



British Columbia Conservation Foundation

INVERMERE AND RADIUM HOT SPRINGS



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WildSafeBC Final Report

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Executive Summary

During the 2014 season, WildSafeBC continued to build upon the successful implementation of the program last year in Invermere and Radium Hot Springs. The program was delivered this season by community coordinator Kara Haugseth.

Spring and summer proved to be a very slow year for wildlife activity in the Columbia valley, with deer creating the most conflict (most significantly in Invermere). Encouraged to keep this low level of conflict into the fall season, education focused on how to stay safe around urban deer, as well as how to properly manage attractants during bear season.

Bear activity in both Radium and Invermere picked up earlier than in previous years, with garbage and fruit trees being the primary attractants. Although there have been many bear sightings this year, it is clear WildSafeBC's primary message of keeping wildlife wild and communities safe has been taken to heart by residents of the valley as there have been minimal aggressive encounters with any type of wildlife.

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Highlights

Presentations

Presentations were delivered this year that targeted many different interest groups and age ranges. All presentations were designed to focus on prevention of wildlife conflict through attractant management, safety when travelling in the outdoors, and building an understanding and respect for the species that share our environment. All presentations were very well-received, especially those that were presented to a school-aged audience. Some of this year's presentations included:

- Panorama Mountain Village staff training
- Edgewater Elementary School
- Eileen Madson Primary School
- J Alfred Liard Elementary School
- Invermere Public Library
- Windermere Valley Childcare Society
- Radium Hot Springs Headbanger Festival



FIGURE 1: WILDLIFE SKULLS AND SCAT PURCHASED BY THE PROGRAM LAST YEAR HELPED TO ENHANCE PRESENTATIONS

Events

During the slower summer season, setting up booths at public events was a priority for WildSafeBC in Invermere and Radium Hot Springs. As both towns are very tourist-oriented, setting up at farmers markets, festivals, and town events proved to be an excellent way to reach both the visiting and resident populations. The booth allowed for people to get a comprehensive and hands-on look at many of the species that are found in the valley, as well as valuable information on how to manage attractants to keep wildlife wild and the community safe. These booths also allowed for awareness to be spread of WildSafeBC programs, as well as our Facebook page, printed educational materials, and the WARP system. Each event resulted in approximately 200 people attending! Events attended included:

- Radium Market on Main
- Invermere Farmer's Market
- Invermere Thursday Evening Market
- Radium Show & Shine
- Salmon Festival
- Visitor Appreciation Day
- Lake Windermere Ambassadors' Summer Splash



FIGURE 2: EDUCATING THE PUBLIC AT THE SALMON FESTIVAL

Door-to-Door

There were two primary focuses of door-to-door education this year. The first was in regards to urban deer in Invermere. During springtime, there were many aggressive deer that were trying to protect their fawns. Messaging involved giving deer their space, and making urban areas unattractive to deer. The second focus of door-to-door this year was awareness of bear and cougar activity within town limits. Door-to-door sessions in both Invermere and Radium were focused on public safety and attractant management when there was a sighting close to a particular neighborhood. Brochures were given out, and awareness was spread of the WARP system and RAPP line.

Garbage checks

Garbage checks this season proved to be a great indication of how successful the program is in Invermere. During residential and business garbage checks in Invermere, there were very few residents who had left garbage accessible to wildlife the night before collection. The garbage raids were a focus of the program in previous years, and it appears that most of the residents continue to be aware of this attractant. In previous years industrial garbage bins at businesses in Radium were a main challenge for the program- another area that seems to have greatly improved this year. So far there has only been one incidence of a bear sighting reported at a Radium garbage bin.

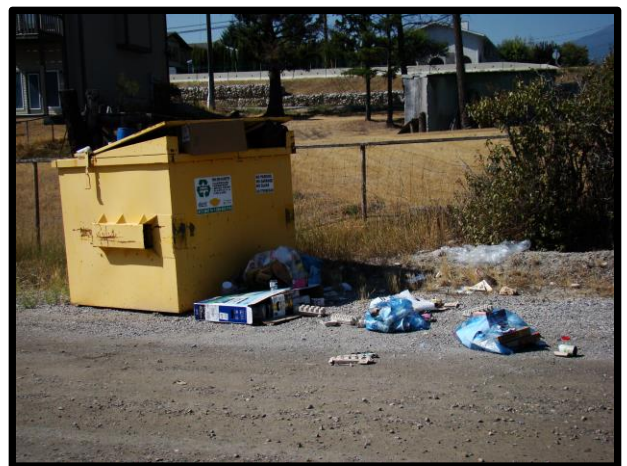


FIGURE 3: IMPROPER USE OF GARBAGE BINS SUCH AS THIS WAS FORTUNATELY A RARE SIGHT THIS YEAR

Pioneer Articles

Writing a bi-weekly article for the Columbia Pioneer proved to be an excellent way to reach residents with messaging regarding current sightings, attractant management, as well as overall safety tips regarding wildlife both in urban and recreational settings. Response to the articles was very positive and residents indicated that they appreciated the reminders every few weeks. This was also a great medium to promote contests and other WildSafeBC events.

Challenges

Urban Deer

A large presence of urban deer in Invermere (and to a lesser extent in Radium) was the main challenge to the program during the spring and summer season. Because of the large number of does that were having their fawns right in town, many residents were inciting aggression from the does. Each incidence of an attack was brought on by dogs that got too close to fawns. Because there are very strong opinions in Invermere regarding the deer (and whether to cull or protect them), it was hard to get neutral messaging across.

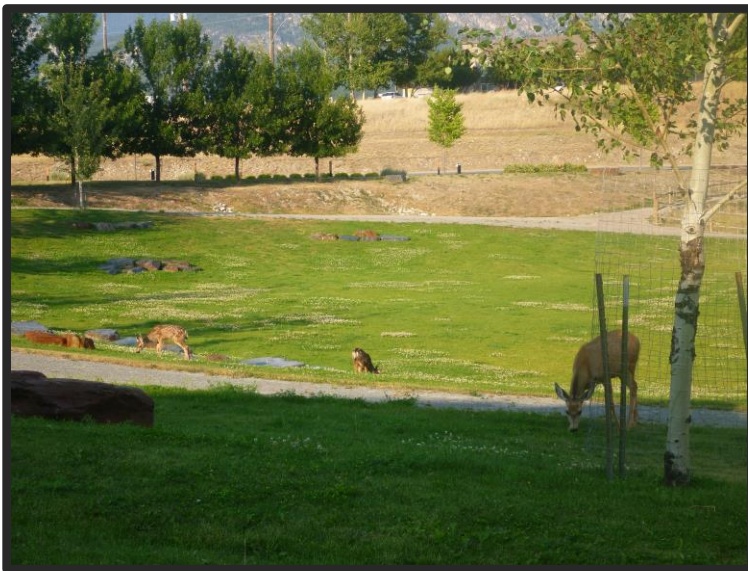


FIGURE 5: A DOE AND TWO FAWNS IN POTHOLE PARK

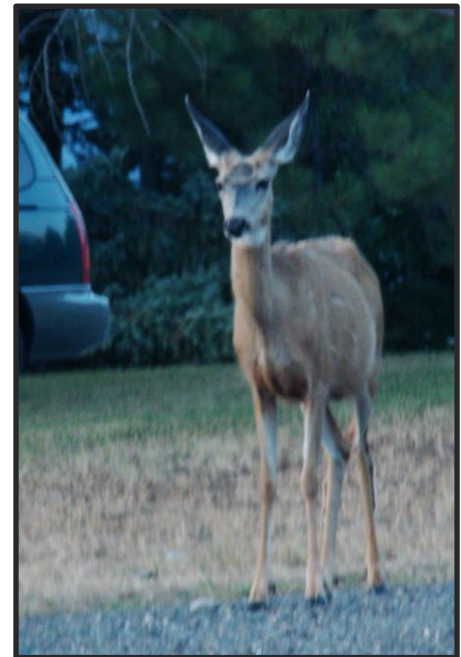


FIGURE 4: A MULE DEER SPOTTED WHILE DOING GARBAGE CHECKS

RAPP Line Awareness

Another challenge to the program was concern from the CO's office that not enough residents were reporting sightings and conflicts. It is a common opinion in both towns that calling the RAPP line will result in the destruction of an animal. Correcting this myth was a main focus of education this year. Calling the RAPP line is not the first thing residents think of, as bear and other wildlife sightings are so common here.

Conflicts outside of town

This year the communities in the Columbia Valley that had the most human-wildlife conflict were those outside of Invermere and Radium. The communities of Windermere, Fairmont, Canal Flats, and Edgewater had significant wildlife conflict that kept the conservation officers very busy. It was difficult to not be able to fully address these conflicts.

Fruit Swap

The Columbia valley fruit swap is a program that has run for the past four years that aims to pair fruit-picking volunteers with residents who are not able or willing to pick their own fruit trees. Despite advertising for the program in varied sources, there were very few people signing up (both to pick or to volunteer their tree). This was a significant issue, as there are so many seasonal homeowners with fruit trees that leave Invermere and Radium in the fall. Fruit was one of the top bear attractants this fall.

Goals for 2015

Heading into the 2015 season, goals for the WildSafeBC program are focused on building upon successes and attempting to address some of the challenges from this year's delivery:

- **Bear Smart Status:** The continued move towards the six requirements of gaining bear-smart status for the town of Invermere. The next step is to begin transferring the waste disposal system to a fully bear-resistant variety
- **Summer Programming:** As the school-age programs are so effective at getting messaging across, developing more kids programs during the summer season would be very beneficial. Teaming up with already established programs and summer camps would be a great way to accomplish this.
- **Fruit Swap/ Fruit Tree Replacement:** Getting an earlier start to gathering volunteers for the fruit swap program. Possibly instating a fruit tree replacement program, where residents who are not using their fruit can get some kind of incentive for replacing their tree with a non-fruit-bearing variety
- **Urban Deer Education:** Some kind of public forum or education on living with urban deer would be highly beneficial- most importantly in the springtime when conflicts with fawns and does are occurring. This is also the time of year that the community does not benefit from school presentations as a medium for education.
- **Expanding to Regional District:** Getting the regional district on-board for the WildSafeBC program, so the community coordinator is able to travel outside of Invermere and Radium to address conflicts.

Acknowledgments

The WildSafeBC program in Invermere and Radium Hot Springs would like to extend many thanks to the municipalities of both communities. Special consideration goes to Mark Read and Chris Prosser.

I would also like to acknowledge the support from the Columbia Valley Pioneer Newspaper, whose support of the program greatly helped to spread the message of reducing human-wildlife conflict this season.

Special thanks to the Columbia Basin Trust, the Ministry of Environment, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation, without whose financial and organizational support the program would not exist.

Last, but not least- thank you to all of the residents and visitors to the Columbia valley who properly managed your attractants and helped to spread the message of keeping wildlife wild and our communities safe!



FIGURE 6: BIGHORN SHEEP RAMS IN DOWNTOWN RADIUM HOT SPRINGS