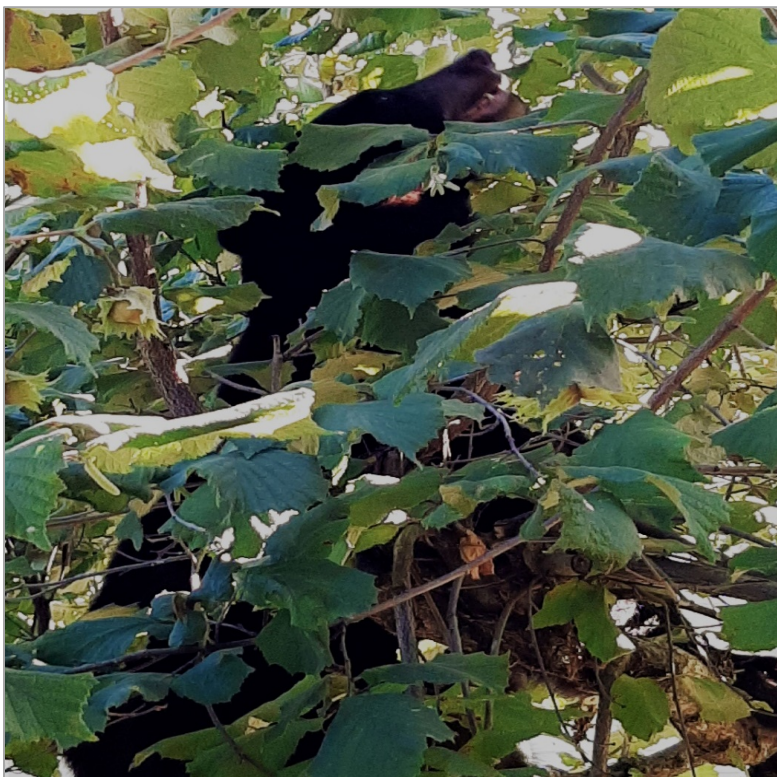


WildSafeBC Annual Report 2020

Kaslo and Area D

Prepared by Brian Montgomery, WildSafeBC Kaslo and Area D
Community Coordinator



Executive Summary

This year-end report will describe the activities and deliverables of the 2020 WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) in Kaslo and Area D (Figure 1). The WildSafeBC (WSBC) Kaslo and Area D program covers the communities of Gerrard, Popular Creek, Howser, Meadow Creek, Argenta, Johnsons Landing, Cooper Creek, Schroeder Creek, Lardeau Valley, Shuttly Bench, Kaslo, Fletchers Falls, Mirror Lake and Ainsworth. I wish to acknowledge that the land on which the program operates in is the traditional unceded territory of the Ktunaxa, Syilx (Okanagan), and Sinixt Peoples. I am grateful to have the opportunity to work in in this territory. In 2020, wildlife activity reported was steady with previous years and there were 49 wildlife reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS). The majority of these at 78% were reports of black bears (38 reports).

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activity with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community. Following COVID-19 safety precautions, several of the standard WildSafeBC (WSBC) program activities were modified this season. These activities included: 3 Wildlife Awareness and Safety presentations to 15 people; display booths at 3 Lardeau Valley Sunday Markets in Meadow Creek in Fall 2020 reaching 63 people; and display booths at 4 Trailheads in Kaslo reaching 67 people. Over 200 residents in Kaslo and Area D were visited in areas of human-wildlife conflict with 77 residents (or 36% of areas canvassed) receiving door hangers if they were not home during visits and an additional 200 conversations were had with residents that contacted the WWC. Of these conversations, 18 were focused on electric fencing assistance, and 8 were focused on fruit tree management and referrals to fruit gleaning. Ten outings of bin tagging in the evening resulted in a total of 11 garbage or recycling bins tagged in the Village of Kaslo with zero repeat offenders. Five articles were published in the Valley Voice and the WildSafeBC Kaslo and Area D Facebook page grew 16% in 2020 from 194 to 225 page followers.

WildSafeBC Kaslo and Area D would like to thank the Village of Kaslo, the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK), the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT), and BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy for recognizing and supporting this work in Kaslo and Area D. WCC Brian Montgomery is grateful for cooperation and collaborations with several organizations including: the BCCF team and local Conservation Service Officers (COS); Kaslo Outdoor Recreation and Trails Society; North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society and the Kaslo Food Hub; the Lardeau Valley Sunday Saturday Market; Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions; and the recently formed Kaslo Bear Smart Community Working Group.

The key attractants in 2020 continue to be garbage and fruit trees, resulting in 90% of human-wildlife encounters this season for black bears and grizzlies. Management of these attractants by residents and visitors remain challenging, but moving forward initiatives and collaborations such as fruit gleaning, education and outreach, electric fencing workshops, introducing the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program to campground operators, and supporting the Village of Kaslo in progressing towards a bear smart community will help “keep wildlife wild and our community safe”.

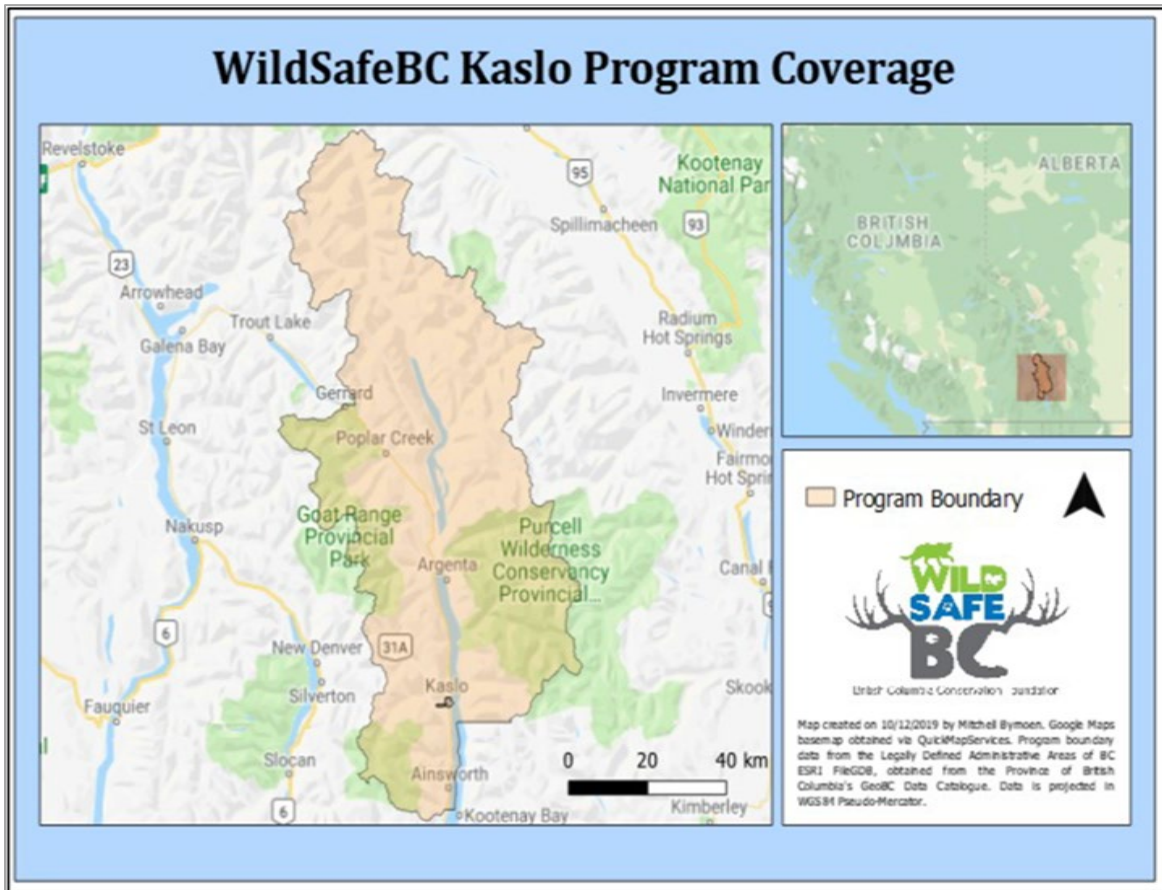


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Kaslo and Area D program coverage area.

Kaslo and Area D are located within the watershed of the Columbia Basin with settlements surrounding Lake Kootenay and to the Southwest and East of Duncan Lake with creeks and rivers throughout the watershed such as the Duncan River, Lardeau River, Meadow Creek, Cooper Creek, Fry Creek, Kaslo River, Fletcher Creek and Falls which can serve as corridors for wildlife seeking fish or natural fruits and vegetation. Settled between the Selkirk and Purcell mountain ranges, grizzly bears, black bears, elk, and mountain goats are known to venture down the mountainsides from alpine meadows to visit Kootenay and Duncan Lake.

The WildSafeBC Kaslo and Area D program covers the communities of Gerrard, Popular Creek, Howser, Meadow Creek, Argenta, Johnsons Landing, Cooper Creek, Schroeder Creek, Lardeau Valley, Shutty Bench, Kaslo, Fletchers Falls, Mirror Lake and Ainsworth.

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Cover Photo: Brown-coloured black bear enjoying nuts in a tree, located in Kaslo, BC(B. Montgomery, 2020).

Highlights from the 2020 Season

Wildlife Activity

Data for wildlife activity is captured by calls made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) and are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) available at <https://warp.WildSafeBC.com/warp/>. The data is updated daily and this report for Kaslo and Area D includes data from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020 (Figure 2).

There were 38 black bear reports which is consistent with the past three years. Garbage remained the most reported attractant followed by fruit trees and livestock (Figure 3). These attractants match those reported to the WWC in conversations with residents while canvassing in Kaslo, Shutty Bench, Mirror Lake, and Cooper Creek.

There were 6 grizzly bear reports which occurred in the Meadow Creek and Cooper Creek, which is consistent with 2019. Grizzly attractants reported included garbage, fruit trees, livestock, and barbeques.

Deer were reported as the third highest wildlife reported in Kaslo and Area D with four reports which is consistent with previous years. In these cases, deer were found to be injured or distressed in the months of March to June 2020.

Cougar was surprisingly unreported for the 2020 season to the COS and WARP, however there have been conversations with residents as of October 2020 reporting of cougars appearing in Kaslo. The highest reporting of cougars historically in Kaslo was between December 28, 2018 and January 5, 2019.

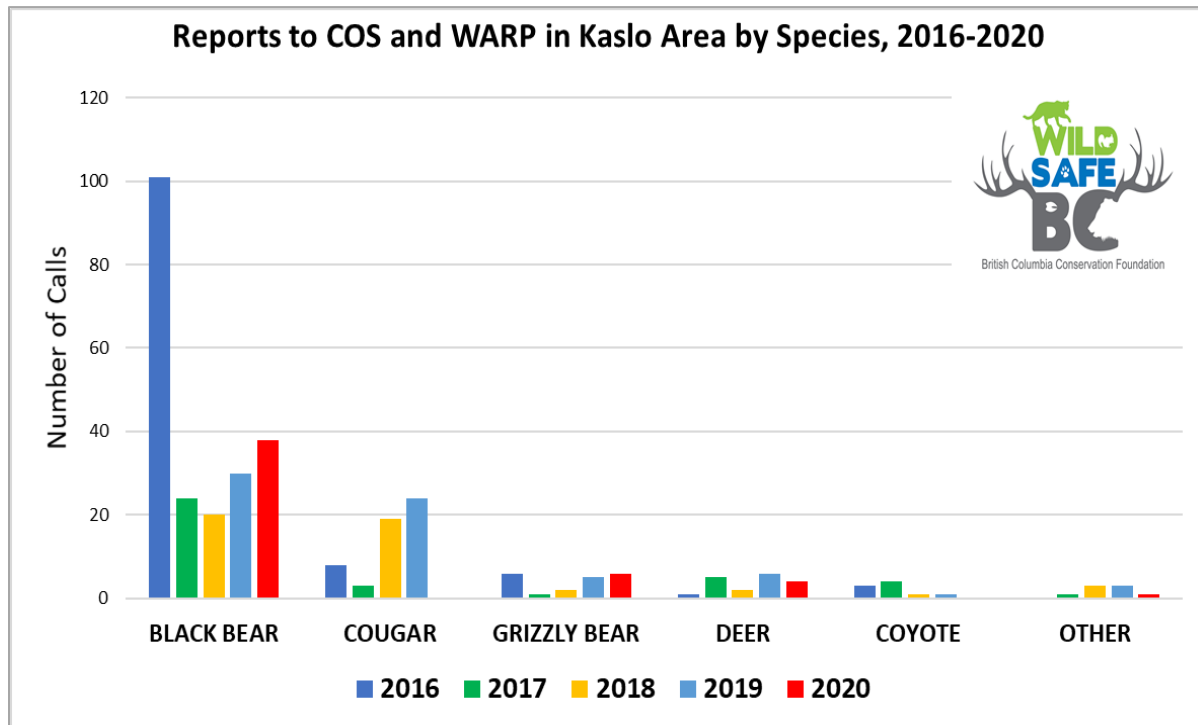


Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from Jan. 1, 2016 to Oct. 31, 2020.

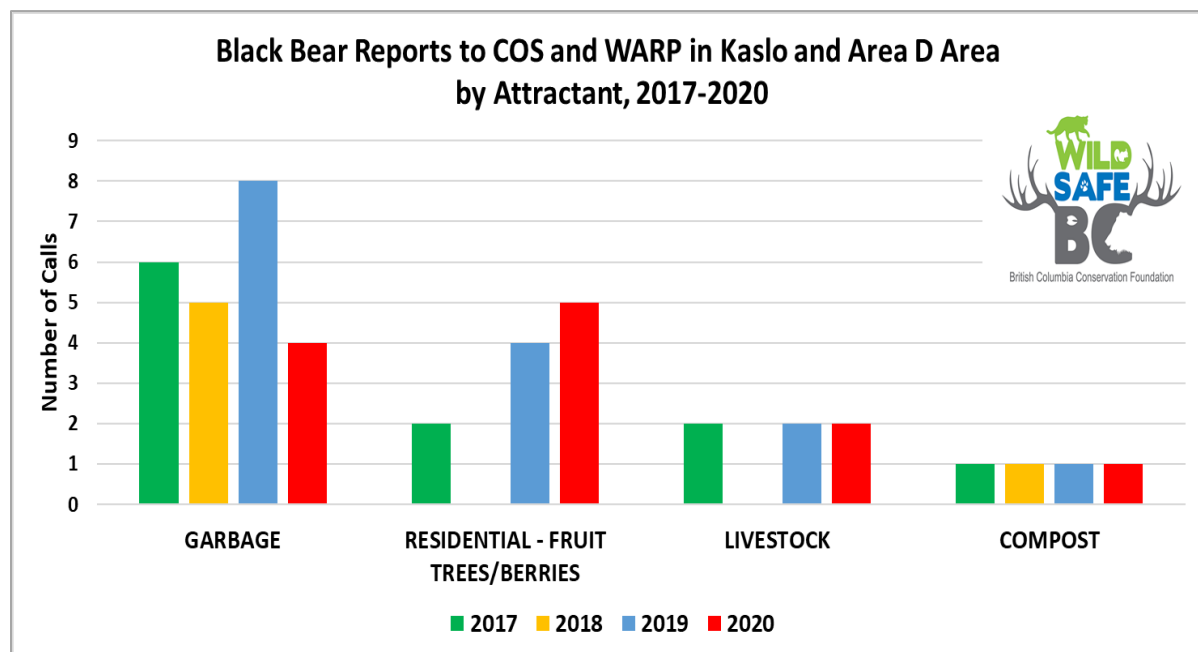


Figure 3. Black bear attractants reported in Kaslo and Area D between 2017 to 2020. Note that the highest reported attractant is garbage followed by residential fruit trees.

Black bear encounters and sightings were reported across Area D this season (Figure 4) from Ainsworth to Kaslo to Meadow Creek and Johnsons Landing.

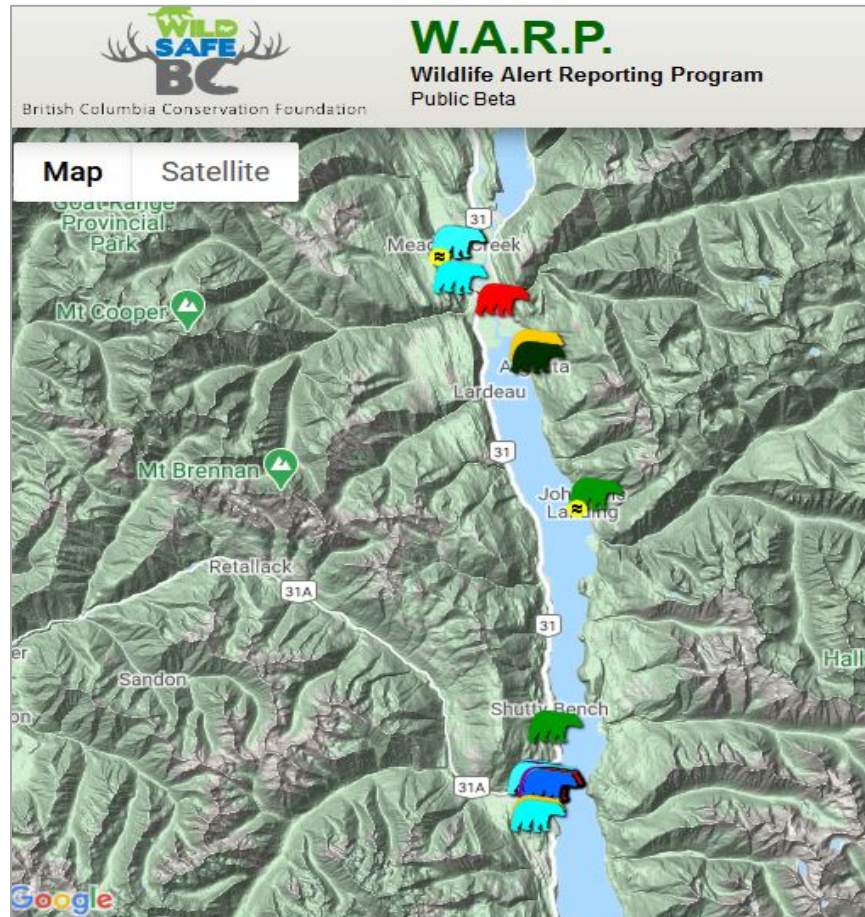


Figure 4. Map of black bear calls throughout Area D from COS and WARP, 2020

Black bears reported in Kaslo made up 65% (32 reports) of the total black bear reported to COS and WARP this season (Figure 5).

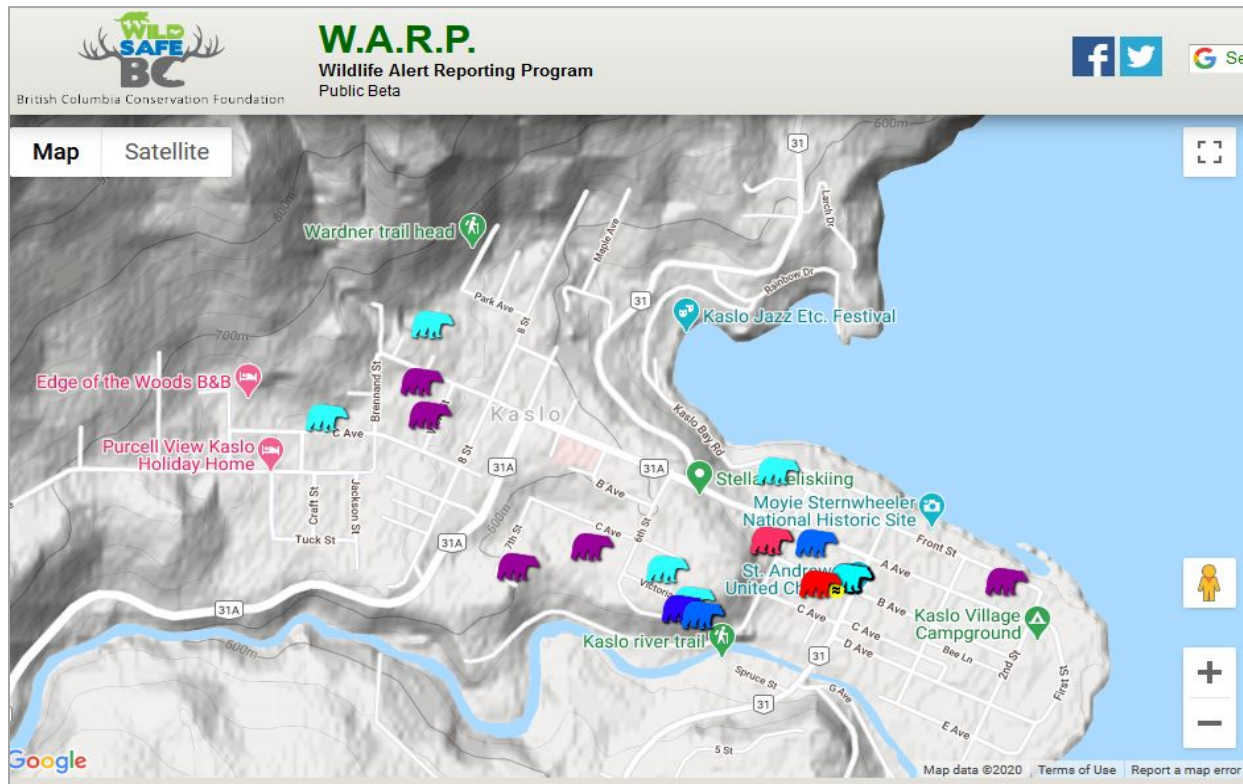


Figure 5. Map of black bear calls in Kaslo from COs and WARP, 2020

WildSafeBC COVID-19 Mitigation

All of the activities performed this season followed safety guidelines provided by the Province, WorkSafeBC and/or the BC Conservation Foundation's Safety Coordinator. The WCCs were required to provide safety plans if they were organizing events where people would congregate. Wherever possible, in person activities were replaced with video conferencing. WSBC adapted and modified requirements as the Province moved from Phase 1 to Phase 3. The WCCs worked closely with their local communities to ensure that all local requirements and restrictions were respected.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. The program can be offered in person through school presentations or through on-line presentations and activities for schools, home school programs and youth groups. The program and activities can be visited on-line at <https://WildSafeBC.com/wrp/>

Due to COVID-19 restrictions this year, the WRP program was promoted but took a break this 2020 season with the hope of renewing interest and delivery of the program at schools and homeschooling in Kaslo and Area D in 2021.

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave a total of three Wildlife Awareness and Safety presentation safely through online webinars due to COVID restrictions to over 15 participants in July and September 2020. Participants were from Kaslo, Shuttly Bench, Meadow Creek and Mirror Lake with interests in learning more about bears, bear safety, managing attractants, and the use of bear spray.

Display Booths

Community Farmers Markets



Figure 6. Booth display at the Lardeau Valley Sunday Market, August 2020

Working within COVID-19 restrictions around markets and local community events, the WCC was able to attend three Lardeau Valley Sunday Markets (Figure 6) in Meadow Creek in August and September 2020 (Table 1).

Table 1: Displays at Farmers and Community Markets, 2020

Event	People Reached
August 9, 2020 - Lardeau Valley Sunday Market	28 – 2 youths, 24 adults
August 30, 2020 - Lardeau Valley Sunday Market	22 – 7 youths, 15 adults
September 20, 2020 Lardeau Valley Sunday Market	13 – 3 youths, 10 adults
TOTAL = 3 events	63 - 12 youths, 51 adults

Kaslo Trailheads

Recognizing COVID-19 restrictions on social distancing, the desire for locals and visitors to get outside, and receiving permission from KORTS, the WCC took the WildSafe BC display “on the road” and set up at four trailheads in Kaslo while maintaining social distancing allowing visitors and trail users to pass by (Figure 7 and Table 2). A total of 67 people were engaged at the trailheads with the largest engagement during the morning of July 24, 2020 at the Kaslo River trail to the Kaslo Kids Bike Park.



Figure 7. Displaying at Kaslo Trailheads, July 2020.

Table 2: Displays at Kaslo Trailheads, 2020

Trailhead	People Reached
July 24, 2020 – Kaslo River Trail – Bike Park	50
July 24, 2020 – Kaslo River Trail – Trailblazers Bridge	7
July 29, 2020 – Wardner Trail	6
July 29, 2020- Alpine Ski Trail	4
TOTAL = 4 Trailheads	67 people

BC Goes Wild

September is “BC Goes Wild” month in which WSBC celebrates the diversity of wildlife within British Columbia and aims to increase education opportunities in our communities to learn about how to reduce human-wildlife conflict. September is historically a month where human-bear conflicts are at their highest due to increase activity of bears in the region foraging before winter denning.

BC Goes Wild Kick Off Booth/Display – Legacy Park, Kaslo

A WSBC booth and display was set up September 3, 2020 from 10 am to 2 pm to kick off BC Goes Wild Month in Legacy Park in Kaslo (Figure 8). Legacy Park is connected to Kaslo City Hall and the Kaslo Library. As a sponsor and supporter of the WSBC Kaslo and Area D program, the kickoff display provided an opportunity for the Village of Kaslo to highlight their support of the WSBC Kaslo and Area D program.



Figure 8. BC Goes Wild, Legacy Park, Kaslo - September 2020.

A banner was put up in view of Highway 31 and the booth was in a corner that allowed visitors to come to the park while practicing physical distancing. It also did not interfere with people's movements or daily routines (Figure 8). The booth attracted 12 visitors with conversations on topics of black bears, raccoons and bear spray. Visitors attending the booth came from Cooper Creek, Meadow Creek, Argenta, Kaslo, and even Calgary and Banff, Alberta.

BC Goes Wild Online Contest – Kaslo WildSafeBC Facebook Page - September 2020

To celebrate BC Goes Wild Month, an online contest was hosted on the Kaslo WildSafeBC page with 12 questions posted throughout the month. Notices of the contest were advertised in an article to the Valley Voice newspaper and through postings on Facebook Community Pages for Kaslo, Lardeau Valley and Argenta. Questions involved looking up items on websites like WildSafeBC, answering some wildlife fact questions, and/or looking at pictures to answer questions. The contest ran until October 2, 2020. Prizes to be won include a WSBC hat, a set of WRP buttons, a set of WSBC bookmarks and a WSBC shopping bag (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Prizes to be won during BC Goes Wild online contest, September 2020

Door-to-Door Education and Community Support

In the beginning of the season, the WWC visited communities in the Kaslo and Area D program area and posted WSBC posters on community bulletin boards (Figure 10). These posters offered wildlife safety tips and contact information for residents and visitors in the communities to report any human-wildlife encounters. Community bulletin boards that had posters included: Ainsworth, Mirror Lake Fletcher Falls, Shuttly Bench, Lardeau, Cooper Creek, Argenta, Johnsons Landing, Meadow Creek, Howser Station, and Gerrard.



Figure 10. Poster on Community Board, Meadow Creek 2020

Door-to-door education and communication was prioritized in the neighbourhoods and areas of Kaslo and Area D where encounters with wildlife were reported to the COS, WARP, the Village of Kaslo or directly to the WWC. The intent of the canvassing was to ensure that everyone in the area impacted was aware, reminded about managing attractants, and to gain information in areas with increased wildlife activity that may have not been reported directly to the COS or WARP.

The 2020 season kicked off with a visit to Johnsons Landing as a black bear had damaged a cabin in the community and ended with visiting neighbourhoods in lower Kaslo due to increased bear activity and a cougar sighting around and between A Ave and C Ave. Door-to-door education took place in Johnsons Landing, Fletchers Falls, Cooper Creek, Meadow Creek by Highway 31A, lower Argenta, Kaslo Bay Park and Larch Drive area, the neighbourhoods around the Kaslo Golf Course, Arena Ave in Kaslo, the neighborhoods around J.V. Humphries School, and Upper Kaslo (8th St, Washington St, C Ave, Brennand St, View St, Jackson St, Tuck St, Sherman St, Craft St, Jackson St, Allen St, Wardner St) and lower Kaslo (A – E Ave). In total 212 residents in these areas were visited.

Door-to-door education was modified this year and consisted of leaving door hangers at residences when the resident was not at home to have a follow up conversation. This ensured that every resident in the area with human-wildlife encounters or increased activity was included and visited. In total 77 residents (or 36% of areas canvassed) received door hangers if they were not home during visits. The use of door hangers increased communication with residents and the WCC received a number of follow up calls from residents not at home at the time of visiting on topics of attractant management, to updates on sightings of wildlife in area, and reports of human-wildlife encounters in the area.

The WWC was approached and contacted by email, messaging, phone and in person by residents in Kaslo and Area D on topics from bear safety, bear spray, raccoons, skunks, electric fencing, fruit tree management, waste management, human-wildlife encounters on properties, composting, wildlife deterrents, cougars, and ravens. In total, over 200 conversations with residents that contacted the WWC were had between May to October 2020. Of these conversations, 18 were focused on electric fencing assistance, and 8 were focused on fruit tree management and referrals to fruit gleaners.

Bin Tagging

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of residential containers set curbside the evening before collection. Garbage bag tagging only occurs in Kaslo, as the Village of Kaslo has a day of residential collection which is Tuesdays. Kaslo businesses and Area D residents dispose of waste and recyclables either by contracting a service provider, or by travelling to either the Kaslo Waste Transfer Station or the Marblehead Waste Transfer Station operated by the Regional District of Central Kootenays (RDCK).

WSBC garbage tagging normally focuses on garbage bins alone, however recyclables and recycling bins can be attractants to black bears especially if bins are left outside or bins and their contents are not clean. In July 2020, the Village of Kaslo and Area D transitioned into a new recycling system and collection through Recycle BC. At the request of the Village, garbage and

recycling tagging began in July 2020 to coincide with the transition and expansion of recycling in Kaslo and to capture the behaviour of residents with regards to curbside recycling pick up and animal attractants.



Figure 11. Example of garbage bin tagging in Kaslo, August 2020

During 10 outings between July and October 2020, a total of 11 garbage or recycling bins were tagged in the Village of Kaslo and 0 were repeat offenders (Figure 11). The effectiveness of garbage and recycling bin tagging for changing behaviours is demonstrated by the 100% response rates of residences (or zero repeat offenders) whose bins were not found out on the curb again during follow up surveys (Figure 12).

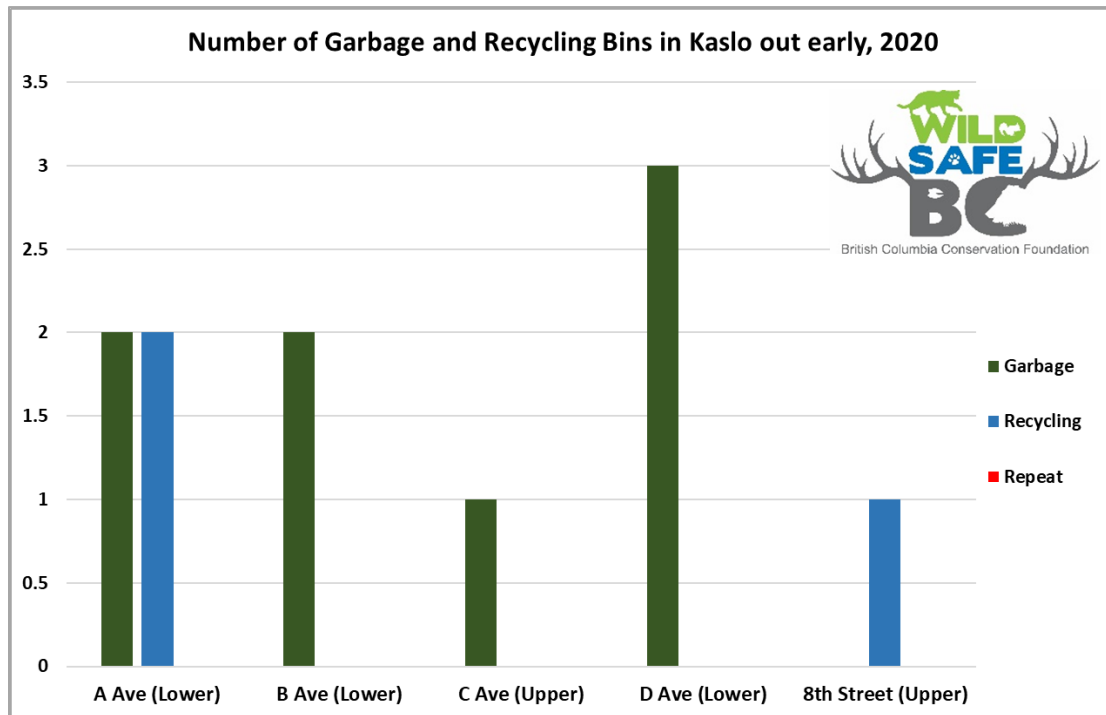


Figure 12. Number of garbage and recycling bins carts placed out early in Kaslo

Particularly worth noting on the dates of bin tagging in Kaslo, that during traditional bear season of August to October 2020 no bins were found to be out the night before. However, during WWC visits and canvassing in Kaslo neighborhoods on collection days, it has been noted that bears are intercepting garbage and recycling bins on collection day either before or after waste collection had occurred.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Kaslo and Area D Facebook page grew 16% in 2020 from 194 to 225 page followers. The highest number of viewers for a Facebook posting was 143 in June 2020 and 129 in October 2020. However, social media postings were not confined to the WildSafeBC Kaslo and Area D Facebook Page. Postings and notifications were also made on Facebook community pages for Kaslo, Lardeau Valley and Argenta to get word out, as well as KORTS Facebook pages.

There were several news articles co-written with the WildSafeBC New Denver and Nakusp Community Coordinator in 2020. This collaboration allowed both WSBC program areas to combine information and outreach opportunities to get messaging out to community members that do not use social media. All the news articles submitted were well received and generated several phone calls and leads for further education opportunities.

These articles included:

June 4, 2020 - New WildSafeBC coordinator in Kaslo to introduce myself and start the 2020 WildSafeBC season – <http://www.valleyvoice.ca/ PDF 2016/ValleyVoice200604web.pdf>

Aug 27, 2020 - Bears and people agree - our ripening fruits are delicious – to introduce the managing of fruit trees and attractants

http://www.valleyvoice.ca/ PDF_2016/ValleyVoice200827web.pdf

Sept 10, 2020 – BC Goes Wild Month to introduce BC Goes Wild Month -

http://www.valleyvoice.ca/ PDF_2016/ValleyVoice200910web.pdf

Oct 10, 2020 - BC Goes Wild Month - September, 2020 to conclude BC Goes Wild Month -

http://www.valleyvoice.ca/ PDF_2016/ValleyVoice201008web.pdf

Dec 3, 2020 - End of Season for WildSafeBC – to be published

Wildlife in Area Signs

The primary recipients of “Bear in Area” signage this season were the hotspot areas for human-wildlife conflict in Kaslo and grizzly bears in Meadow Creek. Meadow Creek received signage regarding grizzly bears on the Community Board at the Meadow Creek Store in July 2020 in response to reports of grizzly bears in the area.

“Bear in Area” signage for black bears was provided to the Village of Kaslo for use and posted at Kaslo Bay Park in August 2020 due to increased black bear activity sighted in the area. “Bear In Area” signage was also provided to J.V Humphries school for their use as black bear reports and sightings of bears on the property were received in September 2020 (Figure 13).



Figure 13. Bear in Area signage – Kaslo Bay Park and J.V. Humphries School, 2020

Collaborations

The WCC appreciated the support from local Conservation Officers, the Kaslo Outdoor Recreation and Trails Society (KORTS), the North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society and the Kaslo Food Hub, Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions, the Lardeau Valley Sunday Market, and other non-profits, business and public sector organizations.

KORTS permitted the WWC to post wildlife and trail safety notifications on their Facebook pages, display at their Annual General Meeting, and set up at trailheads in Kaslo to inform both residents and visitors to local Kaslo trails regarding local wildlife and trail safety. These collaborations assisted in getting wildlife trail safety tips and notices of wildlife sightings or encounters on trails out to the public and trail users.

Although WSBC does not participate directly in fruit gleanings or installing electric fencing, it does connect people to Kaslo Food Hub's Harvest Sharing program for fruit gleanings and food sharing, and Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions for advice on electric fencing installation. In addition, WSBC promotes sustainable food production by sharing tips on how to manage fruit trees as attractants and providing electric fencing guidelines and best practices.

Special Initiatives

The Village of Kaslo Council responded positively to a presentation on WSBC and Bear Smart Community status in the spring of 2020. The Village continues to show interest and support of Bear Smart initiatives. In the fall of 2020, the Kaslo Bear Smart Community Working Group was formed. It is a local grassroots group that was established in response to increased encounters with black bears in Kaslo. The intention is to work with the Village of Kaslo in becoming a Bear Smart Community. The working group will be meeting over the rest of the 2020 and into the 2021 season to research, develop and help implement the Bear Smart criteria in Kaslo, in collaboration with community partners and the Village.

Challenges and Opportunities

Fruit trees continue to be a source of attractants in the community that draw bears into residential areas. Bears have been reported damaging fences and remaining in people's yards which impacts the safety of the neighbourhood. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community and would benefit from increased education and fruit gleaning activities. To address the abundance of fruit in the community, the following initiatives could be implemented in 2021:

- Education campaign focusing on the hazards and solutions through social media, news articles, workshops, flyer in municipal tax information.
- Working with the Kaslo Food Hub and fruit gleaning programs as well as other food security groups to connect food security with management of attractants.
- Electric fence demonstrations and workshops in the spring and fall.
- Increased door-to-door campaigns in hotspots during the entire season.

Garbage also continues to be a source of attractants in the community that draw bears into residential areas. Food-conditioned bears have been observed taking garbage bags from garbage bins on collection day or from where bags have been stored outside. Engagement and messaging with residents should continue to be focused on securing and managing garbage including increased door-to-door campaigns. WildSafeBC could work with the Village and RDCK to develop and maintain a bear-proof municipal solid waste (MSW) management system as part of Kaslo becoming a Bear Smart Community.

The Village of Kaslo has made great progress in becoming Bear Smart with the Animal Attractant Bylaw. In addition, the Village could update the 2005 Bear Hazard Assessment and Human-Bear Conflict Management Plan. Along with the 2021 Official Community Plan (OCP) Review considering management of bear-human conflicts in planning decisions, the Village could make quick progress. Maintaining contact with and continued support to the Village and staff by BCWS and the WCC can assist them in their progress and abilities to become a Bear Smart Community in 2021.

WildSafeBC has introduced a new program called the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program which aims to reduce wildlife attractants at camping sites and provide programming on how to successfully camp and co-exist with bears. With the increased demand and interest in outdoor camping by visitors this past summer season, and aiming to reduce attractants such as garbage at campsites in Kaslo and Area D, this program could be piloted with some campground operators in the area. Through the program, WSBC can provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the BCCF team and local Conservation Officers Nathan Smienk and Jason Hawkes, whose support was invaluable this 2020 season. Thanks also to Chief Administrative Officer Ian Dunlop, the Village of Kaslo staff, and the Village of Kaslo Council for their support and receptivity to our bear smart and wildlife safety initiatives in Kaslo. Thank you to the Regional District of Central Kootenay, the Columbia Basin Trust, and BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy as well for recognizing the need for this work in Kaslo and Area D and providing funding.

Thank you to Stuart Heard of the Kootenay Outdoor Recreational Trails Society (KORTS) for allowing myself to post notifications on wildlife safety on the trails on their respective social media platforms and attending the annual KORTS general meeting. Thank you to Patrick Steiner of the North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society and the Kaslo Food Hub for coordinating and communication on fruit gleanings opportunities. Thank you to Gillian Sanders of Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions for your expertise in electric fencing. Thank you to Marlaine Blanche, Anna Kallstrom, Joan Murach, Gillian Sanders, Heather Gates, Liz Ingles, Patricia Feeney and Faye Petersen for beginning the formation of a Bear Smart Working Group for Kaslo, I look forward to continue working with you all on this initiative.

And finally thank you to all the residents, tourists and communities of the Kaslo and Area D program area with whom I met and had conversations around wildlife safety and reduction of attractants and for your patience with the continued social media postings on Facebook of reminders to manage your attractants this season.