

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2018

Town of Golden

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Executive Summary

The Town of Golden is part of the Columbia Shuswap Regional District Area A (CSRDA), along with Blaeberry, Donald, Nicholson and Parson, in the North-East Kootenays. Thanks to the financial support of the British Columbia Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF), the Town of Golden, and the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT), WildSafeBC can continue its goal to work collaboratively to reduce human-wildlife conflict in this area of BC with the goal of “keeping wildlife wild and communities safe”.

The WildSafeBC program in Golden started later in 2018 compared with last year, with the arrival of a new WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC). The WCC conducted a Wildlife Hazard Assessment and met with the program sponsors, Conservation Officers, and locals, to determine the two main goals for 2018.

The first goal was to reduce the availability of wildlife attractants through education, garbage tagging and door-to-door canvassing. The WCC supported the Town by placing bear instruction stickers on the new bear-resistant bins and promoting them on social media and in an article in the Golden Star. Garbage tagging took place over 8 days and 100 “Warning” stickers were placed on garbage bins put out the night before collection. Door-to-door canvassing reached 93 residents.

The second goal was to increase the community’s awareness of WildSafeBC and our mandate to reduce human-wildlife conflicts through innovation, education and cooperation. We provide educational information in four main aspects of life: Living, Working, Playing, and Growing. The WCC accomplished this by participating in 15 events and interacting with over 1,000 people. The WCC also increased WildSafeBC Golden’s presence on social media by growing Facebook page “likes” by 25%.

Garbage and fruit trees remain the primary non-natural attractants that lead to human-bear conflicts in Golden. The WCC will continue to support the final rollout of bear-resistant garbage bins in the future and work with residents to find solutions in managing attractants. The safety of visitors and locals alike will be further enhanced by an increase in bear-spray demonstrations in 2019.

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Highlights from the 2018 Season

Wildlife Activity

Calls to the Conservation Officer Service’s (COS) RAPP line are available to the public and for reporting purposes through WildSafeBC’s (WSBC) Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). For the period from January 1, 2014 to September 30, 2018, the top three reported wildlife for Golden and CSRD-A were: 613 bears, 108 deer and 38 cougars. Bears are further broken down into 582 black bears and 31 grizzly bears. Throughout the province, there was a reduction in reports of human-wildlife conflicts with bears in 2018 and a similar trend was observed in Golden (fig. 1).

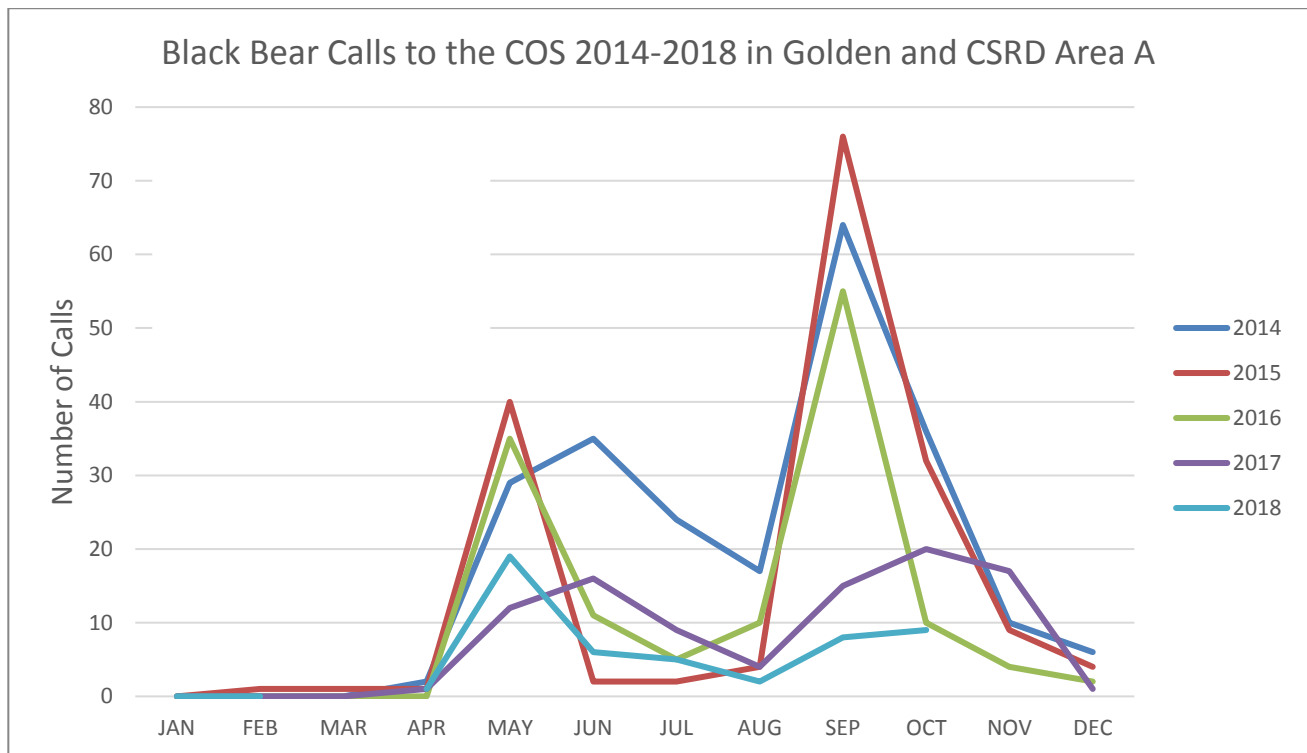


Figure 1. Reports regarding black bears generally have two peaks, one in the spring when the bears come out of hibernation and one in the fall as they prepare to enter hibernation.

From January to October in 2018 there were only 50 reports regarding black bears compared to an average of 142 calls per year from 2014-2017, over the same time frame. When attractants are involved, garbage and fruit trees are the most reported both for grizzly and black bears. Although black bears continue to be the predominant species in conflict with humans in Golden, advice was provided by the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) to residents and tourists on other wildlife species of interest in BC and particularly for the CSRD-A. These included grizzly bears, deer, cougars, skunks, coyotes, and bats among others.

Presentations to Schools and Community Groups

The WCC for the Golden Community gave a total of 9 presentations and Junior Ranger Program (JRP) presentations to 210 participants including:

- Special Kids presentation for Animal Week with the Mountain Child Day Centre Day Camp (July 13th)
- Kids Summer Day Camp with Wildsight Golden (July 20th)
- JRP for International Students at the Golden Secondary School (October 1st)
- JRPs for Lady Grey Elementary School (November 19th)
- Special bear theme presentation for Mountain Child Day Centre (November 20th)
- JRPs for Alexander Park Elementary School (November 26th)

Public Displays and Events

The WCC organized a total of 15 events and interacted with over 1,000 participants. The events were as follows:

- Farmers' Market Summer Season Opening (June 13th)
- Golden Two-Four annual weekend biking event, Kinsmen Soccer Field (June 16th, 17th)
- CANADA DAY Farmers' Market Downtown Golden (July 1st)
- First Saturday of July Farmers' Market, Spirit Square (July 7th)
- Saturday Showcase, Golden Tourism Centre (July 14th)
- Regular Wednesday Farmers' Market, CP Rail Parking Lot (July 18th)
- Special Farmers' Market at the Hill, Kicking Horse Mountain Resort (July 22nd)
- Regular Saturday Farmers' Market, Spirit Square (August 4th)
- Regular Wednesday Farmers' Market, CP Rail Parking Lot (August 22th)
- Closing Summer Farmers' Market, Kicking Horse Mountain Resort (August 26th)
- Saturday Showcase, Golden Tourism Centre (September 1st)
- Fall Community Connections, Mount 7 Rec Plex (September 12th)
- WildSafeBC Goes Wild Weekend, many locations throughout Golden (September 15th)
- Golden Ultra: How to RUN in bear country, Spirit Square (September 22nd)
- Bat week special at the Craft Fair & Farmers' Market, Parson Community Hall (October 27th)

Event scheduling was decided strategically to cover communities effectively and to participate in a variety of activities. The calendar of public outreach activities started with some networking at the Golden Tourism Visitor Centre Grand Opening. This first meeting resulted in two outreach opportunities. The first was a training presentation session for Visitor Centre staff on WSBC, local wildlife and our safety and attractant management messaging. The second was the Saturday Showcase (cover photo). Each Saturday throughout July and August, local experts and presenters set up at the picnic tables outside the Visitor Centre and provide presentations or workshop for visitors. Themes in high demand by visitors include local culture, history, nature

and wildlife. This was a great opportunity to present *WildSafeBC Golden on How to Keep Wildlife Wild and Community Safe*, followed by a Q&A session with the public.

A highlight of the season was the well-attended *Community Connections and Fall Registration Night* hosted by Golden's recreation services department. This expo-style evening provided an ideal place for members of the community to meet local organizations. "This annual event showcases the many organizations that provide great value to our community," says Mayor Ron Oszust. "It's a great way for new and long-time members of our community to be informed, get active and get involved."¹

On September 15th, Golden celebrated WSBC's annual BC Goes Wild Weekend (BCGWW) with three events including:

- A WSBC booth at the Local Food Matters special farmers' market.
- A screening of the *Staying Safe in Bear Country* video, followed by a WSBC presentation at the Golden branch of the Okanagan Regional Library.
- A bear spray presentation where participants could practice the S.P.R.A.Y. technique with inert bear spray.

Despite the rain and cooler weather, a total of 69 people participated in these events. This outreach effort led to a publication of an article in the Golden Star which also passed on our messaging.

Social Media and Press

The [WildSafeBC Golden](#) Facebook page continues to be a source of local and provincial information on wildlife and the WildSafeBC program. The page increased its "Likes" by 25% since the beginning of 2018 and now stands at 447. The page had over 100 posts this season and reached over 30,000 people. Examples of popular posts included images collected by the WCC with a remote wildlife camera (fig.2). These were used to communicate local safety messaging and management attractant tips.

In our outreach efforts, it is important to be inclusive of the many generations that interact with wildlife. The WCC wrote a short article for the Golden Seniors Community Centre Newsletter (pending publication) to promote keeping wildlife wild and communities safe.

¹ <http://www.golden.ca/What-s-New/Find-out-what%E2%80%99s-happening-this-fall-in-Golden.aspx>



Figure 2. Sample of the local wildlife photographed with a wildlife trail camera near the Cedar House trail head, a popular trail for local and visiting hikers, runners, mountain bikers, climbers, etc. Photos are arranged in chronological order from oldest to most recent (June 5th to June 26th 2018). From top left to bottom right: deer, black bear sow and cub, black bear cub, black bear, elk, black bear, elk, coyote, and coyote.

Garbage Tagging and Auditing

In keeping with its commitment to reducing human-wildlife conflicts, the Town of Golden is replacing all of its residents' green garbage bins with a form of bear resistant lockable bin. Collaborative work between the Town of Golden, the Conservation Officer Service, WildSafeBC and the solid waste management services provider (VP Waste Limited) resulted in the rolling out of the first 400 of the new bins in the Golden Mobile Home Park and Alexander Drive neighbourhoods.

"Our deployment strategy is to target traditionally problematic areas first with the least problematic areas receiving their bins by 2020," says Chief Administrative Officer, Jon Wilsgard. "Priority deployment areas are entirely based on years of research by the WildSafeBC Program and the recommendations of the local Conservation Officer Service."²

² <http://www.golden.ca/What-s-New/First-batch-of-bear-resistant-garbage-bins-roll-ou.aspx>



Figure 3. Left to right: Co-founder of VP Waste Solutions Ltd Jordan Peterson, Bylaw Enforcement Officer Graeme Murphy, WildSafeBC Golden Community Coordinator Johanne Lamoureux, and Conservation Officer Dan Bartol, all gathered around the bear-resistant bin in front of the Golden Town Hall (June 1st 2018). Newer bear bin sticker to be fastened to the bear-resistant bins. Example of a properly locked latch.

“We have found that when used as per the instructions – the bear-resistant bins are very functional,” says the mayor of the Town of Golden, Ron Oszust. “While somewhat costly, these bins are another tool we can use to effectively chip away at lessening conflicts with wildlife. We will be expecting improvements to this condition through the proper use of these new bins and less forgiving to those residents who still manage to experience bear problems because of their own actions or inactions. Above all, a change to human behaviour is what is needed to reduce human-wildlife conflict.”³

In the spring of 2018, approximately 460 more bins were deployed. They were accompanied by an instruction sheet outlining the rules and expectations for residents. The Conservation Officer Service and local bylaw officers are now enforcing and issuing fines to residents who are not using the bins properly. In order to increase compliance, and to remind residents about the rules, the Town had 900 bear-shaped instruction stickers produced and many of these have been installed by the WCC. Information was also shared in the Golden Star and through sponsor websites and social media.

Garbage tagging was performed eight times and 100 “Warning” education stickers were placed on bins put out the night before collection (fig. 4). The Town’s bylaw requires bins to be placed, unclipped for the new bear-resistant ones, on curbside between 6 am and 8 am on collection days only.



Figure 4. Garbage “Warning” tags and bear-shaped instructional stickers.

³ <http://www.golden.ca/What-s-New/Second-batch-of-new-bear-resistant-garbage-bins-ro.aspx>

Door-to-Door Education

The WCC went door to door based on requests either from members of the public, bylaw department or the COS. These were directed to areas with unsecured attractants. As of this report, 93 people were contacted either directly or through a WildSafeBC “while you were out” door hanger stapled with a brochure regarding the wildlife of concern.

Fruit Tree Outreach and Education

WildSafeBC Golden played a role in connecting local volunteers with local fruit tree and animal owners. Domestic fruit is a reliable source of high calorie food for bears at a time when they are preparing for winter hibernation. It is important to keep bears away from these unnatural foods by picking fruit early before it is full-ripened. The WSBC Golden FB page was instrumental in bringing together community efforts to reduce attractants by connecting volunteers with those interested in picked fruit such as horse and pig owners.

Challenges for the 2018 Season

Managing attractants such as garbage and fruit trees continues to be a challenge for reducing human-wildlife conflict in the Town of Golden and the CSRD-A. In Golden, a second round of bear-resistant lockable bins were distributed in 2018 (fig. 5). There remains about a third of the residences that have not yet been equipped with bear-resistant lockable bins. Regardless of the type of bins currently used, it is important to abide by the Town’s bylaw as to when they can be put out for collection.



Figure 5. A map of the Town of Golden showing where bear-resistant bins were distributed in the second round of distribution (left). Residential solid waste and recycling collection areas and schedule with orange on Wednesday and green on Thursday (right). Credit: Town of Golden.

Goals and Opportunities for 2019

- Support the final rollout of the bear-resistant bins program throughout the Town of Golden.
- Provide further educational activities on attractant managements with an emphasis on garbage and fruit trees.
- Continue to develop partnerships with key organizations in Golden.
- Offer more hands-on bear spray demonstrations, for both locals and tourists alike.

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Golden Community Coordinator would like to thank its sponsors, namely the British Columbia Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation, the Town of Golden, and the Columbia Basin Trust. Thank you also to WildSafeBC Golden's working partners, Conservation Officers Dan Bartol and Alexandre Desjardins, Bylaw Enforcement Officer Graeme Murphy, the Town of Golden Town Council and Chief Administrator Officer Jon Wilsgard. The WCC also recognizes the support of Jordan and Parker from VP Waste Solutions Ltd., Alycia from Visitor Information Golden Tourism, Ingrid, Ebe, and Kay from Golden's Farmers' Market, Joyce from Local Food Matters, Kathy from the ORL, the Town of Golden staff – Kyle, Carrie, Jordan, and many more!

Finally, last but not the least, special thanks to Michel Beauchemin, Resource Conservation biologist for Parks Canada, for his continued volunteering efforts for the program throughout the season. *Merci !*

References

1. <http://www.golden.ca/What-s-New/Find-out-what%E2%80%99s-happening-this-fall-in-Golden.aspx>
2. <http://www.golden.ca/What-s-New/First-batch-of-bear-resistant-garbage-bins-roll-ou.aspx>
3. <http://www.golden.ca/What-s-New/Second-batch-of-new-bear-resistant-garbage-bins-ro.aspx>