

WILDSAFEBC YEAR END REPORT 2014

ROSSLAND & TRAIL

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Photo by Sharon Wieder



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2014 was the second year of WildSafeBC (since our transition from Bear Aware) and the program focus expanding from bears to all urban wildlife. In the Rossland and Trail areas, this wildlife mostly includes cougars and coyotes.

2014 was a quiet year for bear activity, possibly due to an abundant huckleberry crop that rivaled that of 2009. The season had a brief spurt in mid June with calls to the RAPP line very similar to 2010. Someone turned on the tap September 2 that brought the black bears back into town with record number of calls to RAPP. The spring sightings of grizzly bears faded out in July with only a few unconfirmed sightings in the fall. Cougar and coyote sightings were minimal.

The WildSafeBC educational materials were again well received including the new raccoon & rattlesnake brochures. The tattoos were much loved by kids of all ages. Other features of the WildSafeBC program included migrating Bear Aware website to WildSafeBC website and expanding the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) map. Rossland/Trail Facebook "Likes" were increased to 78.

The community coordinator Sharon Wieder offered all these features at many displays, presentations, and on a one-to-one basis. The WildSafeBC program strives to reduce human-wildlife conflict through education, innovation and cooperation. Our motto is "Keeping wildlife wild, and communities safe."

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PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2014

The WildSafeBC program and all its features were presented at many displays & presentations, some new venues and many annual ones. The Harvest Rescue team was busy collecting and distributing fruit and saw an increase in volunteers in both Trail & Rossland. Kate's Kitchen in Trail was the grateful recipient of more than 150 pounds of local fruit! The annual Community Fruit Press Day produced 160 liters of juice! Over 4,700 people were reached this season.

DISPLAYS

Displays at public events are an opportunity to spread the message and to allow people to pick up educational materials. Visitors to our booth can also ask questions and receive advice on their particular wildlife issues. This year two additional Trail Market events were very successful at increasing the total number of people reached through displays this year.

The WildSafeBC community coordinator set up displays at the following events:

- Trail Evening Farmers Market
- Rossland Museum 'Where the Wild Things Are'
- Rossland Farmers Market
- Rivers Day
- Community Fruit Press Day
- Rossland Fall Fair
- Trail Teddy Bear Picnic
- United Way Day in the Park
- Trail Spooktacular Market



Figure 1 Rossland Fall Fair event

PRESENTATIONS

Learning about wildlife behavior and biology can lead to a better understanding of why animals behave the way they do. This understanding can help people realize how their actions affect wildlife and help them change human behavior to reduce human-wildlife conflict.

Presentations were made to many familiar groups as well as some new faces. The WildSafeBC community coordinator presented to the following groups:

- Trail Library Summer Reading Club
- Rossland Non –Profit Networking Open House
- Camp Cawabunga
- CBEEN
- Rossland Sparks
- Rossland Recreation Summer Camp
- KCTS Trail's Day
- JL Crowe Debate team



Figure 2 Trail Library Presentation

MEDIA

Local media was instrumental in spreading the message of WildSafeBC. Media also helped keep people informed on bear activity, Harvest Rescue options, and location of bear resistant dumpsters in Trail. Newspaper articles and radio interviews reached a wide audience of more than 145,000 impressions.

OTHER

This was the third year for the West Kootenay Human-Bear Conflict Working Group to meet and discuss bear management issues and develop creative solutions that can be used in collaboration with all levels of government. The group provides a varied pool of knowledge, experience and influence.

This year, the main thrust was creation of a strategy to bring bear-resistant residential bins to the area. This strategy will be pursued over the coming months with the goal of purchasing a bulk order of bins to be distributed throughout the West Kootenay region.

There were 2 bears destroyed in Rossland this year and 7 bears destroyed in Trail, with most of the mortality occurring in June.

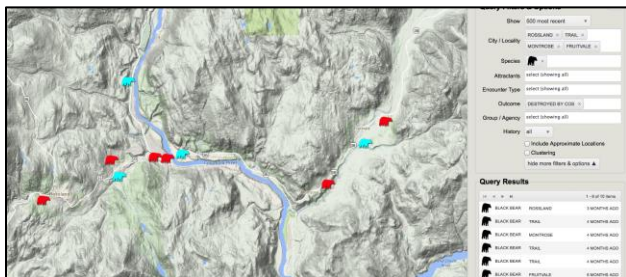


Figure 3 WARP Map



Figure 4 WildSafeBC tattoos

CHALLENGES OF THE 2014 SEASON

A brief spurt of bear activity in June was followed by a very quiet summer. A quiet bear activity season presents the challenge of convincing people that their attractants need to be managed for **when** a bear shows up, not **if** a bear shows up. During a quiet season, it is easy to believe that your attractants are not a problem. September brought the black bears back with calls to the RAPP line in numbers not seen for many years. Although Rossland was relatively quiet, several neighborhoods in Trail had black bears accessing garbage almost every night for all of September and October, and well into November. Despite options to dispose of garbage between pick up days and the collaboration of WildSafeBC coordinator, city of Trail bylaw officer and Conservation Officers, the calls continued to come in. Many people felt that something needed to be done about the bears and could not be convinced to change their behavior regarding garbage storage, believing instead that it was someone else's responsibility to solve the 'bear problem'.

Spring reports of a sow grizzly and two cubs on a popular mountain bike trail outside Rossland presented the challenge of getting the message out that the bears were in the area as well as convincing people to keep their distance and give the bears a chance to move up the mountain. Overall, people were receptive to the message and encounters were limited. Special thanks to Rossland staff at the bike store and city hall for spreading the message.

Historically, garbage and fruit trees are the first and second greatest attractants that create human-wildlife conflict. This year was no different in either Rossland or Trail.

Every year it seems one animal is spotted more than usual. This was the year of the raccoon. Cougar and coyote reports were down from last year.

Finding volunteers to help with Harvest Rescue and spreading the WildSafeBC message throughout neighborhoods is an ongoing challenge.

A properly installed and maintained predator electric fence has been proven very effective in reducing conflict. Several people inquired about electric fencing and one household was assisted in setting up a fence to keep bears out of harvested fruit. There is still a general mistrust of electric fencing with the main concern being safety of children and pets.

The lack of residential bear-resistant trash bins available locally means that residents with little or no secure space to store garbage continue to find this issue challenging. The West Kootenay Human-Bear Conflict Working Group is working to find a solution for this issue.



Figure 5 Residential Bear Resistant Bin



Figure 6 Harvest Rescue Fruit

GOALS FOR 2015

Looking ahead to next season, WildSafeBC would like to work in cooperation with our partners on projects to continue reducing human-wildlife conflict.

- Engage Rossland stakeholders in a discussion regarding changes to the Solid Waste Management bylaw
- Engage residents of Trail in neighborhoods with chronic garbage issues in a discussion around working together to reduce human-bear conflict
- Continue working on the goals of the West Kootenay Human-Bear Conflict Management Working Group
- Conduct a Fruit Tree management workshop
- Organize a fruit tree management work party for 'rogue' trees
- Conduct a wildlife safety workshop for people recreating on the trails
- Spreading the message regarding the effectiveness of electric fencing in reducing conflict.
- Increase the wildlife display items to include a cougar pelt and skull

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WildSafeBC and the Rossland Trail Bear Smart Committee are grateful for the generous support from many sources. Thanks to our sponsors: BC Conservation Foundation, Ministry of Environment, Columbia Basin Trust and the Cities of Trail & Rossland (councilors and staff, including bylaw staff). Thanks to our supporters and volunteers: Rossland REAL Food including the Harvest Rescue team, Trail Harvest Rescue coordinator Sita Lawson and all her fruit picking volunteers. The assistance from Conservation Officers Tobe Sprado, Blair Thin, Ben Beetlestone and Jason Hawke is greatly appreciated as always.

Special thanks to volunteers that spread the message about how to reduce human bear conflict and who care enough to make the effort to set a good example and to report those that disregard the message.

