

# WildSafeBC

## New Denver, Silvertown, Nakusp and Area K 2016 Annual Report

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Photo: Michael Brown, New Denver BC



## Executive Summary

In 2016, the WildSafeBC program was delivered throughout New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and Area K by Community Coordinator, Bree Lillies. Thanks to ongoing support and valuable community partnerships, the WildSafeBC Program continues to grow.

The Slocan and Arrow Lakes valleys have diverse communities and each experience their own challenges with wildlife conflict. This year the Villages of Nakusp, Silverton, and New Denver reported higher than normal black bear and grizzly bear activity to the RAPP line. WildSafeBC focused on addressing and preventing conflict with residents particularly regarding fruit trees, small livestock, and garbage. Despite cooperative efforts from many residents, bear activity remained high from mid-August to the end of October.

WildSafeBC aims to work with communities to assist with the reduction of conflict and offer solutions that will help keep wildlife wild and the community safe in the long term. This annual report describes the program delivery for 2016 and provides insight into how the program has concentrated its efforts to reduce human-wildlife conflict. Ideas for how to build on the program for the 2017 season are also included.

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## Program Highlights

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator engaged residents in New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and Area K through a variety of activities. Public education is the focus of the program. Program delivery highlights and achievements are described briefly below.

### Bear Safety Session

On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, members of the Nakusp and Area Community Trails Society and other outdoor enthusiasts joined WildSafeBC for a presentation on bear safety. Twelve participants learned how to reduce the risk of an encounter and the correct storage, transport, and use of bear spray.

### School Presentations

The Junior Rangers program is intended to introduce youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict and encourage them to take an active role in reducing human wildlife conflict at home by helping their families identify backyard wildlife attractants. Presentations were delivered to approximately 400 children: New Denver Early Learning Program (ages 2-5), Lucerne Elementary (grades K, 1, 2, 3), Nakusp Elementary (grades 1,4,5), Winlaw Elementary x5 (K, 1/2, 3, 4/5, 5/6), Brent Kennedy x6 (K, 1, 1/2, 2/3, 2, 3/4), New Denver Brownies and Guides, and Recreation Commission #6 kid's summer camp.



Figure 1: Junior Rangers presentation for the New Denver Preschool

## BC Goes Wild Event

The third weekend in September is the time when human-bear conflict tends to peak in the province. Three province-wide activities were planned: a photo-contest, a “Wildlife Counts” activity, and a colouring contest. WildSafeBC used this weekend of activities to inspire people to keep wildlife wild and communities safe.

### Electric Fencing

As part of the BC Goes Wild weekend of activities an electric fencing workshop was held in New Denver. Fifteen participants attended the workshop led by Gillian Sanders. There was a sweeping increase in the use of electric fencing in the area this year as more people learn how to use them properly and achieve successful results. WildSafeBC offers electric fencing information and assists property owners with design suggestions and voltage testing. WildSafeBC assisted a total of 25 homeowners with electric fencing outreach this season: New Denver – 11, Silverton – 3, Area K – 5, Area H – 6. Thanks to contributions from Harvest Share and The Village of New Denver, two full temporary fence kits were available to residents, both were in use from August to the end of October.



**Figure 2: Testing the voltage of a temporary electric fence**

### Fruit Harvesting

WildSafeBC continued to concentrate efforts on fruit tree management and collaborated with Harvest Share to assist homeowners with the removal of excess fruit from their property. Forty-five volunteers helped harvest fruit this year with a total removal of 1,656 kg. WildSafeBC has combined efforts with the North Slokan Food Program and Lucerne Elementary and Secondary School to have students assist with fruit picks. There is ongoing support and communication with the Root and Branch Harvest program in Nakusp.

### Events

WildSafeBC participated in various events throughout the season with an educational display. Involvement in these community events creates an opportunity for people to become engaged in conversation about local wildlife and the WildSafeBC program. The questions, stories, and conversations that take place build relationships and understanding around wildlife in our community. The main events in 2016 included market displays in New Denver and Nakusp, Garlic Festival in New Denver, Nakusp Public Library WildSafeBC Info Session, and the Harvest Festival in New Denver.



Figure 3: Nakusp Market Display

### Social Media and Press

- WildSafeBC New Denver-Nakusp Facebook page has gained 200 likes.
- Weekly Facebook posts kept followers up to date on events, wildlife activity, and attractant management.
- The Valley Voice newspaper and the Arrow Lakes News printed all submitted articles, interviews, and advertisements with a total reach of approximately 30,400 readers.
- WildSafeBC submitted attractant management excerpts that were aired on 107.1fm “The Arrow” throughout June and July.

### Door to Door

Neighborhoods were targeted based on reports to the RAPP line, recommendations by the Conservation Officer, and reports made by individuals to WildSafeBC. Door-to-door visits are an effective method to raise awareness about bear activity in the area and to share attractant management information. 252 homes were visited this season.

### Campground Visits

Black bears are often attracted to campgrounds in the area due to the location in rich bear habitat. Throughout the summer, with the help from campground attendants, WildSafeBC efforts focused on educating tourists about black bear activity, safety, and securing attractants. 200 campsites were visited throughout the tourist season.

### West Kootenay Human Bear Conflict Working Group

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator actively participates in the West Kootenay Human Bear Conflict Working Group. The working group is a diverse group of representatives from West Kootenay Regional Districts and Municipalities, BC Conservation Officer Service, BC Parks, BC Ministry of Forests, Lands, and Natural Resource Operations, WildSafeBC Community Coordinators, biologists, Trans-Border Grizzly Bear Project, and Selkirk College. The group discusses and supports creative and effective solutions to address human bear conflict in the region.

## Program Challenges

The 2016 season proved to be a challenging one with remarkably high black bear and grizzly bear activity throughout the area. Our communities have the ideal requirements that make it attractive for bears to forage throughout the season.

The abundance of fruit trees presents a human-wildlife conflict situation that requires a significant amount of attention. While many homeowners pick their fruit or partner with the local fruit gleaning projects, there are no bylaws that require residents to manage their fruit trees and unpicked fruit remains a chronic attractant issue. WildSafeBC submitted recommendations to the Villages of Silverton, New Denver, and Nakusp specific to increasing management of fruit trees in the community to reduce conflict.

Tourism and non-resident property owners pose unique challenges as well. Educating tourists is a challenge because of the need for continuous education and awareness. Campgrounds in the area would benefit from information specific to camping in bear country, bear safety, and bear viewing etiquette.

Non-resident property owners tend to only be in the area for short periods of time. Bears quickly learn that they can safely use these yards for shelter. The result is increased bear activity on these properties and an increased concern for public safety in the neighbourhood. Many of the fruit trees on non-resident home owner properties are not properly managed and contribute to the overall human wildlife conflict problem.

Reducing conflicts will require a proactive plan from the municipalities with cooperation from the residents, non-resident home owners, and tourists alike.

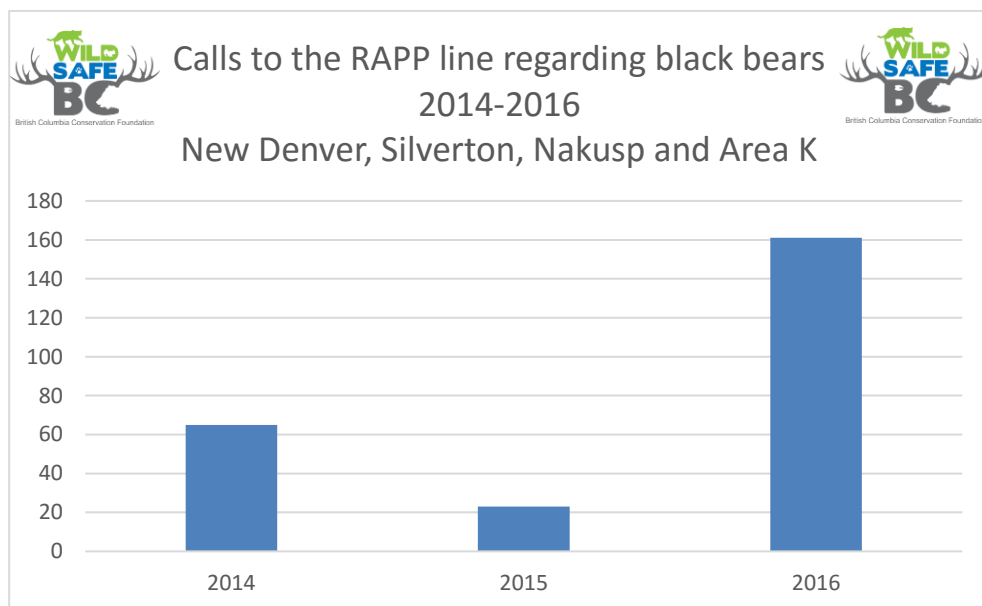


Figure 4: Calls to the RAPP line regarding black bears 2014-2016

## Planning for 2017

WildSafeBC plans to continue offering education and assistance to residents and municipalities to further reduce conflict with wildlife. The following is a list of items to build on in 2017:

- Continue presentations, workshops, event displays, and door-to-door campaigns.
- Continue regular campground visits throughout the peak tourist season.
- Continue to work collaboratively with municipalities.
- Continue networking and planning with the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group.
- Bring residential bear resistant bins to the area through the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group's Bear Bin Strategy Committee.
- Expand the WildSafeBC presence in Silverton, Nakusp and Area K.
- Collaborate with Village staff in New Denver, Silverton, and Nakusp to reach non-resident homeowners about fruit trees as an attractant and encourage pruning and harvesting.
- Acquire WildSafeBC campground signage and information for camping and staying safe in bear country.
- Assist in the efforts to align the Official Community Plans with the Bear Hazard Assessment and Bear-Human Conflict Management Plan.



## Acknowledgments

The efforts and success of the WildSafeBC program in 2016 would not have been possible without the in-kind support from the Village of New Denver. The Village of New Denver has provided in-kind funding of staff time for meetings, brainstorming and planning, photocopying, advertising high black bear activity on the Village website and in the Valley Voice, and covering the cost of the Knox Hall for the electric fencing workshop. In 2016 the Village purchased an additional 25 Bear in Area signs for the program and donated electric fencing supplies to be used in the community where needed.

I gratefully acknowledge funding from the Columbia Basin Trust, Regional District of Central Kootenay, and the Ministry of Environment. Ongoing funding for the WildSafeBC program means new goals can be achieved year after year.

Thank you for the support from the Village of New Denver' Mayor Bunka and Council, Council's WildSafeBC Liaison Nadine Raynolds, and Village Staff; the West Kootenay Region Conservation Officer Service; our local RCMP; Nakusp Director of Operations Warren Leigh; the Healthy Community Society; Harvest Share volunteers and steering committee; Claire Paradis and the Root and Branch Harvest Committee; British Columbia Conservation Foundation personnel and the provincial WildSafeBC Community Coordinators.

