and design for a one-page flyer addressing residential attractant management to reduce human-wildlife conflict. They distributed the flyer to all Whitehorse area residents. It can be found on our website here: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56a7bfd942f5526d03005cb6/t/5e237884f8b9515a7685cfb3/1579382918145/City+of+Whitehorse+bear+facts+flyer.pdf>

Ibex Valley Resident Info Session

Ibex Valley residents requested a presentation by WildWise about compost management. They report more bear activity, primarily on agricultural properties in the area in the past few years and wanted to explore the idea of including composting facilities at their local landfills. The result was a co-authored letter to YT's Community Services, which was well received, with the assurance that the department is interested in developing a plan for rural, bear resistant composting.

Bear Spray Training And Back Country Camping

We were invited to give a bear safety talk to women at a Coast Mountain Sports event, sponsored by Arcteryx. The event went well, was attended by around 100 women and covered the use of non-lethal deterrents (bear spray) and bear aware travel tips for the backcountry. We had designed a backcountry travel flyer in anticipation of the event and Coast Mountain continued to distribute it across the counter throughout the season. It can be found here: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56a7bfd942f5526d03005cb6/t/5e237a7d73d1bc4c301ecf56/1579383451762/bear-wise+back+country+camping+tips+%281%29.pdf>

Bear Shepherding Talks

We are often asked about Kerelian bear dogs and aversive conditioning. Aversive conditioning is a means of pushing bears away from residential or other areas where they are likely to come into conflict with humans. Trained Kerelian bear dogs are used by professionals to find and deter bears and have been used in the past around Whitehorse. This year, we invited Nils Pedersen to attend the Fireweed Market with two of his KBDs and to talk with people about what the dogs can (and can't) do. We encourage anyone who is interested in learning more to visit Wind River Bear Institute's website here: <http://beardogs.org/>

Critter Proof Composter

We are always trying to find ways to showcase solutions for each major wildlife attractant. In August we built a bear proof composter at Cliffside Greenhouse on the Alaska Highway. We posted the event on FaceBook as an opportunity for people to drop by and help out, ask questions and investigate. The composter will live at the greenhouse and be in use for their greenhouse refuse. Drop by anytime to check it out!





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. These contributions enable us to address the problem in many ways.

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.

<i>Fund/Grant</i>	<i>Amount requested</i>	<i>Projects included</i>	<i>Amount Approved</i>
Yukon Government	\$44,500	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contract fees & operational costs • Electric Fence Support Program 	\$44,500
Stay Another Day Program (YG Dept of Tourism & Culture)	\$5,000	Travel costs for education/outreach coordinators & rack card printing	\$5,000
Tourism & Culture's Product Partnership Development Program	\$9,771	Development and delivery of visitor centre outreach materials and presentations	\$9,771
EMR	\$1,000	Coordination of electric fencing workshop	\$1,000
Environmental Awareness Fund (Dept of Env.)	\$15,750	Summer education/outreach program	\$15,700
Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative	\$3,000	Updates for human-bear conflict map	\$2,000
City of Whitehorse, Waste & Water Services	\$6,028	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content & design work for city wide attractant management tips flyer • City of Whitehorse attractant management outreach activities 	\$4,000
Yukon Fish & Wildlife Enhancement Trust Fund	\$13,250	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer education/outreach programs • Human-bear conflict map 	\$13,000
Community Development Fund	\$3,225	Translation of outreach materials into six languages and production of materials.	\$3,225
Total funds received in 2019			\$98,196



Changing Our Local Culture

2019 was a busy and successful year for WildWise. Each year we take on new challenges, build stronger ties with our partner organizations and reach more people. This was especially true through the addition of two education and outreach coordinators to our team from June through September. We hired the right people for the job, which enabled greater efficiency in our administrative responsibilities and expanded our scope and reach. We are confident that hiring seasonal outreach/education specialists is a good model for WildWise moving forward.

Our greatest success this year comes through our work with the Department of Tourism & Culture. This is the result of many years of noise-making about the impacts of roadside bear viewing, including habituation and food conditioning. We are now working with the department to mitigate some of that risk through our outreach programs. We look forward to meeting some of the challenges this will continue to bring.

Looking forward, there is still much work to be done to change our local culture to one of coexistence. In 2020 we will do more of what has been well received so far and add a couple of new approaches, including:

- Increased presence in Visitor Info Centres May-September;
- Continued door to door work in Grizzly Valley;
- Community event planning in collaboration with First Nations, government departments and NGOs;
- Promoting use of bear friendly bird feeders, electric fencing and use of bear spray in all seasons;
- Continued collaboration with tour operators and VIC staff to align messaging about wildlife viewing;
- Continued advocacy for adoption of bear resistant waste management practices

Protect Yukon's Bears

- **Use the bear resistant garbage bins.**
Ensure the lid is closed properly.
- **Bin full? Take your garbage to the next one.**



Pssst Yukoners!

Do not use highway pullout bins or the areas beside for residential waste.

- Bears can die from eating garbage.
- Bears with a garbage habit end up getting killed to protect the public.
- Bears can smell garbage from a long way off and will come out of the wilderness to find it.



Littering is illegal.

Yukon

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wise**
YUKON



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**Centre for Human-Wildlife
Conflict Solutions**

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 *WildWise Yukon*