

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2019

## Rossland

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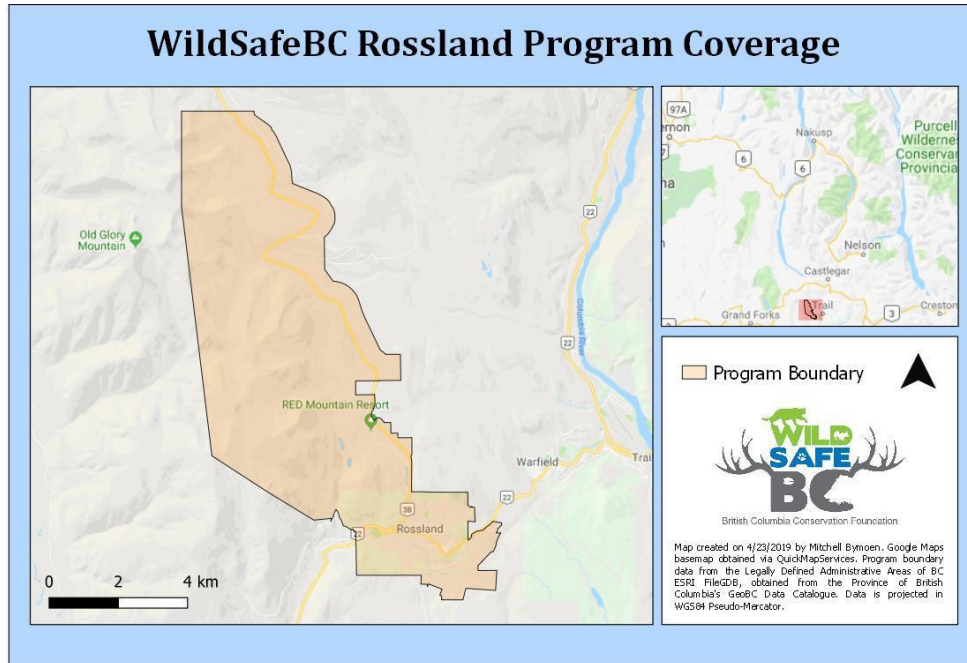


## Executive Summary

This report describes the activities for the Rossland (fig. 1) and Trail (fig. 2) program between May 1 and November 15, 2019 including the highlights and challenges of delivering the program to residents and visitors in the City of Rossland/Trail and its rural area (Warfield). In the past four years, Trail has made 640 calls to the Conservation Service (COS) compared to Rossland at 207. Black bears remain the most frequently reported wildlife in Rossland and Trail while garbage remains the mores reported unmanaged attractant. Other wildlife reported include coyotes, grizzly bear, cougars and deer.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) provided WildSafe Ranger Program presentations to two schools and four summer camps, reaching over 428 students. Due to unmanaged fruit trees and poorly stored garbage, 170 households were visited through door-to-door outreach. Garbage tagging was performed nine times in Trail and four times in Rossland. There were 20 educational displays that reached 941 attendees and 2 bear spray demos with 23 people in attendance. In addition, the WCC used media releases, interviews and social media to help spread messaging in Rossland and Trail. The WildSafeBC Rossland/Trail Facebook page reached over 15,000 page views in 2019.

Some of the ongoing challenges in 2019 were vast amounts of unpicked fruit trees, under-reporting of wildlife to the COS, poorly managed garbage and difficulties recruiting volunteers. Goals for 2020 include continued education and outreach by collaborating with local fruit gleaning groups, providing electric fencing demonstrations and supporting access to bear-resistant bins to community members. WildSafeBC will continue to emphasize the need to report wildlife in conflict or bears and cougars in urban areas to the COS in order to support a more proactive approach to reducing human-wildlife conflict. The WCC recognizes the support of its sponsors, COS, city staff and organizations. Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help “keep wildlife wild and our community safe”.



**Figure 1. WildSafeBC Rossland program coverage area.**



**Figure 2. WildSafeBC Trail program coverage area.**

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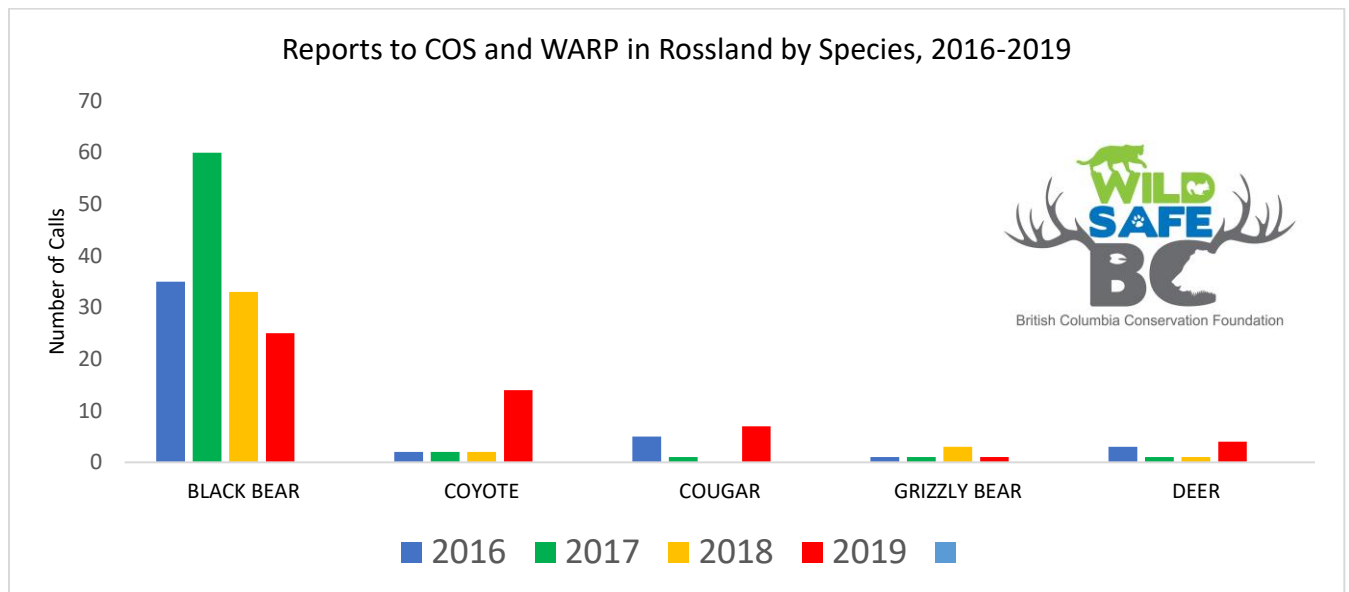
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## Highlights from the 2019 Season

### Wildlife Activity

Calls made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) are available to the public through WARP. This data is updated daily and this report for Rossland and Trail includes data from January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019.

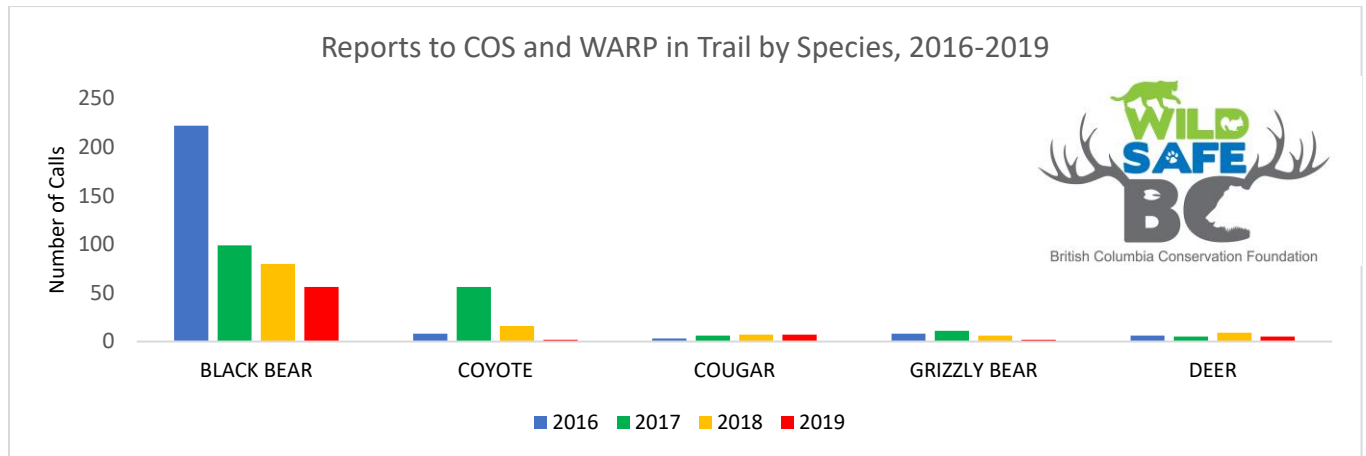
From 2016 to 2019, Rossland had a range of wildlife reports with a total of 207 calls made to the COS. Black bear was the most frequently reported each year and 2017 was a higher conflict year with 60 calls made. It is likely that bear reports were low this year likely due to under-reporting. Coyotes (14) had the highest reported year in 2019 and could be a result of population dynamics and/or attractants such as pets and garbage (fig. 3).



**Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP by Species in Rossland from January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019.**

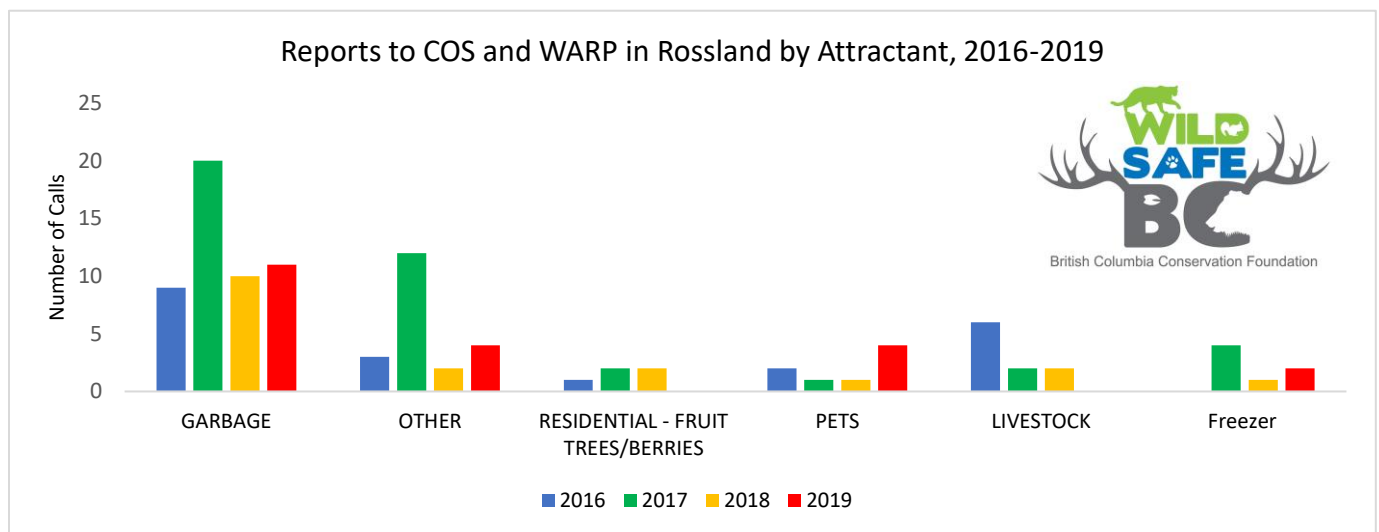
Trail had a range of wildlife reports from 2016 to 2019 with over 640 calls made to COS. Black bears were the most reported each year with 2016 being a particularly high conflict year with over 220 calls made regarding black bears. Other wildlife reports were coyote, grizzly bear, cougar and deer (fig. 4).





**Figure 4. Reports to the COS and WARP by Species in Trail from January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019.**

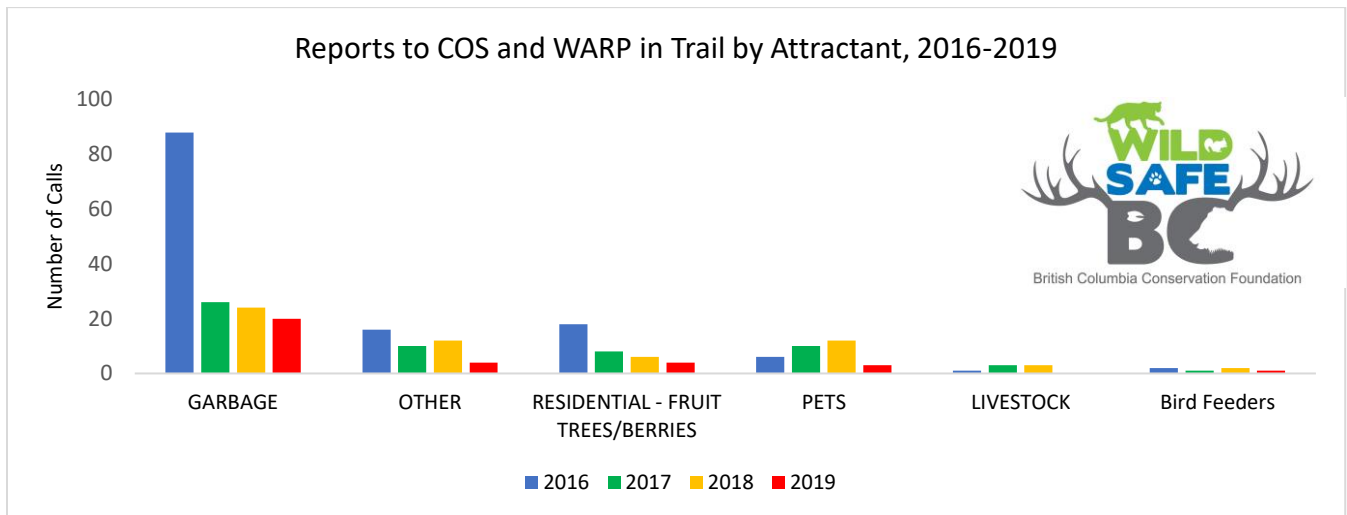
In Rossland, the most reported attractant was garbage with the greatest number of reports occurring in 2017 (20) and 2019 (11). Other unnatural food attractants included pets, livestock, other, residential fruit trees/berries, and freezers. Although residential fruit trees/berries displayed low results, this was one of the biggest challenges and attractant management issues in the community and under-reporting could be influencing these results (fig. 5). Bears that access fruit trees are more likely to become food-conditioned and human-habituated.



**Figure 5. Reports to the COS and WARP in Rossland by Attractant, January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019.**

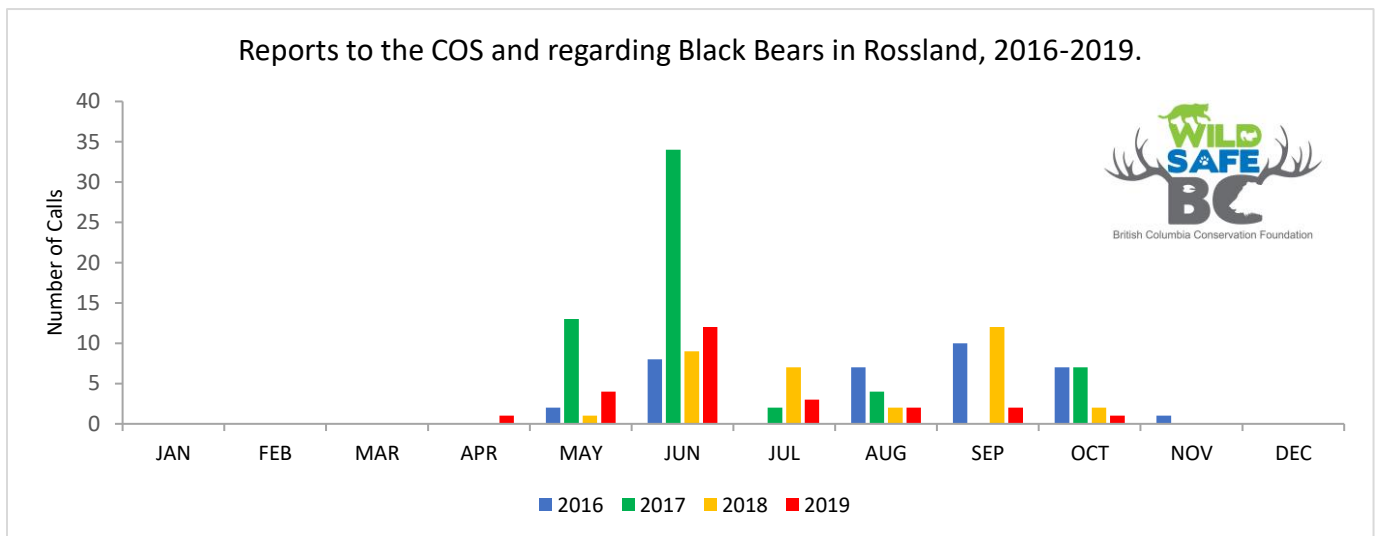
In Trail, the most reported attractant from 2016 to 2019 was garbage. Other attractants included pets, livestock, freezers, and residential fruit/berries. As mentioned above, residential fruit trees/berries displayed low results, however this is one of the biggest challenges and attractant management issues in the community and under-reporting and food availability could play a factor in these results. The City of Trail bylaw states that no person shall keep horses, cattle,

sheep, goats, fowl or poultry on any parcel in the Municipality. This could be influencing the low number of livestock attractant conflicts recorded (fig. 6).



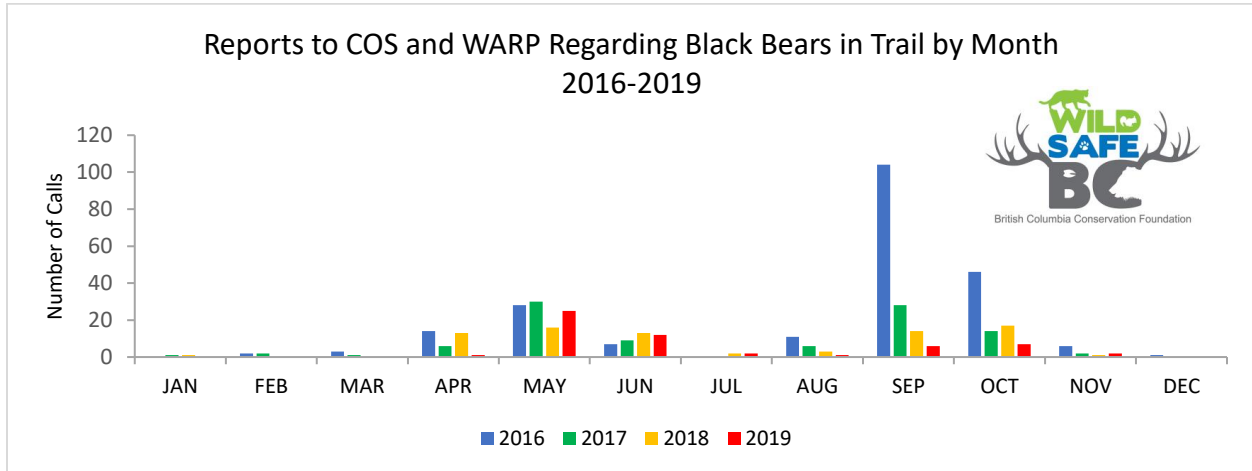
**Figure 6. Reports to the COS and WARP in Trail by attractant, January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019.**

Black bear sightings are highly seasonal and tend to have peaks; one in early summer and one in the fall. Reports regarding black bears in Rossland fluctuated by month from 2016-2019. In 2017, June was one of the highest conflict months on record. Calls regarding black bears are low to nonexistent while they are denning from November to April. There were also increases in bear reports when the bears enter hyperphagia, a period of increased caloric intake in September and October prior to denning (fig. 7).



**Figure 7. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears in Rossland, January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019.**

In Trail, the highest numbers of reports tend to occur in May and September or October (fig. 8). The availability of natural foods, population dynamics and access to unnatural foods in town, tend to be factors impacting the number of black reports.



**Figure 8. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears in Trail, January 1, 2016 to November 15, 2019.**

## WildSafe Ranger Program

For younger audiences, the WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) teaches children about the root causes of human-wildlife conflict and what we can do to keep wildlife wild and our community safe. WildSafeBC Rossland/Trail visited two schools and four summer camps and reached 428 students. Out of these students, 206 students received complete WildSafe Ranger kits and 42 students received stickers and rulers (Table 1, fig. 9, fig. 10).

**Table 1. Schools that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2019.**

Name of organization	Grade	Students
Glenmerry	Kd, 3x2	35
Webster	Pk,Kd,Kdx2,Kd/1,1/2x2,2,3,4,5,5/6 6,7x2	274
Camp Cawabunga	Children	66
Trail Association for Community Living adult camp	Adults	15
Trail Association for Community Living child and youth camp	Children and youth	17
Rossland Library reading group x2	Children	21





Figure 9. A group of children at Camp Cawabunga, 2019.



Figure 10. A group of children at Glenmerry Elementary School, 2019.

## Presentations to Community Groups

The Rossland/Trail coordinator gave a total of 2 presentations to over 23 participants (Table 2, fig. 11).

Table 2. Presentations to community groups, 2019.

Organization	# of participants
Mudbunnies bear spray training	15
Museum staff bear spray training	8

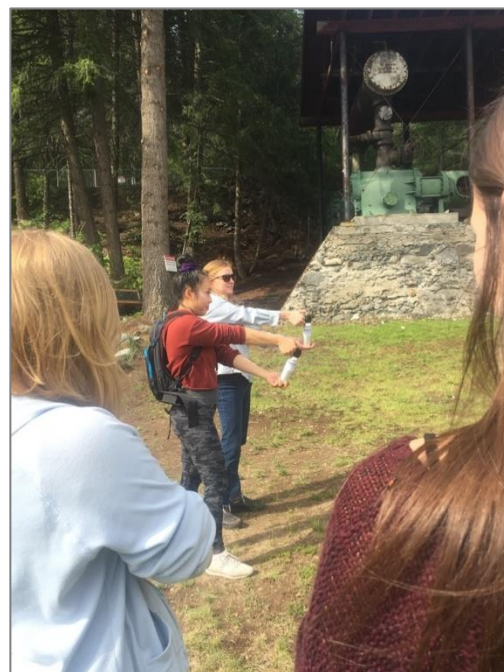


Figure 101. Museum staff bear spray training, 2019.

## Public Displays and Events

Educational displays at local events were a great success with local residents and tourists in attendance. Residents were able to access information on solutions for their unique attractant challenges. WildSafeBC spent 20 days at these events and reached 941 people (Table 3, fig.12).

**Table 3. Participation at community events, 2019.**

Name of event	# of participants
Rossland Mountain Market x9	356
Trail Incredible Market X5	290
Teddy Bear Picnic	50
Rossland Museum x3	85
Rossland Fall Market	120
BCGoesWild Weekend	40



**Figure 11. Rossland Mountain Market, 2019.**

## Door-to-Door Education and Garbage Tagging

Door-to-Door campaigns are an important part of the WildSafeBC Program. This engagement increases the coordinator's knowledge of the community and allows residents to get to know the coordinator and the program. These are often initiated by the COS from an immediate conflict or attractant management issue. Door-to-door initiatives reached over 170 households and were contacted either directly or through the WildSafeBC "while you were out" door hanger and brochure regarding the wildlife of concern. The neighborhoods visited include:

- Red Mountain
- West Trail x2
- Glenmerry x2

Throughout the season, WildSafeBC conducted eight garbage tagging surveys in Trail and four in Rossland. Garbage tagging involves placing removable “Wildlife attractant” stickers on bins that were out on the curb the night before collection day. The coordinator attempted to talk to residents the following day and provide them with garbage management best practices.

Trail has weekly collection days from Monday to Thursday. The West Trail (Monday collection day) was not visited this year due to the lack of volunteers available. A total of 40 hours were spent on this initiative. The areas of East Trail (Tuesday) and Waneta/Sunningdale/Tadanac (Thursday) were visited 3 nights each while Glenmerry/Shavers Bench/Miral Heights (Wednesday) were visited on two nights. There were a total of 32 bins tagged in which 4 households were 2<sup>nd</sup> time offenders. These households were given a written notice from the bylaw officer and were visited the following day with a bear brochure and information regarding attractant management strategies. Afterwards, there were no third time offenders.

Rossland has weekly garbage collection days on Wednesdays (Upper Rossland) and Thursdays (Lower Rossland). A total of 24 hours were spent on this initiative. Both collection days were visited twice the night before in which no carts were found. As mentioned previously (fig. 5), there were 11 reports of unmanaged garbage in Rossland this year. Even though bins were not observed on the curb this year, the 11 reports indicate that there are still other issues surrounding garbage.

## Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Rossland/Trail Facebook page was updated regularly throughout the season, reaching over 15,000 page views and 629 likes from January 1 to October 12, 2019. It provided a platform for community discussion regarding local wildlife activity and how to prevent conflicts. Local media outlets helped spread WSBC’s messaging to a wide audience through publishing articles in the Trail Daily Times Newspaper:

<https://www.trailtimes.ca/news/mind-your-household-habits-5-bears-destroyed-in-rossland-trail/>

<https://www.trailtimes.ca/news/bears-are-hungry-pick-your-harvest/>

## Wildlife in Area Signs

The bright yellow “Bear in Area” lawn signs are an effective way to give residents a heads up about local bear activity. The WCC posted signs in response to specific wildlife conflict reports but also received requests from residents and businesses such as the Rossland Lions Community Campground. A total of four signs were posted.

## Collaborations

The Rossland Community Harvest Facebook Page and The Harvest Rescue Fruit Exchange Facebook groups connects fruit pickers and those needing help harvesting their trees in the Rossland and West Kootenay region. Jenna Fox and Caley Mairin were great resources for connecting people to fruit gleaning in the Rossland area.

The WCC continues to work with the West Kootenay Human Bear Conflict Working Group. It is made up of local bear biologists, Conservation Officers, local government representatives, area residents and WCCs in other program areas. The group meets annually to identify and implement innovative solutions to local human-bear conflicts.

## 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

Bear spray has been identified and proven to be an effective deterrent that can reduce injury and potentially save lives. Workshops are a great way to encourage community members to participate and become familiar with bear spray and how and when to use it. There were a total of two bear spray workshops that included the Mudbunnies Mountain Bike Group and the Rossland Museum Staff.

## Challenges & Opportunities

There are vast amounts of residential fruit trees in both Rossland and Trail and they continue to be one of the main causes of human-wildlife conflicts in the region. Several bears have been reported damaging property and remaining in neighborhoods due to this unmanaged attractant. Although the majority of these calls have been made from Trail residents, there are still concerns in Rossland.

Moreover, garbage continues to be a problem in Rossland and Trail, especially for houses with carports that are easily accessed by wildlife. Several calls were received this year regarding poorly stored and managed garbage bins.

Volunteer recruitment was challenging this season and impacted the delivery of the garbage tagging initiative. They would also be appreciated at special events.

In order to address these issues, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2020:

- Continued support and education with regards to fruit tree management with local fruit gleaning groups.
- Electric fencing demonstrations in Rossland and Trail.
- Increased door-to-door campaigns in hotspot areas.
- Explore the engagement of local food banks and other non-profits.
- Encourage the public to call the COS when conflict first arises so that issues can be handled through proactive measures such as education.
- Continue to foster a strong partnership with local governments, COS, bylaw and WildSafeBC.
- Engage and recruit more volunteers.
- Offer the extended WildSafe Ranger Program to schools.
- Explore increased access to bear-resistant bins for residents.

## Acknowledgements

The WCC would like to thank the City of Rossland, the City of Trail, the Ministry of Environment and Climate Strategy, and the Columbia Basin Trust for their financial support of this program. Thank you to the COS (Ben Beetlestone and Blair Thin) for their open communication and assistance with specific wildlife conflicts. Thank you to the volunteers that helped with garbage tagging. A special thank you to the media outlets for their stories and broadcasts that helped spread the messaging of WildSafeBC. The WCC would like to thank the community members of Rossland and Trail for their support and readiness to learn about the wildlife and attractant management strategies.