

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2018

Kaslo and Area D*

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Ministry of
Environment



Welcome to the
Village of Kaslo

Executive Summary

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) for Kaslo was determined to keep attractant management at the forefront of resident's regard through door-to-door canvassing, presentations and educational displays. Kaslo residents were challenged to find more innovative ways to protect and harvest fruit to avoid food conditioning of bears and other wildlife during peak season for domestic fruit. Responsible attractant management is the most critical and effective long term solution to reducing human-wildlife conflict in the Kaslo area. The Kaslo and Area D WCC continued to host training and presentations on safe bear spray use in the 2018 season. With our broad scope, WildSafeBC (WSBC) provides Kaslo and area residents with information on many different wildlife species. While black bears continue to be the species most commonly discussed, the number of questions regarding cougars, urban deer, coyotes and skunks continued to increase. The WSBC expanded species resources were well received by the community members and tourists this season. WildSafeBC Kaslo received support for the 2018 season from the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, in-kind advertising from the Pennywise, Columbia Basin Trust, Regional District Central Kootenay (RDCK), the Village of Kaslo, and BC Conservation Foundation.

The WCC received almost daily updates regarding wildlife in the area and/or questions about attractant management and electric fencing. The WSBC Kaslo program has fostered good relationships with key residents who in turn advocate attractant management strategies and share that information with new residents and neighbours. The WCC also created new relationships with residents who may not have been involved with program messaging in past years. Community members with input and tips have been invaluable for identifying problem spots in the community and prioritizing education efforts. The WCC connected with Neil Smith, Village of Kaslo Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), early in the 2018 season to discuss the animal attractant bylaw, enforcement and working towards Bear Smart Status in Kaslo. The program published printed classified advertisements and additional display advertisements in the Kaslo Visitors Guide to help to educate tourists and visitors to the area. Keeping WildSafeBC and its message of responsible attractant management in the forefront continued to be the main focus this season as well as providing solutions to human-wildlife conflict.

Cover photo: Black bear. All photos by Tracy Remple unless credited otherwise.

*Area D includes the Regional District of Central Kootenay communities of Argenta, Gerrard, Howser, Lardeau and Meadow Creek.

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Highlights from the 2018 Season

Wildlife Activity

Wildlife reports that are reported to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). These reports inform this report and can also be used to alert community members. However, many calls are also shared on social media and by calling the WildsafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC). Unfortunately, these cannot be captured in the reporting data.

Reports regarding black bear activity were lower than average province-wide in 2018 and this is reflected in Kaslo's numbers as well (fig.1). However, there were more reports regarding than cougars in the community, especially near the J.V. Humphries school.

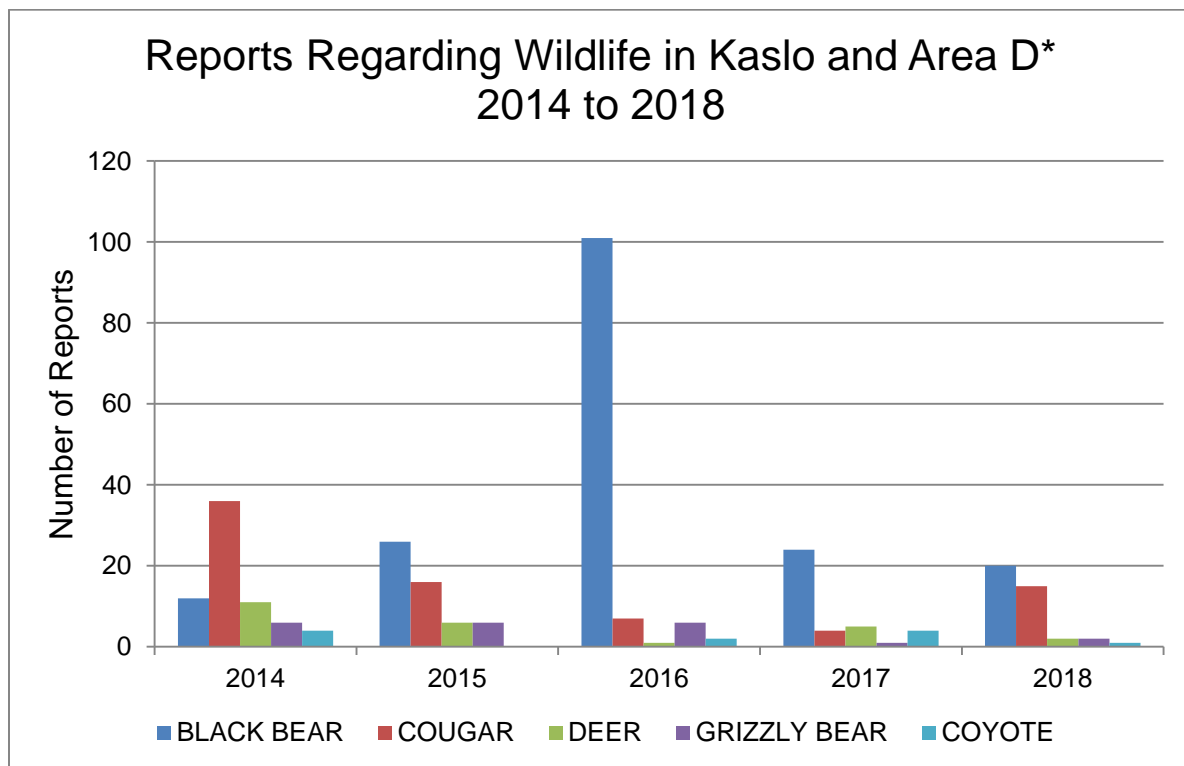


Figure 1. Reports to the COS and WARP for Kaslo and Area D which includes Argenta, Gerrard, Howser, Lardeau, and Meadow Creek from 2014 to December 12, 2018.

Where reports to the COS regarding black bears involved an attractant, garbage most was the most common (fig.2). For cougars, pets and livestock were the most reported attractants.



Figure 2: Black bear accessing garbage at a resident's home.

Presentations to Schools and Community Groups

The WCC for the Kaslo & Area D gave a total of eight presentations to over 100 participants including:

- Bear Spray Safety Training
- Wildlife Safety & Attractant Management
- Electric Fencing demonstrations

Door-to-Door Education and Garbage Tagging

In previous seasons, the WCC conducted most door-to-door canvassing after receiving bear-issue complaints. The WCC took a different approach in the 2018 season, focusing mostly on prevention. By visiting residents within Kaslo and Area D early in the season, and throughout the domestic fruit season, the WCC was able to keep attractant management at the forefront. While the WCC did receive reports of bears accessing garbage, most of the calls were about bears accessing domestic fruit trees in Kaslo this season. In response to these calls, the WCC promptly facilitated door-to-door education to restore responsible attractant management in

those neighborhoods. Consistent with the previous season, attractant management education was delivered to several of the outskirt areas near the Village. WSBC Kaslo was able to deliver attractant management education to over 150 houses throughout Kaslo and Area D this season.

Public Displays and Events

Educational and interactive displays at the Kaslo Saturday Market, Meadow Creek Sunday Market, and the Meadow Creek Spawning Channel Open House were not as well attended as previous seasons. Public displays often attract tourists that had experienced conflict and were ready to adopt ways of reducing human-wildlife conflict. The WCC was pleasantly surprised by the number of tourists who were fascinated by the program, who took attractant management messaging back to their communities, which ranged from BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, Australia and several parts of Europe and the USA. Summer markets served as a venue to engage with people about local wildlife issues and to share human-wildlife reduction in our region, using the different attractant management methods that have been successful.

Social Media and Press

WildSafeBC Kaslo Facebook page 'likes' increased by 45% from 126 on January 1, 2018 to 183 as of November 22, 2018.

Partnerships

In the summer of 2018, the WCC was contacted by the owner of the local waste management company, Kootenay Waste Services (KWS), about providing household garbage services in the Lardeau Valley. KWS owner Jon Carlson and the WCC have been working together to design a plan of action for household garbage collection to commence in fall of 2018, with a bear resistant garbage dumpster program to commence in the spring of 2019.

WildSafeBC Kaslo sits on the West Kootenay Bear Conflict Working Group (WKBCWG), an initiative of local bear biologists and the Conservation Officer Service (COS). It includes representatives from the Regional District of Central Kootenays (RDCK), city councillors, municipal staff from around the West Kootenays, expert bear biologists, Conservation Officers, Grizzly Bear Solutions, interested citizens, and WildSafeBC community coordinators. Meetings are held bi-annually with the goal of identifying solutions to human-bear conflict and collaborating to find ways of implementing those solutions. This group formed a bear bin committee that was successful in obtaining funds through the RDCK to purchase bins for cost share or loan in contributing regional areas. The WKBCWG discussed options for community composting in the spring 2017 meeting in response to the RDCK's proposed residential compost program. The WKBCWG will be meeting again in the fall of 2018 to further discuss the bear bin initiative, and community composting.

Fruit Tree Outreach and Education

The WCC continued to promote the Harvest Share program and the Kaslo Food Hub organized by North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society (NKLCSS) in Kaslo. Harvest Share is a

gleaning program that has been instrumental in reducing bear conflicts due to excess domestic fruit in Kaslo and Area D. The Kaslo Food Hub continues to utilize excess fruit and share the wealth to families who need it. The NKLCSS also has an extensive tool library that has been invaluable to the community by providing seasonal tools that aid in the use of domestic fruit crops, and reducing the amount of fruit going to waste or attracting bears.

Challenges for the 2018 Season

Kaslo and RDCK Area residents continued to experience human-bear conflict this season despite the availability of natural foods such as wild berry crops. The easy access and abundance of domestic fruit continued to be an issue. Kaslo continued to have a high number of habituated deer that remained in the community year-round (fig.2). There is an increasing need to dissuade residents and visitors from habituating and tolerating deer in the community. The deer are natural prey for cougars and they may have drawn more cougars into residential areas. Cougar sightings increased in 2018 in residential areas and especially around the school. Cougar activity near J.V Humphries School was a concern this season as it has been in the past. Ongoing safety education is recommended.



Figure 3. Habituated white-tailed deer in downtown Kaslo (photo by Mona Zilkie).

The WCC also found that residents struggled with abundant domestic fruit crops this season and were not well-equipped to properly manage this wildlife attractant. With the increase of residents keeping backyard hens, electric fencing is in high demand, and the community is challenged to find the appropriate electric fencing supplies in town. As human-wildlife conflicts occur year-round in Kaslo, the program would benefit from having a year-round part-time coordinator or at least an earlier start date.

Goals and Opportunities for 2019

Some activities that should be pursued in 2019 include:

- Support for people looking for sources of electric fencing supplies.
- Increased adoption by the general public of the WildSafeBC Kaslo Facebook page as a source for up-to-date information on human-wildlife conflict occurrences and solutions.
- Develop signage to dissuade people from feeding wildlife (especially deer).
- Support of increased gleaning opportunities for the whole of the area.
- Increase reports through the COS RAPP line (1-877-952-7277).

Acknowledgements

Kaslo WildSafe BC thanks the following sponsors: Columbia Basin Trust, the Ministry of Environment, BC Conservation Foundation, the Village of Kaslo and the Regional District Central Kootenay. Kaslo and area WSBC also thanks the BC Conservation Officer Service for their ongoing support of program activities.