

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2015

Town of Golden



Town of Golden Photo Credit: Bill Usher

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British Columbia Conservation Foundation



Executive Summary

WildSafeBC is a province-wide program owned and operated by the BC Conservation Foundation with the goal of reducing human-wildlife conflict through education, innovation and cooperation. The program was delivered in the Town of Golden by Sarah Osadetz. This was Sarah's second year as a WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC).

The 2015 season began with fewer reports of human-wildlife conflict in comparison to a very busy 2014. Nevertheless, there have been 8 bears destroyed in the Golden area this season. Improperly stored garbage was the primary root cause for these destructions.

In an attempt to reduce the level of human-wildlife conflict in the area, the WCC used the following to inform the residents of best practises: public displays, presentations, articles in the local paper, Facebook posts, door-to-door visits, phone, email, and on-line discussions.

As WildSafeBC's mandate includes messaging around multiple species, there was always an opportunity to engage the public in a variety of conversations.

Although black bears are still the highest priority in Golden, there were consistent enquiries about cougars, coyotes, raccoons, snakes, bats and skunks. One should note that bat and skunk enquiries have been on the rise this past season. Conversations about all these species have been solution-oriented and successful in reducing human-wildlife conflict.



Figure 1 WildSafeBC Community Coordinator of Golden Sarah Osadetz, Canada Day, 2015

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Highlights from the 2015 Season

WildSafeBC programming started at the beginning of May instead of June this year, with Sarah Osadetz returning as the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator. Relative to 2014 there were fewer calls to the Conservation Officer Service Reporting line with respect to black bears in conflict (162 in 2014, 131 in 2015).

Working with local residents a pilot project called the Home Ambassador program was launched. This program is designed to encourage residents in an area to share with their neighbours our message of attractant management. The program and has grown from three to ten homes in the first full season of implementation.

Partnerships have been established, and maintained, with several organizations such as: Alexander Park Elementary (trail cam project), Lady Grey Elementary School (Junior Rangers' Club), Wildsight, Golden Food Bank, Glean Golden and the Golden Apple Festival.

Education about managing skunks had been extremely popular this year, taking up most of the mid-season discussion as many residents had issues. To service the needs of the residents, the Town of Golden, Conservation Officers and WildSafeBC coordinated the presence of our own local skunk removal trapper/contractor who is scheduled to start in the spring of 2016.

Presentations

The WCC gave 24 presentations this season:

- Community Basin Alliance for Literacy (Immigrant Welcome Centre) x2
- Rotary Club of Golden
- Lady Grey Elementary (Grades: 4-7) x11
- APES Elementary (Grades K-3) x11
- Golden Secondary School (Grades 10, 11) x2
- Wildsight Wild Camp X (Ages: 5-10) x4
- Local residents x2
- Set in Stone Landscaping x2

Photo credit: Heather Carlson-Acton



Figure 2 Sow and cub walking by the airport in Golden

Garbage Tagging, door-to-door visits and displays

WildSafeBC Golden receives Facebook messages, text messages, phone calls and street-side conversations regarding local areas that need direct messaging with regards to attractant management.

The WCC conducted 20 garbage tagging inspections throughout the season which involves placing stickers on locals' bins put out early. The WCC noticed a 60% reduction in garbage bins being put out early (2015 vs 2014). Fifty residences were reached through door-to-door visits to promote discussion and education on an individual basis.

Interpretive displays were set up throughout the season to reach out to the community in order to provide education, networking and an opportunity for members of the community to share stories and learn new ways of handling wildlife issues around their homes. The WCC for Golden spent 17 days at the following local events:

- CBEEN Symposium x1
- Golden Farmers' Market x13
- Golden Museum x1
- Golden Apple Festival x1

Glean Golden

Glean Golden has three partners: Stephanie Findlater of the Golden Food Bank, WildSafeBC, and Donna Attewell, Arborist and advocate for local food. Glean Golden's mission is to raise awareness around several issues in Golden. These issues are: reduction of human-wildlife conflict, consuming readily available food growing in Golden, and the sharing of knowledge and skills. The partnership garnered a total of 65 volunteers and 145 hours of volunteer efforts. The group visited 19 sites throughout Golden. There are several activities that this group leads: educational meetings, fruit gleaning, fruit organizing and attractant reduction and education in Golden.

2nd Annual Golden Apple Festival

The WCC partnered with Golden Food Bank, Golden Farmers' Market, Wildsight, Region 4 Indigenous Co-op, Amuse Troupe, Green Leaf Tree Services, Columbia Basin Trust, Golden Artist's Guild and Small Town Revival Musicians to celebrate the harvest season. This event promotes human-wildlife conflict reduction and attractant management, wildlife education, food advocacy and community engagement. Located at the Spirit Square on Saturday September 26th, the celebration included live music, information stands about each participating partner, apple juicing, face painting and children's activities. Over 300 attendees joined in the celebration and over 450 kg's of apples were juiced. Thirty-five community members partnered to create this event. In November of 2015, the group will start organizing next years' events which will include workshops such as: tree pruning with Green Tree Leaf Services; tree grafting with Donna Attewell- Arborist; electric fencing with Gillian Sanders, and more.

APES Trail Cam Project

The WCC approached three Parent Advisory Committees and principals in Golden to initiate ecology and outdoor education programs. Alexander Park Elementary School (APES) has committed to purchasing 2 trail cams to set up on game trails around Golden and Area 'A' in conjunction with a Kindergarten class of 20. The duties of setting up, monitoring cameras, and documentation of the pictures will be shared by Steve Wyer, Principal of APES, Sandra Beckett, Kindergarten teacher, and the WCC.

Lady Grey Junior Rangers' Club

WildSafeBC introduced a new program province-wide called the Junior Rangers. This program formalizes and standardizes the safety messaging and attractant management messaging that we provide to children.

Three students in Lady Grey Elementary immediately expressed interest in learning more about wildlife and created a club in partnership with WildSafeBC. With parental consent, the WCC is meeting with the students once a week year-round, discussing many different issues that affect wildlife and humans in Golden. Junior Rangers' Program will include:

- Farmers' Markets displays
- Fruit gleaning with Glean Golden
- Researching wildlife
- Assisting the WCC with presentations
- Partnering and participation in the trail cam project in APES
- Utilizing WildSafeBC's website, including the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP)– submitting information through the Lady Grey Junior Rangers' profile

Home Ambassador Program

Golden is home to a pilot project that was conceived as a way to bring positive messaging to the community through neighbourhoods and individual residents willing to exhibit 'best practises' with regards to attraction management. This project grew from 3 homes in 2014, to 10 homes participating in 2015.

Their participation includes:

- Consistent commitment and solid message about human-wildlife conflict reduction
- Learning/training to use bear spray
- Knowledge of the Waste Management bylaw for Golden
- Appropriate use of the COS line

- WARP submission (still in progress)
- Sharing Facebook posts and social media engagement
- Neighbourhood advocacy of WildSafeBC's best practises

Media

The WildSafeBC Golden Facebook page has been an extremely valuable tool for public engagement in Golden. Residents sharing stories, asking questions, needing help or information and reporting methods have increased.

The Golden Star has been an excellent venue for articles and advertisements to support WildSafeBC messaging.

EZ Rock radio provides support by sharing posts on social media, spreading awareness daily about events and activity throughout Golden, and including regular interviews to update the public on wildlife activity

Challenges of 2015

Golden is challenged with garbage bins that are not bear resistant and many residents do not have garages to store their garbage in. Several bears have been destroyed this season because they had become food-conditioned to garbage and then habituated to human presence.

Goals for 2016

Goals for the 2015/2016 season include:

1. Addressing new solid waste management options for both residential and commercial properties should be a focus for the 2016 program
2. Supporting the growth of the trail cam project with APES
3. Expanding the Junior Ranger program within Golden.
4. Organizing and expanding 3rd Annual Golden Apple Festival
5. Increasing the number of home ambassadors in Golden
6. Include Area 'A' into the program
7. Maintain and evolve the partnerships already established with key organizations in Golden



Predator and its prey: Falcon and a northern flicker, 2015

Photo credit: Sarah Osadetz

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Thank you!

