

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2019

New Denver, Silvertown, Nakusp & Area K

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Executive Summary

This WildSafeBC New Denver Program also covers the communities of Nakusp, Silverton, and the ones within Area K (fig.1). Overall, these communities reported less human-wildlife conflicts this year than in previous seasons. There were fewer reported sightings and fewer encounters most likely due to an abundance of readily available natural food sources in surrounding habitats. Time was spent late in the season helping track and map a rodent issue in New Denver as it was of significant concern to citizens. Overall, there was very little conflict reported.

The New Denver WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) attended 12 events and distributed WildSafeBC (WSBC) messaging to over a 1,000 people. With Farmers' Markets in the two largest communities and major events such as Canada Day in Nakusp, Toad Fest at Summit Lake, Hills Garlic Festival and Lucerne's Harvest Festival in New Denver, there were many great opportunities to present information on managing attractants, bare camping, recreating safely, and proper storage and deployment of bear spray. As well, there were many visitors to the region who do not live in wildlife areas and who benefited greatly from the information provided.

This region is quite conscientious about securing garbage until the day of pick up and very few incidents of reported conflict involved garbage. Although formal reporting does not completely support this, fruit and windfall remains the biggest attractant issue. Door-to-door campaigns occurred 6 times and reached over 300 people. The main focus of these campaigns was managing attractants, and making spaces less inviting to wildlife. Two electric fencing workshops were planned and promoted in the region through partnerships with Grizzly Bear Solutions and the communities themselves with 20 people participating. Over a dozen campgrounds were visited; four received regular repeated visits to promote bare camping and to educate visitors about potential wildlife encounters. The regional newspaper promoted WSBC initiatives seven times and published three submitted articles. The WSBC messaging was also presented in four New Denver Village Notices in the Valley Voice. In the latter part of the season, the WCC focused on presenting the WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) with 12 classes and over 205 students taking part. As well, multiple Facebook messages were posted each month with a 7 percent increase in followers.

The New Denver WCC collaborated with several organizations this season with including the Bear Smart program offered by Valhalla Wilderness Society, Grizzly Bear Solutions, Harvest Share, The Healthy Community Society and the Kaslo WildSafeBC Program to present education on a variety of topics including electric fencing and wilderness safety. The WCC also worked collaboratively with the Village of New Denver to provide education on rodent mitigation and to map the problem areas in the village. Information was also requested and shared between the WCC and RDCK Parks Department on trail signage and trail closures.

One of the many challenges faced, and perhaps the most difficult, was finding support in areas where there was much less conflict than in previous seasons. It is important to note that human-wildlife conflicts fluctuate from year to year and remaining vigilant is necessary to ensure communities continue to reduce potential for conflicts to occur. Goals for 2019 include making stronger collaborations in less responsive communities and doing more education with people who only live in the region part time. It was a particularly busy year for new council and staff in Nakusp this year. Next year, the WCC would like to increase WSBC presence in Nakusp and surrounding areas and revisit the Bear Smart initiatives that were previously introduced in Nakusp.



Figure 1. WildSafeBC New Denver program coverage area.
* Areas south of Silverton are covered by the Valhalla Bear Smart program.

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Cover Photo: Resident moose along Highway 31A between Kaslo and New Denver

Highlights from the 2019 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 New Denver includes data from January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019. This year, black bear reports were significantly lower than in previous years with only slight increases in July and in September (fig. 2, fig. 4). Garbage remained the most reported attractant followed by fruit trees (fig. 3). Based on general observation and discussion with locals, fruit trees are still the most prevalent attractant for wildlife. There were fewer reports of conflict this year partly due to an exceptional huckleberry crop in the region but also due to a lack of reporting. Although residents will verbally comment to the WCC about sightings in town, those sightings are typically not reported.

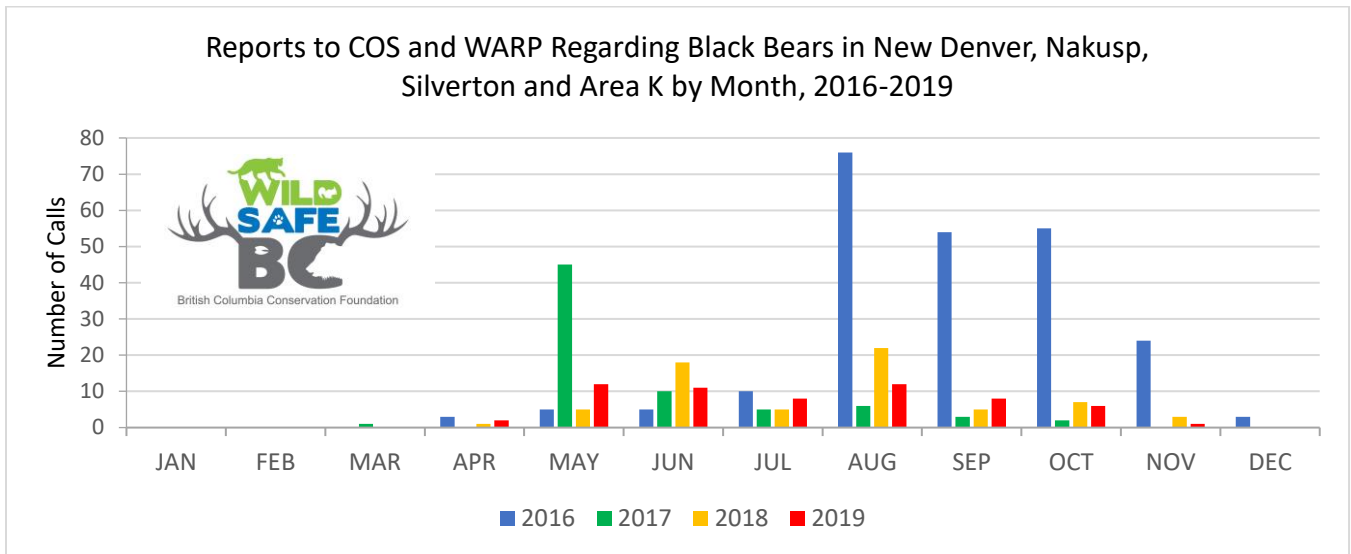


Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019.

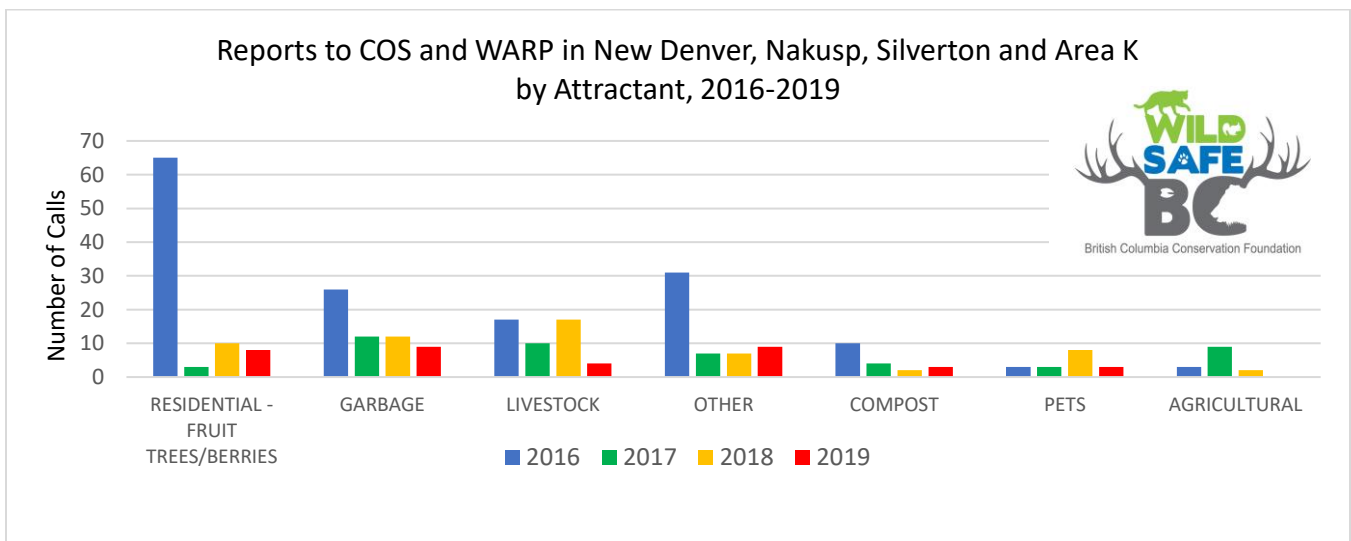


Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding attractants from January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019

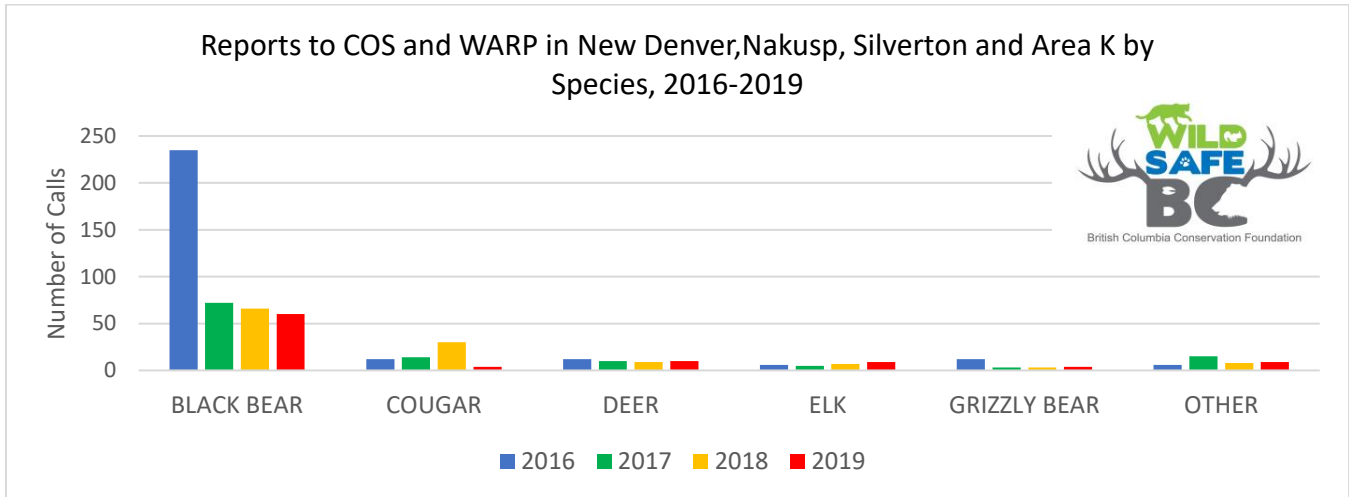


Figure 4. Species reported to the COS and WARP in New Denver from January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019. Black bears account for 70% of the reports (430 out of 615).

WildSafe Ranger Program

In 2019, the Junior Ranger Program was renamed WildSafe Ranger. This is a keystone of our program. Three schools participated in the program with a total of 12 presentations provided to 205 students who became WildSafe Rangers and received WildSafe Ranger Kits (Table 1). One group of students received an outdoor presentation on attractants and safety when hiking or recreating outdoors.

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

School	Grade	Students
Nakusp Elementary	K-6	151
Lucerne Elementary	K-3	25
Burton Elementary	K-4	17
Lucerne Preschool		12

Public Displays and Events

The WSBC display booth was set up for a dozen events in Areas H and K (fig.6, fig. 7). The WCC attended local Farmer’s Markets 3 times in each of the communities of New Denver and Nakusp. The WCC also attended Canada Day celebrations in Nakusp, Toad Fest at Summit Lake for two days, Hill’s Garlic Festival and Harvest Festival at Lucerne School in New Denver. WildSafeBC’s annual BC Goes Wild Weekend was held at Hills Garlic Festival with special contests and activities for youngsters (fig. 5). Local support for these events and the supporting organizations is fantastic with people attending from all over the region. Even more impressive, numerous visitors are reached through these events. As well, many people in the region are part-time residents and the education about attractants has great reach during the summer and fall seasons when more of these people are living in the region.



Figure 5. Visitors at our BC Goes Wild Weekend event.



Figure 6. Visitors to one of the twelve booth set ups for the season.



Figure 7. Due to in kind support from the Village of New Denver, the WCC was able to replace a damaged canopy with a new branded canopy.

Door-to-Door Education and Garbage Tagging

Garbage tagging was performed in New Denver a total of three times with no garbage being put out early. According to most residents questioned, this is normal for New Denver as they self-manage within the community and are also certified as a Bear Smart Community by the Province. The WCC switched focus very early in the season and spent time educating people about the proper storage of garbage in between pick up days. This was accomplished through door-to-door campaigns which also focused on educating people about specific problem species. Earlier in the season the focus was on coyotes, and later switched to rats. Other campaigns discussed managing attractants, and making spaces less inviting to wildlife. Campaigns also occurred in more rural areas that do not typically receive as much attention such as Silverton, Burton, Bayview and Rosebery. The WCC was not able to do garbage tagging in Nakusp due to a work schedule conflict on the garbage pick up days and the considerable travel distance to reach Nakusp. Consultation with Public Works and the Village Office indicated that putting garbage out early was not an issue in the community. Local businesses in Nakusp were canvassed to discuss conflict issues and the general consensus was that 2019 was an extremely low conflict season in the region.

Social Media and Press

Social media engagement and growth from January 1st to November 30th was on par with previous years with some gains in followers and improved engagement for posts that involved community events. The WildSafeBC New Denver page grew 7% in 2019 from 312 to 336 page likes and had an overall reach of 13,000 from May 1st to October 15th. New Denver is not a community that is easy to reach via social media as some residents do not own computers or cell phones. The reach was much

greater through the local paper, the Valley Voice, which has a readership throughout Areas H and K of 7,600. The WCC submitted 7 news articles on attractant management as well as providing an interview to introduce the coordinator and the program to the community. WSBC messaging was also presented in four New Denver Village Notices in the Valley Voice.

Wildlife in Area Signs

Signage was required in a number of communities this season. Signage was developed for the Burton Historical Campground, a municipal campground that sits in a wildlife corridor. Bear in Area signs and posters were used to remind visitors to be alert and mindful while staying in the campground. Signage was also supplied twice to Rosebery at the entrances to the community and at the Galena Trail heads in consultation with the persons responsible for trail maintenance through the RDCK Parks Department. Signage was used in Silverton on four separate occasions at the request of local citizens who felt visitors to the area were not bear aware and should be notified of areas where bears are known to enter the Village.

Collaborations

The WCC worked to actively promote fruit gleaning with referrals to Harvest Share in Silverton and New Denver and remained in touch with the community sponsors of this program throughout the season. She also collaborated with Grizzly Bear Solutions to help set up and get registrants for two electric fencing workshops, one in New Denver and one in Burton. The New Denver workshop was sponsored in part by the Valhalla Wilderness Society (VWS) and their Bear Smart Coordinator took part. The VWS also supplied cost sharing for 5 electric fencing set ups in the villages and provided advise on installations as well. The WCC was in touch with the Conservation Officer Service (COS) as needed and attended the West Kootenay Bear Working Group meeting to collaborate with a number of organizations that promote bear safety in the region. Numerous events were attended with other organizations that promote wildlife stewardship including two days at Toad Fest which is organized by the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program. The WCC also collaborated with RDCK Parks before installing signage at trailheads. The most regular collaboration was with the Village of New Denver. The Village sent out WSBC best practises information with tax notices in the spring, WSBC messaging in Village Notices and WSBC rat brochures late in the season to help address the rodent issue. The Village of Nakusp also requested season end reminders to publish in its fall newsletter.

Province-wide Initiatives for 2019

Bear Spray

Formal bear spray demonstrations were performed on two occasions. Wind and weather conditions eliminated the capacity to deploy inert spray on three other occasions at outdoor venues but the safety information was presented. Proper handling and transport of bear spray was addressed at every event attended with the transport container being of particular interest. Bear spray safety and deployment was a regularly asked question at events and was addressed in as much detail as permissible from the booth. At least 100 people had direct engagement on the efficacy of bear spray and the steps on how to use it effectively. Large numbers of visitors to events were grateful to be directed to check the expiration dates on bear spray.

Special Initiatives

New Denver is always working towards reducing human-wildlife conflict. They are already a Bear Smart community and along with Silverton are piloting a community composting program that reduces the amount of backyard composting which in turn reduces attractants. Backyard composts can attract large animals such as bears but are even more attractive for rodents. The community school also has an amazing program where the students plant, maintain and care for a school garden and manage the composting (fig. 8, fig. 9). Students are taught how to properly care for both which bodes well for the future of the community. The WCC will continue to work with the community by promoting the use of bear-resistant garbage and compost containers and has discussed the possibility of broadening the use of these resources in the new season.



Figures 8 & 9. Lucerne Elementary School Composting Program

Challenges and Opportunities

This region is still an area where fruit trees abound and continue to be the major attractant that draws wildlife into residential areas. Bears, coyotes, deer and now rats have all been issues in areas where there is fruit. Attractant mapping has identified hotspots in the community where more education and fruit gleaning are needed. In particular, more volunteers are needed to continue with the great programs that already exist. To address the abundance of fruit in the communities in areas H and K, and to widen the expanse of WSBC messaging, the following initiatives are recommended for 2020:

- Increase focus on electric fence demonstrations
- Continue education through presentations, workshops, event displays, social media, news articles, flyers in municipal tax information, and public notices
- Continue regular campground visits especially during tourist season
- Continue to collaborate on bringing more residential-bear resistant bins to the area
- Increase contact with gleaning groups, food banks and other non-profits
- Increase door-to-door campaigns in hotspots
- Encourage homeowners to remove blooms on fruit trees to reduce production
- Continue with education on bear spray use and transport

Acknowledgements

Thank you to our host community, the Village of New Denver, Mayor Leonard Casley and councillors for the in-kind support that provided staff time, photocopying, hall rentals, storage space, and a new canopy for the program. Special thanks to the CAO, Catherine Allaway and the village staff for their considerable efforts to answer and address question and concerns in a timely manner. They all helped with the delivery of this program. Thank you to the staff of the Nakusp Village Office, the Visitor Information Staff and the Municipal Campground attendants for the numerous updates on visits to the community.

Thank you to Bree Lillies of Harvest Share and Julia Greenlaw of The Healthy Community Society for their continued support of the WildSafeBC program and for the wonderful collaborations and event opportunities. Thanks also to the many organizations the program collaborated with including Bear Smart and Grizzly Bear Solutions. The WSBC program was also supported by the Conservation Officer Service, local RCMP detachments, municipal park operators, and trails and recreation personnel.

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