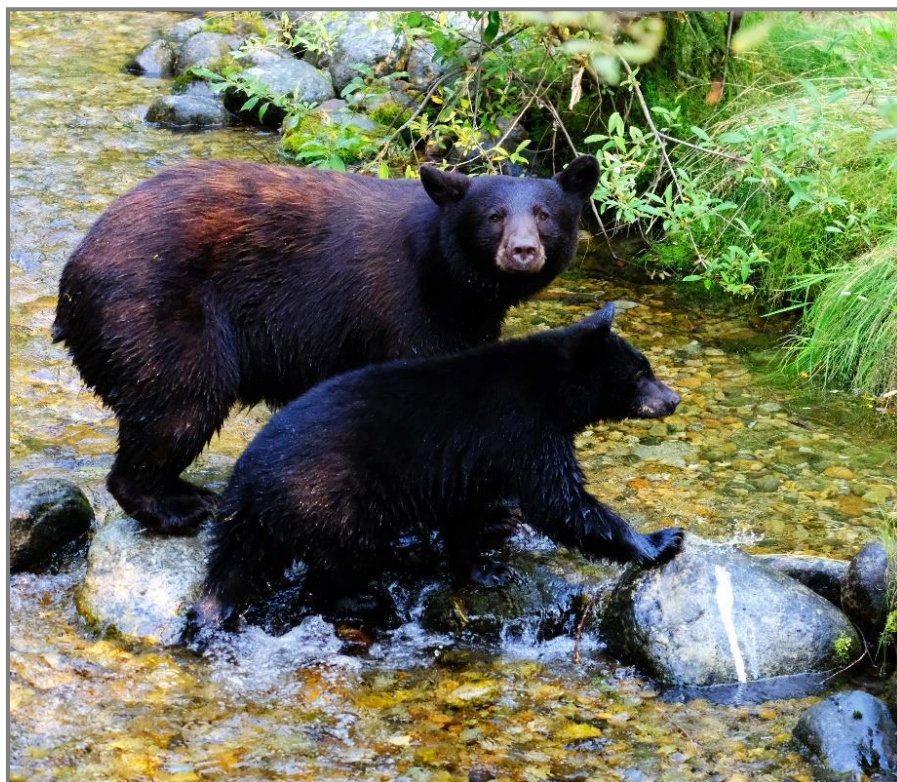


WildSafeBC Annual Report 2018

Selkirk Purcell

Prepared by: WildSafeBC Community Coordinators Danica Roussy,
Jenny Wallace and David White



BRITISH COLUMBIA
CONSERVATION
FOUNDATION



Executive Summary

The Selkirk Purcell WildSafeBC (WSBC) program covers the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) management zones A,B,C and G including the towns of Creston, Erickson, Yahk, Salmo, Ymir, Lumberton, Moyie, Crawford Bay and surrounding areas.

WildSafeBC's goal is to reduce human-wildlife conflicts in order to increase public safety and keep wildlife wild. The Selkirk Purcell WSBC program provides education and promotes best practices by working closely with the Conservation Officer Service (COS), local municipalities, community groups, area schools, small businesses and other independent organizations.

A man was injured this year by a grizzly bear (*Ursus arctos*) sow defending its cubs, just north of Creston on the Kootenay River. This demonstrates the importance of an ongoing education program, aimed at reducing human-wildlife conflict where we live, work, play and grow in the Selkirk Purcell region.

The WSBC program brought its message to the Selkirk Purcell through school programs, door-to-door campaigns, bear spray demonstrations and booths at farmer/craft markets.

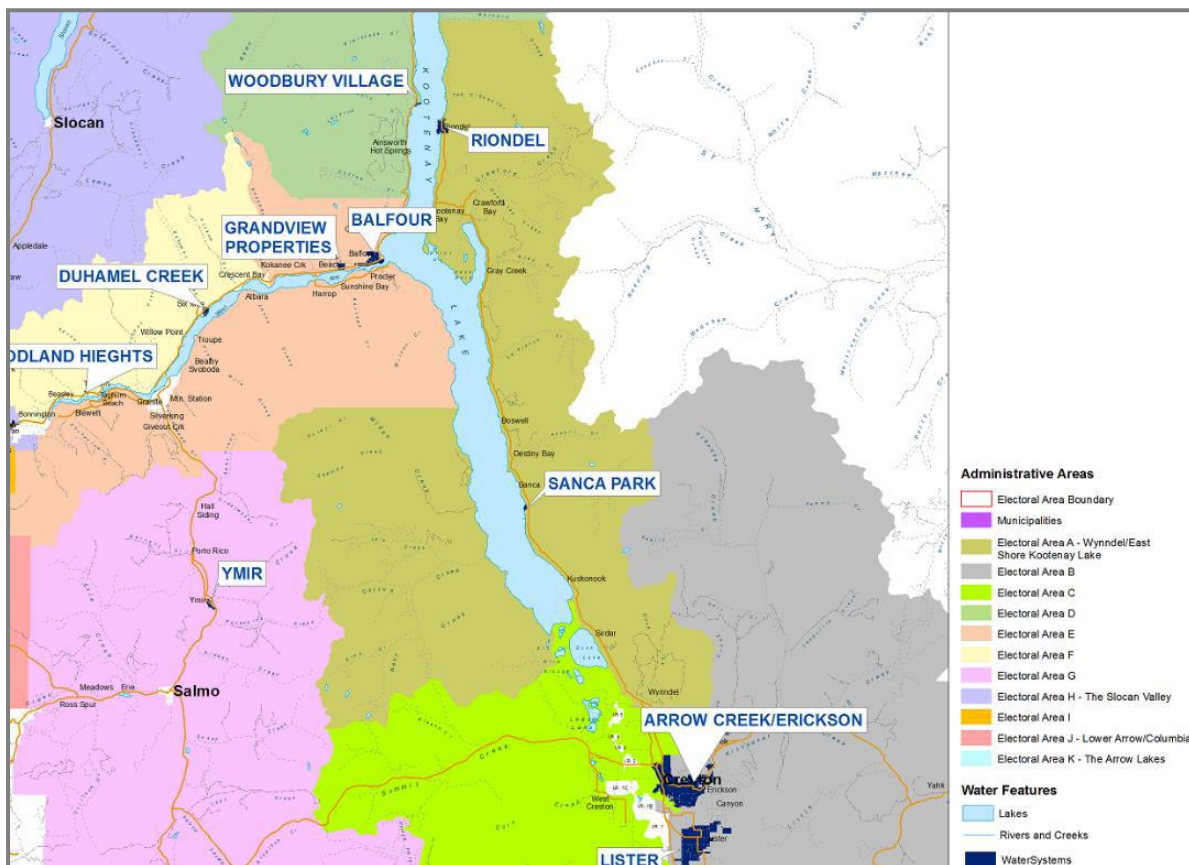


Figure 1. Regional District of Central Kootenays (RDCK) areas A, B, C and G.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Highlights from the 2018 Season	3
Black Bear Activity	3
Bear Smart Community Status in Salmo.....	5
Presentations to Schools and Community Groups.....	5
Public Displays	7
Door-to-Door Campaigns.....	8
Brochure Distribution	8
Bear Spray Training.....	9
Goals and Opportunities for 2019.....	10
Acknowledgements	10

Table of Figures

Figure 1. Regional District of Central Kootenays (RDCK) areas A, B, C and G.	1
Figure 2. Black bear reports for Salmo as viewed through WARP. Bears in turquoise were sightings with no attractant reported.....	3
Figure 3. Black bear reports for Creston as viewed through WARP. Bears in red were reported accessing garbage.....	3
Figure 4. Calls to the COS regarding black bears in Creston from January 2013 to November 22, 2018.....	4
Figure 5. Calls to the COS regarding black bears in Salmo from January 2013 to November 22, 2018.....	4
Figure 6. Calls to the COS in Salmo regarding black bears where an attractant is involved. Fruit trees are the most reported.	4
Figure 7. Calls to the COS in Creston regarding black bears where an attractant is involved. Garbage is the most reported.....	4
Figure 8. Children learning about bear biology and safety at a school presentation.	6
Figure 9. Variety of WildSafeBC booths at Salmo Markets and Fairs.	7
Figure 10. WSBC door hanger and black bear brochure left during a door-to-door campaign. ...	8
Figure 11. Brochure stand with a collection of WSBC brochures.....	8
Figure 13. Bear spray demonstration in Yahk.	9

Highlights from the 2018 Season

Black Bear Activity

Reports to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) are uploaded daily to WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). This information is available to the public on WildSafeBC's website and is used to inform this report (Fig. 2 and 3). Data includes reports up to November 22, 2018.

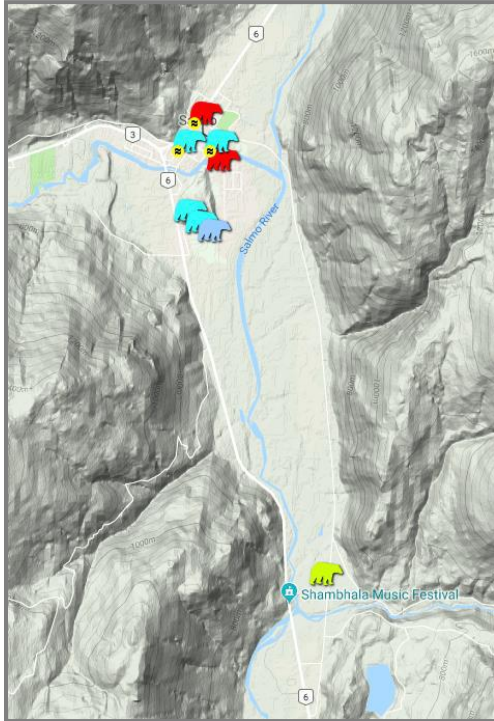


Figure 2. Black bear reports for Salmo as viewed through WARP. Bears in red were reported accessing garbage.

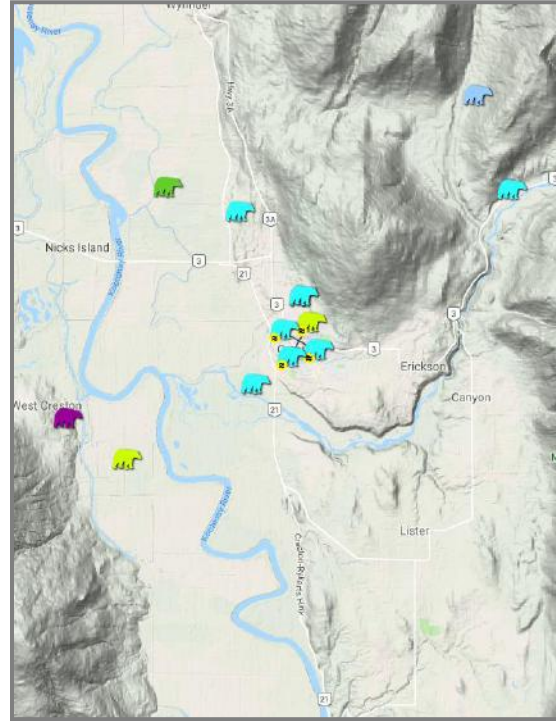


Figure 3. Black bear reports for Creston as viewed through WARP. Bears in turquoise were sightings with no attractant reported.

Black bear activity on both sides of the Kootenay pass was light, which was similar to call reports across the province. There were 18 reports regarding black bears in Creston (fig.4) and 10 in Salmo (fig. 5).

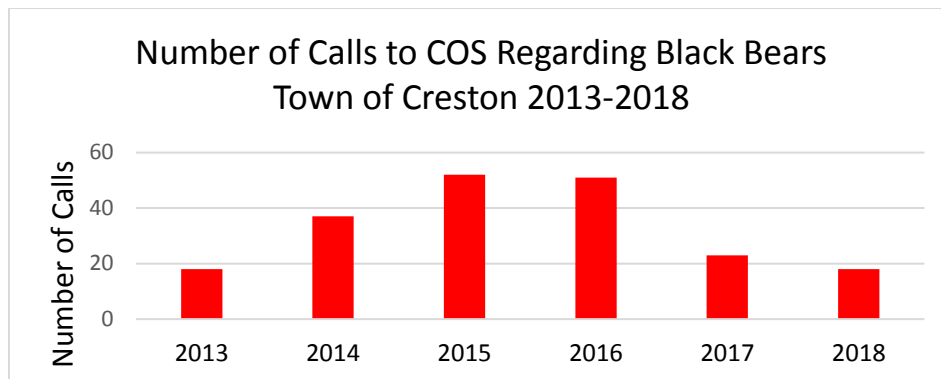


Figure 2. Calls to the COS regarding black bears in Creston from January 2013 to November 22, 2018.

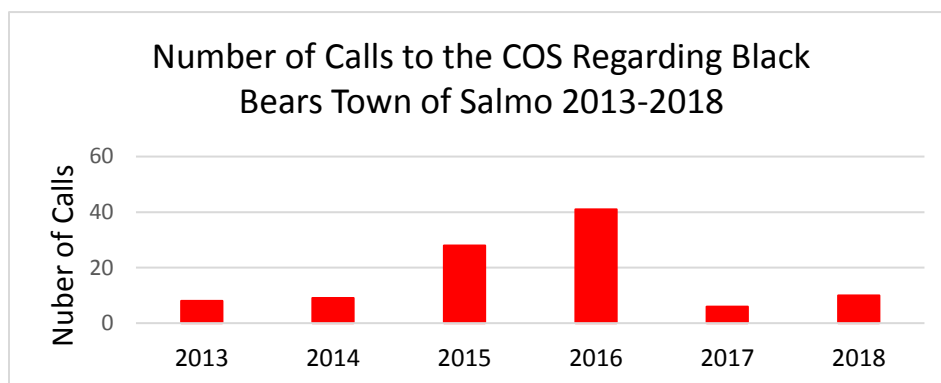


Figure 3. Calls to the COS regarding black bears in Salmo from January 2013 to November 22, 2018.

The main attractants causing bear conflicts in Salmo was garbage at 60%, followed by livestock and pet food both at 20% (fig. 6). In Creston, fruit trees are the most reported attractants at 43% while other attractants such as garbage, pet food, livestock and crops are each responsible for 14-15% of the calls (fig. 7). However, the number of calls are relatively low and may not be fully representative of the critical issues in these communities.

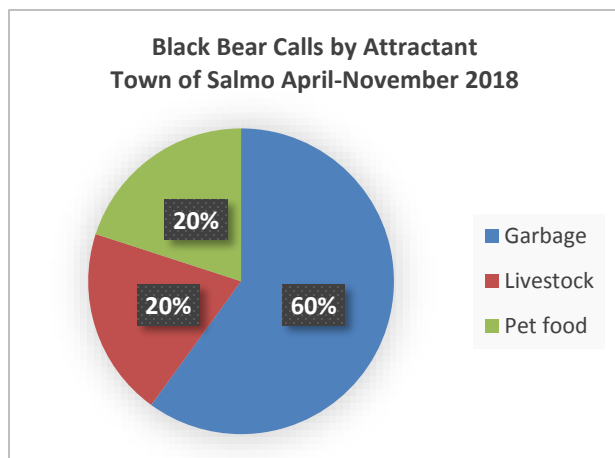


Figure 6. Calls to the COS in Salmo regarding black bears where an attractant is involved. Garbage is the most reported.

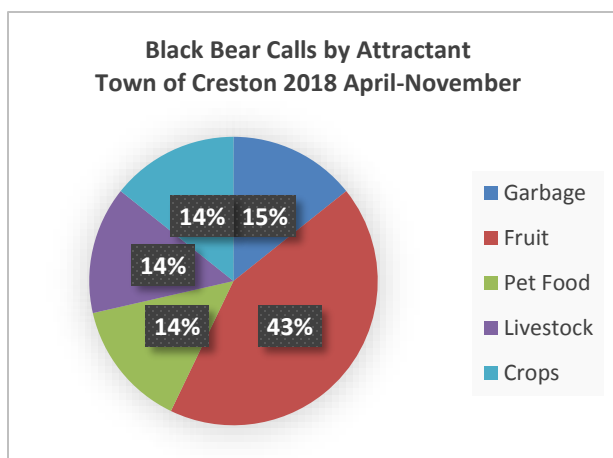


Figure 7. Calls to the COS in Creston regarding black bears where an attractant is involved. Fruit trees are the most reported.

Bear Smart Community Status in Salmo

The Town of Salmo, in collaboration with WildSafeBC (WSBC), the COS and Grizzly Bear Solutions has been moving towards Provincial Bear Smart Community status. Salmo Councillor Jonathan Heatlie and CAO Anne Williams had a meeting in July with Conservation Officer Jason Hawkes and WSBC Community Coordinator (WCC) Jenny Wallace to identify the next steps in this process. Jenny compiled a Bear Smart package for the village including samples of wildlife attractant bylaws and official community plan amendments that reflect bear smart principles to help the community move forward with their Bear Smart efforts.

As part of Salmo's move towards Bear Smart Community status, the community engaged Gillian Sanders of Grizzly Bear Solutions to develop a Bear Hazard Assessment for Salmo. In the assessment, Gillian identified the root causes of human-bear conflict in the community, including attractants in public areas such as open garbage receptacles, fruit trees and commercial garbage dumpsters. The Bear Hazard Assessment also provided recommendations which are as follows:

1. Ensure that bear-resistant containers are installed at Salmo Elementary and Salmo Youth and Community Center.
2. Manage or remove unused fruit trees at Salmo Elementary and Salmo Curling Club.
3. Encourage landowners to manage excess unmanaged fruit by supporting a local fruit harvest share program.
4. Support WildSafeBC programming for school children and community members to promote attractant management and bear safety education.
5. Ensure that Waste Management Ltd. replaces all dumpsters fitted with plastic lids with lids that are bear-resistant.
6. Ensure that residential garbage is stored in bear-resistant bins, either for individual residences or for communal use. The first priority area is Cady Road, followed by other areas near Glendale Road. Note, this item is actually second highest priority overall but numbers 2-5 are more immediately feasible due to the cost of bear-resistant bins.
7. Develop solid waste bylaw that ensures garbage not be put out until the morning of pickup.
8. Develop animal attractant bylaw that ensures residents do not allow bears to find anthropogenic foods and ensures that all small livestock and honeybees are protected by a well-constructed and maintained electric fence
9. Incorporate Bear Smart wording into Salmo's Official Community Plan.

Presentations to Schools and Community Groups

The WSBC program provided 14 presentations to various schools and organizations over the 2018 season. The presentations focused on managing attractants for bears and cougars, both in the home and while camping and how to avoid dangerous encounters with bears and other predators while traveling in the wilderness.

- Adam Robertson Library (3)
- Canyon Lister Elementary (1)
- Kootenay Valley Christian School (2)
- Yagan Nukiy School (1)
- Creston Library (2)
- Creston Valley Junior Naturalists (1)
- Salmo Library Summer reading group (1)
- Erickson Elementary School (1)
- Creston Valley Beavers (1)
- English as a Second Language School(1)



Figure 4. Children learning about bear biology and safety at a school presentation.

Public Displays

The WCCs held 5 booths at craft and Farmers markets during the summer:

- Salmo River Valley Fall Festival
- Creston Valley Bear Fair
- Salmo Valley Farmers Market (3)

These booths afforded an opportunity to network and engage with many citizens. The WCCs addressed all manner of concerns, such as garbage and fruit management, questions of biology, to electric fencing installation and bear spray usage.



Figure 5. Variety of WildSafeBC booths at Salmo Markets and Fairs.

Door-to-Door Campaigns

Door-to-door campaigns are one of WSBC programs most important activities. It is the action often requested by the Conservation Officers, to assist them with issues that are causing human-bear conflicts. The WCCs also learn more about the community at large and the community gets to know their coordinator. Unsecured garbage and unmanaged fruit trees are the most common issues discussed, but livestock/pet predation can also be a topic. Over 90 hours were spent in this activity.

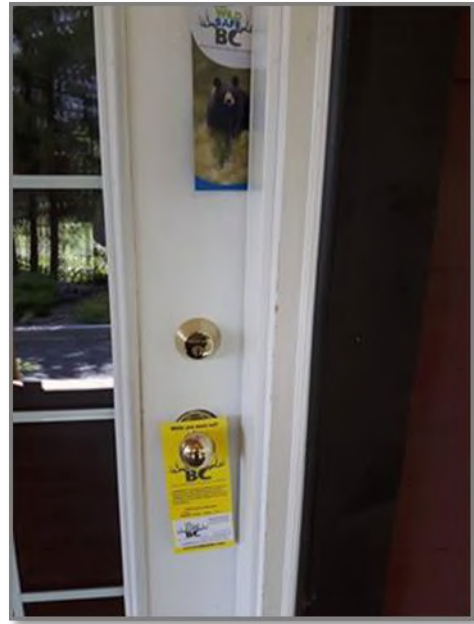


Figure 6. WSBC door hanger and black bear brochure left during a door-to-door campaign.

Brochure Distribution

WSBC brochures encompass a number of species that are interesting to the public, but are also ones that cause the greatest number of complaints. The brochures provide biological and behavioural information about the species, but also safety information and best practices on how to avoid conflict. Brochures are distributed as part of the door-to-door campaigns and are distributed to service centers, visitor centres and stores. Brochures were distributed to the Salmo Village office, Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area, Creston Visitor Center and the Ymir General store.



Figure 7. Brochure stand with a collection of WSBC brochures.

Bear Spray Training

Bear spray saves lives and, after an aggressive bear encounter, it can lead to a positive outcome for both the person and the bear. WSBC feels that bear spray should be a tool carried by recreationists, hunters and people who work in bear country.

In 2018, the WCCs offered four bear spray demonstrations in the Selkirk Purcell area. Three demonstrations were performed in Yahk, Kingsgate and at the Salmo Valley Harvest Festival.



Figure 8. Bear spray demonstration in Yahk.

Goals and Opportunities for 2019

The Selkirk Purcell WSBC program will continue to support the towns of Creston and Salmo in their efforts in becoming “Bear Smart” Communities. There are 6 criteria for becoming a “Bear Smart” Community and these include “developing and maintaining a bear-proof municipal solid waste management system”. Ongoing efforts to replace open garbage receptacles with certified bear-resistant units are important steps in this process as well as offering Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee certified bear-resistant garbage carts to the public at cost.

Fruit trees, livestock and livestock feed continue to be significant bear attractants and sources of conflict, both on private and public lands throughout the Selkirk Purcell. The WCCs will continue to collaborate with the communities of RDCK areas A, B, C, and G in identifying areas of concern and work with the public to find long-term solutions.

In 2019, one of the goals of the WSBC program should be to further develop partnerships with local media within the Selkirk Purcell area. Radio and printed media are important ways to disseminate the WSBC message and safety alerts. Fostering good relations with the press is a mutually beneficial relationship.

The program will continue to collaborate with the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and promote the use of the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) to report dangerous wildlife in an urban setting. WildSafeBC also supports the COS by providing urgent education and safety information to residents affected by heightened wildlife activity. The WCC will continue to provide public education through educational seminars, the school Junior Ranger Program and special events. The WCC is committed to supporting the city of towns of Creston and Salmo, the Regional Districts, local businesses, schools, and non-profit groups in reducing human-wildlife conflicts.

Acknowledgements

The Selkirk Purcell WSBC program would like to acknowledge the generous support it receives from its sponsors, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the Regional District of Central Kootenay, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation and the Town of Creston.

The Selkirk Purcell WSBC program also values the important support provided by Conservation Officers in helping direct the coordinators to problem neighborhoods so that their time and energy can be focused. WildSafeBC would also like to thank the school staff of School District 8 and the parents of the students for their commitment to the WSBC education program.