

WildSafeBC Year End Report 2014

Selkirk Purcell Transborder

Prepared by: Trish Drinkle



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Executive Summary

The 2014 season was a very busy and productive one for WildSafeBC Selkirk Purcell area. Many new partnerships for our program were created including partnerships with: the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area, Creston Chamber of Commerce, and the Creston and District Recreation Department. Media releases, social networking, door-to-door canvassing, WildSafeBC public displays, and educational outreach programs allowed us to deliver the WildSafeBC message to over thirty-five thousand people. The impact was far reaching and stimulated conversation and open dialogue with residents throughout the Selkirk Purcell region and beyond.



Figure 1 WildSafeBC Community Coordinator Trish Drinkle with Creston Valley Wildlife Management area director Carla Ahern.

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2014 Wildsafe BC Highlights

There were many promising developments in the Selkirk Purcell region during the 2014 season. Community outreach and education has resulted in fewer residents hosting bird feeders on their property. Many residents were simply unaware that bird feeders were a food source and that they had the potential for creating conflict with wildlife.

Focus on unused fruit stimulated direct action by local residents, businesses, and fruit gleaning organizations. The WSBC community coordinator directed residents, with an abundance of unused fruit, to the Harvest Share fruit gleaning program in an attempt to reduce this potential attractant. Residents' involvement with the Harvest Share fruit gleaning program proved effective in not only reducing the amount of unpicked fruit, but brought to light the importance of picking and disposing of unused fruit responsibly.



Figure 2 Residents reducing the abundance of unused fruit. Photo Trish Drinkle

Presentations

The WildSafeBC community coordinator was busy throughout the year delivering 28 WSBC presentations. The relationships developed with other organizations such as the Creston Valley Wildlife Management area and the Creston and District Recreation complex allowed the WSBC coordinator to deliver the program efficiently and effectively.

A list of presentations around the Selkirk Purcell territory:

- Junior Naturalist camps x10
- Creston Valley Recreation Complex x 12
- Creston Valley Homelinks x3
- Creston Valley Quad Squad
- Creston Valley Chamber of commerce
- Moyie River Ranch Presentation
- Ymir Tiny Lights Festival



Figure 2 WildSafeBC community coordinator Trish Drinkle with students in the CVWMA Junior Naturalist Camp 2014

Displays

Educational displays were an effective and exciting way to reach out to the residents in the Selkirk Purcell area. Bear, deer, coyote, cougar, and raccoon brochures were circulated which stimulated dialogue and provided valuable information. Community events and local retail establishments provided an effective venue in which to deliver our WildSafeBC message. Engaging resources provided by WSBC such as the grizzly bear skull, black bear hide, bear track cast, teeth, and claws were big hits and are valuable tools to engage public participation. Bear-resistant garbage cans provided by CO James barber also brought to light the importance of responsible trash containment and disposal.

Several displays in the Selkirk Purcell area helped deliver the WildSafeBC message.

- Ymir Tiny Lights Festival
- Moyie River Ranch
- Canada Day Festival
- Creston Valley Farmers Market
- Overwaitea Foods
- Home Hardware
- Creston Valley Recreation Complex



Figure 3 WSBC Display at the Ymir Tiny Lights Festival 2014

Electric Fencing

Predator specific electric fencing is a proven tool for reducing wildlife conflict. The WildSafeBC community coordinator provided information pertaining to electric fencing to residents and then directed interest to Gillian Sanders of the Grizzly Electric Fence Project, which facilitated the implementation of electric fencing for five residents in the area. More residents are planning to install electric fences in 2015 after witnessing first-hand the effectiveness of this system.

Garbage Tagging

Residents were extremely compliant in the spring and early summer months with their garbage storage and collection. Mid-summer told a different story for some who became lax in practice. Residential garbage bins were tagged when garbage was placed out the night before pick-up. The bright yellow warning sticker alerted residents of the potential attractant factor of their garbage. A total of 26 residents were tagged when they placed garbage out too early for collection. The community coordinator provided follow up which was successful. Residents did not repeat the behaviour.

Rural Garbage Management Outreach

Rural garbage disposal poses a greater challenge for responsibility and compliance. The community coordinator networked with garbage collection services for rural residents in an attempt to reduce garbage attractants. The collection services were quick to alert the community coordinator when they noticed residents either putting garbage out too early or allowing bins to overflow with household trash. This cooperation allowed the coordinator to effectively focus efforts directly on the individuals or areas in need.

West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group

WildSafeBC Selkirk Purcell community coordinator participates in the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working group which is an initiative of local bear biologists and the Conservation Officer Service. This group is comprised of representatives from the RDCK, WildSafeBC community coordinators, local bear biologists, Conservation Officers, and residents interested in reducing human-wildlife conflict.

In the West Kootenays from 2010- October 1st, 2014 the Conservation Officer Service has received 6685 calls about black bears and 388 calls pertaining to grizzly bears with garbage being named as the most common attractant. The West Kootenay Bear Working group has identified the need for public availability of bear resistant garbage bins and has embarked on a project to meet this need. In areas identified by Conservation officers and WildSafeBC Community coordinators, bear resistant garbage bins will be made available to residents in need in an effort to further reduce conflict.

Challenges of the 2014 Season

New Residents: The Selkirk Purcell area is a unique and welcoming area to live in and attracts many new residents each year. Most move from urban areas and are unaware of the consequences of habituating wildlife. The fantasy of wildlife in one's yard soon becomes a nightmare when residents realize there are serious implications when wildlife is encouraged to reside in urban areas.

Removing wildlife from the wild: Turtles are one of the most commonly displaced animals in the Creston valley resulting in the mortality of many Western Painted turtles each year. Emphasis on the stress and starvation factor of wildlife in captivity has been well received, especially by the younger residents in the area.

Resident Rescues: Educational outreach especially in fawning season has been effective with more residents aware of nature's ability to survive without human interference.

Migrant fruit pickers: Orchardists and their employees are a constant concern during fruit season. Many of the workers employed by orchards are migrant travellers residing in primitive camps. Camps are left unattended; filled with garbage and improperly stored foods; they have created conflict with wildlife, especially bears. Continual efforts and outreach with both the pickers and orchardists is effective but time consuming.

Outreach gap: Winter months can be a unique challenge with no scheduled outreach for WildSafeBC. Moose, elk, and deer frequent the trails utilized by many back country enthusiasts such as snowmobilers, skiers, and snow-shoers which creates a major potential for conflict. Residents continue to feed urban deer populations in winter months, again adding to the potential for human-wildlife conflict in the winter months.

Territory coverage: The Selkirk Purcell territory is a large area that requires frugal time management. More hours are required to provide effective outreach in areas such as Salmo and the lake shore communities.

Start Date: An earlier start date would allow WSBC community coordinator to provide outreach before bears emerge from hibernation to prevent early season conflict.

Goals for 2015

Some of our goals for 2015 should include:

- Make available and distribute bear-resistant garbage bins to those in need.
- Develop and execute new outreach programs in a cooperative effort with organizations such as the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area, Chamber of Commerce and Creston and District Community Complex.
- Provide greater outreach in surrounding areas such as Yahk, Crawford Bay, Riondel, Salmo, and Ymir.
- Provide educational outreach to more schools.
- Reduce the amount of orchard related wildlife conflict incidents.
- Facilitate frequent garbage collection in areas used by tourists.
- Actively encourage abandoned and unused fruit tree removal to reduce wildlife conflict.
- Attend more festivals and events to deliver the WildSafeBC program to a wider demographic of people.
- Continue to work with our local conservation officer to maintain harmony between wildlife and our community.
- Develop specialized presentations for organizations such as the Rod and Gun Club, Back Country Mountaineering clubs, power sports clubs to deliver relevant and useful information to these unique user groups.
- Work with local bear biologist Michael Proctor to further the effectiveness of our WildSafeBC program.
- Engage more youth involvement in the WildSafeBC program.



Figure 4 WSBC community coordinator Trish Drinkle on a nature “walk like a bear” adventure in the Creston Valley.

Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC Selkirk Purcell is thankful for the incredible support from many individuals and organizations.

- Columbia Basin Trust
- British Columbia Conservation Foundation
- Ministry of Environment
- Regional District of Central Kootenay
- Creston Valley Farmers Market
- Creston Valley Wildlife Management Authority
- Creston and District Community Complex
- Creston Valley Chamber of Commerce
- Conservation Officers Hawke and Barber
- WildSafeBC Support Staff and Community Coordinators

Thank you to everyone helping keep wildlife wild and our community safe.



Figure 5 WSBC Providing Outreach at local tourism destination Moyie River Ranch