

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2017

## Town of Golden

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Photo credit: Tourism Golden



## Executive Summary

The 2017 season began with a slower start for bear activity and conflict during spring than previous years. Conversely, there was an increase in skunk and deer activity that was the focus of the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC). Bear sightings increased during September and October with bears accessing fruit trees, compost and garbage. Increased reporting of bear activity and interest in habituated bears during the fall necessitated repeat conversations in the community by the WCC.

The Town of Golden purchased 400 bear resistant bins at the beginning of 2017 that were distributed throughout the community in spring. Areas within Golden that experienced high bear activity were not those that received the bear resistant bins. The WCC worked throughout the season with the Town Council in Golden to encourage the purchase of additional bear resistant bins to distribute throughout a greater portion of the community.

An electric fencing workshop was delivered in April which was well attended by members of the community and will be pursued as an additionally area of program delivery in 2018.

The WCC continue to engage the Golden community through on-line discussions, radio media interviews, door-to-door visits, phone and email enquiries, and public events.

Although black bears continue to have the most visible human-wildlife conflict in Golden, many discussions were had regarding skunks, deer, and cougar. The community has rallied together, sharing effective means of conflict reduction, including sharing live traps and relocation methods.



Figure 1. WildSafeBC Golden booth display

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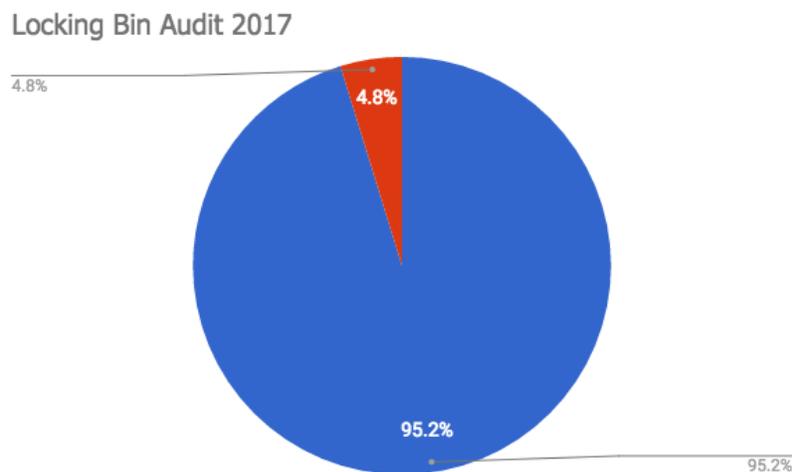
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## Highlights from the 2017 Season

The WildSafeBC Golden program started in mid-April with Sarah Osadetz returning as the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC). The WCC continued discussions with community partners regarding the progress of the Town of Golden Bear Smart application. Work continued on the Bear Hazard Assessment (BHA) and the Human-Bear Conflict Management Plan (HBCMP) with document editing and education completed in 2017.

The WCC assisted in the delivery of an electric fencing workshop with 25 community members in attendance. The workshop was a first for the WildSafeBC Golden program and was well received by the community and further electric fence workshops will become a goal for 2018.

Bear resistant bins with lockable lids were piloted within the community through the introduction of 400 bins. A series of 24 audit assessments were undertaken on the use of the locks on bins to record the rates of compliance. The results of the audits found that 95% of residents provided with lockable bins were compliant in their use (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Results of the locking bins audit (red indicates non-compliance, blue indicates compliance)**

The WCC continued to utilize the Home Ambassador Program network to continue social influence and communications around reducing human-wildlife conflict. The program increased to 13 homes participating during 2017.

Partnerships have been established and maintained with several organizations such as: Alexander Park Elementary (outdoor walks for education), Lady Grey Elementary School (Junior Rangers Club), Golden Farmers Market, Golden Food Bank, Glean Golden, partnering in a pilot project called Harvest Share and Golden Apple Festival.

## Presentations

Presentations regarding wildlife biology, ecology and behaviour help to influence how the public interacts with wildlife – both in an urban and rural setting. The WCC gave 36 presentations during the 2017 season; including wildlife safety, bear spray demonstrations and outdoor walks:

- College of the Rockies x 4
- Lady Grey Elementary (Gr. 4-7) x 11
- APES Elementary (Gr. K-3) x 11
- Brownies x 1
- Electric Fencing x 1
- Parks Canada staff x 2
- BC Goes Wild (Ages 14+) x 1
- Golden Secondary School (Gr. 10,11) x 2
- Junior Rangers x 3

## Public Displays

Interpretive displays were set up throughout the season to reach out to the community in order to provide education, networking and an opportunity for members of the community to share stories and learn new ways of handling wildlife issues around their homes. The WCC for Golden in participated in 10 local events:

- Golden Farmers Market x 8
- Golden Apple Festival x 1
- Golden Ultra Festival x 1

## Door-to-door and Garbage Tagging

The WCC conducted 20 garbage tagging inspections throughout the season which involved placing stickers on residents bins put out early. The WCC noticed a 60% reduction in garbage bins being put out early from 2014 to 2016. This again has been reduced by another 50%, with only nine bins being left outside in the south side of Golden weekly, and ~20 in the north side of Golden on a weekly basis. A total of 460 residences were reached through door-to-door visits to promote best-practices and education.

## Glean Golden

WildSafeBC Golden continued to work with Glean Golden and their partners, Golden Food Bank and Harvest Share. Glean Golden aims to retrieve and share readily available food in Golden and to reduce human-wildlife conflict. The partnership garnered a total of 45 volunteers and 300 hours of volunteer efforts, visiting 30 sites throughout Golden and Area 'A'. In total, over 1,500 kilograms of fruit was picked in a span of 15 weeks, mainly focusing on apples, pears and plums. Glean Golden leads activities in public education, fruit gleaning and attractant reduction in Golden. New volunteers expressed interest in developing more skills in wilderness safety, attractant management, gleaning and food processing.

## Golden Apple Festival

The WCC partnered with the Golden Food Bank, Golden Farmers Market and local farmers to celebrate the harvest season through the 4<sup>th</sup> annual Golden Apple Festival. The event promotes human-wildlife conflict reduction and attractant management, wildlife education, food advocacy and community engagement. The celebration included farmer's market vendors, information stands and an apple press. This year the festival had over 350 participants and resulted over 450 kilograms of apples juiced in the apple press. Compost from apple juicing went to feeding pigs in local farms. Thirty community members were participating in creating, volunteering and partnering in the festival.

## Junior Ranger Program

WildSafeBC Golden continued to present the Junior Rangers program for a second year. The program was presented to the Nicholson Elementary School to 45 students as well as the Lady Grey Junior Rangers Club. The Junior Ranger program is designed to provide information to children regarding human-wildlife conflict. Junior Ranger kits were delivered to program participants as an education tool.

Five students in Lady Grey Elementary have been meeting with the WCC throughout the school year. With parental consent, the WCC has held field trips and lunch time discussions to discuss various topics around human-wildlife conflict.

The Junior Rangers program included:

- Wildlife walks
- A power point presentation to the school
- Research on wildlife biology
- Learning about the use of trail cameras
- Developing goals for the winter season

## Home Ambassador Program

The WCC continued to work with local residents in the Home Ambassador program during 2017. The program aims to spread awareness around reducing human-wildlife conflict through the community. Willing participants commit to managing attractants around their homes according to WildSafeBC guidelines and help to spread WildSafeBC messaging throughout their neighbourhoods. There were 13 homes participating in 2017, compared to 11 houses in 2016.

Participation in the Home Ambassador Program includes:

- Consistent commitment and solid message about human-wildlife conflict reduction in their neighbourhoods.
- Advocacy of safe practices when managing their homes regarding waste, fruit and compost.
- Knowledge of the Waste Management bylaw of Golden.
- Appropriate use of the COS RAPP line.
- Sharing Facebook posts and social media engagement.

- Neighbourhood advocacy of WildSafeBC's best practices.

## Media

The WCC's activity on Facebook continues to be a valuable tool for public engagement in Golden. Utilization of WildSafeBC Golden page to generate discussion around wildlife sightings have proved to be an effective way to promote conflict reduction practices. The information on the WildSafeBC Golden Facebook page allowed the WCC and residents to increase education and attractant management efforts in a targeted way to prevent conflicts from escalating.

EZ Rock radio has been an excellent support for spreading awareness of local campaigns and education. EZ Rock radio provides support by sharing posts on social media, spreading awareness daily about events and activity throughout Golden, including regular interviews to update the public on wildlife activity. Additionally, the Golden Star is supportive with regular interviews and spreading awareness of local events.

## Challenges for the 2017 Season

The storage of residential garbage continued to be a major challenge for reducing human-wildlife conflict in Golden during 2017. A third of Golden homeowners have been equipped with a lockable bear resistant bin through the 2017 pilot program; however those residents with regular bins continued to experience bear conflict. Many residents do not have a secure facility to store garbage bins on non-collection days. There has been consistent reduction in early placement of bins by 50% on collection days in 2017. An expansion of the lockable bear resistant bin program is a priority of the 2018 WildSafeBC Golden program.

## Goals for the 2018 Season

- Updating Bear Smart certification strategies – the Bear Hazard Assessment will be edited by November 2017 to include an addendum detailing the success of the bear resistant bin program.
- Expand the bear resistant bin purchase program to include another 4-500 locking bins for Golden.
- Include Area 'A' in locking bins conversation, purchase and conflict-reduction education.
- Participate in the Strategic plan for Area 'A' trails working group.
- Increase education delivery to tourism operations through bear spray training and conflict reduction methods.
- Provide electric fence demonstrations through acquiring a demonstration kit.
- Continue to grow the Junior Ranger program at Lady Grey.
- Organizing the 5th Annual Golden Apple Festival.
- Partner with the Harvest Share pilot program to reduce conflict and food availability.
- Continue to work with Home Ambassadors for 2018.
- Maintain and evolve the partnerships already established with key organizations in Golden.

## Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC Golden would like to acknowledge the following participants who have made this season's results exciting, successful and a platform to continue in building a deeper knowledge base with a strong commitment to keeping wildlife wild and communities safe: The Columbia Basin Trust, The British Columbia Conservation Federation, Conservation Officers Alex Desjardins and Dan Bartol, Town of Golden Town Council and Administration - Jon Wilsgard and Council members, Jordan and Parker of VP Waste Management, Shannon Liske – Golden Food Bank, Joyce De Boer - Local Food Matters Society, Columbia Basin Trust, Ebe and Ingrid Risch - Golden Farmers' Market, Nicole Du Vent - Eat Pure Mountain Market, teachers, principals and school children of Alexander Park Elementary, Lady Grey Elementary, Nicholson Elementary and Golden Secondary Schools, Karen Wilson - Home Ambassador and Little Mittens, Adam and Andrea Sherriff – Home Ambassadors and Parks Canada, Brianna Burley – Parks Canada, Bear Smart Committee, Nicole Gangnon – Kicking Horse Mountain Resort, members of Golden's Bear Smart Committee and Parks Canada, Matt Fellows, Catherine Parent, Judith Thibault, Frank Rousseau, Raisa Roberts, Linda Shibley, Barb Hankey, Brenda Smith – Town of Golden staff and many others.

With involvement of these people, WSBC Golden is becoming increasingly effective in reducing human-wildlife conflict. Please see below our community partners' logos.

Thank you!

