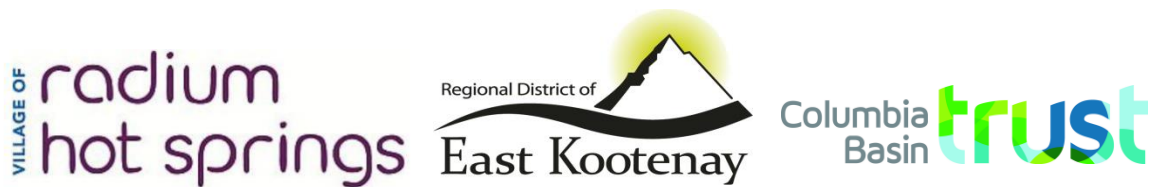


WildSafeBC Annual Report 2017

Radium Hot Springs and Fairmont

Prepared by: Thea Rodgers, WildSafeBC Community Coordinator



Ministry of
Environment

Executive Summary

This was the first year that a second WildSafeBC coordinator was available in the Columbia Valley region. One WildSafeBC coordinator worked within the District of Invermere, and the other worked between RDEK Area F and Area G, including the incorporated Village of Radium Hot Springs (Radium).

The summer and fall seasons of 2017 proved to have average levels of human-wildlife conflict in the RDEK Areas F & G and Radium, when compared to past years. Some of the more notable conflicts this year occurred in the communities of Fairmont, Radium, and Windermere, involving primarily black bears. The instigator of black bear conflict in these communities was unlocked dumpsters, unsecured grease traps, unoccupied residences with habitat and food attractions, and unmanaged fruit trees. Additionally, deer, turkey, and cougar conflicts occurred to a lesser extent within the communities of Windermere, Edgewater, and Radium.

Between June and November of 2017, the WildSafeBC coordinator visited approximately 1,000 houses; spoke with approximately 2,000 people through fourteen presentations, thirteen community events, and door-to-door outreach; and published two educational articles that were distributed widely in local media. The coordinator formed two new community partnerships and helped coordinate the initiation of a regional wildlife conflict-reduction working group involving local government, Conservation Officers, WildSafeBC, and community members.

Goals for the 2018 program include: continuing the regional conflict-reduction working group; setting up a valley-wide Adopt-a-Tree program; hosting a Junior Ranger summer camp for kids; planning a BC Goes Wild Weekend fruit-themed event; working with municipal and regional officials to improve waste management and attractant bylaws; hosting an electric fencing workshop with WildSafeBC electric fencing experts; and developing more partnerships with community associations, short-term housing rental hosts, resorts and golf courses.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 1

Highlights for the 2017 Season 3

 Public Events..... 3

 Door-to-door Canvassing..... 3

 Attractant Monitoring 4

 Fruit Gleaning..... 4

 Presentations and Workshops..... 5

 BC Goes Wild Weekend..... 6

 Community Partnerships 6

 Media 7

 WARP 7

Challenges for the 2017 Season 8

 Geographic Area 8

 Seasonal Visitors and Tourism 8

 Bylaw Enforcement..... 9

 Waste Management 9

Goals for the 2018 Program 10

Acknowledgments..... 11

References 11

Table of Figures

Figure 1. WildSafeBC booth at the Radium Days market in June..... 3

Figure 2. Example of a wildlife-accessed garbage bin in the Radium community 4

Figure 3. The Fairmont Community Association picking fruit from a neighbourhood tree 5

Figure 4. WCC delivers an urban wildlife presentation at the Radium Headbanger Festival..... 6

Figure 5. BCGWW public display 6

Figure 6. WARP data showing all species conflict reports between 2014-2017..... 8

Highlights for the 2017 Season

Public Events

A total of thirteen public displays were presented between June and November, 2017. The majority of these displays were at Farmer's markets or weekend events where it was possible to set up a tent and table. Approximately 950 people were reached via displays.

Public displays provide a unique opportunity to reach larger groups of people, including children and families, within a one- or two-day timeframe. Public events are also a useful way to reach the temporary visitor and second homeowner demographics. Public events attended in 2017 included:

- Radium Days
- Radium Music & Market on Main
- Radium Visitor Centre
- Radium Headbanger Festival
- BC Goes Wild Weekend (Invermere)
- Windermere Fall Fair
- Fairmont Mountainside Meet 'n' Greet
- Sunchaser Villas Resort Welcome
- Panorama Mountain Village



Figure 1. WildSafeBC booth at the Radium Days market in June

Door-to-door Canvassing

Door-to-door canvassing was used to inform residents of animal activity in the area, and to remind residents to be diligent about garbage and other backyard attractants. It was also a good way to hear directly from residents about their own concerns or sightings of wildlife.

In total, approximately 600 people were reached directly via door-to-door canvassing. Another 250 bright yellow door-hangers, with information about the date and time, reason for visit, contact information, and details of current wildlife activity, were left on door handles in situations where a resident was not home to answer the door. If a visit concerned a specific species, the corresponding WildSafeBC brochure was also left at the door.

Attractant Monitoring

The WCC regularly monitored for wildlife attractants within the communities, particularly following reports of wildlife activity. When conducting door-to-door activities the WCC would note obvious wildlife attractants and discuss these with residents. Commonly observed wildlife attractants included unsecured garbage, fruit trees, bird feeders, backyard agriculture and barbeques.

A waste management sticker was printed and placed on public bins and trash cans in Radium and RDEK, which highlights the importance of proper waste management for reducing wildlife conflict.

An example of success during the 2017 season was the placement of a temporary carabiner on a commercial dumpster at a motel in Radium by the WCC. The action was discussed with the motel management and a more permanent carabiner was installed on the dumpster the following week. No wildlife was reported to have accessed the dumpster once the carabiner was installed. Discussions regarding attractant management are key to ensuring proactive action is taken to reduce wildlife attractants.



Figure 2. Example of a wildlife-accessed garbage bin in the Radium community

Fruit Gleaning

Problematic fruit trees were most common in Fairmont and Windermere (Area F), Edgewater (Area G) and Radium Hot Springs, and regularly attracted deer, big horn sheep, black bears and skunks.

Fruit management again proved to be an issue this year with most problem trees located at unoccupied houses or where residents do not have the means to address the excess fruit. To address this, the WCC successfully worked with homeowners in Windermere and Radium, as well as with the Fairmont Community Association (FCA) to help coordinate the volunteer fruit gleaning crew. The FCA and the WCC partnered with local farmers and landfill facilities to dispose of overripe or unwanted fruit.



Figure 3. The Fairmont Community Association picking fruit from a neighbourhood tree

Presentations and Workshops

Fourteen presentations and/or workshops were given by the WCC between June and November and reached a total of approximately 500 people. These included:

- Fairmont Town Hall – WildSafeBC program information
- Fairmont Community Association AGM – Program update and wildlife safety
- Panorama Staff – Wildlife safety and attractant management
- Lakeshore Resort Campground (Akisqnuq First Nation) – Wildlife safety
- Fairmont Mountainside Resort - Wildlife safety and attractant management
- Sunchaser Villas Resort Welcome - Wildlife safety and attractant management
- Adventure Radium Summer Camp - Wildlife safety and attractant management
- Edgewater Elementary School – Bear safety
- Radium Headbanger Festival - Resolving conflicts with urban wildlife
- Radium Headbanger Festival - Wildlife mask-making and crafts
- Radium Headbanger Festival - Sinclair Canyon wildlife corridor interpretive walk
- Windermere Elementary School - Bear safety
- Edgewater Recreation Society - Program summary and wildlife working group
- Village of Radium Council - Program summary



Figure 4. WCC delivers an urban wildlife presentation at the Radium Headbanger Festival.

BC Goes Wild Weekend

The second annual BC Goes Wild weekend was held in Invermere with both WCC's in the Columbia Valley hosting a bear spray and safe camping demonstration in Pothole Park, with an attendance of over 15 people. The COS attended the event to help provide information to the public.

This year, the turnout was much lower than we had hoped due to other events being run on the same weekend. Next year, this event will be planned to occur at the Radium Classic Car Show 'n' Shine or another large event being held the same weekend, so there can be a much better reach with a wider audience. Although we had low attendance, the feedback was positive and attendees left with confidence in their bear spray safety and wildlife safety knowledge.



Figure 5. BCGWW public display

Community Partnerships

In 2017, the WCC established new working relationships with the FCA, as well as being involved in the creation of the Wildlife Conflict Reduction Working Group between FCA, COS and the WCC's. This group is its initial stages; however it will aim to include key community

stakeholders throughout the Columbia Valley. The second group meeting was held on November 7th and included representatives from RDEK, Radium Hot Springs, Fairmont and the COS. The next meeting is organised for April 2018.

The Radium Visitors Center invited the WCC to attend several events in 2017 including public displays at the visitor center, farmers market and the Headbanger Festival.

Additionally the volunteer base to help support the program was strong this season with individuals helping to share WildSafeBC information in their neighbourhoods.

Media

Two wildlife safety articles were published in newsprint and online sources including the Columbia Valley Pioneer and the East Kootenay News Online Weekly (E-KNOW) in 2017.

The WildSafeBC Columbia Valley Facebook page was utilised to promote events, wildlife reports and attractant management information. The total number of post views and engagements (e.g. likes, comments, or shares) published by the WCC were over 24,000. Since June 2017 the Facebook page has gained an additional 50 likes and 45 new followers.

Having an online presence is an extremely helpful way to reach a group of the population we can't otherwise reach through traditional media or door-to-door visits. However, with the benefits also come drawbacks, since Facebook pages cannot always be monitored and it's possible that educational posts may be misinterpreted. For our purposes, using Facebook as a means for alerting the public to wildlife activity and reminding people of the WildSafeBC messaging has been a useful tool overall.

WARP

The Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) is used to present wildlife reports to both the COS Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line and WARP. The community of Panorama is known to utilise WARP to directly report wildlife sightings, however the main reporting method is through the RAPP line. Through door-to-door canvassing and public outreach it is clear that not all sightings of wildlife within the community are being reported. Most calls to the RAPP line tend to involve a direct conflict such as wildlife accessing garbage or fruit trees, or demonstrations of aggression by wildlife. Sightings are often not reported due to the common misconception that it will result in destruction of the animal.

Discussion with community members throughout the valley indicated that 2017 felt "quieter" than normal in terms of bear and other wildlife conflict. However, the COS reported that based on a 5-year historic mean, 2017 was close to average for conflict calls.

The most calls were received during the month of September, as seen in Figure 6, which was due to several incident calls regarding black bear activity in and around Radium Hot Springs. Activity in May was due to a higher volume of calls in the communities of Fairmont Hot Springs and Panorama (RDEK Area F). When compared to last year, 2017 had more conflict reports in all months except June and November.

Local climate and seasonal variation play a large role in food availability for wildlife, and thus influences wildlife conflict pressures. In addition to being an extraordinarily dry summer, this season was plagued by several large forest fires. The 2017 burns will likely influence the availability of food and habitat for wildlife over the next few years as the forests undergo new growth and species succession.

For a more detailed look at conflict calls, WARP report graphs sorted by region are included in Appendix A.

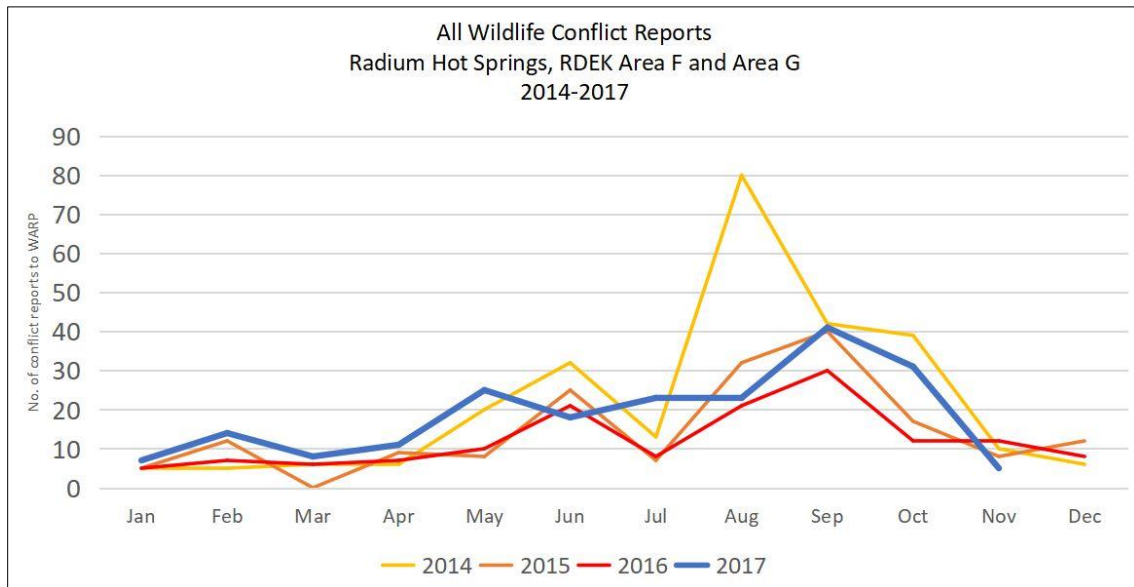


Figure 6. WARP data showing all species conflict reports between 2014-2017

Challenges for the 2017 Season

Geographic Area

Rural properties pose a challenge from a program delivery standpoint, because it can be difficult to locate or reach the property owners of rural properties unless they come in to more urban settlement areas, at a time when a WCC is giving a presentation or holding a booth display.

The large geographic area of the outreach zone was also generally a challenge for program delivery due to constraints on travel time between communities in the valley. The time and distance required to travel the length of the valley in one week was found to be a barrier for delivering more proactive messaging in communities, since a majority of time was also spent delivering reactive messaging when a wildlife conflict incident occurred.

Seasonal Visitors and Tourism

It is estimated that more than 55% of the Columbia Valley’s yearly population are part-time, seasonal residents (Chicanot, 2013). As a result, many of the properties in the valley are second homes, and may be unoccupied at any given time during the year. In addition, the

proximity to four National Parks and three Provincial Parks draws thousands of tourists and visitors every year.

Challenges arise when trying to reach these transient populations of property owners and temporary visitors. Timing of door-to-door visits depends on WCC availability and local human-wildlife conflict situations, but this does not guarantee that second homeowners will be present when door-to-door outreach is happening. Public displays are only effective if visitors are present at the event where a booth is set up, and only if they stop to talk with the coordinator or look at the display materials. If out-of-town visitors are coming from a region where human-wildlife conflict is negligible, they may not be aware of the risks associated with unmanaged attractants or how to handle a conflict situation safely.

Ensuring that seasonal visitors and tourists receive adequate wildlife safety and attractant management information is a challenge. Improved strategies to help reach second homeowners, short-term renters, passing tourists, and timeshare visitors would be extremely beneficial to the outreach of this program.

Table 1. Census Canada and BC Statistics indicating percentage of full-time homeowners (Chicanot, 2013)

Statistic	Invermere	Radium Hot Springs	Electoral Area F	Electoral Area G
Population (2011)	2,955	777	2,635	1,142
Dwellings (2011)	1,912	1,190	3,727	955
% of Dwellings Occupied by Usual Residents	63.8	28.8	29.8	66.7

Bylaw Enforcement

There are no bylaws specifically addressing human-wildlife conflict and/or intentionally feeding wildlife in the RDEK, with the exception of Bylaw No. 900, 1990 which covers wildlife exclusion fencing (W. Booth, pers. comm., Nov 2017). Bylaw enforcement is also challenged in the RDEK due to staffing restrictions.

The Village of Radium currently has in place an Ungulate Safety Policy and an Animal Safety (No. 358) bylaw, both of which are excellent models for the RDEK to consider adapting to include in their own bylaws and policies. Under the Animal Safety bylaw, a fine of \$200.00 is issuable on violation of the bylaw provisions, though there were no situations to warrant fines being handed out in Radium this year. The COS may also issue a Dangerous Wildlife Protection Order (DWPO) under the *Wildlife Act*, however there must be undeniable evidence of an offense and it must involve animals classified as “dangerous”, which does not include deer, sheep, or other ungulates. There were also no situations to warrant issuing a DWPO in this area this season.

Waste Management

Business owners with commercial dumpsters and public bear-resistant dumpsters often experience wildlife conflict when bins are left unlocked, or when garbage is left on or around

dumpsters. This is a particular issue around peak visitor season in the summer months where dumpsters located in publicly accessible areas are often completely full with excess garbage located on or around bins.

The RDEK recently voted to consider strategies to reduce the availability of garbage and other attractants such as fruit trees, livestock, and bird feeders in order to mitigate human-wildlife conflict as part of the solid waste management plan review and future planning processes (K. Murray, pers. comm., Sept 2017).

Goals for the 2018 Program

- Continue to support the WCC by facilitating information exchange, attending meetings, and taking part in the conflict-reduction working group meetings.
- Help with the formation of groups of volunteers who would be willing to manage fruit trees, and work to develop an Adopt-a-Tree program in communities of Edgewater, Fairmont, Windermere, and Radium.
- Deliver pamphlets and educational materials to developers, real estate agents, AirBnB hosts, timeshare managers and condo managers for distribution to guests upon check-in.
- Plan and host a free or low-cost electric fencing workshop in summer 2018.
- Plan and host a free community fruit tree management workshop in spring 2018.
- Continue to work with businesses and residents regarding waste management and strategies for managing waste volumes and facilities during peak visitor seasons.
- Encourage restaurant businesses to install bear-resistant metal grease traps.
- Pilot the WildSafeBC Business Certification program to provide positive feedback to businesses with good attractant management practices.
- Encourage the review of the current Nuisances, Rubbish & Unsightly Premise bylaw in the RDEK for the possibility to include wording that addresses wildlife attractant management issues, such as leaving garbage unsecured and in such a way that wildlife can gain access to it.
- Encourage the amendment of the Upper Columbia Valley zoning bylaw in the RDEK to allow use of electric fencing in agricultural practices other than just beekeeping.
- Continue with bi-annual meetings of the regional wildlife conflict reduction working group, to share strategies and knowledge between communities and encourage greater uptake of wildlife attractant management in Columbia Valley communities on behalf of local government and community members.

Acknowledgments

This program received funding support from the Columbia Basin Trust and the Province of BC Ministry of Environment. Additional funding was provided by community sponsors: Village of Radium Hot Springs, and the Regional District of East Kootenay (Area F & Area G).

Additional thanks goes out to those who helped with the delivery of this year's program:

- Andrea Smillie (WildSafeBC - District of Invermere)
- Sergeant Andrew Milne and Constable Greg Kruger (BC Conservation Officer Service)
- Linda Pfeiffer, Tex and Anne-Marie Deagnon, and Shirley White (Fairmont Community Association)
- Mark Read, Gary Burford, and Kent Kebe (Village of Radium Hot Springs)
- Wendy Booth (RDEK Area F) and Gerry Wilkie (RDEK Area G)
- Frank Ritcey and the staff at the BC Conservation Foundation head office in Kamloops

References

Chicanot, J. 2013. "Columbia Valley Community Priorities Plan". Regional District of East Kootenay.

Village of Radium Hot Springs. Animal Safety Bylaw No. 358, 2009.

http://www.radiumhotsprings.ca/sites/default/files/Bylaw_358_2009_Animal%20Safety.pdf

Village of Radium Hot Springs. Ungulate Safety Policy.

<http://www.radiumhotsprings.ca/sites/default/files/Ungulate%20Safety%20Policy.pdf>

Revised Statutes of British Columbia. BC Wildlife Act, 1996.

http://www.bclaws.ca/civix/document/id/complete/statreg/96488_01#section33.1