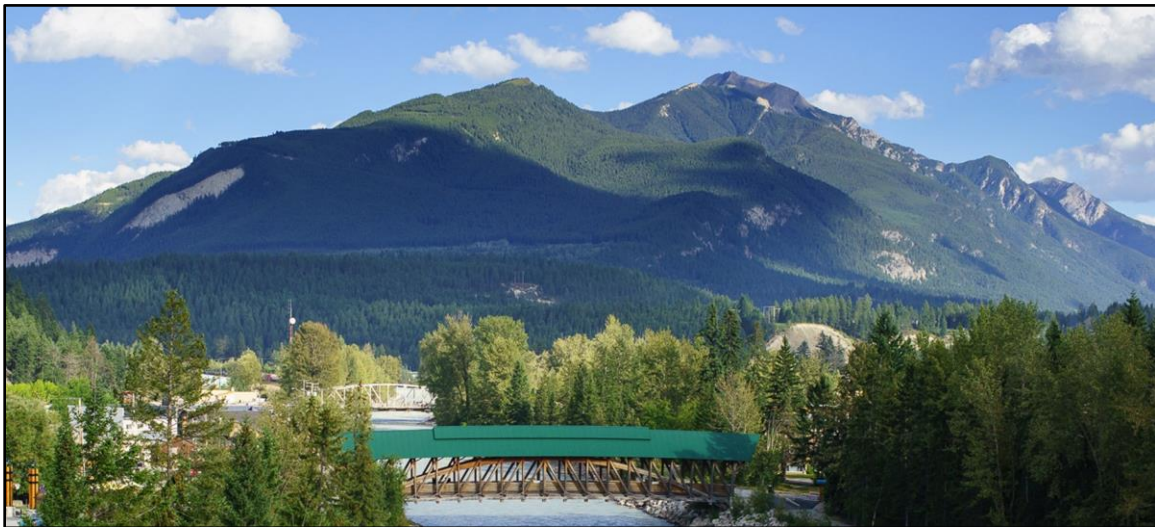


WildSafeBC Annual Report 2016

Town of Golden

Prepared by Sarah Jane Osadetz, WildSafeBC Golden Community Coordinator



Kicking Horse Pedestrian Bridge and Mount 7 - Golden, BC
Photo credit: Tourism Golden



Ministry of
Environment



Executive Summary

There was consistent bear activity in the Town of Golden throughout the 2016 season, with slightly more conflict and sightings reported in the spring and fall months. Improperly stored garbage and unpicked fruit were once again responsible for much of this conflict. The total number of bear sightings and conflicts this season (99) was slightly lower than in the previous two years, but bear activity was certainly at the forefront of residents' minds. A total of 12 bears were destroyed by the Conservation Officer Service in the Golden area as a direct result of human-bear conflict. This level of mortality is slightly higher than last year.

As the bears moved into the community in the fall, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) focused on community conversations around managing attractants to avoid conflict. The WCC used proven educational strategies to inform the residents of responsible attractant management through displays, presentations, festival organization, social media and networking with the local paper. The WCC also engaged the public through on-line discussions, door-to-door visits, phone and email inquiries and conversations. Having a consistent message throughout the season and engaging the public through a variety of avenues has created a forum for community discussion. These conversations have been valuable in guiding new conflict reduction goals for the Town of Golden. The WCC worked with the Town Council of Golden this season to address the issue of accessible residential garbage with the implementation of a bear-resistant bin program. This sort of collaboration between community partners will help eliminate community attractants and reduce human-wildlife conflict in the long term.

Although black bears continue to be the most visible example of human-wildlife conflict in Golden, the WCC also provided residents with information and advice regarding other wildlife species such as: skunks, bats, coyote, deer and cougar.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Highlights from the 2016 Season	4
Collaborations	4
Displays	5
Glean Golden	5
3rd Annual Golden Apple Festival	6
Lady Grey Junior Rangers' Club.....	6
Home Ambassador Program.....	6
Media	7
Challenges of 2016	7
Goals for 2017	8

Table of Figures

Figure 1 The WCC presenting to a school group, 2016. Photo credit: Heather Adama.....	4
Figure 2 WildSafeBC Golden's 2016 display. Photo credit: Sarah Jane Osadetz.....	5
Figure 2 Bear safety information posted in Area 'A' - Cedar Lake Rec. Area - Golden, BC. Photo credit: Sara Jane Osadetz.....	8

Highlights from the 2016 Season

Collaborations

WildSafeBC programming started at the beginning of May with the return of WCC Sarah Jane Osadetz. The first priority of the season was to collaborate with community partners regarding the path towards Bear Smart Community Designation. Discussions with individual council members, a delegation at Town Council regarding the Bear Smart program and letters of support from leading community members lead to an official commitment towards this goal. A Bear Smart Committee was established as part of the requirements for Bear Smart Status.

Partnerships have been established and maintained with several community organizations, including: Alexander Park Elementary (outdoor walks for education), Lady Grey Elementary School (Junior Rangers' Club), Golden Farmers' Market, Golden Food Bank, Glean Golden and the Golden Apple Festival.

Presentations

Presentations covering wildlife biology, ecology, and both wildlife and human behaviour help to influence how the public interacts with wildlife – both in an urban and rural setting (Figure 1). The WCC gave 24 presentations this season:

- Lady Grey Elementary (Gr. 4-7) x 11
- College of the Rockies (Ages 18-60) x 4
- APES Elementary (Gr. K-3) x 11
- BC Goes Wild (Ages 14-45) x 1
- Golden Secondary School (Gr. 10,11) x 2



Figure 1 The WCC presenting to a school group, 2016. Photo credit: Heather Adama

Door-to-door Education and Garbage Tagging

WildSafeBC Golden receives Facebook messages, text messages, and phone calls regarding local areas that are experiencing human-bear conflict due to careless attractant management. The WCC conducted twenty garbage tagging inspections throughout the season, placing warning stickers on garbage bins put on the curb too early. The WCC has noticed a 60% reduction in garbage bins being put out early since first observed in 2014. A total of 180 residences were reached through door-to-door visits to promote best practices and education.

Displays

Educational displays were set up throughout the season in order to provide an opportunity for members of the community to share stories and learn new ways of managing wildlife issues around their homes (Figure 2). The WCC spent 10 days at the following events:

- Golden Farmers' Market x 7
- Golden Museum x 1
- Golden Apple Festival x 1
- Canada Day Farmers' Market x 1



Figure 2 WildSafeBC Golden's 2016 display. Photo credit: Sarah Jane Osadetz

Glean Golden

WildSafeBC Golden works with Glean Golden and their partners, the Golden Food Bank and Arborist Donna Attewell. Glean Golden works to raise awareness around the

reduction of human-wildlife conflict through picking, sharing and consuming the readily available food growing in Golden. It also provides an opportunity for sharing education and skills. The partnership garnered a total of 70 volunteers and 250 hours of volunteer efforts, visiting 30 sites throughout Golden and Area 'A'. In total, over 2,500 lbs of fruit was picked in a span of 12 weeks. Moving forward, volunteers have expressed interest in developing skills in wilderness safety, attractant management and gleaning for the community.

3rd Annual Golden Apple Festival

To help celebrate the harvest season, the WCC partnered with Golden Food Bank, Golden Farmers' Market, Columbia Basin Trust and Carl Trinkwon to host the 3rd Annual Golden Apple Festival. This event promotes human-wildlife conflict reduction, responsible attractant management, food advocacy and community engagement. Located at the Golden Food Bank on Saturday, Oct 1st, the celebration included live music, information stands about each participating partner, apple juicing and face painting. Due to the weather, the visitation was lower this year, yet over 100 attendees joined for the celebration. During this event, 800 lbs of harvested apples were juiced. It took 25 community members working together to create and coordinate this event.

Lady Grey Junior Rangers' Club

Once again this year, WildSafeBC coordinated a Junior Rangers club for Golden kids. Learning about wildlife helps children to make informed decisions in their backyards and community to stay safe and reduce human-wildlife conflict.

Five students in Lady Grey Elementary have been meeting regularly with the WCC throughout the school year. With parental consent, the WCC has participated in field trips and lunch time discussions covering many different issues that affect wildlife and humans in Golden.

The Junior Rangers' Program included:

- Wildlife walks
- Art projects
- Researching and sharing information
- Junior Rangers' monthly activities
- Utilizing WildSafeBC's website, including the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP)– submitting information through the Lady Grey Junior Rangers' profile

Home Ambassador Program

The WCC worked with local residents in a project called the Home Ambassador program to spread awareness around reducing human-wildlife conflict through the community. Willing participants commit to managing attractants around their homes according to

WildSafeBC guidelines and help to spread WildSafeBC messaging throughout their neighbourhoods. There were 11 households participating in 2016, compared to 10 in 2015 and 3 in 2014.

Participation in the Home Ambassador Program includes:

- A commitment to reducing human-wildlife conflict in the neighbourhood
- Bear spray training
- Knowledge of the Waste Management bylaw for Golden
- Appropriate use of the COS line
- Sharing Facebook posts and social media engagement
- Neighbourhood advocacy of WildSafeBC's message

Media

Social media has been an extremely valuable tool for public engagement in Golden. The WildSafeBC Golden Facebook page and other community pages have provided a platform for public discussion of wildlife sightings and issues. The information on these pages allowed the WCC and residents to increase education and attractant management efforts in a targeted way to prevent conflicts from escalating.

The Golden Star and Golden This Week have been excellent venues for articles and advertisements that support WildSafeBC messaging. EZ Rock radio provided support by sharing posts on social media, conducting regular interviews regarding local wildlife activity and spreading awareness about WildSafeBC events throughout the community.

Challenges of 2016

The storage of residential garbage between collection days is a major attractant challenge in Golden. Unsecured garbage is regularly stored outside in open garbage cans, especially at residences without garages or sheds. Furthermore, many residents place garbage on the curb the evening before collection, leaving it accessible to hungry bears. While there has been a reduction of 60% in the number of bins placed on the curb too early since the WCC began 'garbage tagging' in 2014, this is still an issue to focus on moving forward. There is still a significant level of human-bear conflict every year in the community, especially in a few 'hot spot' neighbourhoods.

SOLUTION: On Tuesday, October 18th, 2016, the Town Council of Golden voted unanimously to purchase bear-resistant residential garbage bins, with an on-going commitment to long-term investment in appropriate tools and strategies for conflict reduction. The implementation of 400 bear-resistant residential bins will begin in the spring of 2017. Education, enforcement and proper utilization of the bear-resistant bins will go a long way in reducing human-wildlife conflict. An earlier start to the WCC position –start date April 1, 2017- would help educate the public on the proper usage of

the bins through the transitional period.

Goals for 2017

1. Fulfil Bear Smart Certification requirements - BHA (Bear Hazard Assessment November, 2016).
2. Coordinate an earlier contract start date (April 1- November 30) for 2017 to ease transition to new bear resistant bins and provide education and advice on proper usage.
3. Coordinate an early season workshop - Electric Fencing with Gillian Sanders (April, 2017)
4. Obtain extra contract hours to administer and support the growth of trail cam skills with the Junior Ranger club @ Lady Grey Elementary throughout the 'off-season'.
5. Organize the 4th Annual Golden Apple Festival.
6. Maintain the number of Home Ambassadors in Golden.
7. Include Area 'A' in locking bins conversation/purchase and provide conflict-reduction education to this area.
8. Maintain and evolve the partnerships already established with key organizations in Golden.



Figure 3 Bear safety information posted in Area 'A' - Cedar Lake Rec. Area - Golden, BC. Photo credit: Sara Jane Osadetz

Acknowledgements:

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Without the involvement of these people, the forward momentum of WildSafeBC Golden would not be possible.

Thank you!

