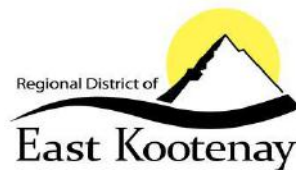


WildSafeBC Annual Report 2018

Radium Hot Springs and RDEK Areas F & G

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Executive Summary

The 2018 season ran from April 15 to November 30, 2018. This was the current WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC)'s second year running the program. A total of 250 hours for the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) and 300 hours for the Radium programs were directed towards public education and outreach, wildlife attractant monitoring, events and presentations, fruit gleaning support, developing community partnerships, and administrative duties.

The highlights of the 2018 season included a successful electric fencing workshop held in Invermere, a 40% decline in black bear conflict calls to Conservation Officer Service (COS) RAPP line compared to last year, and an attractant audit for the Village of Radium completed in partnership with the COS and Radium bylaw officers. The WCC reached approximately 2,800 people through face-to-face interactions and distribution of WildSafeBC materials, and made approximately 85,000 impressions through social media and press releases. Partnerships and collaborations helped make the program a success as well as the support of the Conservation Officer Service (Figure 1).

The challenges of the 2018 season included issues around dumpsters lacking wildlife-resistant handles and community misuse, non-dangerous wildlife feeding, and a lack of fruit tree management.

The goals and opportunities identified for 2019 include continually improving education and outreach about dumpsters and fruit trees to commercial businesses and second homeowners, and hosting another electric fencing workshop for the valley. An electric fence demonstration kit would be beneficial for sharing between Invermere and Radium/RDEK. The Village of Radium Hot Springs could consider making steps towards achieving Bear Smart Community status, including a community landscape plan, Bear Hazard Assessment and/or A Bear Conflict Management Plan.

Thank you to the Village of Radium Hot Springs, RDEK, Columbia Basin Trust, and the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy for their funding and support of this program.



Figure 1: WildSafeBC Community Coordinators and BC Conservation Officers for the Columbia Valley, April 2018. (Photo: Lorene Keitch, Columbia Valley Pioneer).

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Highlights from the 2018 Season

Presentations to Schools and Community Groups

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) gave a total of 26 presentations to approximately 580 participants including:

- Columbia Valley Human Wildlife Conflict Reduction Working Group (HWCRWG)
- BC Conservation Officer Service
- Windermere Community Association's Annual General Meeting
- Fairmont Community Association's Annual General Meeting
- Panorama Mountain Resort Staff Safety Orientation
- Radium Hot Springs Rotary Club
- Mount Swansea hiking group
- Fairmont Hot Springs Resort and Sunchaser Resort welcomes (x8)
- Adventure Radium
- Radium Hot Springs Library
- Windermere Elementary School (Jr. Ranger Program)
- Edgewater Elementary School (Jr. Ranger Program)

Topics ranged from wildlife biology and safety education, to attractant management and the need to phone wildlife sightings into the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277). All presentations concluded with a question period, and dozens of great questions were answered (Figure 2).



Figure 2: WildSafeBC presentation to Adventure Radium (Photo: Nicole Rathgeber)

Door-to-Door Education and Attractant Monitoring

The WCC visited 300 residences or businesses and reached approximately 900 people during door-to-door education (average of three people per household). This type of outreach was used to contact people directly when there was a concern about dangerous or nuisance wildlife activity in a neighbourhood, and/or when there were attractants noted in and around the premises. In cases where a resident was not at home, a yellow doorhanger was left with the time and date of the visit, reason for visit, and follow-up contact information for the WCC as well as a relevant brochure about the wildlife species of concern.

The WCC also monitored neighbourhoods for attractants, via vehicle and on foot when an animal with potential for conflict was noted to be in the area. Door-to-door education was used when an attractant was noted. A 'Bear In Area' or 'Cougar In Area' sign was also placed at a high-traffic intersection nearby.

Except for private contracted services, there is no curb-side garbage collection in Radium Hot Springs or any of the seven small communities included in the RDEK Areas F & G. Thus, garbage tagging at a specific date and time is not an effective way to reach residents about garbage left out overnight. As an alternative, yellow garbage stickers were used on commercial dumpsters when they were found to be unlocked (Figure 3). Stickers were also given to community associations as a way for community members to notify their neighbours if they noticed any garbage left outside on porches or in backyards before being taken to the transfer stations.



Figure 3. The WCC and Radium bylaw officer inspect a faulty dumpster.

Public Displays and Events

The WCC attended or hosted 15 public events with a display booth, and reached approximately 1,400 people through these events either through direct conversation or via handouts and brochures given out at the event (Figure 4).

- Electric Fencing Workshop in Invermere (partnered with WildSafeBC Golden)
- “Radium Days” Market
- Canal Flats “Canal Days” Market
- Radium Hot Springs Market and Music on Main (x9)
- Columbia Valley “Goes Wild” Weekend @ Radium Show ‘n’ Shine
- Radium Hot Springs Community Center Grand Opening
- Radium Hot Springs Headbanger Festival



Figure 4. WildSafeBC booth at the Radium Market on Main (Photo: Kent Kebe).

Social Media and Press

The WCC submitted six press releases to local news media outlets, including the Columbia Valley Pioneer and East Kootenay News Online Weekly (E-KNOW), which reached an estimated 27,000 people (based on calculated reach of publications). Local radio stations (The Drive 102.9 and Summit 107) also picked up on certain news articles and Facebook posts, and contacted the WCC to interview and publish news articles concerning wildlife activity on their websites.

The WCC also shared relevant information on Facebook via our [WildSafeBC Columbia Valley](#) page. Between April 15 and November 28, 2018, the WildSafeBC Columbia Valley Facebook page gained 127 likes, 138 follows, and posts had a reach of approximately 58,600 people. This page is jointly run by the Radium/RDEK WCC, Invermere WCC, and provincial staff, and primarily reaches audiences from the Columbia Valley, BC and Calgary, AB.

BC Goes Wild Weekend

The BC Goes Wild Weekend (BCGWW) is held on the third weekend of September every year. This also coincides with the Radium Classics Show 'n' Shine, a highly attended event that draws hundreds of people to the community of Radium.

On Saturday, September 15th, both Radium/RDEK and Invermere WCCs set up a display booth at the Radium Market near the car show. We reached approximately 80 people between 12 and 4 pm. At 5 pm, we held a bear spray demo and nature walk at the Old Coach Trail. We led the group through the bear spray information sheet facts and questions, then we ran through the S.P.R.A.Y. acronym (Figure 5). Everybody had a chance to fire the can and people were very pleased. It was cold and rainy, but we still had 16 people for the bear spray demo, and four people stayed for the nature walk. We talked about local wildlife, historical salmon runs up the Columbia River, and natural wildlife foods.

On Sunday September 16th, we held a children's scavenger hunt for 12:30 pm but only one participant attended. While she enjoyed the activity, plans for next year will include a more targeted outreach to childcare programs and schools. A revised time and date would also be beneficial.

Overall, this year's BCGWW had greater participation than in 2017 and was a great success.



Figure 5: WCC Jenna Milne speaking about the safe use and deployment of bear spray (L); An eager participant fires their first bear spray with the guidance of WCC Thea Rodgers (R).

Fruit Tree Outreach and Education

The WCC again supported local groups to develop and foster their fruit gleaning initiatives. The Fairmont Community Association built on their successful fruit picking initiatives from 2017, and the WCC was available to provide support and direction as needed in 2018. The Windermere

Community Association attempted to get a fruit picking initiative going, however there was a lack of volunteer availability within the community and so the WCC was unable to assist further.

The WCC is working to develop a list of property owners interested in receiving assistance with fruit gleaning. With the permission of the property owners, this list will be provided to those not-for-profit organizations that provide fruit gleaning services in the area.

The WCC also developed an information brochure for residents that contains information about attractive planting alternatives to fruit-bearing trees, thanks to the help of other community coordinators from around the province.

Partnerships

The WCC worked to foster and develop stronger partnerships this year with the Lakeview Meadows Community Association, Windermere Community Association, Fairmont Community Association, and Edgewater Recreation Society in order to support these societies to develop attractant management and fruit gleaning initiatives within their communities.

The WCC again partnered with the BC Conservation Officer Service in the Kootenay-Columbia zone for information sharing and education/outreach support, and in 2018 helped the COS to undertake an attractant audit in Radium Hot Springs. This partnership is invaluable to the work of the WCC and supports the work of the COS.

Challenges for the 2018 Season

The main challenges identified in 2018 included:

- **Dumpsters with locking handles, but without roll-bars, being accessed by black bears.** WildSafeBC recommends that waste management companies replace dumpsters with bear-resistant versions that include a roll-bar to prevent access by bears. Not having the roll-bar makes a dumpster more accessible to wildlife. However, it can be challenging to have all users use and replace the roll-bars consistently so an education campaign and staff training is also needed.
- **Residents feeding turkeys, bighorn sheep, and skunks.** There were several reports received of local residents feeding turkeys, bighorn sheep and skunks on multiple occasions. Unfortunately, no action can be taken by the COS because these are not considered dangerous animals. However, the RDEK is currently working on a bylaw to help address the intentional feeding of all wildlife. This could potentially help with enforcement in the RDEK zones for 2019.
- **Fruit tree management by absentee homeowners.** People who own a second property in the valley or who leave for the winter often forget that they have to manage their fruit trees in their absence during the fall. It is often difficult to reach these homeowners unless they are registered with their community association. Distributing educational brochures about planting alternatives and absentee management responsibilities will be helpful in 2019.

Goals and Opportunities for 2019

- **Continue to improve outreach and education to second homeowners regarding fruit tree management.** Develop communications strategies that will better reach temporary visitors and weekend residents.
- **Continue to improve outreach and education to commercial dumpster owners regarding proper waste management and use.** Offer to provide free bear awareness training to restaurant and business staff at beginning of summer season. Consult with owners about replacing non-bear resistant models with handle & roll-bar versions.
- **Support more fruit gleaning programs in the valley through partnerships with community associations,** as well as non-profit groups like Wildsight, Columbia Valley Slow Food, and Groundswell Network.
- **Host another Electric Fencing workshop.** Acquire an electric fence demonstration kit for sharing between Invermere and Radium/RDEK. Target beekeepers and food producers throughout the valley to take part.
- **Assist the Village of Radium Hot Springs to make steps towards achieving Bear Smart Community status,** including the preparation of a community landscape plan, Bear Hazard Assessment and/or Human-Bear Conflict Management Plan.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the following organizations and individuals for their support of the Radium Hot Springs and RDEK Areas F& G WildSafeBC program in 2018:

- **Columbia Basin Trust**
- **Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy**
- **BC Conservation Foundation**
- **Village of Radium Hot Springs**
 - Mark Read, Clara Reinhardt, Gary Burford, Jill Logan, Emily Mitchell
- **Regional District of East Kootenay**
 - Gerry Wilkie (Area G), Wendy Booth (Area F)
- **Radium Hot Springs Chamber of Commerce**
 - Kent Kebe, Kara Cassidy
- **Fairmont Community Association**
 - Linda Pfeiffer, Ann-Marie Deagon
- **Columbia Valley Conservation Officer Service**
 - Andrew Milne, Greg Kruger
- **WildSafeBC Invermere**
 - Jenna Milne
- **WildSafeBC Provincial Team**