

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2018

## Rossland and Trail

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## Executive Summary

The WildSafeBC Rossland-Trail program delivery focused on providing education and safety information to a diverse range of community members and visitors. This included key WildSafeBC activities such as school and community presentations, door-to-door canvassing, participation in public events and the use of social media. This season there was a focus on working with different user groups to increase human-wildlife conflict awareness around hiking and camping with visits and training at all three local campgrounds. The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) received the support for part of the season by the WildSafeBC Ambassador summer student Alyssa Christianson.

A highlight of the season was the attendance at the Environmental Awareness Day at Rossland Summit School where WildSafeBC provided education to over 200 school-aged children and did several bear spray demonstrations. The WCC also did 15 presentations for over 500 participants and participated in 11 events that reached over 1,100 people. The WCC received several reports of bear activity in town and the four “Bear in Area” signs were in constant rotation.

The WildSafeBC program benefited from the ongoing support of local media for spreading pertinent information and the WildSafeBC Facebook page increased “likes” by 19% to 624. The WCC provided support and referrals to local volunteer groups involved in fruit gleaning and pick and press events.

Goals for 2019 would include supporting local governments on reviewing current bylaws and using “Bear Smart” language to promote best practices in the community to reduce human-wildlife conflicts. There is also a need for further education for backcountry users and other recreationists in the area around “bare” camping and proper use and transport of bear spray.

The WildSafeBC Program recognizes the support of its sponsors, the Conservation Officer Service, city staff and community members and organizations that help spread our messaging and reinforce actions that keep “wildlife wild and our communities safe”.

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## Highlights from the 2018 Season

### Wildlife Activity

Wildlife activity was lower than average throughout the province and this was reflected in the reports to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) RAPP line for the communities of Rossland, Trail and Warfield. These reports are available to the public through WildSafeBC’s Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). There were 177 calls received regarding wildlife from January 1 to October 31 and black bears were the most reported at 120. While black bear reports were lower than average year-over-year (fig. 1), there were high numbers of calls to the WildsafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) regarding black and grizzly bears, coyotes, raccoons and cougars. It is important for dangerous wildlife calls to continue to be reported to the COS RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) to provide data year-over-year and to provide focus on areas that require education and safety information. Grizzly bears were reported in all three communities and associated with either garbage, pets or livestock as an attractant.

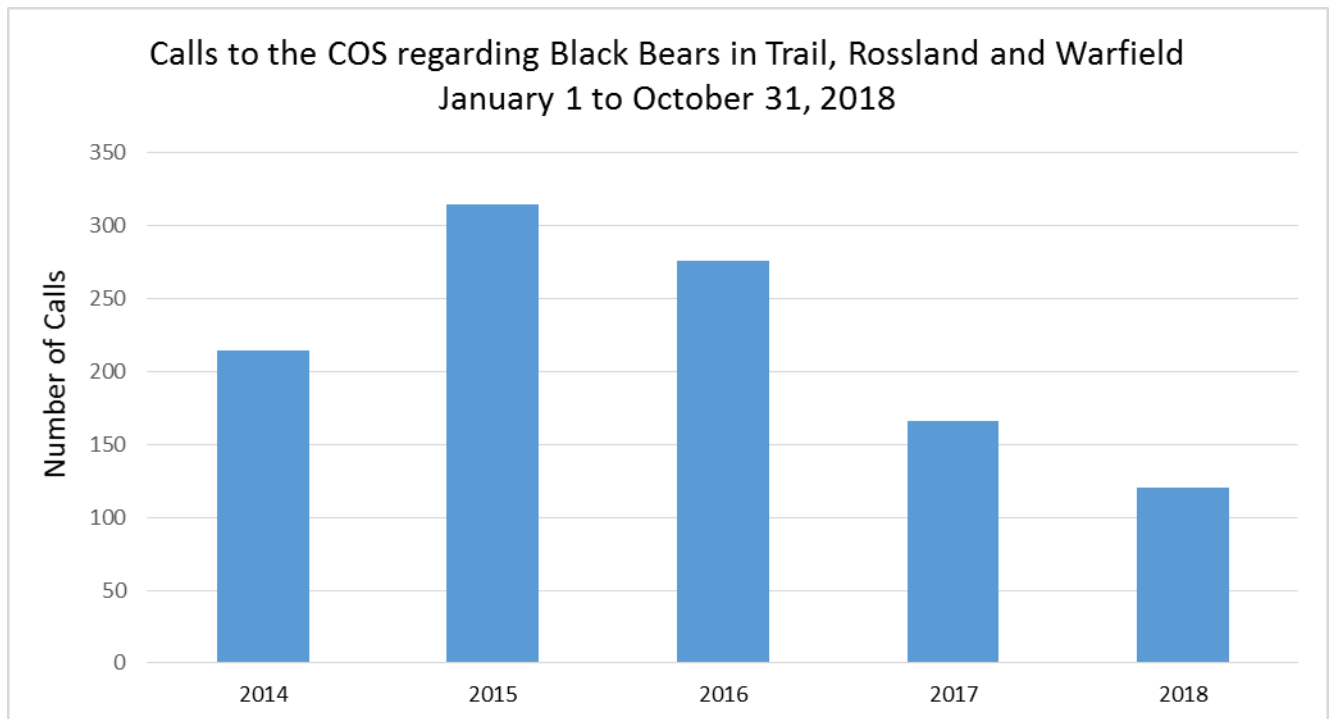


Figure 1. Calls to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) with regards to black bears in Trail, Rossland and Warfield.

## Presentations to Schools and Community Groups

A highlight of the year was the Environmental Awareness Day at Rossland Summit School. The WCC partnered with WildSafeBC Ambassador, Alyssa Christianson, to provide bear and cougar education and safety information to over 200 school-aged children. They also did several bear spray demonstrations that were well-received. The WCC gave a total of 15 presentations to over 500 participants including:

- Trail Library program
- Multiple preschools
- Classroom presentations at Glenmerry School
- Webster School
- Rossland summits environmental education day
- Presentations to Trail TALC program
- Camp Cowabunga

## Door-to-Door Education and Garbage Tagging

This year, WildSafeBC covered multiple areas in Rossland, Trail and Warfield. The WCCs reached 280 people and took direction about what areas needed covering from COS requests as well as from citizen feedback. Conversations were focused on providing safety and attractant management information on bears, raccoons, skunks and deer. WildSafeBC also provided information to staff and guests at the three local campgrounds.

## Public Displays and Events

This summer the WCC participated in 11 events in both Rossland and Trail. It is estimated over 1,100 people were reached (fig.2). Events included:

- Rossland and Trail markets
- Silver City Days Parade
- Multiple events at the Rossland Museum
- Lions Campground workshop in Rossland
- Rossland Golden City Days

The fridge magnets were the most requested item this year as people appreciated the information and the easy access to the COS phone number. Other well-received items were the children's temporary animal tattoos and the reusable shopping bags. The display of cougar and bear hides were important props for educating as well as initiating conversations.



Figure 2. The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator at the Rossland Golden City Days event in September.

## Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Rossland/Trail Facebook page is used to create awareness around wildlife conflict situations such as road safety, camping safety, wildlife alerts, and key bear and cougar sightings. Posts this season also included tips on how to prune trees to avoid extra fruit, what to do with unwanted fruit, and reminders about managing attractants to avoid wildlife conflicts. The Facebook page likes increased by 19% this season and reached 624 by November 27, 2018.

The local media, including the Trail Times, the Rossland News and local radio stations, were always supportive and helped spread the message of how we can "keep wildlife wild and communities safe." The media was also instrumental in getting the word out about events that WildSafeBC was involved in.

## Bear in Area Signs

The "Bear in Area" signs were in high demand this year. There were multiple requests for signs to be posted at hiking trails, schools, neighbourhoods and other high traffic areas that were experiencing frequent bear sightings or encounters. All four of the "Bear in Area" signs were out and moved all throughout the season.

## Partnerships

This summer, City of Trail staff directed many calls to the WildSafeBC program when people were experiencing wildlife conflicts. The City of Rossland included WildSafeBC in an initiative to test a pre-built electric fence designed to go around garbage cans. This initiative is exploring

and option for people to secure their garbage cans when they do not have an enclosed garage or shed available. Other partnerships included working with volunteers, local food banks and Kate's kitchen to make use of excess fruit.

## Fruit Tree Outreach and Education

Social media was used to help provide ideas and education on how to manage fruit trees. This included tips on how to manage fruit trees and decrease fruit production, interesting ways to use excess fruit and to connect people who had fruit with people that wanted fruit. Other outreach was done in partnership with the volunteer-run pick and press events in Rossland that help people with excess fruit run a large fruit press to produce juice (fig.3).



**Figure 3. Fruit ready to be pressed at pick and press event in Rossland.**

## Goals and Opportunities for 2019

Goals moving into 2019 include increasing wildlife safety education for backcountry users, continue to work with local campgrounds to create awareness about “Bare” camping, and plan more information events at trailheads and recreation sites.

Another goal would be to continue to support city councils with adopting “bear smart” bylaws and continue to work towards a Bear Smart Community application and designation.

## Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC Rossland-Trail is grateful for the generous support from many sources. Thanks to our sponsors: BC Conservation Foundation, Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, Columbia Basin Trust and the Cities of Trail and Rossland. Thank you also to city councilors, staff and bylaw officers for their ongoing support. Thanks to our supporters, media and volunteers that help us spread our messaging on how to reduce human-wildlife conflicts. A big thank you for the assistance of Conservation Officers Blair Thin, Ben Beetlestone and Jason Hawke. Finally, thanks to Gillian Saunders for providing information on electric fencing in grizzly bear country and assisting some residences in the installation.