

WildSafeBC Year End Report 2016

Selkirk Purcell

Prepared by: Trish Drinkle, WildSafeBC Community Coordinator



Columbia Basin **trust**



British Columbia Conservation Foundation



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2016 was a busy year for WildSafeBC and Community Coordinator Trish Drinkle. Efforts from previous seasons have created increased awareness and recognition within the Selkirk Purcell Transborder Region. WildSafeBC is now a recognized and accepted program, often being the go-to resource whenever there is a question regarding potential conflict between humans and wildlife.

The relationship between the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) and the Conservation Officers Service (COS) was key to this season's success. Coordinated efforts between the COS and the WCC were very effective in reducing human-wildlife conflict in the Selkirk Purcell Transborder Area.

Many communities that were previously negligent with attractant management, embraced the WildSafeBC program this year and helped facilitate efforts within their community. Another positive step forward within the area is that Salmo is seeking direction on receiving Bear Smart Status.

New schools were also eager to participate in WildSafeBC outreach. The Junior Ranger program was delivered within schools along with the Junior Naturalists Camp with the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Centre. High school students participated in a more mature curriculum consisting of attractant management, back country safety and bear spray technique.

Finally, more programs, additional resources, and new relationships with complimentary organizations helped the WCC experience the most successful and productive season to date.

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Figure 1 WildSafeBC community coordinator Trish Drinkle

WILDSAFEBC CRESTON OFFICE

The WCC continued to offer a drop-in office where residents could stop in for resources or to ask questions regarding human-wildlife conflict. In addition to the office, a training area to facilitate bear spray and electric fencing demonstrations has been acquired. This has allowed the WCC to host a variety of information days with minimal expense and maximum turnout. Brochures are also available if the coordinator is out of the office providing outreach or conflict resolution.

Events hosted at WildSafeBC Selkirk Purcell Office are as follows:

Staying safe
in bear
country

Bear spray
101

Kids Pets and
back country
safety

Urban Deer
101

Understanding
nature signs



Figure 2 Example of WildSafeBC Community Coordinator Trish Drinkle providing outreach where she encourages dog owners to put pets on leashes when encountering wildlife in the back country.

YOUTH PRESENTATIONS

This was the busiest season for youth outreach for the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator. Schools were eager to have more presentation and activities than in previous years. The addition of the Junior Rangers Kit was an absolute favorite of educators, children, and parents. The Junior Rangers Kits prompted much discussion between parents and children, with follow through action especially regarding attractant management. The presentations to the Salmo high school and elementary school were highlights of the season. The entire elementary and high school participated in programs delivered by the WCC, with more plans for outreach with the youth centre in the works. The WCC also delivered programs during the Junior Naturalists camp and other outreach programs, with local and out-of-town children participating. A multi-school outreach project by the community foresters in Creston allowed WildSafeBC to collaborate with many schools in the back country near Creston, providing hands-on safety tips for staying safe in bear country.

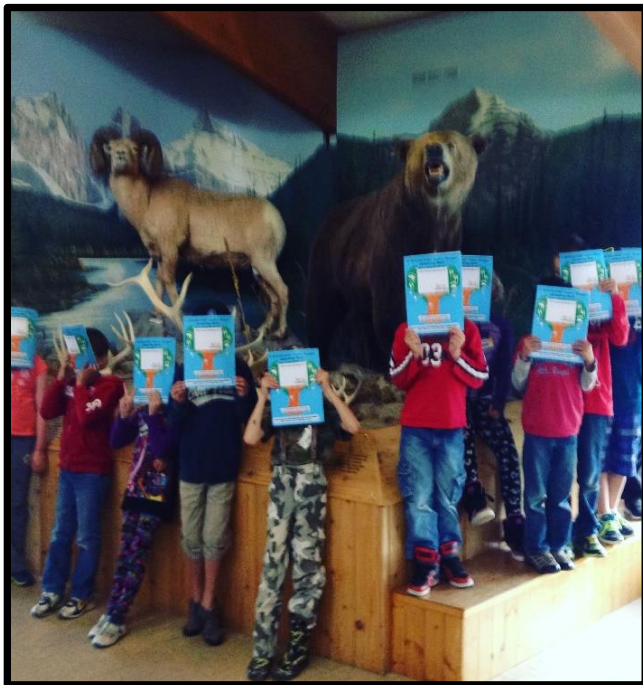


Figure 3 The first Junior Rangers in Creston of the year



Figure 4 Predator Day at the CVWMA

CRESTON VALLEY BEAR FAIR

In a coordinated effort with the Transborder Grizzly Project, Conservation Officers Service, biologist Michael Proctor and WildSafeBC, the first annual Creston Valley Bear fair was launched. The fair consisted of outreach regarding back country safety, bear spray training, and attractant management with hands-on training provided. It was an overwhelming success with over 150 local, and out of town visitors participating in the fair. Funding support was provided by the Columbia Basin Trust with the locations graciously offered by the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area Visitors Centre.



Creston Valley Bear Fair
Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area Visitors Center
Saturday Aug 20th, 11:00—4:00

12:00 and 2:30
Grizzly Bears in the
Creston Valley with
biologist Michael Proctor

12:30 and 3:00
Bear Safety and Bear
Spray Training

ALL DAY EVENTS:
Bear Coexistence Movies
Electric Fencing
WildSafeBC booth
Children's Activities
Concession Available

ALL DAY CHILDRENS
ACTIVITIES 😊

Hosted by the Transborder
Grizzly Bear Project
www.transbordergrizzlybearproject.com
 Email: grizzlybearsolutions@gmail.com

Columbia Basin trust

Figure 5 The Creston Valley Bear Fair Poster

MEDIA OUTREACH

Social Media outreach was at an all-time high, with the WCC belonging to several community message boards throughout the region. Utilizing a social network platform helps spread the WildSafeBC message to many individuals in a fast and efficient manner. Many residents choose to message the social media pages privately with questions and concerns, allowing the program to manage time more effectively while minimizing mileage costs. Juice FM 94.1 has continued unwavering support for the WildSafeBC program with several interviews completed throughout the season. The “Creston Valley Advance”, and the “I Love Creston” magazine have also continued to support the WildSafeBC program our messaging by publishing articles offering conflict resolution and attractant management advice.



Figure 6 WildSafeBC Community Coordinator Trish Drinkle Live on the air Juicefm 94.1

WEST KOOTENAY BEAR CONFLICT WORKING GROUP

Selkirk Purcell community coordinator continues efforts with the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group. The group comprised of local bear biologists, conservation officers, local government representatives, WildSafeBC community coordinators and the RDCK waste management authority. As the group strengthens, the opportunities for communities grow. Efforts of the WKBCWG have been felt throughout the West Kootenays. The town of Salmo heard a delegation to council from CO Jason Hawkes, and WCC Trish Drinkle, resulting in the town seeking direction to obtaining Bear Smart status. The working group has also provided bear-resistant garbage containers throughout the area which has been instrumental in reducing the root-cause of much of the human-bear conflict we experience.

CHALLENGES OF THE 2016 SEASON

The 2016 season saw some of the same challenges as previous years, with a few more challenges becoming apparent.

Ornamental and harvestable fruit trees continue to be a problem. Some residents do not harvest fruit, leaving it to attract wildlife including bears and deer. Education and networking with local greenhouses is showing promise, with the hopes of sparking an incentive program for people who replace unwanted fruit trees with non-fruit or nut bearing trees.

Orchards and their crews occupy much of the WCC's time during picking season. Coordinated efforts with orchards, and the local RCMP have helped, but more work is needed to help get everyone on the same page. Electric fencing is becoming more popular for the wineries and orchards in the area with positive result. The goal is to continue to reach out to orchards urging them to utilize electric fencing, keep camps clean and free of garbage (attractants), and to dispose of cull fruit responsibly.

As the popularity of WildSafeBC grows, so does the effort needed to reach many of the communities in need. More funding is needed to supply the WCC with sufficient hours and travel expenses to provide the outreach needed to reduce human-wildlife conflict.

Tourism based garbage was out of control for a few weeks in August when Shambhala traffic made its way through the community. Overflowing public garbage bins throughout the Selkirk Purcell area caused conflict in many situations. Working with the local garbage collection authority, the Town of Creston, Yellowhead Road and Bridge, and COS brought some relief, but more focus is needed to stay on top of tourist garbage. In an effort to save money, some rural residents have been using public garbage bins designated for tourism as their own public dumping site, further exacerbating the problem with overflowing bins.

Berry crops were inconsistent throughout the Selkirk Purcell area. The areas with low berry production seemed to push bears down into urban areas. Early growing seasons, combined with an early fall contributed to many human bear conflicts in September and October.



Figure 7 Garbage tagging in Creston



Figure 8 Overflowing bins near Ymir



Figure 9 Yahk Fest

BC GOES WILD

The first Selkirk Purcell BC Goes Wild Weekend was a success. The WCC led a group of eager residents on a nature walk in the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area. Focus was on the animals in their natural habitat, and natural food sources. Bear spray education was delivered, along with a scavenger hunt inside the Wildlife Centre. Attractant management, and ways to avoid conflict in the back country were discussed, along with camping, hiking and fishing safety tips.

GOALS FOR THE 2017 SEASON

Continue to help communities such as Salmo to obtain their Bear Smart Status.

Further electric fencing outreach is needed for the Selkirk Purcell area. The focus should be on larger orchards and farms which would greatly reduce the level of conflict we have with bears around these operations

Expanded outreach efforts in conjunction with the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group. By partnering with this group our area receives a great deal of benefit through the access to the combined knowledge and experience of the various participants.

Increased outreach in areas such as Crawford Bay, Riondel, Yahk, Kitchener, and West Creston.

Work with the Town of Creston to modify bylaws pertaining to garbage, bird feeders and urban hens.

Continue to work on the creation of a livestock composting site which would be instrumental in reducing livestock-predator conflict.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

WildSafeBC Community Coordinator Trish Drinkle would like to extend thanks to all those who make this program such a powerful tool for reducing human-wildlife conflict in the Selkirk Purcell Area. The funding provided by Columbia Basin Trust, The British Columbia Conservation Foundation, The Transborder Grizzly Bear Project and the Regional District of Central Kootenay is greatly appreciated. Many thanks to all the schools and hardworking teachers who invite WildSafeBC into their classrooms. It is inspiring to see such an engaged youth dedicated to reducing human-wildlife conflict. Media outreach provided by 94.1 Juice FM and the Creston Valley advance has had a huge impact on the success of WildSafeBC's outreach efforts. The partnering, mentoring and endless support from Conservation officers James Barber and Jason Hawkes and other Conservation officers from Castlegar, Nelson, and Cranbrook. Funding, and mentoring from Michael Proctor and his team with the Transborder Grizzly project help to create a strong foundation and presence for WildSafeBC.

A special thank you to Frank Ritcey, Jen Bellhouse, Trina Radford and their staff at the British Columbia Conservation Foundation who work tirelessly to ensure the success of the WildSafeBC initiative each season. This program is changing the way everyone looks at wildlife and wildlife attractant management. It truly does take a village to keep wildlife wild and our communities safe.