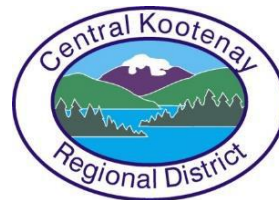


WildSafeBC Year End Report Nelson and Area

Prepared by WildSafeBC Coordinator

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Executive Summary

This was this author's first season as the Nelson Coordinator for the WildSafeBC program. The Nelson WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) is responsible for delivering the WildSafeBC program in the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) management zones E and F.

The season began with a Wildlife Hazard assessment that recorded over 140 waste receptacles city wide. Following this the Nelson coordinator visited and reintroduced the program to the City, RDCK, the Conservation Officer Service, campgrounds and local business. This also involved distributing program posters and brochures to campgrounds, the visitor center, and businesses associated with outdoor activities. As the summer progressed, canvassing included businesses along the north shore, especially those areas heavily impacted by bear activity.

As the season progressed it became evident that bear activity this season was to be extraordinary. This required a great deal of door-to-door education, working closely with, and largely directed by the Conservation Officers Service. The increase in bear activity resulted in many calls from the public, inquiring about how to avoid conflict with wildlife. The coordinator also worked closely with local media organizations to get WildSafeBC's message to a wider community. The end of the season was marked by multiple visits to various schools in the city and along the North Shore.



Figure 1 Regional District Central Kootenay Zones E and F

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-------------------------------------|
| Executive Summary..... | 1 |
| Wildlife Hazard Assessment..... | 3 |
| Bear Activity..... | 5 |
| Presentations | 7 |
| Door to Door | 8 |
| Bear Signage..... | 8 |
| West Kootenay Human Bear Working Group | 9 |
| Kokanee Creek Provincial Park..... | 9 |
| Media | 10 |
| Public Displays..... | 10 |
| Objectives for 2017..... | 11 |
| Acknowledgments..... | 12 |
| | |
| Figure 1 Regional District Central Kootenay Zones E and F | 1 |
| Figure 2 Typical commercial garbage receptacle..... | 3 |
| Figure 3 Garbage Receptacle locations..... | 4 |
| Figure 5 Black Bear RAPP line call locations 2016..... | 5 |
| Figure 4 RAPP line calls Black Bears 2013-2016..... | 5 |
| Figure 6 Grizzly Bear RAPP Line call locations 2016..... | 6 |
| Figure 7 RAPP Line calls Grizzly Bears 2013-2016..... | 6 |
| Figure 8 WildSafeBC presentation Rosemont Elementary | 7 |
| Figure 9 Bear Sign placed near culvert trap..... | 8 |
| Figure 10 65 Gallon Bear Saver Bin | 9 |
| Figure 11 Black Bear feeding on Kokanee Salmon..... | 9 |
| Figure 12 WildSafeBC Booth at Environmental Expo..... | 10 |
| Figure 13 Hid-A-Bag garbage receptacle at Nelson Skate Park | Error! Bookmark not defined. |

Wildlife Hazard Assessment

To initiate this season a Wildlife Hazard Assessment was performed for the community of Nelson. This involved systematically travelling the community, photographing and recording the GPS location of each waste receptacle. An assessment was made of each receptacle at the time, and units with areas of concern were noted. Owners of such receptacle were contacted after the assessment was complete to educate or discuss options for improving the bear resistance of the receptacle. Fruit trees located in areas of concern such as close to school zones were also recorded.



Figure 2 Typical commercial garbage receptacle

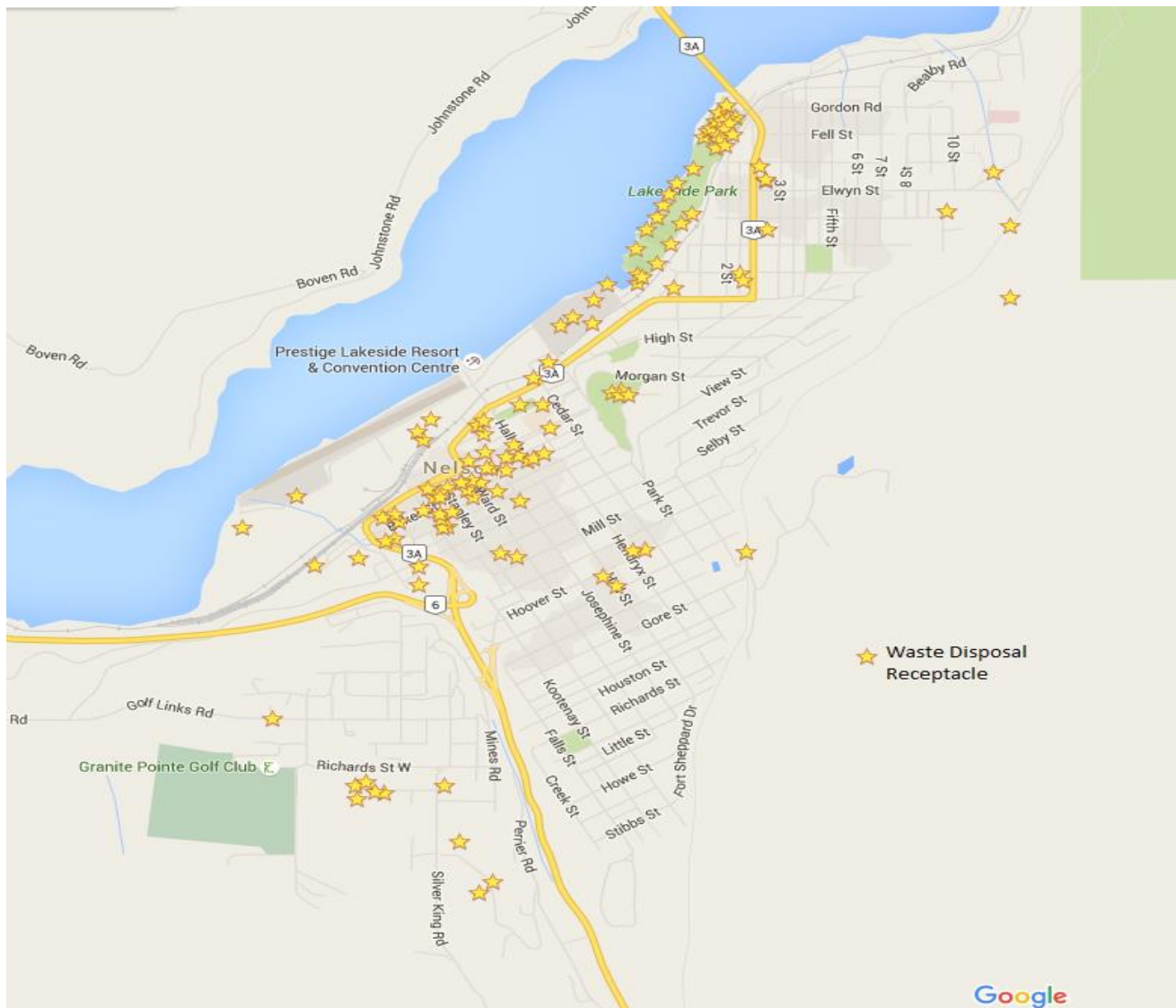


Figure 3 Garbage Receptacle locations

Bear Activity

2016 was a year of increased black bear activity through the entire RDCK E and F zones. 2016 recorded over 450 bear calls. This is over three times higher than the next highest year since 2014. Black bear activity was not restricted to areas adjacent to green space, but activity was extent through the entire city. It was not uncommon to receive complaints from residents that had lived decades in the city, who complained that this was the first time they had ever experienced bears on or close to their property.

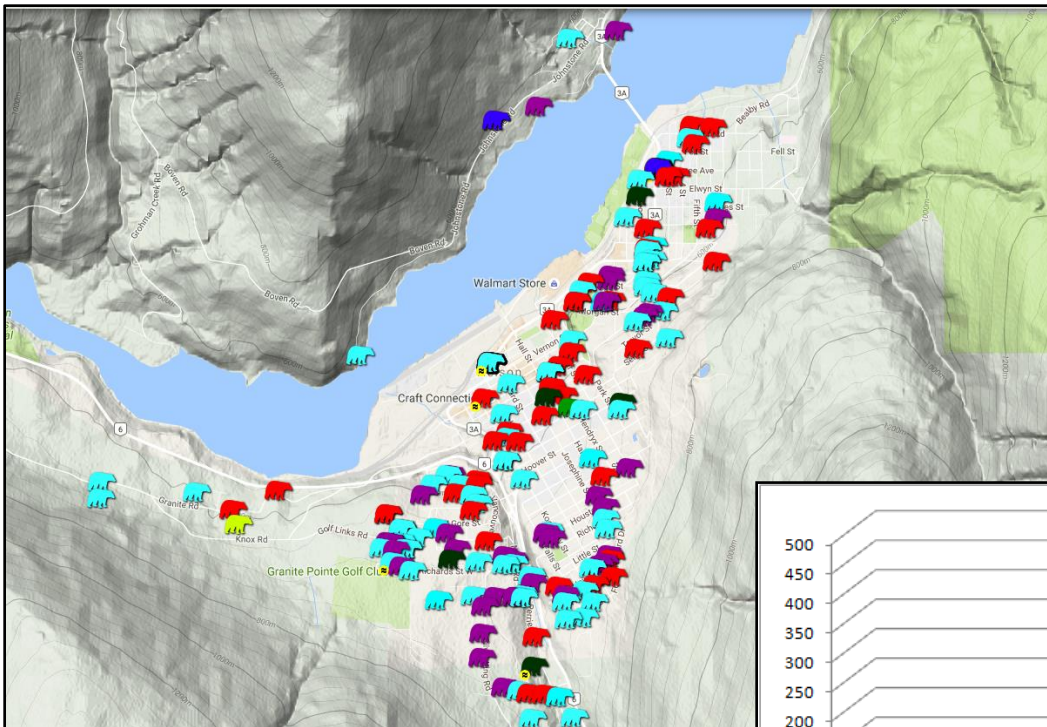


Figure 4 Black Bear RAPP line call locations 2016

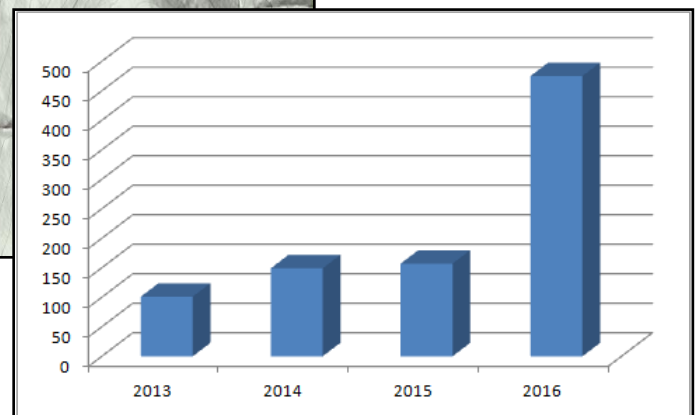


Figure 5 RAPP line calls Black Bears 2013-2016

Grizzly bear activity was also increased over previous years. Complaints involving grizzly bears were mainly located in the Rosemont/Silverking, Blewett areas, where grizzly bear activity is normally experienced. A handful of complaints were made in the greater Nelson area, but seems to be normal as bears pass through the areas.

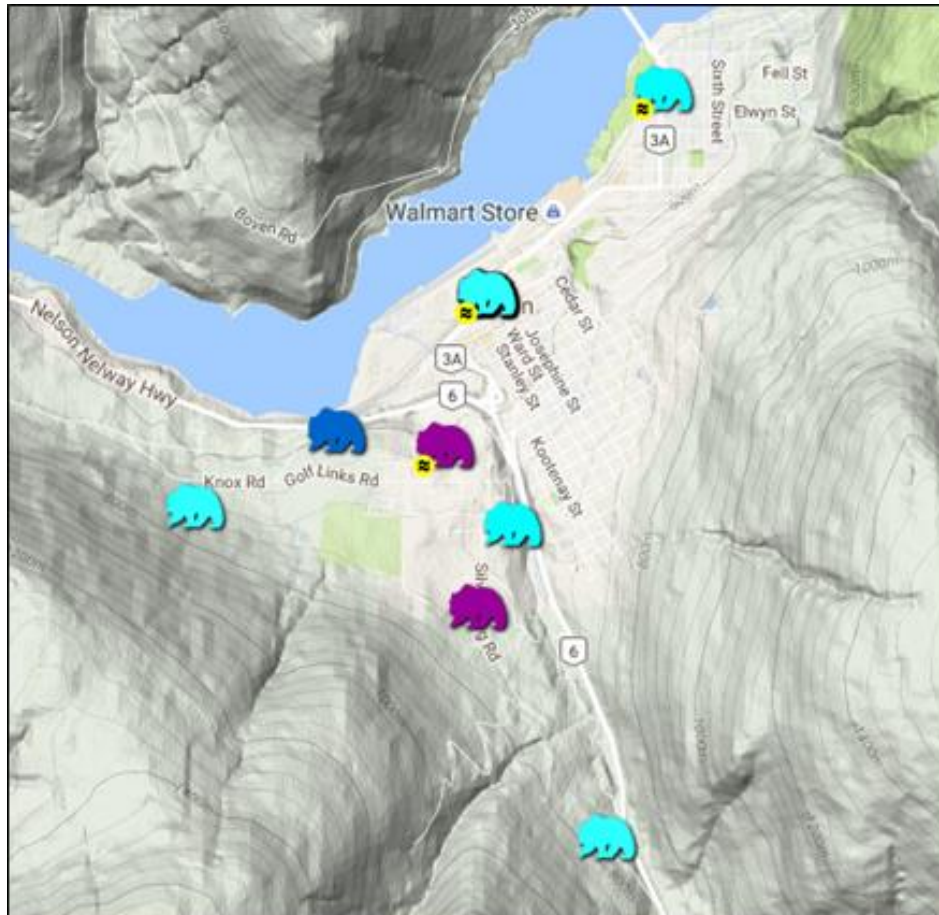


Figure 6 Grizzly Bear RAPP Line call locations 2016

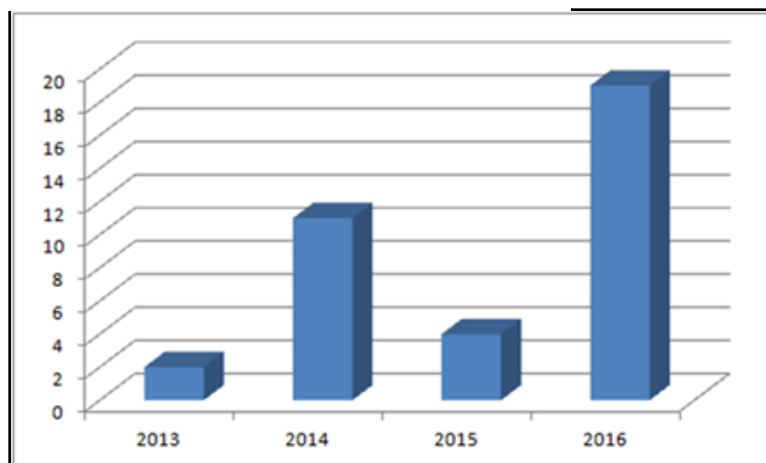


Figure 7 RAPP Line calls Grizzly Bears 2013-2016

Presentations

Throughout the summer the Nelson WildSafeBC Program maintained a connection with young people both at summer camps and after Labour Day in classrooms at various schools and Boy Scouts Canada meetings. In total, 27 presentations were given.

- 3 presentation at SPCA summer camp
- 1 Presentation at Balfour Covenant Church Summer Camp
- 6 Presentations at Ecole des Sentier-Alpins grades Kindergarten to grade 8
- 7 Presentations Blewett Elementary School, Kindergarten to grade 5
- 5 Presentations Rosemont Elementary School, Kindergarten to grade 5
- 2 Presentations Hume Elementary School, grades 1-2, 2-3
- 1 Presentation L.V. Rogers High School Aboriginal Studies Program
- 1 Presentation Boy Scouts (Cubs) Canada
- 1 Presentation Boy Scouts (Beavers) Canada



Figure 8 WildSafeBC presentation
Rosemont Elementary

Door to Door

Going door to door to educate residents how to avoid conflict with wildlife is an important part of a WildSafeBC coordinator's role in the community. It is important on a number of levels. First it gets the coordinator out in the community meeting people, helping the community stay safe. It also expands a coordinator's knowledge of the community and allows them to share this information with residents and wildlife officials. This helps everybody make better decisions. At the start of the season, the Nelson coordinator canvassed areas adjacent to green space that likely would be where issues with wildlife would most likely arise. As the summer progressed the coordinator received more calls from the public and from the conservation officers, which helped to target areas with greater bear activity. 85 hours were spent between May and October in door-to-door efforts. Residents were advised in fruit tree management, garbage management, personal safety techniques, and non-lethal deterrents.

Bear Signage

The Nelson coordinator placed Bear Warning signs as required. Bear signs were placed at the request of Conservation Officers or when the coordinator learned of bear activity that could be of concern. Signs were placed in areas where conservation officer's had set culvert traps, or in school yards when bear activity had been an issue. Also, signs were placed at trail heads, such as the Rail Trail and Mountain Station trailhead, when the coordinator either experienced bear activity or bears were spotted and reported to the coordinator. A couple of incidents of note were when a grizzly bear was spotted on the Rail Trail east of the Mountain Station Parking lot (popular area for dog walking, cycling, hiking and jogging) and when a grizzly bear was feeding around the perimeter of the Waldorf School parking lot and playground.



Figure 9 Bear Sign placed near culvert trap

West Kootenay Human Bear Working Group

The Nelson coordinator was involved in the West Kootenay Human Bear Working Group (HBWG). This group is a multi agency organization that works towards reducing Human Bear conflict in the West Kootenay region. Among the participating organizations are the WildSafeBC Coordinators of the region, the Conservation Officer Service, biologists for the Ministry of the Environment, Trans-Boarder Grizzly Bear project, and BC Provincial Parks. The HBWG has a active program in distributing Bear Saver, bear resistant garbage containers, on a cost share basis. 6 containers were distributed in the Nelson area. This was Nelson's total stock. Many more could have been distributed if the stock had been available. For this reason, the coordinators are working towards organizing a resupply for the following 2017 season.



Figure 10 65 Gallon Bear Saver Bin

Kokanee Creek Provincial Park

Kokanee Creek Provincial Park experienced much higher than normal bear activity in 2016. This seemed to be in line with the increased activity along the North Shore. Bears were active in the parks' campground and over 12 different bears were regularly using the Kokanee Spawning Channel from mid-August to mid-September. This presented a challenge for park operators and WildSafeBC tried to aid in this challenge by visiting campsites to promote bear-safe behaviour and by working with the park as a bear monitor during the Kokanee spawning period. This involved talking to park visitors about bear safety, distributing literature, and ensuring people maintained a safe distance from the feeding bears. The coordinator also aided with bear monitoring while the school Red Fish programs took place in the park.

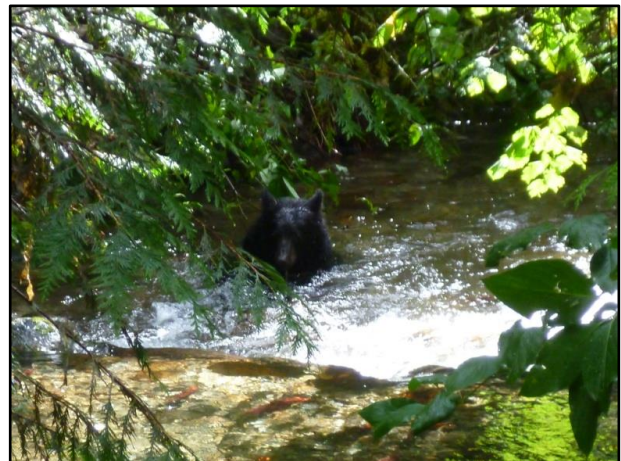


Figure 11 Black Bear feeding on Kokanee Salmon

Media

WildSafeBC Nelson worked closely with the media to present the message to the wider community. The Nelson Star printed three articles authored by the Nelson coordinator on a variety of subjects, from managing garbage, efficacy of bear spray and discussing bear resistant containers. The Nelson coordinator also appeared in several radio programs on 103.5 Juice FM and the Nelson Co-op Radio

Public Displays

WildSafeBC presented numerous public displays through the summer in Nelson BC. Booths were held at the Cottonwood Market, Baker Street market, the Canada Day Lake Side Park Expo, and the Environmental Expo, also at Lakeside Park. The program also tried a new concept of a booth at the trailhead of the popular Pulpit Rock Trail. This booth was run from 11am to 1pm on a weekday. The numbers of people engaged were about twice that of the Cottonwood Market, in half the time. This will be expanded in the following year.



Figure 12 WildSafeBC Booth at Environmental Expo

Objectives for 2017

2016 was this coordinator's first year in this position. It was a good season with a steep learning curve. Building partnerships and public educational role was a focus for this year, especially with the increase in bear activity. The coordinator wants to take lessons learned from this year, and build a strong working relationship with the city of Nelson. The city has made many efforts to reduce conflict with bears, and WildSafeBC would like to see these efforts continue and progress to the stage where the city has followed the example of other cities in the region in obtaining Bear Safe designation.

The coordinator will encourage the city to increase the number of bear resistant garbage receptacles located in public places. It is noted that the city has started to install Haul All "Hid-a-bag" garbage containers in new park developments, such as the Skate Park and the Fairview Park. This season showed that no area of the city was free of bear activity and WildSafeBC will encourage the city to expand the number of permanent bear resistant garbage receptacles in public areas such as Lakeside Park and the downtown area.



Figure 13 Hid-A-Bag garbage receptacle at Nelson Skate Park

Acknowledgments

WildSafeBC Nelson would like to acknowledge the generous support it receives from its sponsors, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Regional District of Central Kootenay and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation.

We would also like to acknowledge the support of all the partners that help in coordinating program delivery and presenting the important message: the Conservation Officer service, including Sgt. Cynthia Mann, CO Nathan Smienk and CO Jason Hawkes, the schools of the Kootenay Lake School District 8 (SD8) and the École des Sentiers-alpins , that provided the program with time out of their busy schedule to allow WildSafeBC Nelson to discuss bear safety to their children.

Finally, WildSafeBC Nelson would like to thank the local media for working with the program to deliver the message to the community at large, such as the Nelson Star Newspaper, 103.5 Juice FM Radio and the Nelson CO-OP radio.