

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2017

## Selkirk Purcell

Prepared by Trish Drinkle, WildSafeBC Community Coordinator



## Executive Summary

2017 was a busy year for Selkirk Purcell WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) Trish Drinkle. There is an increase in knowledge surrounding attractant management awareness in all of the communities the WCC provides outreach in. The WSBC program is recognized as the most reputable resource for information on wildlife and human/wildlife conflict.

Working closely with a variety of Conservation Officers, allowed the WCC to address human/wildlife concerns in a quick and efficient manner. Providing outreach education facilitated resolve for most human/wildlife conflict situations which was appreciated by the Conservation Officers Service (COS) during this busy season of wildfires, and back-country bans.

It was inspiring to see efforts put forth by communities, who've previously had many attractant management issues. Yahk and Kingsgate had one of the most dedicated efforts of attractant management that had been seen in a long time. Residents within the Selkirk Purcell area seem to be developing an understanding the link between human food conditioning, habituation and conflict.

Many new schools and organizations requested WildSafeBC presentations, including the English as a Second Language program operating in Creston. The WCC again facilitated the Junior Ranger program at the Creston Valley Wildlife Center, expanding curriculum from previous years. The Junior Ranger Program has been a successful tool for outreach in schools in the Selkirk Purcell area. A presentation to the teen stewardship program provided by the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area (CVWMA) allowed the WCC to deliver a more mature curriculum.

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## Highlights from the 2017 Season

Yahk and Kingsgate demonstrated a dedication to attractant management when a grizzly sow, wearing a collar was lingering around residential areas. Due to their dedicated efforts surrounding attractant management, the grizzly bear sow moved on into more natural habitat. Yahk and Kingsgate were given a certificate of appreciation from WSBC.

The WCC was pleased to deliver outreach to many more schools, and educational programs this season, many for the first time.

All the communities in the Selkirk Purcell area were active with networking WSBC messaging on social media, and at their own local meetings.

A delegation to the town of Creston Council was very well received with plans of working closer together in the upcoming year, especially targeting skunks, raccoon, rats, urban deer and cougar.

During the 2017 season new outdoor groups requested presentations and training from the WCC including Creston Valley Adventure Group (back country runners), The Creston Valley Rod and Gun Club and ATV BC.

Receptiveness to electric fencing in agriculture applications is increasing with many more farmers opting to electrify their fences to protect crops, and livestock.

New groups such as the Rotary Club, and Rotarians invited the WCC to speak at their meetings. The presentation included bear-spray effectiveness, attractant management, and back country safety.

A unique human/wildlife conflict involving turtles crossing the highway near Salmo's Erie Lake prompted much discussion and the need to create more awareness of turtles during their nesting/hatching season. Signs were created to signify a turtle crossing, with residents, actively seeking a more permanent solution.



Figure 1: Highlights from the 2017 season

## WildSafeBC Creston Office

With previous success WildSafeBC (WSBC) continued to provide a home base office in Creston with space for events, presentations, and bear spray demonstrations. Providing a central location for events and outreach reduces mileage, and allows residents to drop in on their own schedule for resources such as brochures and posters. If the WCC is out in the field, resources are available in a display from the hours of 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Tuesday through Saturday. Many residents drop in with questions and concerns relating to human/wildlife conflict including:

- Staying Safe in Bear Country
- Cross Country running in bear country
- Bear Spray 101
- Identifying wildlife signs
- Grizzly Bear Safety Session
- Back Country Recreation Safety

**WildSafeBC**  
**Bear awareness and Bear Spray**  
**Demonstration**

KEEPING WILDLIFE WILD AND OUR COMMUNITY SAFE

**Learn Bear Safety Protocol**  
**Bear spray Demonstration**  
**Conflict reduction**  
**Staying safe in Bear Country**  
**Attractant Management**  
**And More!**

**Location: 1525 NW Blvd**  
**Kootenay Speed Shop**  
**Saturday June 24th**  
**11:00am**  
**Family friendly event**



British Columbia Conservation Foundation

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BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CONSERVATION  
FOUNDATION

Figure 2: Event advertisement for the WSBC program



## Youth Presentations

It was an exciting season for the Selkirk Purcell WCC with more students than ever before becoming official Junior Rangers. The Junior Ranger (JR) oath seems to have been taken to heart by many children, for their parents contacted Trish Drinkle with updates of the great work their JR was doing making sure their neighborhoods were free of wildlife attractants.

Participating in the Community Forest school outreach program was again a great success, with WSBC integrated into the entire day's events. Students were bussed to the Russel Creek location, where students experienced true back-country outreach. Around 200 students attended, taking turns at each station set up. The WSBC station provided information about back country safety and preparation, Bear Camping, and wildlife facts.

Walk on the Wild Side reading club at the Salmo Valley Library was an exciting new addition to summer youth outreach. Around 35 new JR's graduated the program in Salmo.

Other Youth presentations included the Creston Valley Beavers and youth heritage days with the Creston Valley Rod and Gun Club.



Figure 3: Junior Ranger program presentation

## School Presentations

New schools were added to the list of schools WSBC provides outreach to in the Selkirk Purcell area. The Yaqan Nukiy first Nations School in Creston requested outreach. It was exciting to work with the students and educators of the Yaqan Nukiy School, especially the “walk like a bear” nature walk with the students in the forested areas around the school. Many students participated in a cross country run which included bear safety awareness information, which is very relevant to their everyday life. The Principal has requested more outreach for their students relating to other back country safety, and wildlife safety protocol.

The English as a Second Language (ESL) outreach was extremely unique for the WWC and included students from Russia, China, Vietnam, France and Myanmar. Despite some language barriers the presentation was an incredible success, with many students asking questions relating to safety. A gentleman from Myanmar was especially keen on the program delivery, for he is a wildfire fighter planning on continuing his work in BC. The wildlife is much different in British Columbia than he was used to in his home country.



**Figure 4: Community coordinator with Principal of the Yaqan Nukiy School and students**



## Hunting/Sportsman Outreach

Hunter/Grizzly Bear conflict is a continual issue in the Transborder area, with multiple conflicts reported each season. The Creston Valley Rod and Gun Club has been an incredible support for WSBC outreach directly relating to hunting. Bear spray is becoming more accepted in the hunting community with the WCC providing outreach at three events during the 2017 season. It is inspiring to see the increase in hunters choosing to carry bear spray, and attending WSBC bear spray training sessions. More outreach is needed and planned for next season with focus broadening to out of town hunters visiting the Creston Valley. Many out of towners are unaware of the specific human/wildlife conflict issue found in the Selkirk Purcell region. Hunters camping beside corn fields in the fall, next to a WSBC “Bear in Area” sign were a concern especially with attractants left out in the open in the camp. Outreach was delivered, and Conservation Officers were also notified of the potential conflict, but unfortunately conflict occurred with a grizzly bear resulting in the destruction of the grizzly. More outreach is needed during hunting season when bears are in a state of hyperphagia.



Figure 5: Trish Drinkle delivering a presentation to the Rod and Gun Club



## BC Goes Wild

With beautiful weather, this year's BC Goes Wild (BCGW) weekend was well attended. Held at the Creston Valley Wildlife Center, morning activities consisted of a nature walk where WCC Trish Drinkle discussed natural food sources, attractant management, and multi species safety protocol with the group. In the afternoon, the WCC coordinated efforts with the Transborder Grizzly Bear Project, and Gillian Sanders from Grizzly Bear Solutions to deliver an in depth grizzly bear safety session, and bear spray training session. The Staying Safe in Bear Country video was screened, followed by an in depth discussion. Over 25 individuals attended BC Goes Wild Selkirk Purcell including Regional District of the Central Kootenay's (RDCK) Director Larry Binks.

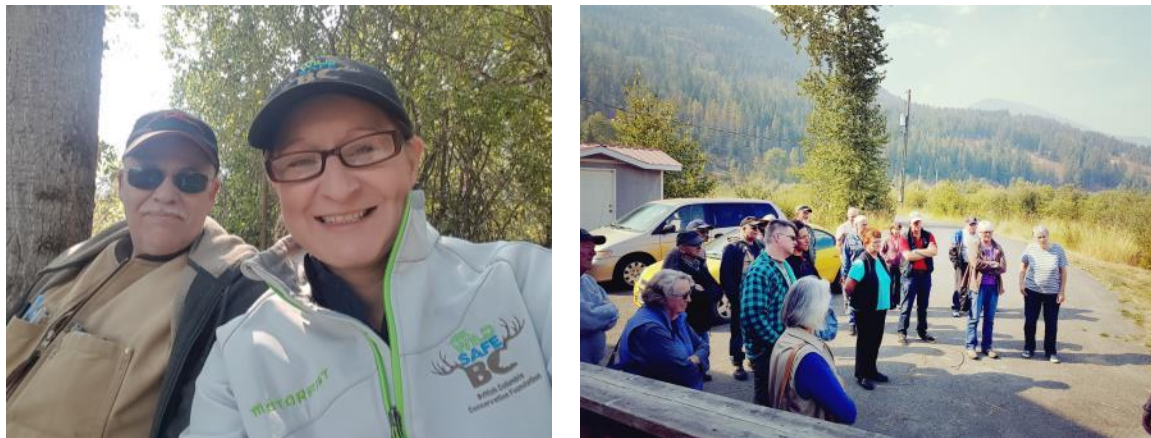


Figure 6: BCGW events in Creston

## Media Outreach

The Selkirk Purcell WCC continued to stay active on multiple social media sites. It has now become protocol for the Creston Valley, Yahk, and Salmo to tag the WCC in posts relating to human/wildlife conflict allowing her to provide information to many residents simultaneously. The Creston Valley Advance newspaper's new editor and the WCC worked together to provide information regarding bear safety and attractant management, with plans of continuing a series of articles relating to human wildlife conflict and safety. Urban deer, rats, cougar, skunks, moose and raccoon are some of the topics to be discussed in future presentations. Radio station 94.1 Juice FM continued to be supportive, providing ample air time to discuss human/wildlife conflict, back country bear safety, and other current events.

## West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group

The Selkirk Purcell WCC continues efforts with the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group. WSBC Coordinators, Wildlife Biologists, Conservation Officers, local government officials and waste recovery specialists network together to help reduce human/bear conflict. Facilitating towns and villages in the area to obtain Bear Smart Status, providing outreach and resources such as the bear resistant garbage bins are some of the ways this group is making a difference in the West Kootenay's.

## Challenges of the 2017 Season

Limited funding was again one of the major issues faced by the Selkirk Purcell WCC. With such a large area, it was difficult to fulfil the needs of the community with the coordinator running out of working hours early in the fall season.

Filed corn in the Creston flats area was a significant attractant for grizzly bears during the fall, causing conflict between farmers and bears.

Ornamental and harvestable fruit trees continued to be an issue, with many hours consumed reminding individuals to pick windfall and ripe fruit especially in the Creston Valley, East Shore, and Salmo areas.

Orchard crews were again cause for concern. Many camps are set up in the area without appropriate attractant management. Several visits to multiple camps were required to remind the orchard crews that attractant management is a must in bear country.

With a large portion of the Selkirk Purcell's WSBC program focused on human/bear conflict, limited time was allocated to addressing other types of human/wildlife conflict including the emerging rat infestation in the Creston area.

The local garbage collection service in the Creston Valley was purchased by another company based out of the Okanagan. This new company was in the process of replacing all metal lids with plastic lids, which are in no way bear resistant. Coordinated efforts, and discussions resulted in the company retro fitting a locking bar on the bins. It is too early to tell if these will be sufficient.

Private campgrounds on the Creston east shore were creating human/bear conflict due to unsecured garbage. Outreach was provided, including a visit from the COS, and a loaner bear resistant garbage bin was provided from the Human Bear Conflict Working Group.



**Figure 7: Unsecured garbage in the Creston area**

## Goals for the 2018 Season

The WSBC program for Selkirk Purcell's will continue to work towards the following goals in 2018:

- Obtain additional funding for the Selkirk Purcell WCC to more adequately service the Selkirk Purcell area.
  - Continued outreach and education in urban areas aimed at reducing the abundance of prey species such as deer, raccoon, skunk, rats and feral cats, to reduce the presence of cougars, coyotes and bobcats.
  - Continue to advocate the use of electric fencing throughout the Selkirk Purcell area.
  - Expand outreach efforts to communities outside of the Creston area.
  - Continue to work with the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group.
  - Continue to work with the RDCK waste reduction initiative.
  - Continue to work with the Town of Creston to modify bylaws pertaining to bird feeders, garbage and urban hens.
  - Continued involvement in the Village of Salmo's application for Bear Smart Status.
  - Continue to expand the school program outreach.
  - Continue to build a working relationship with recreation groups to deliver education relating to wildlife safety.
  - Deliver the WSBC program to new outdoor educational groups such as the Kootenay Nature Kids program.
- Work with partners such as the RDCK, Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions and the Transborder Grizzly Bear Project to develop solutions for grizzly bear attractants in the Creston Flats area.

## Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC Community Coordinator Trish Drinkle would like to extend thanks to so many who support this project, and help reduce human/wildlife conflict. The residents that work hard to manage attractants, educators who invite WSBC into their schools and programs, and local governmental officials who support this program are crucial for the success of this program. Thank you to Conservation Officers Barber, Hawkes, Beetlestone, Thin and Smienk for the support and mentoring. Many thanks again to media outlets such as 94.1 Juice FM, and the Creston Valley Advance for allowing our voice to be magnified throughout the Selkirk Purcell area. A special thanks to Gillian Sanders from Grizzly Bear Solutions for her efforts and willingness to work together for a variety of presentations and programs throughout the region.

Funding provided by the Columbia Basin Trust, The British Columbia Conservation Foundation, The Transborder Grizzly Bear Project and the Regional District of Central Kootenay is very appreciated. Without your funding support this program would be impossible to deliver.

Working together, we can continue to help keep wildlife wild and Selkirk Purcell residents' safe.