

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2019

## City of Kamloops

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## Executive Summary

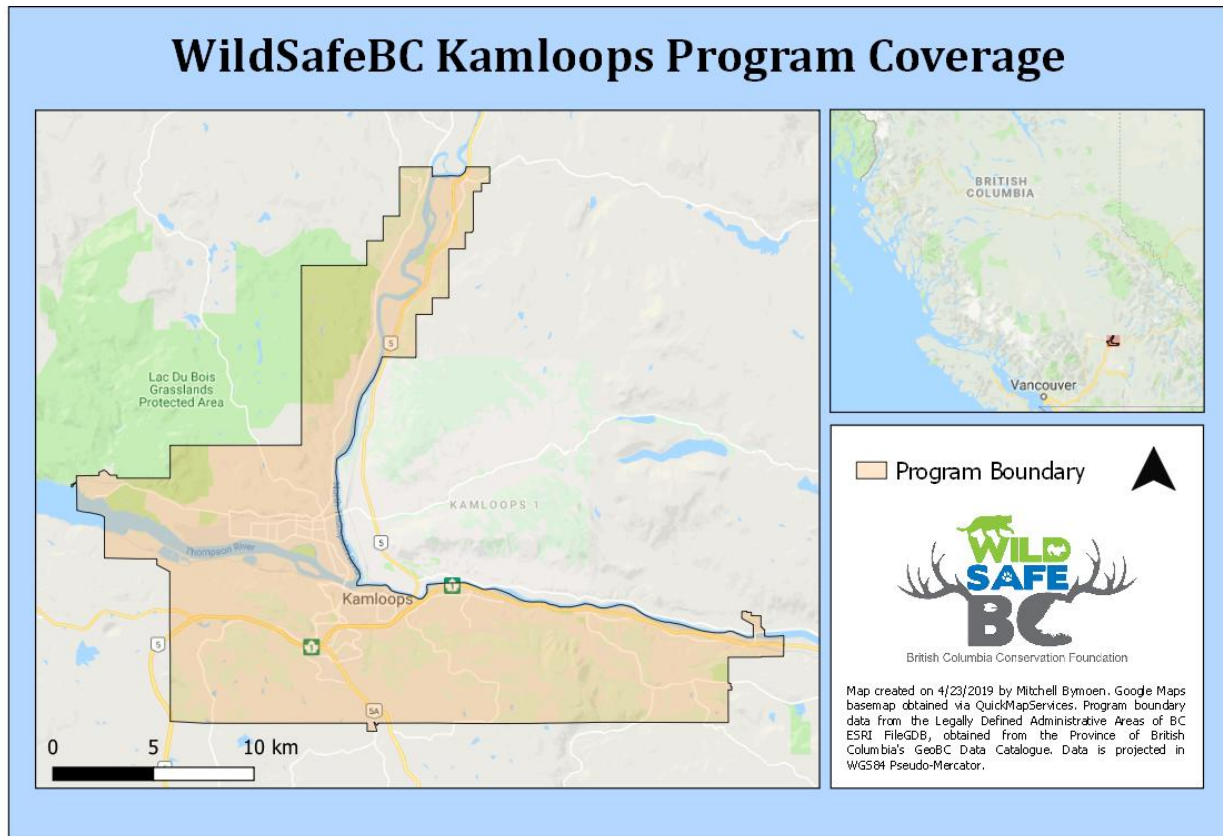
Wildlife reports in Kamloops were at slightly higher levels compared to previous years. According to data from the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line and the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP), black bear encounters were highest with 298 reports, followed by 238 deer, 31 coyote, and 17 cougar from April to October 2019. Black bear reports were much higher in comparison to the previous year.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) was able to increase approval of bear spray use and raise awareness about human-wildlife conflicts by connecting with community groups. Over the course of the 2019 season, the WCC gave 15 presentations to a total of 750 participants that focussed on bear spray use and awareness, wildlife safety, and attractant management. Through door-to-door efforts, 336 residents were reached and educated on proper attractant management as well as rattlesnake awareness. The WCC attended 10 events around the city interacting with approximately 1,400 people. A reach of almost 25,000 was made possible through social media with a 9% increase in likes on Facebook and 55 new followers.

The WCC also assisted the City of Kamloops in facilitating five bear resistant carts to be tested in a high conflict area. These bins are being tested for compatibility with city garbage trucks and how well they function in cold weather months. If successful, they may be used city-wide in the coming years. This would help address the issue of proper garbage cart storage for many residents. The WCC also aided in distributing bin locks to residents in high conflict areas where safe bin storage was not available. In addition to these efforts, the WCC used media releases, interviews and social media to help spread messaging across the city.

The WCC worked closely in collaboration with the Kamloops Conservation Officer Service (COS) to assist in educating residents about safety when there were bears in the area and how to properly manage attractants to avoid human-wildlife conflicts.

Through collaboration, education, and community solutions, the WildSafeBC Kamloops program aims to prevent conflict with wildlife within the program coverage area (Figure 1).



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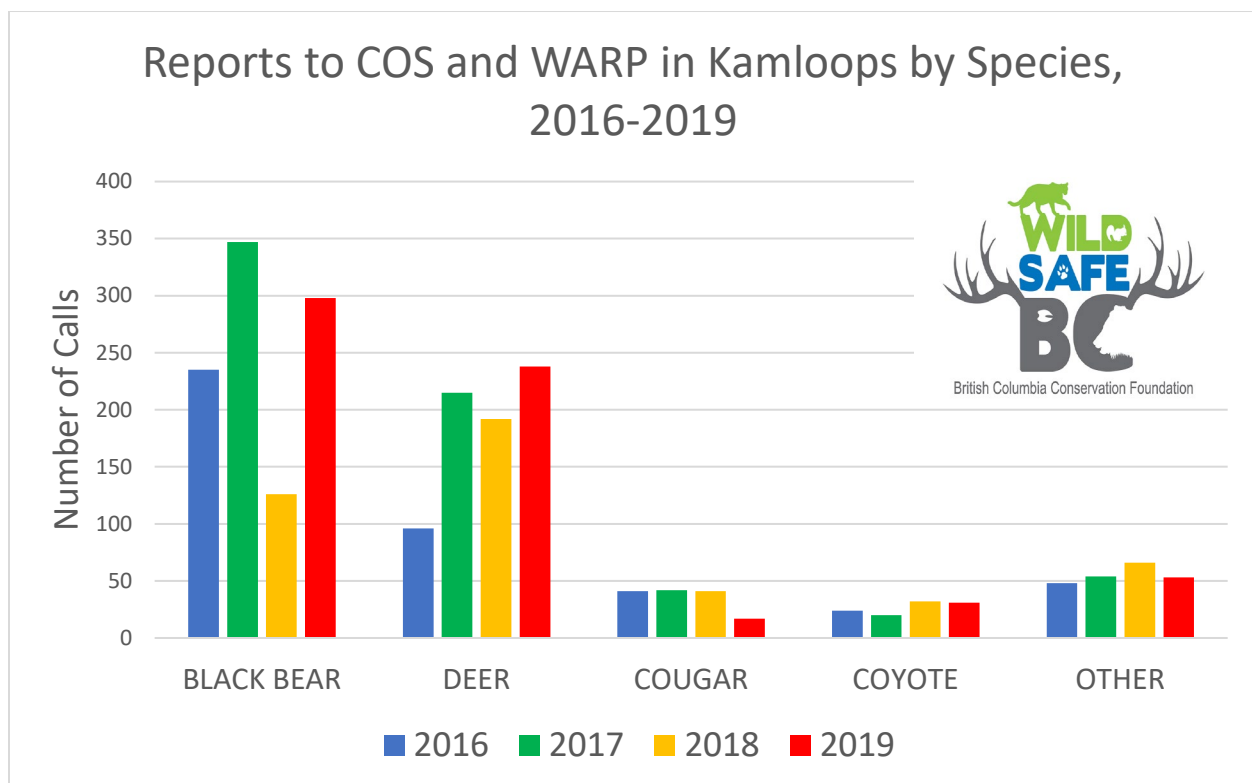
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Cover Photo: WildSafeBC display setup during a community meeting in Kamloops, B.C. 2019

## Highlights from the 2018 Season

### Wildlife Activity

Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). This data is updated daily and this report for Kamloops includes data from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2019 (fig. 2). In 2019, there were 298 black bear reports which is higher than the 3 year average of 236. Deer activity was also higher than average with 238 reports. This is similar to provincial numbers which reflected a higher than average conflict year for bears and deer. The larger number of conflicts may be a result of natural food availability as the result of a very dry spring. Other species were lower than average.



**Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2019.**

Wildlife reports for 2019 indicate that garbage was the main attractant in 56 reports representing 50% of the overall number (fig. 3). This is higher than the previous year, but still lower when compared to the 3 year average. Bird feeders, pets, and livestock are all lower than the previous years numbers.

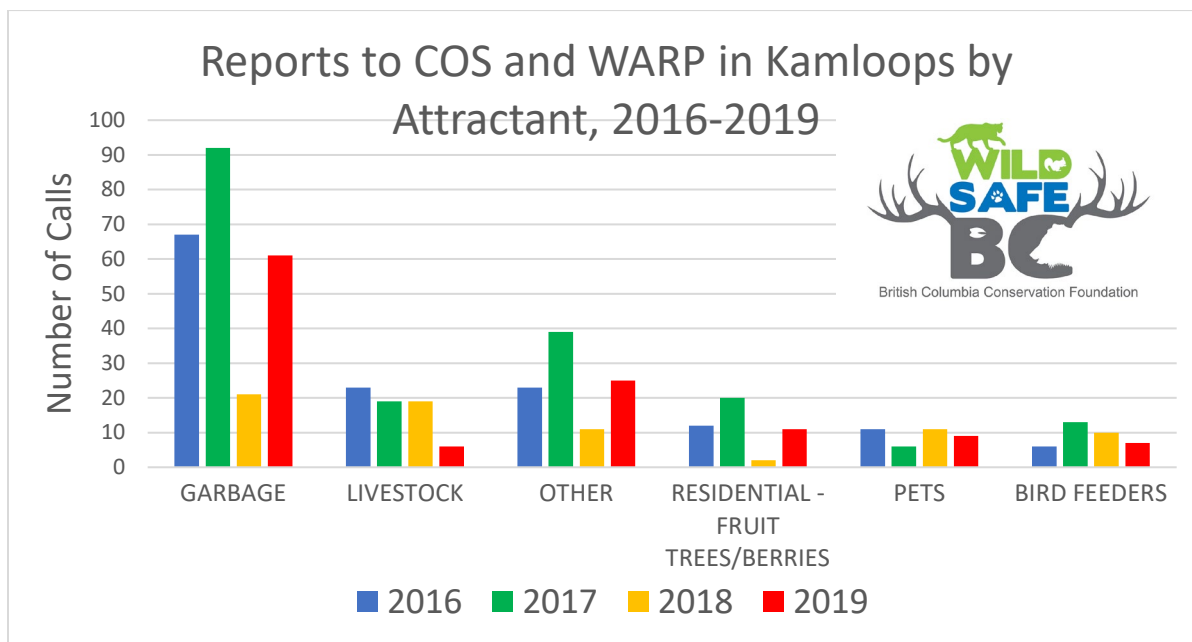


Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding attractants from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2019.

## WildSafe Ranger Program

In 2019, the Junior Ranger Program was renamed to the WildSafe Ranger Program. This program is a keystone of WildSafeBC's education outreach as it not only reaches the student but involves the family as well in the form of take home activities. A total of 9 schools participated in the WildSafe Ranger Program and over 1,000 students became WildSafe Rangers receiving WildSafe Ranger kits (Table 1).

Table 1. Schools that received the Junior Ranger Program in 2019.

School	Grade	Students
McGowan Park Elementary	K - 5	347 (60 completed extended program)
Dallas Elementary	K - 7	367
Arthur Hatton Elementary	K, 1, 2, 3	156
Arthur Stevenson Elementary	K, 1, 2, 3	148
David Thompson Elementary	K, 1, 2, 3	126
Bert Edwards Elementary	K, 1, 2, 3	75
Aberdeen Elementary	K -7	352
Dufferin Elementary	K, 1, 4, 5, 6	172
Westmount Elementary	K, 1, 2, 3	80



## Presentations to Community Groups

In addition to the WildSafe Ranger Program, the WCC provided presentations to over 100 participants including: Atmosphere staff, the Open door group's Adventure program, the Big Little Science Centre, the BC Wildlife Park, and the Kamloops Immigration Services. Attendees were able to learn about local wildlife, understand the importance of managing attractants around our homes, and how to properly use and store bear spray in a safe manner. These presentations are important to the community especially as many newcomers are unaware of the local wildlife and proper measures that need to be taken to reduce human-wildlife conflict.

## Public Displays and Events

The WCC attended many events in 2019. These events allow 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 brochures, magnets, gleaning program contacts, and more.

Events attended in 2019 were as follows:

- World Snake Day at the BC Wildlife Park
- BC Goes Wild Weekend
- Canada Day at Riverside Park
- Neighbourhood block parties
- Kamloops Farmer's Market
- Overlander's Day (fig 4)
- TRU Back to School BBQ
- Community Meetings
- Bert Edwards River's Day



Figure 4. The WCC at the Overlander's Day booth, 2019.

The Kamloops WCC participated in WildSafeBC's fourth annual BC Goes Wild event on September 19<sup>th</sup> (figure 5). This province-wide celebrates the wildlife in BC with unique activities in every community with a WildSafeBC community program. This year, the WCC held a nature walk and proper use of bear spray demo in partnership with the TRU & Kamloops Immigration Services Hiking Club. The walk took place around Isobel Lake and lasted approximately two hours. The event was well received by all 30 participants, especially those who practiced the proper use of bear spray. Most had never had the opportunity to discharge the spray.



**Figure 5. BC Goes Wild attendees along the nature walk at Isobel Lake, 2019.**

## Door-to-Door Education and Garbage Tagging

Door-to-Door (DTD) canvassing covered several high conflict areas in Kamloops this year. Efforts were focused on streets in Upper Sahali, Juniper, and Rosehill where bear and other wildlife conflicts continued to be high. In addition, the WCC canvassed Bachelor Heights during peak rattlesnake season to educate residents about safety and the protection status of this native species. A total of 336 residents were contacted through DTD this year.

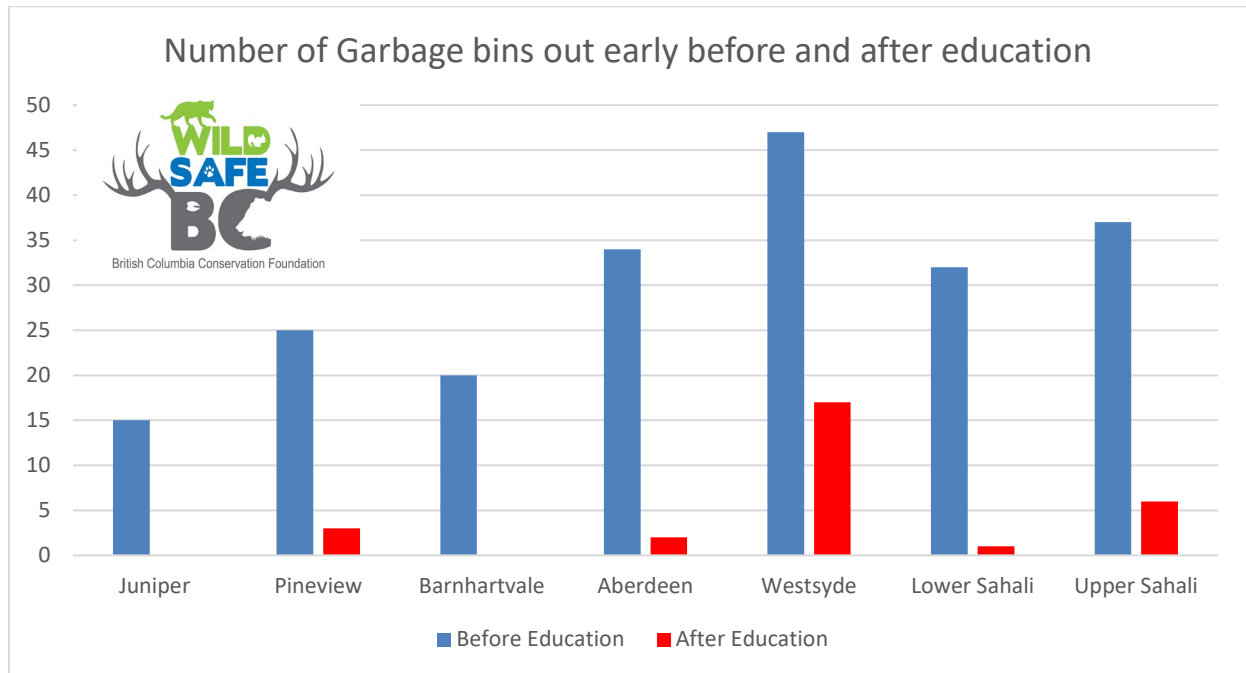
Several neighborhoods in Kamloops received garbage tagging by the WCC this season. Juniper Ridge continues to have the lowest proportion of residents who leave garbage on the curb before the day of collection at less than 1%. Westsyde had the highest rate of 18%. To follow up, neighbourhoods received door-to-door education to discuss the importance of putting carts



out at the appropriate time and keeping them secure during the week. It is important that the WCC always have a volunteer or other staff member assist for safety reasons and to also make the garbage tagging process more efficient. A total of 617 bins were tagged in the City of Kamloops and 29 were repeat offenders. The effectiveness of garbage tagging for changing behaviours is demonstrated by the 95% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey and then were not found on the curb again during the second survey.

The following neighborhoods received garbage tagging this year (number of events in brackets):

- Aberdeen (3)
- Juniper Ridge (2)
- Lower Sahali (3)
- Pineview
- Upper Sahali (4)
- Valleyview (1)
- Westsyde (3)
- Barnhartvale



**Figure 6. Number of carts placed out early for collection before education activities and repeat offenders after education in Kamloops, BC.**

## Social Media and Press

The WCC participated in an interview with CFJC about bears in the North Shore community and how managing attractants could help reduce human-wildlife conflict.

The WCC was able to increase the amount of followers on the Kamloops WildSafeBC Facebook page to 590. 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 WSBC events. Overall, the page had a reach of almost 25,000 from January 1<sup>st</sup> to November 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019.

## Province-wide Initiatives for 2019

WildSafeBC focused on two initiatives in 2019: increased use and acceptance of bear spray and increased Indigenous awareness and engagement.

### Bear Spray

During the 2019 season the WCC hosted 4 bear spray workshops to various groups in Kamloops with a total of 70 people in attendance. These workshops were important for educating retail groups so they could provide correct information to customers and better promote bear spray as an essential hiking tool. After staff at Atmosphere received this education they commented on being more confident when selling bear spray and noted that customers felt more comfortable about making the purchase.

### Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The WCC received training about how to build relationships with Indigenous Peoples and conducted research to learn more about the local Secwépemc First Nation. Additionally, efforts were made to reach out to local First Nation contacts with the goal of coordinating joint events and other partnerships in the future.

## Special Initiatives

The City of Kamloops has obtained five of Rehrig's certified bear-resistant carts that were used for a trial run over the fall-winter season (fig. 6). The WCC coordinated the trial at five households in a high conflict area to try the bins. If this trial is successful, these carts may help address the issue of garbage storage in areas where proper storage is unavailable.



Figure 7. Rehrig Rollout cart (photo source: Rehrig Pacific Company website)

## Challenges and Opportunities

To address the community's challenges with attractant management and increase awareness of wildlife safety, the program should strive to accomplish the following goals in 2020:

- Continue to support the City of Kamloops in the adoption and roll out of bear-resistant garbage carts, especially in higher conflict areas.
- Reduce the amount of garbage carts that are placed out early through continued bin tagging activities.
- Maintain and further develop relationships with the COS and local bylaw officers.
- Continue to increase the followers of the WildSafeBC Kamloops Facebook page with relevant local content.
- Promote the use of bear spray and its importance as an essential safety tool when hiking and biking in bear country.
- Promote greater use and awareness of the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program.
- Develop relationships with Indigenous groups other community association groups around Kamloops.

## Acknowledgements

The WCC would like to thank the City of Kamloops, Ministry of Environment, and the BC Conservation Foundation (BCCF) for funding this project. Special thanks to City of Kamloops sponsor Emily Lomas for her support and help throughout the season, as well as to the BCCF team for their support and guidance this season. Thank you to the COS for their open communication and assistance with education on current wildlife conflicts. The WCC would also like to thank media outlets for their stories and broadcasts that helped spread messaging on wildlife conflicts in Kamloops.