

WildSafeBC Year End Report 2015

Kaslo and Area

Prepared by WildSafeBC Community Coordinators

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Executive Summary

Kaslo experienced less bear activity in the 2015 season according to residents, with report of zero bears destroyed. Motivated by the concept that the lack of bear activity may have led to a decrease in diligence, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) for Kaslo was determined to keep attractant management at the forefront of resident's regard through educational displays, presentations and door-to-door canvassing.

The 2015 fruit crop was abundant and Kaslo was challenged to find more innovative ways to protect and harvest fruit to avoid food conditioning of bears and other wildlife.

With our broad scope, WildSafeBC was able to provide Kaslo and area residents with information about many different wildlife species. While black bears continued to be the species most commonly discussed, questions regarding cougars, urban deer, ravens, and coyotes continued to rise. WildSafeBC's expanded species resources were well received by the community members and tourists this season.

Kaslo WildSafeBC has support from local Conservation Officers, in kind advertising from the Pennywise, and funding from Ministry of Environment, Columbia Basin Trust, Regional District Central Kootenay, the Village of Kaslo, and BC Conservation Foundation.



Figure 1. WildSafeBC Community Coordinators Tracy Remple and Gillian Sanders at Meadow Creek Spawning Channel Open House 2015

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Highlights from the 2015 Season

The WCC heard from residents almost daily with updates about wildlife in the area and questions about attractant management. The Kaslo WildSafeBC program has worked to form good relationships with key residents, who in turn advocate attractant management tactics and share that information with new residents and neighbours.

The new Community Coordinator for the area, Tracy Remple, was valuable in forming new relationships with residents who may not have been involved with program messaging in past years. Community members with input and tips have been invaluable for identifying problem spots in the community and prioritizing education efforts.

The program posted classified ads and additional display ads throughout the season. Ads were placed in the **Kaslo Visitors Guide** and the **Kaslo Go & Do** to help educate tourists and visitors to the area.



Figure 2. Cougar activity in Meadow Creek: dog treed cougar at a local farm ~ photo credit ~ Tracy Remple

Presentations

Understanding wildlife biology and behavior has reinforced the importance of reducing human-wildlife conflict to the residents of Kaslo. Making wildlife safety the priority, for our small rural community, was extensively covered during presentations by the WildSafeBC Community Coordinators in 2015. With an increase of cougar sightings in the Village, particularly on school access pathways, residents and school staff requested cougar safety talks at the school facilities. The WCCs worked in conjunction with the two local Conservation Officers to facilitate these talks.

Door to Door

The WCCs only received a few phone calls regarding garbage concerns in Kaslo this season, noting the majority of these issues as “new to the area residents”. In response to these calls, the WCC was promptly able to facilitate door-to-door education to restore responsible attractant management in those neighborhoods. Differently from previous seasons, attractant management education was delivered to several of our outskirt areas near to the Village that had not previously been a priority. The WCCs were able to deliver attractant management education to nearly 200 homes throughout Kaslo and Area D this season.

Displays

Educational and interactive displays at the Kaslo Saturday Market, Meadow Creek Sunday Market, and Meadow Creek Spawning Channel Open House were all well attended and well received. Public displays often attracted residents or tourists that had experienced conflict, and were ready to adopt ways of reducing human-wildlife conflict. The WCC was pleasantly surprised by the number of tourists who were fascinated by the program, and were able to take attractant management messaging back to their communities ranging from BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and several parts of Europe and the USA. Summer markets served as a prime venue to engage with people about local wildlife issues and to share human-wildlife reduction techniques effective for our region.



Figure 3. Tracy Remple at the Meadow Creek Sunday Market ~ photo credit ~ Robyn Skobalski

Wildlife Attractant Bylaw

Notification of the Village of Kaslo's Wildlife Attractant Bylaw was published in the Pennywise in both spring and fall editions. This ad aids in educating residents of possible financial consequences of leaving animal attractants available for wildlife. Bylaws of this nature have been adopted in many communities across the province. They also contribute to the reduction for chronic cases of poorly managed attractants when education is simply not enough. The Bylaw Officer for the Village of Kaslo was able to follow up with certain identified residents where attractants were still not being managed after education was received. The below picture shows the ongoing need for garbage management and bylaw enforcement.



Figure 4. Black bear and two cubs up a tree after getting into unsecured garbage ~ photo credit~ Tracy Remple

West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group

Kaslo WildSafeBC sits on the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group, an initiative of local bear biologists and the Conservation Officer Service. The group consists of representatives from the RDCK, City Councillors and the City staff from around the West Kootenay, expert bear biologists, Conservation Officers, interested citizens, and WildSafeBC coordinators. Meetings are held bi-annually with the goal of identifying solutions to human-bear conflict and collaborating to find ways of implementing those solutions. This group has also formed a bear bin committee and were successful in obtaining funds through the regional district to purchase bins for cost share or loan in contributing regional areas.

Challenges of the 2015 Season

Despite the overall reduction of human-wildlife conflict this season, there were some challenges that WCCs faced in Kaslo. With early spring bear activity there was no attractant management education being delivered during the time that bears were emerging from their dens, which may have reduced some of the early conflict and bear sightings in residential areas.

Kaslo has a year round urban deer issue, which may be the cause of the increasing number of cougar sightings within residential areas, especially around the school.

Another challenge was trying to reach the new residents for education before conflict occurred: it only takes one yard with unsecured attractants to create conflict and wildlife frequenting the whole neighbourhood.

The Kaslo WCC also found the village had struggled when dealing with excess fruit in this bumper crop season.

Cougar activity near J.V Humphries School this season has been and continues to be a concern, especially without ongoing education through the winter months.

To reduce human-wildlife conflicts that start in the spring, the program would be better served with an earlier contract start date.

Goals for 2016

Looking forward to the 2016 season, WildSafeBC Kaslo hopes to collaborate with community partners to increase local wildlife attractant management by:

- Liaising with the local bylaw officer to increase the efficacy of Wildlife Attractant bylaw with increased social media, publications in local newspapers, signage, door to door education, and bylaw enforcement.
- Continue to offer outreach and education to a wide range of audiences, offering human-wildlife conflict presentations and targeting messaging about relevant species immediately following reports of conflict. Also to be more proactive in following previous years' data to better time more presentations prior to the expected seasonal wildlife activity increase.
- Working with the West Kootenay Human-Bear Conflict Working Group to provide solutions to attractant management issues in the region with benefit to local communities. The Working Group's bear resistant bin initiative received \$1500 funding from Area D in 2015 and has applied for additional funding in 2016.
- Expanding the presence of WildSafeBC in Kaslo, as well as the surrounding rural areas, in hopes that attractant management messaging will become the general practice in every home.
- Pursuing Certified Bear Smart Community Status for the Village of Kaslo in 2016.

Acknowledgements

Kaslo WildSafeBC thanks the following sponsors: Columbia Basin Trust, the Ministry of Environment, BC Conservation Foundation, the Village of Kaslo and the Regional District Central Kootenay. Kaslo and area WSBC also thanks the BC Conservation Officer Service for their ongoing support of program activities.

