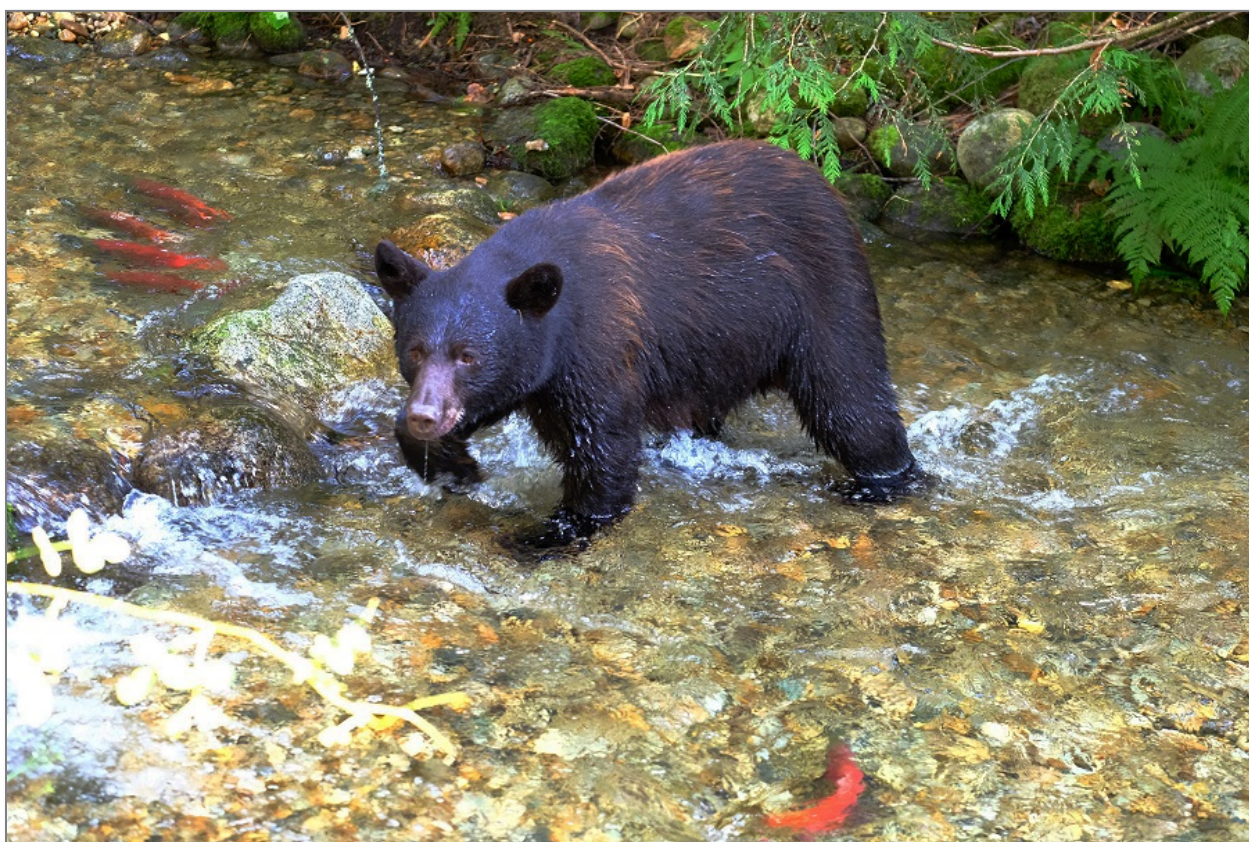


WildSafeBC Annual Report 2019

Nelson

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Executive Summary

The WildSafeBC (WSBC) Nelson Program covers the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) management zones E and F including the City of Nelson and all of the smaller unincorporated communities from Balfour to Bonnington (fig. 1).

WildSafeBC's goal is to reduce human-wildlife conflicts in order to increase public safety and keep wildlife wild. The Nelson WSBC program provides education and promotes best practices by working closely with the Conservation Officer Service (COS), the City of Nelson, BC Parks, the West Kootenay Eco-society, local schools, small businesses and other independent organizations.

In 2019, with the support of its many contributors, and working with a diversity of partners, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) continued to promote its main goals and expand the Program's reach. The WCC performed over 40 presentations to day cares, schools, service groups, government agencies, and parks. The WCC participated in 18 farmers markets and special events. Over 100 hours of door-to-door campaigns were performed, including new initiatives such as fruit reviews and proactive invasive species campaign in an effort to slow the growth of the rat colonization of Nelson.

The WCC worked with the City of Nelson to continue offering affordable bear resistant garbage carts to the public. The program also continued to work closely with the COS to support their important work, with follow up education in neighborhoods that were having bear issues due to unsecured attractants. Some of the other collaborations and partnerships were with Kokanee Creek Provincial Park, School District 8, the Society for the Protection and Care of Animals, the Department of Transportation, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the Boy Scouts of Canada, and the Community Food Center's Harvest Rescue Program.



Figure 1. The WildSafeBC Nelson Program coverage area.

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Cover photo: Local bear in stream. All photos taken by David White unless otherwise stated.

Highlights from 2019 Season

Wildlife Activity

There were 96 black bear reports in and around Nelson which appeared to be average for 2019 season in comparison with the previous six years (fig. 2).

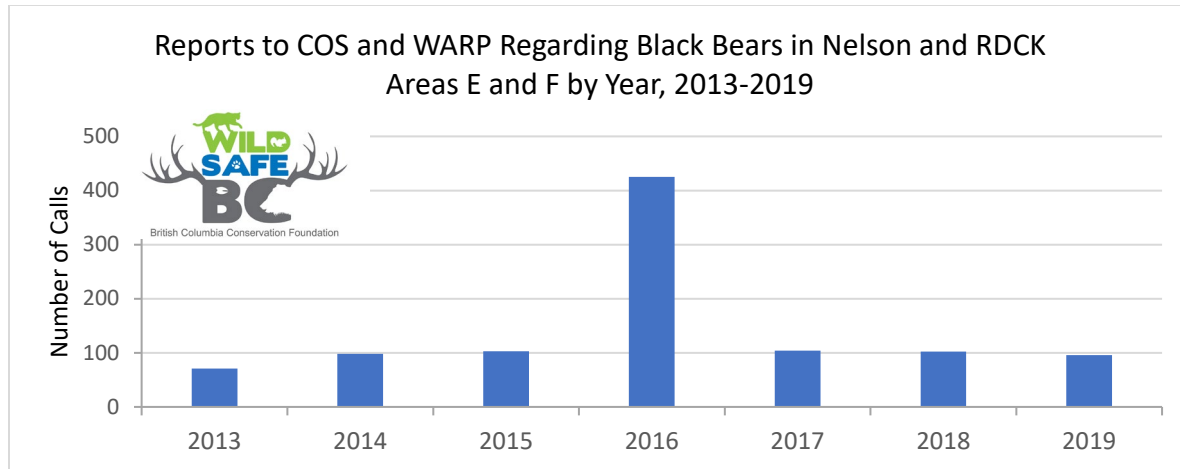


Figure 2. Black bear reports to the COS and WARP since 2013 in Nelson and RDCK Areas E and F.

Bear activity in urban areas tends to peak in May and in the fall when bears are consuming over 20,000 calories per day in preparation for winter denning. Factors that impact conflict include the availability of natural foods, population dynamics and access to unnatural food sources. In 2019, black bear reports peaked in September (fig. 3).

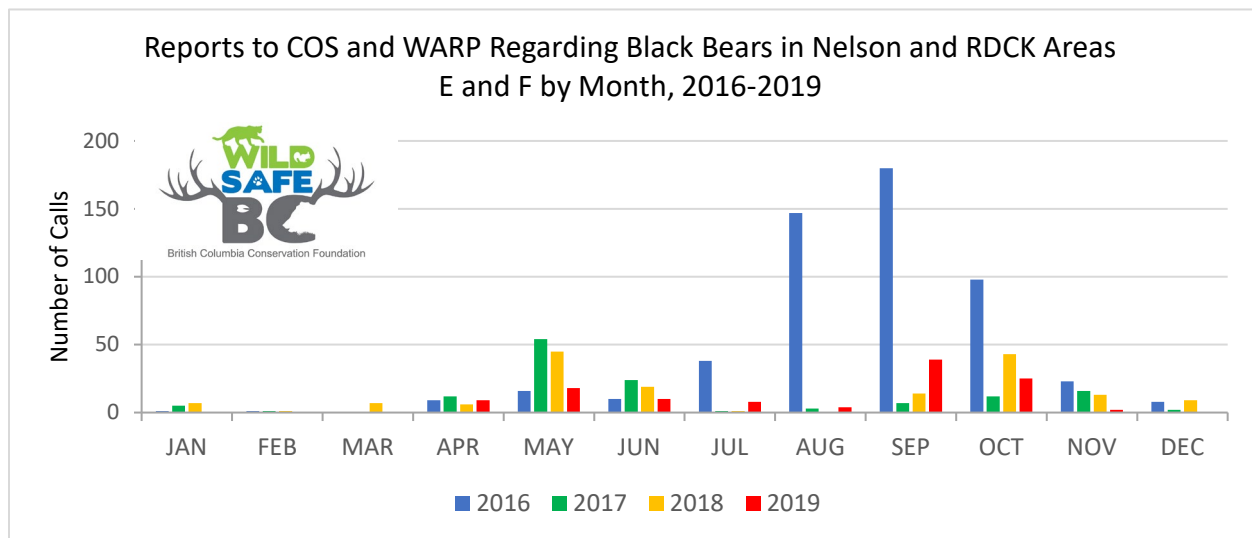


Figure 3. Black bear reports to the COS and WARP by month for WSBC Nelson Program area.

Garbage continues to be the the most reported attractants for black bears, although this has decreased substantially over the years and by 14% since 2018 (fig. 4). This may be an indication of better garbage management. Other attractants are less likely to be reported and may be under-represented in the data.

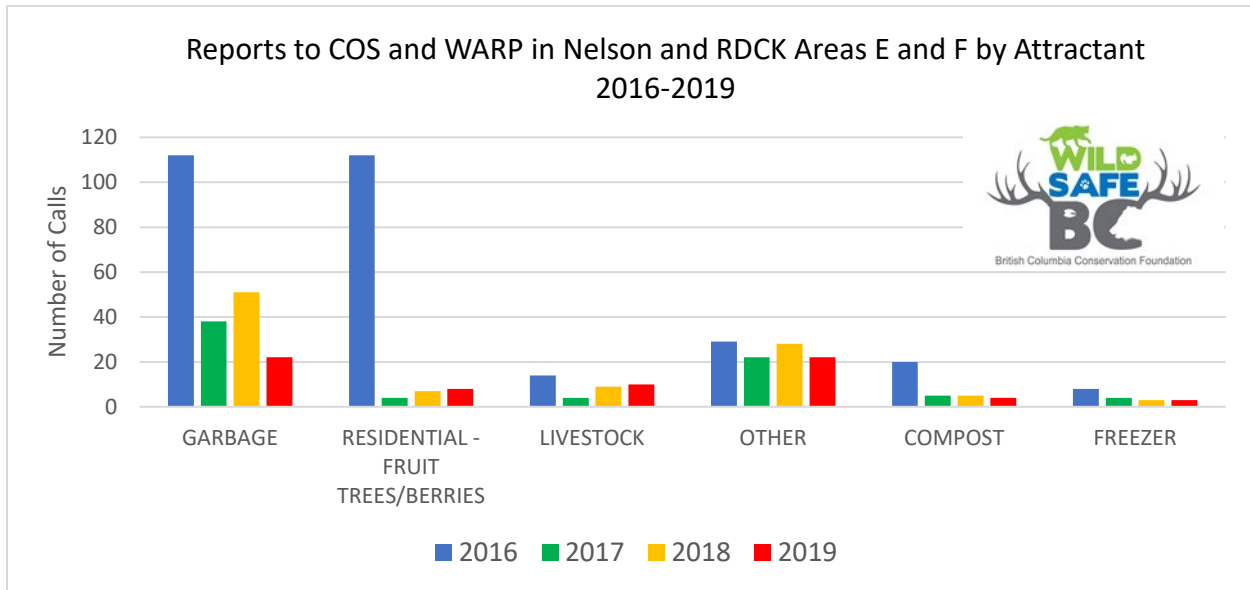


Figure 4. Black bear attractants by type in the WSBC Nelson program area from 2016 to 2019.

Grizzly bear reports in 2019 appear to be higher than the past couple of years (fig. 5) with 30 reports this season. This is comparable to 2016 which was a higher conflict year for black bears as well and was possibly a result of sparse natural fruit sources. In 2019, there were plentiful crops of wild fruit, leaving the increased complaints involving grizzly bears in this region unclear. They may be related to changes in population dynamics such as the dispersal of young males. Overall, the number of reports are still significantly lower than black bears.

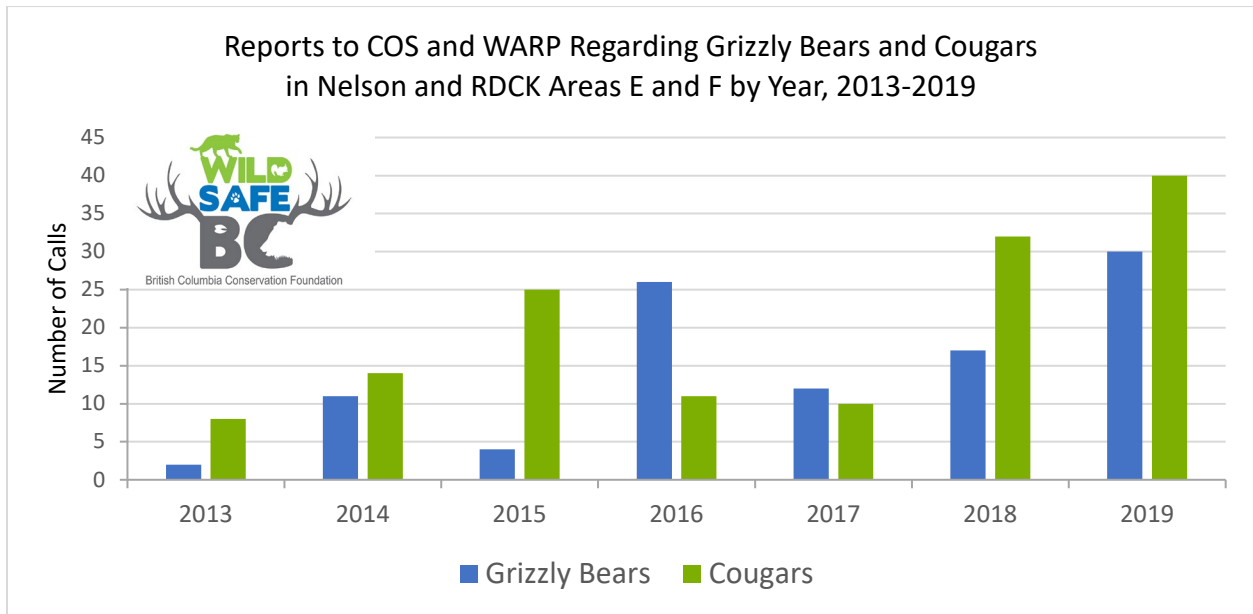


Figure 5. Grizzly bear and cougar report to the COS and WARP in the WSBC Nelson Program area since 2013.

Cougar reports continued an upwards trend in 2019 (fig.5), with 40 reports. Pets and livestock were involved in 22 (over half) of the reports. Anecdotal reports confirmed the loss of house pets and livestock. Cougar activity was also shown to have an increasing trend in other communities such as Kaslo. Cougar may follow their primary prey species (deer) into more urban areas. It is recommended that deer are not encouraged to linger in communities and that house pets and livestock are protected, either by keeping indoors when feasible or using fencing.

WildSafe Ranger Program

In 2019, the Junior Ranger Program was renamed to WildSafe Ranger Program. The WSBC Nelson Program performed 24 WildSafe Ranger presentations to kids in preschool to grade 8 (Table 1, fig. 6, fig. 7). These presentations teach children to respect wildlife for its value in the ecosystem, how to manage attractants at home, and how to behave while in wildlife country. The program sows the seeds for the reduction of wildlife conflict. It is the intention that these memorable experiences will lead to these young people practicing and sharing best practices into adulthood.

Table 1. WildSafe Ranger Program presentations in 2019.

Date	School	Grade
April 16, 2019	Ecole Sentier Alpine x 5	K, 1-2,3-4,5-6,7-8,
April 25, 2019	St. Josephs x 4	2-3,5,6-7,7-8
April 26, 2019	St. Josephs x4	K,1,3,4
April 29, 2019	Trafalgar Middle School x2	6,7
May 9, 2019	Trafalgar Middle School x2	6
June 5, 2019	Blewett Elementary	2-3
June 18, 2019	South Nelson Elementary	2-3
July 11, 2019	Kootenay Kids Day Care	Pre School
August 2, 2019	Kootenay Kids Day Care	Pre School
October 10, 2019	South Nelson Elementary	2-3
October 16, 2019	Blewett Elementary	K-1
October 22, 2019	Blewett Elementary	K



Figure 6. WRP Presentation for South Nelson Elementary



Figure 7. WRP Presentations for Forest Path

Presentation to Community Groups

Apart from school programs, the WCC also offered 17 presentations and workshops to other groups and organizations (Table 2). The focus of these presentations were to provide information to organizations on a specific conflict species, such as a presentation given to the City of Nelson public works on how to manage for marmots. Other presentations included general bear safety presentations, which often included bear spray demonstrations.

Table 2 Presentations to Community Groups in 2019.

Date	Organization	Topic
May 3, 2019	City of Nelson Public Works	Marmots
May 30, 2019	Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resources	Bear Safety
May 31, 2019	City of Nelson Public Works	Bear Safety
June 28, 2019	Selkirk College International Students	Bear Safety
July-August	Kokanee Creek Nature Center	Bear Safety x 7
July-August	SPCA day Camp	Bear Safety x 3
August 12, 2019	Nelson Public Library Reading Program	Bear Safety
October 8, 2019	Boy Scouts of Canada Cubs	Bear Safety
November 6, 2019	Selkirk College Culinary Program	Bear Safety

Public Displays and Events

The WCC used public displays as a primary strategy for reaching out to the smaller communities within RDCK areas E and F. Booths were held at special events within Taghum, Balfour and Harrop, as well as being a regular at the Cottonwood Market in Nelson and Harrop Market. Taking part in these events contributes greatly in developing a community recognition of the WSBC Program and helps the coordinator develop credibility within the many communities, both big and small. The WCC participated in 18 public displays and reached a total of 1,600 people (Table 3).

Table 3. Public Displays in 2019.

Date	Event
April 6, 2019	Science Fair LV Rogers High School
April 21, 2019	Taghum Hall Earth Day
April 22, 2019	Earth Day Hall St. Eco Society
May to October	Cottonwood Park Saturday Market x 7
June to September	Harrop Farmers Market x 3
July 1, 2019	Canada Day Festival Lakeside Park Nelson
July 6, 2019	Balfour Daze Festival, Balfour park
August 25, 2019	Redfish Festival Kokanee Creek Provincial Park
September 3, 2019	Selkirk College Community Connect Event
September 15, 2019	Harrop Harvest Festival, Harrop Hall



Figure 8. Public Display at Selkirk College Community Connect.



Figure 6. Public Display at Canada Day Lakeside Park.

Door to Door and Garbage Tagging

Door-to-door campaigns are an important part of the WSBC program (fig.10). It provides the coordinator with increased knowledge of the community, and allows the community to become familiar with the coordinator and the program. Often door-to-door campaigns are initiated in hotspot areas identified by the COS. These campaigns target neighborhoods with obvious attractant issues but also cover a wider area so as not to single out a particular resident. Door-to-door campaigns were also used in special initiatives such as rat mitigation efforts and fruit reviews, which will be described later in this document. The WCC spent 64 hours in door-to-door campaigns and engaged with over 500 people.

Garbage tagging is an effective tool designed to educate and promote responsible garbage management. It involves surveying an area of the city, in the evening, in which garbage is to be collected the following day. Any garbage that is put out on the curb the night before is tagged with a removable and informational sticker (fig.11). The WCC attempts to talk to the residents the following day and provide them with garbage management best practices in order to keep wildlife wild and the community safe. In 2019, 24 hours were spent in this activity. The number of repeat offenders is extremely low which is an indication of this activity's effectiveness in promoting positive behaviour changes that result in less garbage being available to bears.



Figure 70. Door hanger and brochures left behind when residents are not home.



Figure 81. Garbage set out the night before collection receiving and educational sticker warning that this is a bear attractant.

Brochure Distribution

The WSBC brochures were widely distributed throughout the Nelson area and were re-stocked throughout the season. A full complement of brochures was placed at: Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy office in downtown Nelson; Kootenay Lake Forestry Centre; City of Nelson Visitor Centre; Kokanee Creek Provincial Park Visitor Centre; and the Regional District of Central Kootenay office. Additionally, black bear brochures were distributed to all outdoor and bicycling stores in downtown Nelson and all motor sport dealers, hotels, convenience stores, restaurants and marinas along Highway 3A on the North Shore.

Social Media and Press

The WSBC Nelson program promoted its message in cooperation with a number of media formats in 2019. The program continued its partnership with the local paper, the Nelson Star, and published three articles that were made available online and on Facebook (fig.12). The WCC was also a regular contributor on the three local radio stations.

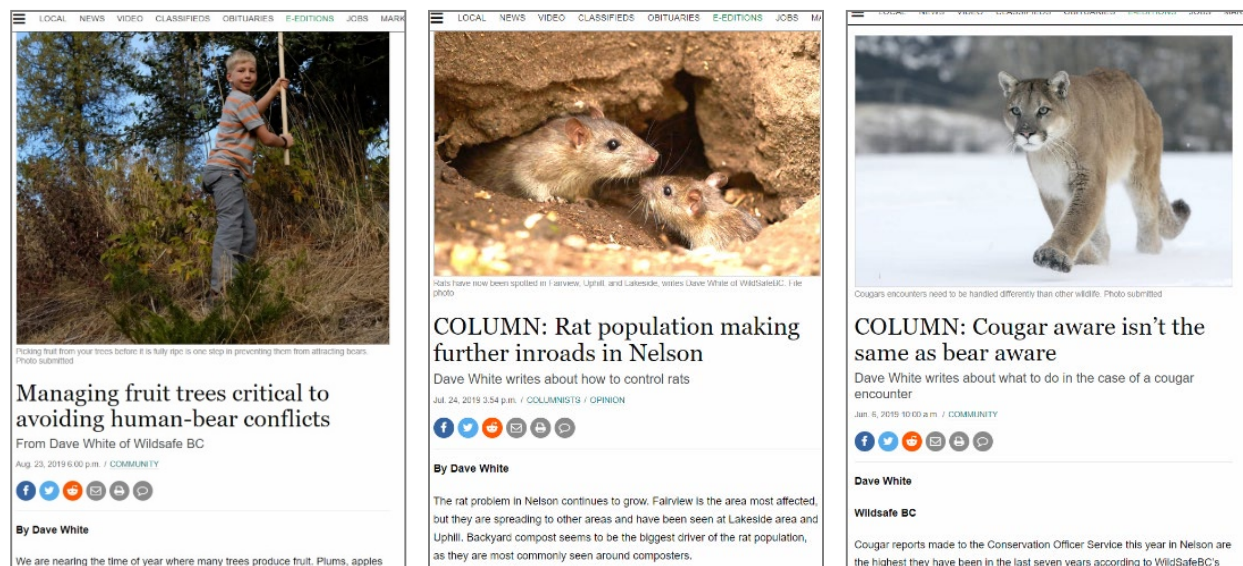


Figure 92. Articles published in 2019.

Province-wide Initiatives for 2019

Bear spray

Five bear spray workshops were held in various locations through area E and F as well as many bear spray demonstrations given alongside bear presentations. Three of these workshops were held in cooperation with Gillian Sanders of Grizzly Bear solutions. Two of these workshops also had Conservation Officers from the Nelson area in attendance. These workshops were held at

the Nelson rod and gun club, the Blewett Fire station, and the Harrop Hall. Over 120 participants were involved in the workshops. The staff from Valhalla Pure Outfitters retail store also participated in the fourth workshop, with a fifth workshop held in Balfour at the Fall Harvest Festival (fig.13).



Figure 103. Valhalla Pure Outfitters' staff annual bear spray training.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

Building on training provided in 2018, the WCC continued to learn about how to build relationships with Indigenous Peoples through a training webinar this year. Also, the WCC conducted research to learn more about local First Nations - the Sinixt, Ktunaxa Nation, Sylix and Metis people.

Special Initiatives

Rat Awareness and Monitoring

The WCC became aware of rat sightings in north eastern Fairview community of Nelson in August 2018. Previously, rats were absent from the City of Nelson. To establish the extent of colonization in the city, the coordinator did a door-to-door campaign in the immediate area of the sighting. After speaking with residents, it seemed apparent that rats were only in the area of the original sighting.

An article was written and published in the Nelson star paper, which was also published online and linked to Facebook. The article discussed ways of mitigating attractants for rats and requested the public report sightings. The WCC also recorded sightings in a database. By the summer of 2019 it was apparent that rats had become established throughout Fairview, and had started colonizing uphill. Rosemont is the only part of the city without any reports.

In July, a follow-up article was written for the Nelson Star that updated the public and reinforced the messaging of the previous article. A meeting with the City Council was held regarding the unfolding situation. In the fall, a door-to-door campaign was initiated to bring awareness of the

problem to the public and provide information on the main attractants, in an effort to slow the spread of rats within the City.

Fruit Reviews

This past year, Nelson experience a bountiful harvest of fruit. In order to inform the scope of the issue, the WCC initiated a program to identify fruit trees there were visible from public roadways and right-of-ways. Trees that were unmanaged were noted for further follow up. The WCC would then engage with the owner of the tree and provide information on best practices. If the person was not interested in the fruit, they were advised to engage with their neighbors or on social media to try and find people who could harvest the fruit. There were also recommended to contact the Community Food Centre Harvest Rescue Program.

Some correlations were recognized during the reviews. People who purchased properties with existing fruit trees were less likely to remove the trees and were also less diligent about harvesting the fruit. Also, elderly homeowners were less likely to not have the ability to harvest fruit. Finally, people renting property with fruit trees were also no inclined to harvest the fruit. Going forward the WSBC Nelson program will attempt to address these issues in future activities.

Bear-resistant Garbage Cart Program

The WSBC Nelson program, working with the West Kootenay Human Bear Conflict Working Group, executed a pilot program in 2016 that provided cost-share bear-resistant garbage carts to the public. Utilizing RDCK funding, the program began by using the Bear Saver brand of bins. It got to a point where these bins became too expensive to make the program viable. The WCC coordinator researched the available certified bear-resistant bins available and found a product made by Toter Inc. that was certified grizzly bear-resistant and affordable, due to direct sales. A proposal was drafted where Toter would sell the bins directly to a buyer in Nelson. This allowed for the bins to be sold at cost which would allow nearly full cost recovery. The City of Nelson adopted the proposal and 100 Toter bins were purchased to be sold at cost of \$205 through the public works department (fig. 14).

The initial 100 carts arrived in November 2018. By July 2019, all 100 carts had been sold and distributed into the region. In 2019, the WCC consulted with the City about the program and the City agreed to continue the program by purchasing 100 of the previous 64-gallon carts, and 50 of the smaller 32-gallon carts. They arrived in August and have been selling well. This program makes a huge difference, when dealing with garbage issues around the region, as it gives the WCC and the Conservation Officers an alternative option to offer residents that have limited waste storage options.



Figure 114. Toter bear-resistant carts for sale at public works compound

Challenges and Opportunities

This was a year of abundant fruit, both natural and domestic. If wild fruit had not been in such abundance, conflict numbers might have been much higher as a result of domestic fruit abundance. Trying to get domestic fruit harvested was probably the biggest challenge which resulted in more education efforts in this area.

Going forward, the WSBC Nelson program wants to better support the community in addressing this issue. The WCC has begun discussing the unmanaged fruit issue by building on existing gleaning programs and supporting their expansion in capacity to harvest and utilize the fruit. This program will hopefully bring in all the elements of education, enforcement and harvesting capacity. The proposed partners in this program will be the Community food Centre, the City of Nelson and the Conservation Officer Service and the West Kootenay Human Bear Conflict Working Group.

In 2019, the Community Food Centre Harvest Rescue Program harvested 1,400 pounds of apples. Kootenay Foods similarly harvested 1,000 pounds of apples in the Castlegar and Slocan Valley area. These two programs took their harvest to the Press Fest, held at Slocan Park, which rendered commercially salable, pasteurized apple cider from a portable press brought up from Creston. The goal for 2020 is to bring together all the partnerships to expand the number of pressings, either by purchasing a press or renting the Creston Press more often through the season. The commercial product could be partially sold to expand the capacity of the harvest rescue program. The Nelson WSBC program will provide the media and door-to-door promotion with support from the City.

Proper management of garbage also continues to be a challenge. Continued education and collaborative efforts will be necessary to prevent wildlife from access to garbage.

Acknowledgments

The WSBC Nelson program would like to acknowledge the generous support it receives from its sponsors: the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Regional District of Central Kootenay, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation, and the City of Nelson. The WCC also values the important support provided by Conservation Officers Nathan Smienk and Jason Hawkes as well as the following schools for their commitment to the WSBC education program: Kootenay Lake School District 8, and St. Joseph's Catholic School. A special thanks to Anne and Rick Pidgeon, operators of Kokanee Creek Provincial Park campground as well as Joanne Siderius and the crew at the Kokanee Creek Visitor Centre for their commitment and hard work in keeping wildlife wild and campers educated and safe. Finally, thank you to the Nelson Star Newspaper, 103.5 Juice FM Radio, and EZ Rock 106.9 FM and the Nelson Co-op radio (93.5FM) for promoting our WSBC messaging to the community at large and helping us deliver our safety information to a wider audience.