

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2018

City of Kamloops

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Executive Summary

Reports of bears and other wildlife in conflict were lower than average in 2018. This mirrored a provincial trend that may be a result of the higher than average availability of natural foods.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) focussed their efforts this year on more door-to-door canvassing and garbage tagging in neighbourhoods that weren't reached in 2017. A total of 246 residents were reached through door-to-door canvassing in high wildlife activity areas. The WCC gave 248 garbage bins educational "Warning" stickers for having their garbage out the night before collection. The WCC also assisted the City of Kamloops with a survey with regards to roll-out carts.

The WCC connected with many community groups in order to reach more people about human-wildlife conflicts. A total of 10 events were attended and over 2700 students were reached through Junior Ranger Program presentations. WildSafeBC presentations were provided to 5 groups and reached approximately 280 attendees. In addition to these efforts, the WCC used media releases, interviews and social media to help spread messaging across the city. The number of WildSafeBC Kamloops Facebook page "likes" increased to 526, which is a 20% increase since the beginning of 2018.

One of the ongoing challenges faced in 2018 included residents struggling to keep their garbage secure from bears if they lived in apartment complexes or lacking enclosed garages. The extreme wildfire season and poor air quality also made outdoor outreach activities challenging over the summer.

Goals for the 2019 season include the continuation of outreach education programs, increased volunteer recruitment and finding long-term solutions for securing garbage in high bear-conflict areas.

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Highlights from the 2017 Season

Wildlife Activity

According to the Conservation Officer Services' Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line and data from WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP), there were approximately 116 black bear, 21 cougar, 29 coyote and 89 deer conflicts from April to October 28th (week 44) in 2018 (fig. 1). Provincially, calls to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) regarding black bears were lower than average overall and this may be a result of locally abundant natural foods. This trend was also reflected in Kamloops and black bear reports were much lower in comparison to previous years (fig. 2).

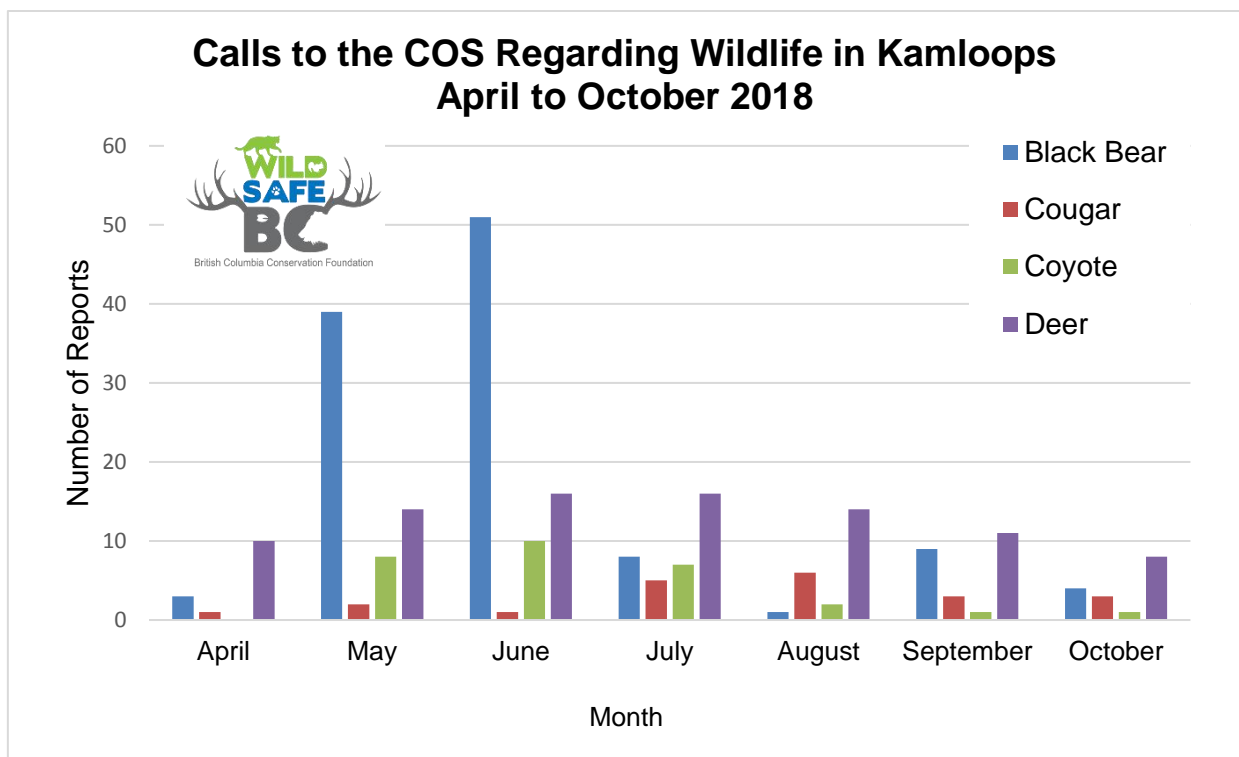


Figure 1. Wildlife encounters reported to RAPP line from April to October 2018 in Kamloops.

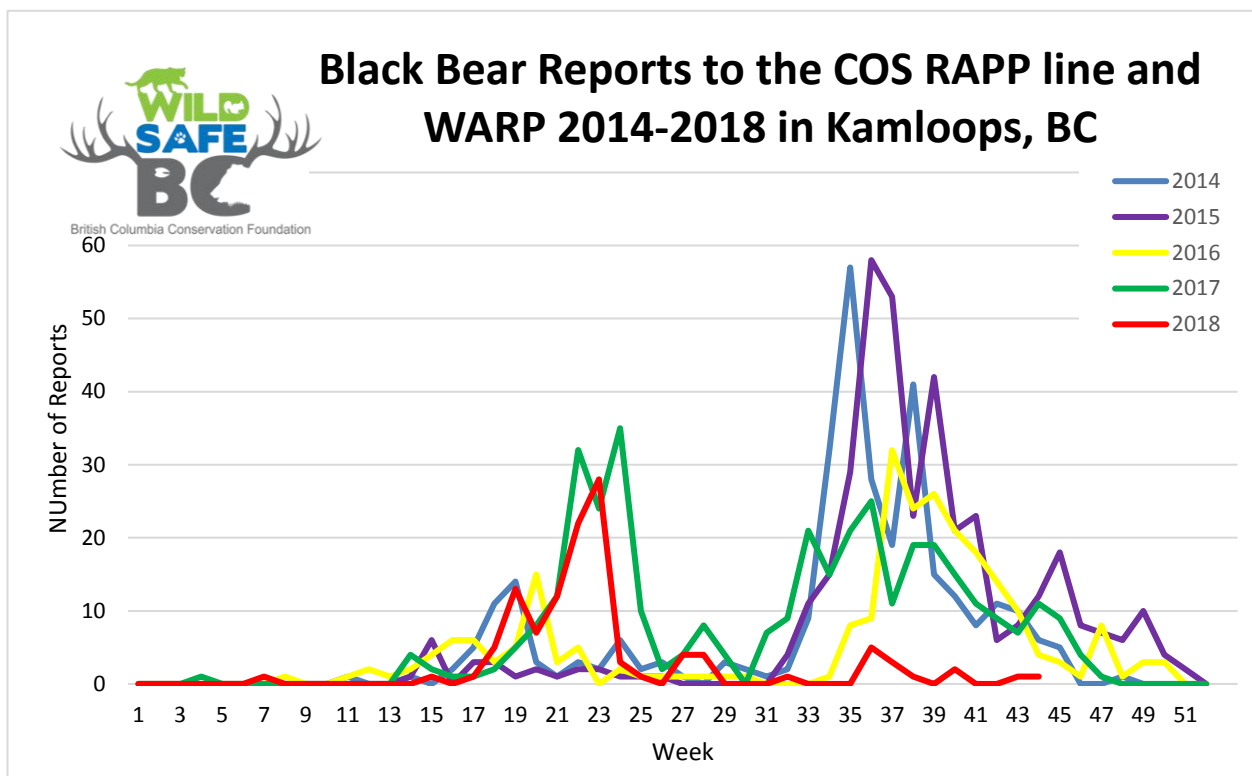


Figure 2. Black bear reports to RAPP line and WARP 2014 to October 2018 in Kamloops, BC.

Public Presentations

In addition to the Junior Ranger Program (JRP) in schools, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) gave presentations to many other groups around the city. Presentations were given to BC Wildlife Park kid’s camp and the Big Little Science Centre camp. The McQueen Lake day use area was also used for elementary school presentations, allowing students to learn about wildlife in nature (fig.3). The WCC continued the strong relationship with Kamloops Immigration Services by providing a general attractant and wildlife safety presentation; this supplied many immigrants with their first knowledge about the wildlife in Canada and how to be safe in the wild and in the community.



Figure 3. The WCC teaching elementary students about bears and bear safety at McQueen Lake.

Junior Ranger Program

The WCC attended several elementary schools this year to deliver the Junior Ranger Program. Every school received a PowerPoint presentation and “show and tell” of skulls, tracks, and other animal props. A total of 2755 students were visited and 884 Junior Ranger kits (colouring book, pencil, button, badge, and membership card) were given out to the community.

The following schools were visited:

- Arthur Hatton Elementary
- Arthur Stevenson Elementary
- Dallas Elementary
- David Thompson Elementary
- Juniper Ridge Elementary
- Kamloops School of the Arts
- Lloyd George Elementary
- Parkcrest Elementary
- Rayleigh Elementary
- RL Clemitson Elementary
- South Sahali Elementary
- Westmount Elementary

Public Events

The WCC attended many events in 2018 (fig. 4). These events allowed the WCC to have one-on-one conversations with locals and tourists about human-wildlife conflict, as well as hand out educational materials such as the WildSafeBC brochures and rulers.

Events attended in 2018 were as follows:

- BC Bears' Day at the BC Wildlife Park
- BC Goes Wild Weekend
- Canada Day at Riverside Park
- Downtown Merchant's Market
- Green Living Expo
- Kamloops Farmer's Market (Wednesdays)
- Overlander's Day
- Salute to the Sockeye at Adam's River
- Thompson Rivers University Back to School BBQ
- TteS Health and Safety Day Open House



Figure 4. The WCC attending the Downtown Kamloops Merchant's Market.

BC Goes Wild

The Kamloops WCC participated in WildSafeBC's third annual BC Goes Wild Weekend (BCGWW). This event was province-wide and took place on September 16th and 17th. This year the WCC held a nature walk for 17 participants in partnership with the Thompson Rivers University (TRU), Kamloops Immigration Services Hiking Club and Friends of Kamloops meet-up group. The two hour walk took place at Isobel Lake on September 16th and it was an opportunity to provide the participants with a demonstration on the proper use of bear (fig. 5). The event was well received and connections were formed to book WildSafeBC presentations in the future.



Figure 5. Kamloops WCC instructing the proper use of bear spray to the BCGWW participants.

Garbage Tagging

Several neighborhoods in Kamloops received garbage tagging by the WCC this season. This education program involves using education “Warning” stickers to tag garbage bins set out the night before collection. This education program also supports the “Bear Smart Bylaw” in effect from April 1st to November 30th prohibiting residents from placing bins on the curb prior to 4:00 am on collection day. Juniper Ridge/West continued to have the lowest rate of early set out rate at 1%. Westsyde had the highest early set out rate of 14%. Neighbourhoods were followed up with door-to-door education to discuss the importance of putting carts out at the appropriate time. It is important that the WCC always have a volunteer or other staff member assist for these safety reasons and to also make the garbage tagging process more efficient. A total of 248 bins were tagged in the City of Kamloops.

The following neighborhoods received garbage tagging this year:

- Aberdeen (1)
- Juniper Ridge (2)
- Juniper West (2)
- Upper Sahali (1)
- Valleyview (1)
- Westsyde (1)

The WCC also assisted the City of Kamloops in surveying the public about bear-resistant roll-out carts to potentially implement them in the coming years. This would potentially address the issue of proper garbage cart storage with many residents.

Door-to-Door Canvassing

Door-to-Door canvassing covered several high conflict areas in Kamloops this year that were reached previously. Efforts were focused on streets in Upper Sahali and Westsyde where bear and other wildlife conflicts continued to be high. A total of 246 residents were contacted through door-to-door canvassing this year in the following neighbourhoods:

- Aberdeen (2)
- Juniper Ridge (1)
- Juniper West (1)
- Upper Sahali (5)
- Westsyde (4)

Media Coverage

This year the WCC was able to utilize different forms of media in order to help spread awareness on wildlife conflicts and attractant management. The City of Kamloops media team was able to release a piece on fawning season by the WCC, which was followed up with an interview by Radio NL. In addition to these, the WCC was able to increase the amount of followers and likes on the Kamloops WildSafeBC Facebook page by 87, pushing the total over 500. Informative posts on local wildlife conflicts including garbage tagging and WARP received a large amount of views. The page was also used to advertise for local events the WCC would be attending.

Challenges to the 2018 Program

There were a few challenges faced by the WCC this season. The air quality and extreme wildfire conditions reduced the summer delivery of outdoor activities such as door-to-door canvassing and garbage tagging. A few events were cancelled and some had to be rescheduled - potentially reducing attendance.

Garbage continues to be a large problem in Kamloops, especially the lack of storage options for apartment complexes and houses with carports that are easily accessible by wildlife. Many complaints were received again this year regarding this issue and the Bear Smart Bylaw. Until bear resistant bins are an option for residents, this will continue to be an issue for residents.

Volunteers continue to be challenging to recruit over the summer months. Volunteers are vital for garbage tagging and for assistant at long events. A volunteer list was obtained at the 2018 TRU Back to School BBQ which will hopefully help out the 2019 WCC.

Goals for 2019

The following activities should be pursued in 2019:

- Continue to increase support for bear resistant garbage carts in Kamloops, especially in high-conflict areas.
- Build a base of consistent volunteers to assist with WSBC activities.
- Continue to develop relationships with conservation and bylaw officers.
- Continue to increase the followers of the WildSafeBC Kamloops Facebook page.
- Increase the number of bear spray demonstration workshops.
- Promote greater use and awareness of the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program.
- Deliver extended Junior Ranger programs.
- Develop relationships with other community association groups around Kamloops.

Acknowledgements

The WCC would like to thank the City of Kamloops and the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy for their financial support of this program. Special thanks to City of Kamloops sponsor Emily Lomas for her support and help throughout the season, as well as to the WildSafeBC Senior Provincial Coordinator Frank Ritcey for all of his guidance and invaluable knowledge this season.

Thank you to the COS for their open communication and assistance with education on current wildlife conflicts. Thank you to all my volunteers for helping with garbage tagging. The WCC would also like to thank media outlets for their stories and broadcasts that helped spread messaging on wildlife conflicts in Kamloops. The WCC would also like to thank the citizens of Kamloops for their continued support and willingness to learn about wildlife in our community. Lastly, the WCC would like to send a huge thank you to all of the staff members at the Kamloops BCCF office. All of your time, hard work, and assistance in times of need did not go unnoticed.