

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2016

City of Kamloops



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WildSafeBC Annual Report Kamloops 2016

Table of Contents

Wildlife Activity / Executive Summary.....	3
Events.....	4
Junior Ranger Program.....	5
Presentations.....	6
Speaker Series.....	6
BC Goes Wild.....	7
Garbage Tagging.....	7
Door-to-Door Canvassing.....	7
Bear in Area Signs.....	8
Bear Management Committee	8
Media Coverage.....	8,9
Challenges to the Program 2016.....	9
Goals for 2017.....	9,10
Acknowledgements.....	10

Table of Figures

Figure 1. Wildlife Encounters from April-October 2016 from RAPP line data in Kamloops.....	3
Figure 2. Percentage of calls to the RAPP line in Kamloops from April-October 2016.....	3
Figure 3. Black Bear encounters from 2014-May 2016 according to RAPP line data from WARP.....	4
Figure 4. Kamloops WildSafeBC Emergency Services Day booth.....	4
Figure 5. Junior ranger presentation at Summit Elementary School.....	5
Figure 6. Kirsten Wourms leading the wildlife detective talk, speaker series 2016.....	6
Figure 7. Bear resistant locks used in pilot project 2016.....	8
Figure 8. Volunteer assisting the WCC at Canada Day, Riverside Park 2016.....	9
Figure 9. WCC next to a juvenile Rubber Boa at the snake walk, speaker series 2016.....	10

WildSafeBC Annual Report Kamloops 2016

Wildlife Activity/Executive Summary

Wildlife conflict had a slow start in Kamloops in 2016, however conflict and activity did increase in the months of September and October. According to RAPP line data from the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) there were approximately 229 black bear sightings, 35 cougar sightings, 22 coyotes and 78 deer from April 2017-October 2017 (Figures 1 & 2). Black bear sightings were lower than last year which had 309 sightings from April-October (Figure 3). The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) had an extremely busy year educating the public about human-wildlife conflict at events, local presentations, elementary schools, as well as through additional activities such as garbage tagging and door-to-door canvassing. The WCC also implemented a bear resistant lock pilot project in the community alongside the City of Kamloops. In addition to these efforts, the WCC did many interviews and media releases to help spread messaging across the city.

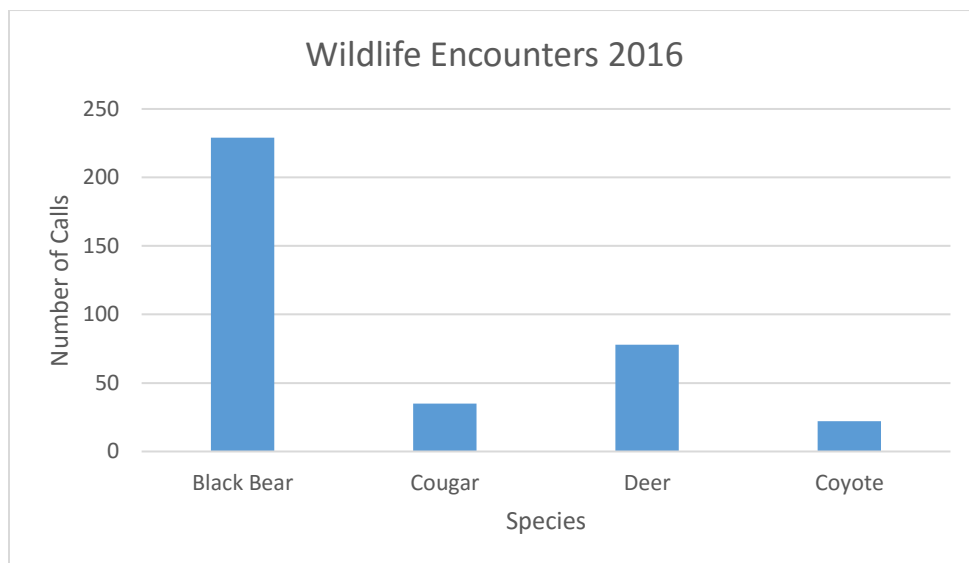


Figure 1. Wildlife Encounters from April-October 2016 from RAPP line data in Kamloops.

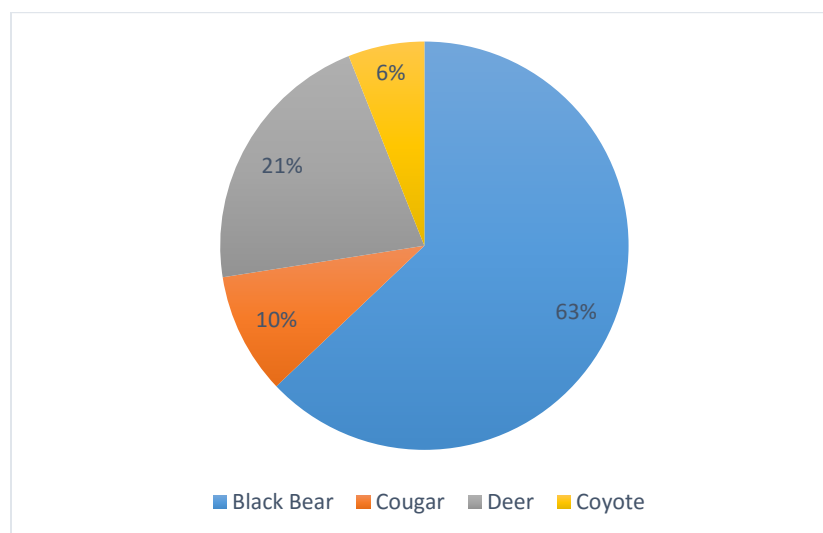


Figure 2. Percentage of calls to the RAPP line in Kamloops from April-October 2016.

WildSafeBC Annual Report Kamloops 2016

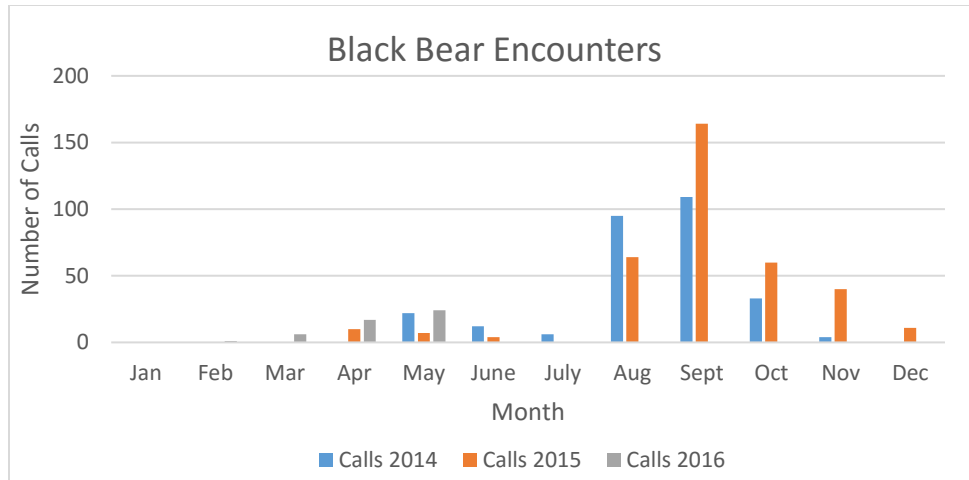


Figure 3. Black Bear encounters from 2014-May 2016 according to RAPP line data from WARP.

Events

The WCC attended many events in 2016. These events allow the WCC to have one-on-one conversations with, and provide support materials about reducing human-wildlife conflict to, locals and tourists alike.. Canada Day at Riverside Park, as well as the Saturday Farmer’s Market in Kamloops continue to have the highest attendance. Events attended in 2016 were as follows:

- *Emergency Services Day*
- *Garden Party*
- *Farmer’s Market (Wednesday/Saturday)*
- *Artisan Square (Saturdays)*
- *Canada Day*
- *BC Goes Wild*
- *Juniper Ridge Elementary Carnival*
- *Provincial Winter Fair*
- *World Rivers Day*
- *North Thompson Rivers Day*



Figure 4. Kamloops WildSafeBC Emergency Services Day booth.

WildSafeBC Annual Report Kamloops 2016

Junior Ranger Program

The WCC attended several schools this year to deliver the Junior Ranger Program. Every school received a similar presentation including a PowerPoint presentation and time for examination of skulls, hides, and tracks. Almost all primaries (K-3) received a Junior Ranger Kit which included a coloring book, pencil, ruler, badge, sticker, oath card and a membership card. A total of 800 kits were given out to the community. Presentations seemed to be best when they were in a general location such as a library or gym, where the students could filter in at assigned times. Approximately 2,268 children were reached this year in the Kamloops region.

The following schools were visited:

- *Aberdeen Elementary*
- *Summit Elementary*
- *Kamloops Christian School*
- *Heffley Creek Elementary*
- *Rayleigh Elementary*
- *Arthur Hatton Elementary*
- *Bert Edwards Elementary*
- *David Thompson Elementary*
- *Westmount Elementary*
- *Parkcrest Elementary*
- *Juniper Ridge Elementary*
- *Kay Bingham Elementary*
- *Lloyd George Elementary*
- *RLC Elementary*



Figure 5. Junior ranger presentation at Summit Elementary School.

WildSafeBC Annual Report Kamloops 2016

Presentations

In addition to the Junior Ranger Program, the WCC gave presentations to many other groups around the city. Eureka science camps were continued this year at Thompson Rivers University (TRU) and seem to be a good organization to continue a relationship with. Presentations with Immigration Services continue to grow each year and allow the WCC to speak to immigrants about the wildlife in Canada and how to be safe while camping and hiking. In the future, it would be important to develop this relationship as well as expand it to TRU World in order to connect with international students as well. The WCC also spoke with the Westsyde Brownies group, a McQueen Lake camping group and led a nature walk with the Kamloops Christian School. Nature walks seem to be a great way to get across information regarding wildlife sign and safety.

Speaker Series

The speaker series was continued for its third year in partnership with Kamloops Parks. This year the event was expanded to provide different topics of interest to the audience. The talks were held at a new amphitheater at Kenna Cartwright built by parks staff, which made the talks more comfortable and pleasant. The Parks staff led several talks including: Tree Jeopardy, Fire: Friend or Foe, Wildlife Detective, and The Night Sky. The WCC led a talk on urban deer as well a predator safety talk where the audience were able to practice using bear spray with inert cans. Alongside the Provincial Coordinator Frank Ritcey, the WCC also assisted in a snake talk/walk at Tranquille Creek. Bat specialist Doug Burles also joined the speaker series to talk about local bats and white nose syndrome, and had the largest turnout of the series. Overall the speaker series was well received, however a change in time as well as location may be needed in order to get higher attendance.



Figure 6. Kirsten Wourms leading the wildlife detective talk at the speaker series, 2016.

WildSafeBC Annual Report Kamloops 2016

BC Goes Wild

The Kamloops WCC participated in the first BC Goes Wild weekend. This event was province wide and took place on September 17th and 18th. This year the WCC held a scavenger hunt at Kenna Cartwright Park on September 17th as a part of the weekend. This scavenger hunt allowed children and parents to learn more about the environment around them such as noxious weeds, mushrooms, moss, as well as wildlife scat and tracks. The event was well received (15 people in attendance), considering the harsh weather that took place that weekend. Next year it would be wise to have alternative plans in the chance that the weather is not preferable, such as an indoor activity or talk. Next year the WCC should also try to incorporate several events for the weekend, as well as team up with the BC Wildlife Park or City of Kamloops in order to make the event an even larger success. In addition, the WCC should advertise the province-wide contests (coloring contest and photography contest) in order to have more people participating.

Garbage Tagging

Several neighborhoods in Kamloops this year were tagged by the WCC. Tagging was increased the week following BC Goes Wild in an attempt to decrease human-bear conflict. The WCC also did several media releases and CBC interviews about garbage tagging to raise awareness of the program as well as to remind residents of the garbage bylaw. Juniper Ridge, Campbell Creek, and Valleyview had very high set-out rates. For example, Campbell Creek had 28 garbage bins tagged out of approximately 70 homes checked, and Valleyview had 50 bins tagged out of 200 homes checked. Campbell creek was visited twice this year in order to see if garbage tagging had an effect on set-out rate. During the first tagging session, there were only 18 bins tagged out of 70 homes, however on the second session a total of 28 bins were tagged out of 70 homes checked. Therefore, it seems that tagging did not have an effect in this area and fines by bylaw officers may be needed in order to see change in set-out rate. Garbage tagging can also be a very dangerous task, due to potential confrontations with residents as well as the proximity to dangerous wildlife. It is advised that future WCC always have a volunteer or other staff member present while garbage tagging. In addition, more tagging was accomplished in the previous year when the WCC had the WildSafeBC Ambassador (WSA) to assist in tagging.

The following neighborhoods received garbage tagging this year:

Juniper Ridge

Valleyview

Rose Hill

Dallas

Campbell Creek

Bachelor Heights

Brocklehurst

Door-to-Door Canvassing

Door-to-Door (DTD) canvassing was only accomplished in a few neighborhoods this year, including Bachelor Heights, Westsyde, Dunrobin Drive and Juniper Ridge. Due to the increasing interest in presentations/public booths as well as garbage tagging, the WCC was unable to reach a lot of people through DTD. Volunteers were unable to help the WCC with DTD which also made it difficult to cover a lot of ground. Only 147 people were contacted through DTD this year. If the WCC had the WSA to help take on the role of DTD as well as garbage tagging the WCC may be able attend more public events, and more people could be reached.

WildSafeBC Annual Report Kamloops 2016

Bear in Area Signs

This year the WCC used bear in area signs in several locations in Kamloops. Signs were put up at Westmount Park to warn residents of a sow and two cubs in a nearby tree, and were also placed in Juniper Ridge and Dufferin where there was high bear activity. The signs seemed to be an effective way of warning residents that there were bears nearby, as well as reminded residents to keep garbage and other attractants secure and away from wildlife. The signs were quite flimsy and hard to work with in windy/stormy conditions, thus a more stable structure would be preferred in the future.

Bear Management Committee

The Kamloops Bear Management Committee met three times during the WCC's contract. This committee consists of many different representatives of the community such as bylaw enforcement, conservation officers, parks staff, urban agriculture staff, City of Kamloops staff and many other guests. At these meetings several issues were discussed such as fruit trees around the city (tree coupons), urban hens/how to mitigate future wildlife conflict, and how we can work together to reduce human-wildlife conflict in the city. In addition to these discussions, the WCC alongside Environmental Coordinator, Emily Lomas, updated the members on WildSafeBC events and efforts across the city, as well as introduced and updated the committee on a pilot project for bear resistant garbage locks.

Pilot Project-Bear Resistant Garbage Locks

The pilot project for bear resistant garbage locks (adapted from Port Coquitlam) took place in Kamloops this year from June until the end of October. Several streets in Juniper Ridge were selected and received locks (approximately 36) due to high bear conflict and lack of storage options for garbage (e.g. a garage) in these areas. Each resident was surveyed in late July for a quick update on how the locks were working as well as in late October/November for a final survey and comments on the project. Locks were then retrieved from owners in November. Overall, the pilot project was well received and seemed effective in reducing conflict with bears, however it may be beneficial to repeat the pilot project in a different location such as the downtown area or Westsyde in order to get varied opinions and results.



Figure 7. Bear resistant locks used in pilot project 2016.

Media Coverage

This year the WCC was a part of a lot of media coverage in many different forms. Online, and print newspapers such as newskamloops, infonews, infotel, castanetnews and Kamloops this Week did articles about the Kamloops WCC's activities around the city such as garbage tagging, the lock pilot project and BC Goes Wild. CBC Radio did many interviews with the WCC about garbage tagging, the lock pilot project, bear activity updates and attractant management tips. The City of Kamloops media team

WildSafeBC Annual Report Kamloops 2016

also did many press releases throughout the year in order to increase awareness. In addition to these, the WCC kept an active Facebook page to provide information about events, wildlife activity, knowledge about wildlife sign and safety, as well as wildlife videos for entertainment. The Kamloops WildSafeBC Facebook page had more followers and likes this year compared to last year, and thus it appears that variety of posts as well as frequency of posts are important for a larger following.

Challenges to the Program

There were several challenges that the WCC faced this season. As in previous years, the WCC did not have enough hours to get messaging out to certain areas of Kamloops, especially through door-to-door canvassing and garbage tagging. The WCC was able to obtain four volunteers this year, which was better than previous years, however these volunteers were only available at certain times which made coordination difficult. A strong volunteer base continues to be an issue for the WCC in Kamloops.

Fruit trees were responsible for a lot of bear activity and conflict this year, thus more communication with the gleaning abundance program as well as city members is needed to mitigate this problem. Garbage continues to also be a large problem in Kamloops, especially the lack of storage options for apartment complexes and houses with carports that are completely accessible by wildlife. Many complaints were received this year regarding this issue.



Figure 8. Volunteer assisting the WCC at Canada Day, Riverside Park 2016.

WildSafeBC Annual Report Kamloops 2016

Goals for 2017

The WCC hopes to accomplish the following goals in 2017:

- Increase buy-in for the bear resistant locks for garbage bins in Kamloops and deliver a second pilot project with additional locks,
- Build a base of consistent volunteers to assist with the delivery of the door-to-door canvassing and garbage tagging,
Acquire more project hours or additional funding to allow for greater delivery of messaging across the city,
- Improve attendance at and continue to deliver WildSafeBC speaker series that includes different locations,
- Continue to develop relationships with conservation officers and bylaw officers,
- Implement bear resistant garbage bins in all nature parks in Kamloops,
- Develop relationship with TRU World to educate international students and staff,
- Provide workshops on bear spray use and safety for the general public,
- Provide electric fencing workshops for urban hen owners,
- Increase the number of followers of the WildSafeBC Kamloops Facebook page and Instagram account, and
- Promote greater use and awareness of the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program through workshops with the public and school district staff.



Figure 9. WCC next to a juvenile Rubber Boa at the snake walk, speaker series 2016.

WildSafeBC Annual Report Kamloops 2016

Acknowledgements

The WCC would like to thank the City of Kamloops, Ministry of Environment, and the BC Conservation Foundation (BCCF) for funding this project. Special thanks to City of Kamloops sponsor Emily Lomas for all her support and help throughout the year, as well as to the WildSafeBC Provincial Coordinator Frank Ritcey for his immense knowledge and support.

Thanks to the Conservation Officer Service and Bylaw Enforcement for their help with garbage tagging efforts and reducing human-wildlife conflict in the city. Thank-you to Kirsten Wourms and Parks staff for their help with the Speaker Series this year and for building the beautiful new amphitheater. Thanks to all my volunteers for helping me at various events and with garbage tagging, and thank you to media outlets for their stories and broadcasts that helped spread messaging.

Lastly I would like to thank all of the staff members at the Kamloops BCCF office for all their hard work managing my contract, your time and commitment did not go unnoticed. Thank you for this opportunity everyone, it has been a fun-filled and memorable year!