

# Wildlife Management Update

## Bow-Crow Wildlife District Newsletter

This Newsletter will provide updates on wildlife trends in the Bow-Crow district including population trends, harvest allocation, projects and ongoing issues.

### Background

The Bow-Crow District extends along the eastern slopes of the Rocky Mountains, from US border in the southwest, north to the Red Deer River/Hwy 27 boundary, and east to Hwy 2; also including an area to Drumheller (WMU 156). The district consists of alpine, and montane environments, transitioning to the Foothills, before giving way to the agricultural communities of the prairies.

Generally speaking, wildlife populations remain viable throughout this district, and there is an abundance of wildlife opportunities. This is especially true along the foothills (300 series units),

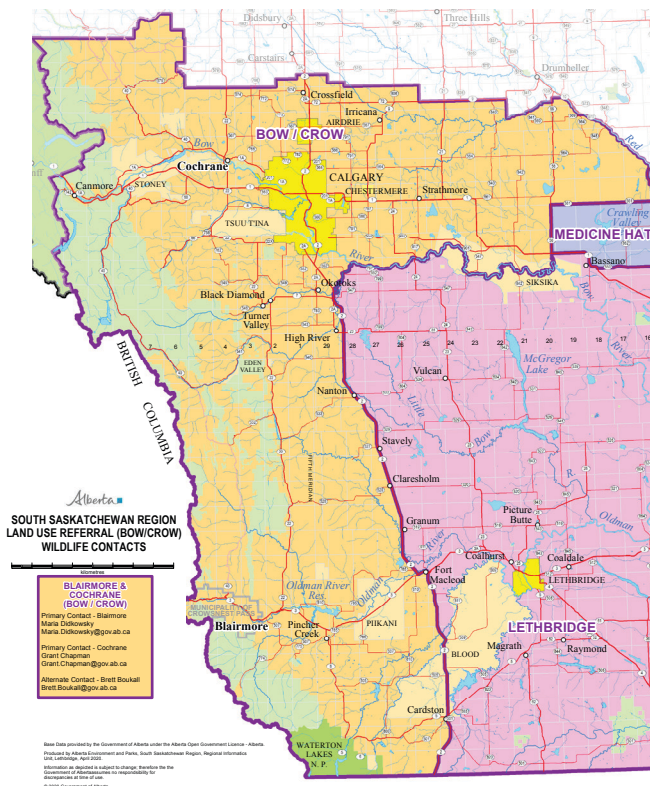
where populations of elk, moose and deer are all stable to increasing. Predator numbers are also stable to increasing, with observations of cougars, and grizzly bear occurring further east from the foothills and mountains. This said, there are uncertainties in the mountain units (400 series), with lower population status due to a combination of poorer habitat, and higher predators.

### Aerial Survey Results

In 2020, aerial Surveys (AUS) were flown in WMU 156 (for all species), WMU 212 elk survey, and a Porcupine Hills elk survey. Since 2015, surveys have occurred in almost every WMU in the district, with sheep surveys flown in 2018, surveys for deer flown in WMU 132 in 2019, and all species surveys in 214, 314, 316 in 2019.

The WMU 156 survey was flown on January 13-16, 2020 and we determined there is an estimated 2600 MUDE, with 2300 WTDE and 100 moose estimated. This aligns with previous estimates for mule deer and moose, but showed a large increase in white-tailed deer.

During the WMU 212 elk survey, flown January 17, the southwest corner of the WMU was surveyed along with portions of 312 that border WMU 212. A total of 754 elk were observed in WMU 212/312 (521 in 212, 233 in 312), which was a slight decrease from previous surveys (2013).



Elk observed during Porcupine elk survey

The Porcupine elk survey was flown March 9 and 10<sup>th</sup> and covered elk habitat in WMUs 304, 305, 306, 308, and 310. A total of 3126 elk were observed in Porcupine Hills, similar numbers to 2015 survey, but with more elk seen in 304.

**Table 1:** Ungulate Observations of Porcupine Elk survey

WMU	Total Elk	Deer Obs	Moose Obs
304	1541	601	121
305	298	108	2
306	358	29	3
308	687	65	18
310	512	156	41

All survey reports should be posted here <https://www.alberta.ca/aerial-wildlife-survey-reports.aspx>

## Game Trends & Allocation

### Moose

Population appears to be stable or growing where habitat is available, and will maintain or slightly increase opportunity for moose across most WMUs

### Elk

Populations increase along Foothills, but declines in mountain units. Maintain or lightly increase cow tags in 300's but decrease cow tags in 400 units.

### Deer: Whitetail & Mule

Both WT and Mule are above goal in most WMUs, but we have concerns about lower availability of antlered mule deer from user groups. Will look to maintain similar levels of harvest in 2020, however, will decrease antlered MUDE tags in WMUs with observed decreased harvest quota success

### Sheep

Population appears to be stable, continue to watch for disease.



### Disease:

**CWD Update:** CWD has been steadily increasing moving west. This is a fatal viral disease in deer, and more prevalent in mule deer bucks. 9 more detections in 132, and 8 more in 156. Two (2) deer tested positive for CWD in WMU 212, one within the City and west of Calgary. This is the furthest west CWD has been found in Alberta. More info on management strategies will be forthcoming.

**Other disease:** Other diseases and parasites, appear to be within normal range of variation. *Enterococcus* has been present in wild canids (coyotes, foxes) for over 20 years. As coyotes and domestic dogs interact more frequently (primarily in urban environments) there is an increase in detections amongst domestic dogs. Keep separation b/w coyotes and dogs, if dog has been in contact with live or dead coyotes consider vet.



## Carnivore trends:

Coyotes, cougars, black bears, grizzly bears and wolves appear to be stable to slightly increasing across much of range. For wolves, cougars, black bears and coyotes, liberal management with hunting and trapping. We recommend Best Management Practices to limit conflict (ie reduce attractants), as well as provide support for BearSmart groups and the Waterton Biosphere to assist with reducing conflict.

When issues arise, Compensation may be available for livestock loss:

<https://www.alberta.ca/wildlife-predator-compensation-program.aspx>

Cougar quotas were reduced provincially at request of Cougar outfitters to achieve older age structure. The reduction was a minimal 1-2 tags per Cougar area.



Grizzly bears are stable to increasing with more observations further east. Currently Grizzly bears are listed as *Threatened*, and AEP staff are working to reduce conflict.

## For more info:

<https://www.watertonbiosphere.com/projects/carnivores-communities/>

<https://www.alberta.ca/reduce-human-bear-conflict.aspx>

<https://www.alberta.ca/preventing-wildlife-damage.aspx>

<https://open.alberta.ca/publications/predator-compensation-south-saskatchewan-region>

## Final Thoughts:

Many species of wildlife are abundant and stable in the majority of the Bow-Crow district. AEP wildlife staff in the Bow-Crow are working hard to manage these wildlife for the benefit, and opportunity of Albertans.

If you have any questions, please contact one of the Biologists below:

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