

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2015

Transborder



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2015 Season was a busy one for WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) Trish Drinkle. Drought conditions created a chain reaction of events resulting in an unusually high number of bears coming into conflict with residents. Realizing early on that this was going to be a busy year Drinkle worked hard to reduce conflict by doing extensive door-to-door canvassing, outreach presentations and frequent media releases. Continuing a working partnership with the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area the WCC did several presentations for youth. Working together with Conservation Officer James Barber, Drinkle was able to work with local residents to create more awareness and responsible attractant management.

After establishing a strong relationship with residents in the 2014 season, the WildSafeBC message was eagerly accepted and shared for 2015. Residents were working with the WCC to help keep wildlife wild and our community safe. Active social media outreach in support of the WildSafeBC message helped grow awareness exponentially! Residents were distributing brochures in their neighborhoods in an effort to reduce human-wildlife conflict. It was inspiring to see the residents of the Selkirk Purcell area working with the program to reduce conflict.

The WCC also worked with Conservation Officer Barber to help bring about understanding in the community as to the consequences of habituating wildlife. Providing outreach and understanding was crucial in situations where bears were destroyed, taking away the villain-like perception of the CO's duty and replacing it with ownership to be a more responsible community.

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WildSafeBC community coordinator Trish Drinkle

WILDSAFEBC CRESTON HEADQUARTERS

New this season, WildSafeBC Selkirk Purcell community coordinator had an office located in the town limits of Creston which facilitated even greater face-to-face interaction with residents. Frequent drop-in visitors and groups came to the office in search of advice and brochures to help reduce conflict. A permanent media display running an attractant management slide show was an excellent way to initiate dialogue with residents. Educational props such as a grizzly bear skull, black bear hide and display board were a favorite of visitors providing even more excitement and intrigue. The WildSafeBC office hosted several events on location.

Events hosted at WSBC Selkirk Purcell Office

Staying safe in bear country

Bear spray 101

Electric Fencing with Gillian Sanders

Cougar Safety

Things that go Bump in the night. Reducing urban wildlife conflict



WSB Headquarters drop in visitor Derrick Brown learning about wildlife

YOUTH PRESENTATIONS

The WCC was active throughout the season with youth outreach. Continuing a partnership with the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area a total of sixteen youth presentations were done in the summer months. School presentations for Erickson Elementary School and Adam Robertson Elementary School were a huge success with the WSBC community coordinator presenting in both an assembly like setting as well as a more personal classroom setting which allowed for a more age specific presentation.

School administrators were very thankful for the WildSafeBC outreach and are eager to have more time spent with their students. Classroom to classroom outreach was extremely effective as the WCC could speak to each group on an age appropriate level making the message even more effective. The children enjoyed brochures, the temporary tattoos and bookmarks distributed - helping them take what they've learned home to share with their other family members. Extra brochures were given for students absent, and parents who wanted more information on reducing wildlife conflict. The students are familiar with the WCC and enjoy sharing stories when they see her out and about in the community and often introduce her to their parents. The WCC works hard to bring understanding and takes time to ensure each child feels their voice is heard with a dedicated wildlife story time at the end of each presentation. Not only do the children feel validated, the WCC gains insight into areas within the community that could be experiencing human wildlife conflict.



Trish Drinkle working with Youth at the CV Wildlife Centre



Trish Drinkle speaking about wildlife attractants at ARES school

CRESTON PUBLIC LIBRARY


New this season was a series of evening workshops the WCC participated in. Back Country Safety and awareness along with Attractant Management was presented to a standing-room only crowd. This event brought residents from all corners of the Transborder region including Riondel, Crawford Bay, Salmo, Yahk, Moyie, Arrow Creek, West Creston, Wynndel, Creston, and even residents from Idaho. The crowd was diverse with residents from all walks of life including hunters, environmental stewards, and new residents to the Kootenays who were all eager to reduce human-wildlife conflict and stay safe in the back country. Bear spray demonstrations, garbage management, composting basics, and identifying signs of wildlife in the back country were some of the topics discussed. Attendees went home with brochures and media links so they can follow the WildSafeBC and WARP websites for future reference. After receiving calls, emails, and social networking posts praising the WildSafeBC presentation, the Creston Public Library wishes to host several events for the next season.

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Great Outdoors Speaker Series




SAFETY IN THE BACKCOUNTRY

.....

 **CRESTON VALLEY**
PUBLIC LIBRARY

THURSDAY OCTOBER 8
7PM AT THE LIBRARY
FREE





photos courtesy WildSafeBC

with WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, Trish Drinkle

MEDIA OUTREACH

In addition to continued outreach on social networking sites and the local newspaper Creston Valley Advance, the WCC developed two new media relationships.

Juice FM 94.1, a local Creston radio station owned by the Vista media group, was an integral part of outreach and information sharing. With frequent broadcasts both locally, and in other towns, such as Grand Forks, Castlegar, Nelson and Kaslo the WildSafeBC message was amplified even more. Key program directors support the WildSafeBC message and are eager to share other WSBC media releases along with Selkirk Purcell community coordinator Trish Drinkle's amplifying the impact of WSBC outreach efforts.

The **"I love Creston Magazine"** has shown great support, offering unlimited opportunity monthly for outreach and information sharing. A popular magazine, the impact of WSBC publications on local residents was quickly felt. Increased visitors to the WSBC office as well as more telephone calls from residents wanting to learn more about safety and attractant management was a direct result of articles published in the I love Creston Magazine.



Community coordinator Trish Drinkle Live on the air Juice FM 94.1

WEST KOOTENAY BEAR CONFLICT WORKING GROUP

The Selkirk Purcell's community coordinator continues efforts with the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group. The group is comprised of local bear biologists, Conservation Officers, local governmental representatives, WildSafeBC community coordinators, and the RDCK waste management authority. Working together to solve attractant management issues common to all, the group has now successfully begun to implement the Bear Resistant Garbage Bin outreach initiative. Facilitating availability of bear resistant garbage bins on both a loaner and cost-share basis has proven effective in reducing conflict and showing residents viable solutions to garbage storage. The group meets biannually to identify and implement solutions common to all representatives in communities that cohabitate with bear populations.

CHALLENGES OF THE 2015 SEASON

The 2015 season was one with an unusually high number of human-bear related conflicts. The number of hours allocated to the Selkirk Purcell WSBC program was insufficient and extra funding was needed to allow the community coordinator to fulfill her duties. Budget constraints allowed for only limited outreach to places like Salmo and Ymir. More time and funding is needed to effectively reach all corners of the Selkirk Purcell Transborder territory.

A bumper crop of fruit in the Creston Valley resulted in many orchards and residential properties with unpicked fruit. While gleaning efforts were amped up by locals, orchardists are exempt from the feeding of dangerous wildlife act resulting in unpicked cherries attracting bears into residential areas.

Migrant fruit pickers continued to cause wildlife related conflict by leaving camps unattended, and garbage strewn about campsites. The WCC visited campsites, with great result, but with the multitude of random campsites it was difficult to visit all camps. More outreach and enforcement is required to prevent such conflict. Networking with employers is promising, but as of yet nothing is in place to insure compliance.

Bird feeders continue to attract dangerous predators, such as bears, into residential yards and properties.

Some residents continue to feed wildlife. More outreach and enforcement is needed especially when dangerous wildlife is involved.

Commercial garbage bins are a concern especially in peak tourism seasons such as July and August. Overflowing unlocked garbage bins were routinely reported and addressed. A better garbage collection strategy is needed for the 2016 tourist season.

Ornamental Crab apple trees continue to be a wildlife attractant. Outreach and education is necessary to reduce the food attractant types of ornamental trees. While the blossoms are beautiful and fragrant during the spring time, late summer and fall finds the community with unharvested fruit which becomes an attractant for bears, and urban deer.

GOALS FOR THE 2016 SEASON

With extra funding and time to provide outreach in smaller communities the WCC would like to increase presence in areas such as Yahk, Salmo and Ymir.

Continued outreach with the Bear Bin Program will create a safer community. With more time to provide outreach more residents will benefit from the Bear Bin Program and the area will see less human-wildlife conflict.

The Creston Valley Public Library has been a vital connection to the community, and WildSafeBC would like to continue and expand on this relationship providing even more outreach to the area.

WildSafeBC would like to further youth outreach by implementing the Junior Rangers program. This program will bring even more excitement to the momentum already created.

With more time and funding, the WCC would like to expand workshops offered at the Creston Valley Wildlife Management area (CVWMA). Events such as “walk like a bear” are great for all ages and provide education and a great family adventure. Talks on specific species and species at risk are other topics that would work well at the CVWMA.

In the near future the WCC would like to work with the Town of Creston’s Bylaw officer to help develop bylaws that would reduce human wildlife conflict.

Outlying communities need more outreach and access to WildSafeBC events. Some of the rural communities have specific needs that are unique to their area, including wolf populations around Kitchener and Russel Creek and Grizzly Bear conflict on the flats of the Creston Valley, Wynndel, Yahk and West Creston. The Canyon Lister Areas, Arrow Creek and Crawford bay need specific cougar awareness outreach. Crawford bay has a beautiful golf course with an abundance of fruit trees and other wildlife attractants that invites wildlife into the town site. Each of these areas need specialized outreach to help reduce their unique conflict issues.

The program wishes to continue outreach to those who enjoy recreating in the backcountry. Specialized presentations to groups such as the Kokanee Country Snowmobile club, and the Creston Valley Quad Squad are crucial to not only keep back country enthusiasts safe, but also the resident wildlife, with outreach specific to Mountain Caribou, Moose, and Bears.

A continued focus on reducing urban deer population is needed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WildSafeBC Selkirk Purcell is thankful to all the organizations and individuals that make this program possible; the Ministry of Environment, the Columbia Basin Trust, British Columbia Conservation Foundation and The Regional District of Central Kootenay. Special thanks to RDCK director Tanya Wall for additional funding mid-season when extremely high incidents of human-bear conflict was reported and more outreach was necessary. Guidance and support from Conservation Officer James Barber has been instrumental in the effectiveness of the program. Continued support and broadcasting of the WildSafeBC message by **Juice FM 94.1** helped deliver information quickly and effectively facilitating even more of an impact for the Selkirk Purcell territory. Monthly press releases from **I love Creston Magazine** were appreciated and valued. Media relationships such as these had a positive impact on delivery and public understanding.

Thank you to the BCCF staff including Frank Ritcey, Jen Bellhouse, Roseanna Niedziejko and Barb Waters for your guidance and efforts with the WSBC program.

Thank you to all the WildSafeBC community coordinators and all of the residents who help us keep “wildlife wild and our communities safe.”



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