

# WildSafeBC Year End Report 2016

## Kaslo and Area D

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Columbia Basin **trust**



Ministry of  
Environment

## Executive Summary

Kaslo and outlying areas experienced higher than average bear activity in 2016 according to residents. 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 2016 domestic fruit crop was a bumper-crop while natural wild foods were scarce.

Kaslo residents were challenged to find ways to protect and harvest fruit to avoid the food-conditioning of bears and other wildlife during this collapse of the wild berry crops.

Responsible attractant management is the only effective long-term solution to reducing human-wildlife conflict in the Kaslo area. The Kaslo & Area WCCs introduced training and presentations on safe bear spray use in the 2016 season. With our broad scope, WildSafeBC was able to provide Kaslo and area residents with information on many different wildlife species. While black bears continue to be the species most commonly discussed, questions regarding cougars, urban deer, ravens, skunks 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 Columbia Basin Trust, Regional District Central Kootenay, the Village of Kaslo, and BC Conservation Foundation.

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## Highlights from the 2016 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 to 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 to educate tourists and visitors to the area. Keeping WildSafeBC and its message of responsible attractant management in the forefront had continued to be the main focus this season as well as providing solutions to human-wildlife conflict.



Figure 1. Community Coordinators presenting wildlife safety to the Students at Jewett School ~ Photo Credit ~ Molly Leathwood



## 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 had been extensively covered during presentations by the WildSafeBC Community Coordinators in 2016. With an increase of black bear sightings in the village, particularly on school access pathways, residents and school staff requested cougar safety talks at the school facilities which the WCCs worked in conjunction with our two Conservation Officers to facilitate.

## 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 in our region, using the different attractant management methods that have been successful.



**Figure 2. WildSafeBC Community Coordinator Tracy Remple explains Attractant Management At The Meadow Creek Spawning Channel Open House 2016**

## Wildlife Attractant Bylaw

Notification of the Village of Kaslo's Wildlife Attractant Bylaw was published in the Pennywise in all spring, summer 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 pictures show the ongoing need for garbage management and bylaw enforcement in the Village of Kaslo.

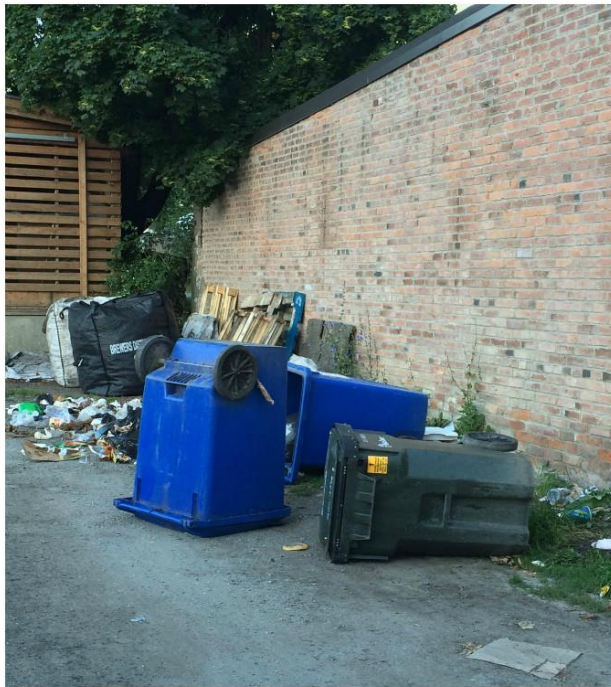


Figure 3. Unsecured Garbage Bins and Bear Resistant Bin garbage  
~ Photo Credit ~ Tracy Remple



Figure 4. Black Bear breaks into a shed to access garbage  
~ Photo Credit ~ Marie Tarr

## **Door to Door**

WildSafeBC received several phone calls regarding garbage concerns and bears accessing domestic fruit trees in Kaslo this season. In response to these calls, the WCC was promptly able to facilitate door-to-door education to restore responsible attractant management in those neighborhoods. In contrast to previous seasons, attractant management education was delivered to several of our outskirt areas that had not previously been a priority. WildSafeBC was able to deliver attractant management education to nearly 150 houses throughout Kaslo and Area D this season.

## **West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group**

Kaslo WCCs sit on the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group (WKBCWG), 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 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. The WKBCWG will be discussing options for community composting in the upcoming fall 2016 meeting.



## BC Goes Wild

The Kaslo Scouts youth group joined the WCC's Tracy Remple & Gillian Sanders for a wildlife safety presentation and then a nature hike along the Kaslo River. We discussed the importance and safety of dogs on leash while walking or hiking. This event was well received well by participants and the Coordinators look forward to growing this initiative in Kaslo & Area D, to reach more people and have more fun while celebrating our wildlife in a safe manor.



Figure 5. BC Goes Wild Wildlife Safety Talk & Nature Hike on River Trail ~ Photo Credit~ Tyler Dobie



## Challenges of the 2016 Season

There were a number of challenges faced by the Kaslo WCCs starting with the fact that Kaslo & Area residents experienced an increase in human-wildlife conflict this season.

With early spring bear activity, but with no WCCs employed until May 1st there was no attractant management education being delivered during this critical time.

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

Another challenge was trying to reach the new residents or temporary seasonal 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 that residents struggled to deal with excess domestic fruit due to the bumper-crop nature of the yield this year.

With the increase of residents keeping backyard hens, electric fencing is in high demand, and the community is challenged to find the appropriate electric fencing supplies in town.

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 prevent human-wildlife conflicts from starting in the spring, the program would be better served with an earlier contract start date to address human-wildlife conflicts in April, or possibly with part-time year round funding.

## Goals for 2017

Over the winter of 2016-2017 the Bear Hazard Assessment and Human-Bear Conflict Management Plan will be finalized and we will be ready to apply for certified Bear Smart Status. WildSafeBC Coordinators in Kaslo hope to work with local businesses to have a good inventory of electric fencing supplies readily available in town.

## Acknowledgements

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

