

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2020

## Nelson

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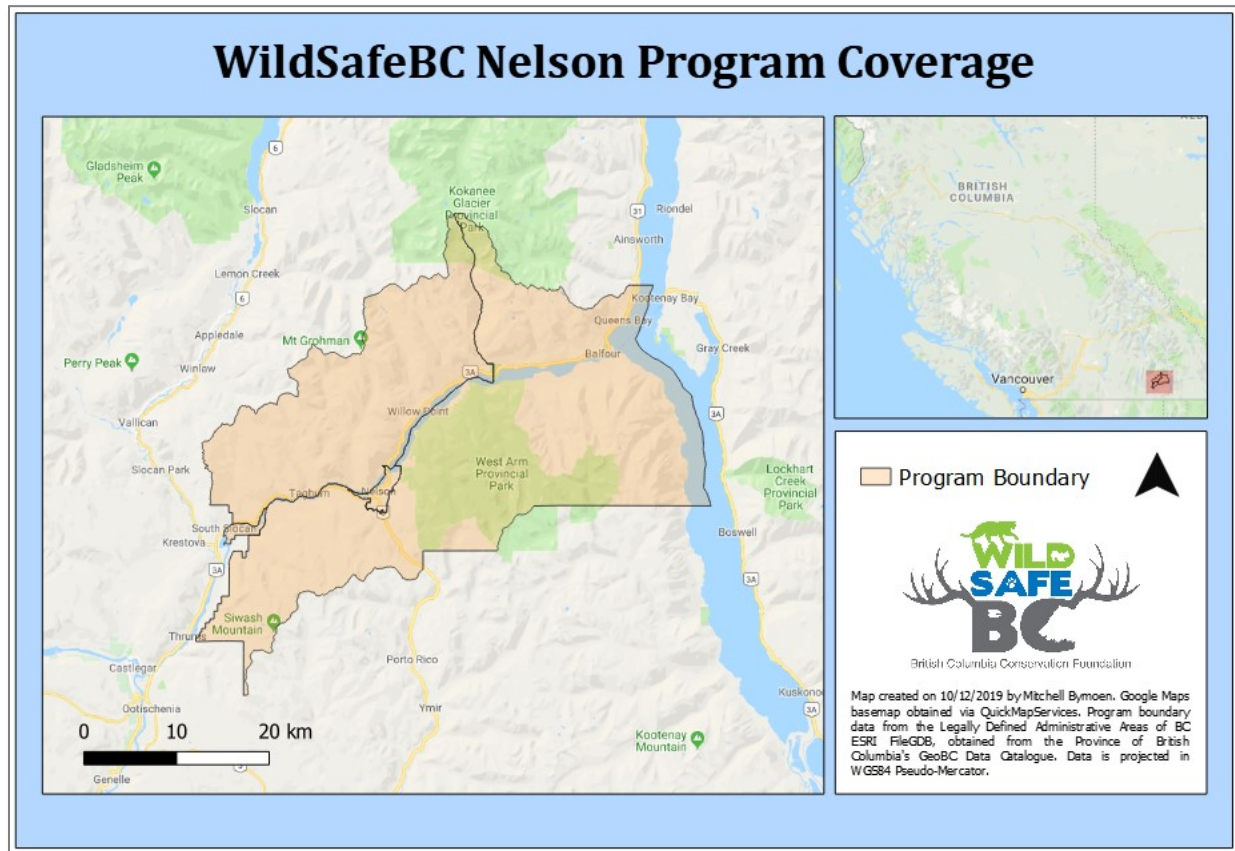


## Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Nelson Program between April 15 and November 30, 2020. The 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 (Figure 1). The program is located within the traditional territories of the Sinixt, Ktunaxa Nation, Sylix, and Metis people.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activities with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community. Following COVID-19 safety precautions, several of the standard WildSafeBC program activities were modified to ensure that the program was delivered safely and effectively. The WCC provided 5 WildSafe Ranger presentations to 85 youth, delivered 15 wildlife awareness and safety presentations to 143 people, reached 227 people at display booths at Harrop Farmers Market, left 450 door hangers, and tagged 2 garbage bins that were left on the curb the night before collection. WildSafeBC messaging was shared through 12 social media posts, 2 articles in the Nelson Star, and 3 radio appearances.

Thanks to generous funding from 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 WildSafeBC Nelson program was a success in 2020. Moving forward, the WildSafeBC Nelson program will need to continue to deliver education, provide solutions, and facilitate collaborations to address unsecured wildlife attractants and “keep wildlife wild and communities safe”.



**Figure 1. WildSafeBC Nelson coverage area.**

Cover Photo: Black bear feeding on Kokanee salmon in Kokanee Creek, by D. White.

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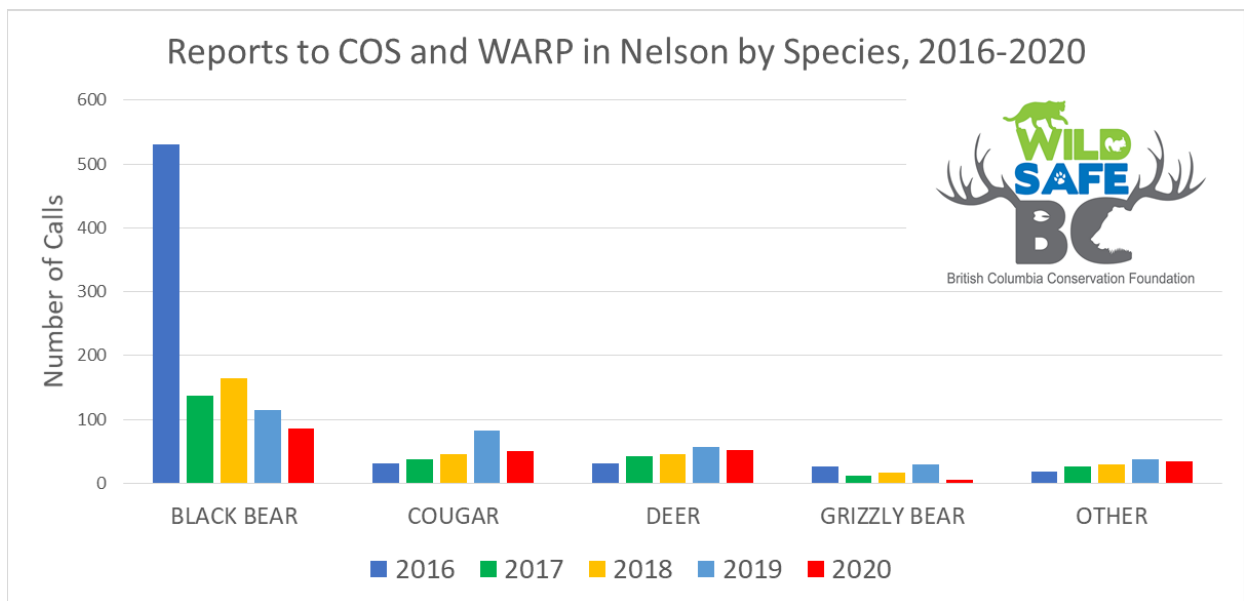


## Highlights from 2020 Season

### Wildlife Activity

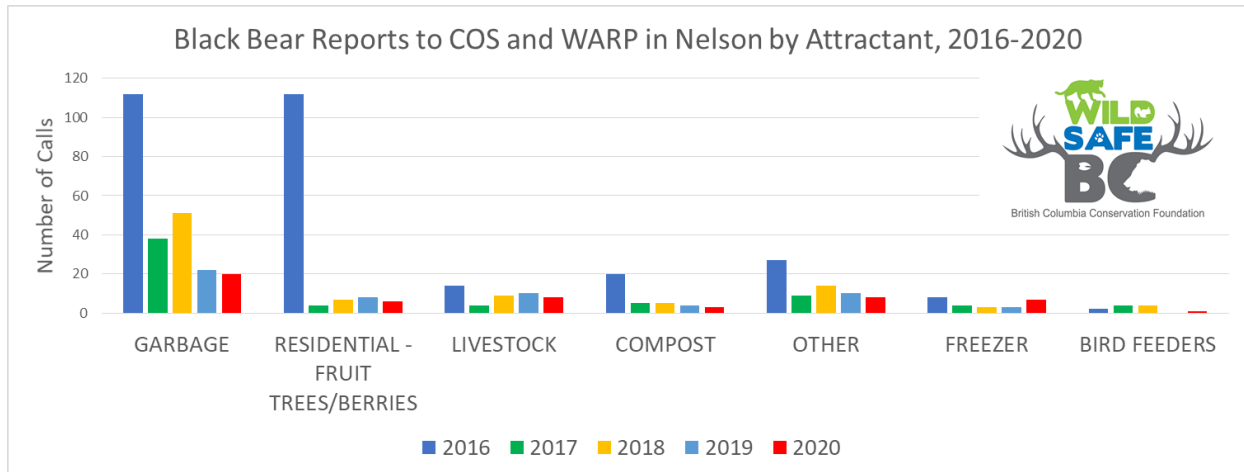
Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) or online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) on the WildSafeBC website. This data is updated daily and this report for Nelson includes data from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020 (Figure 2).

From January 1 to October 31, 2020, there have been 85 black bear reports and 6 grizzly bear reports. This is on track to be below average (Figure 2). Cougar reports (50) and deer reports (52) were both on par with the four year average (Figure 2).



**Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP in Nelson by species, January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.**

Garbage was the attractant most often associated with black bear reports (Figure 3). There were also reports of bears accessing residential fruit trees, livestock, compost, freezers, and bird feeders.



**Figure 3. Black bear reports to the COS and WARP by attractant, January 1, 2016 to October 31, 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. WildSafeBC 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. A total of 75 students became WildSafe Rangers and received kits (Table 1). In the spring, the WCC hosted WRP presentations over Zoom. In the fall, the WCC joined classes on field trips to Cottonwood Lake (Figure 4). In two of these field trips the WCC demonstrated how to set up trail cameras (Figure 5). The video footage of an impressive black bear was captured, which was shared with the class and was posted on Facebook.

**Table 1. Schools that received the WildSafe Ranger program in 2020.**

Date	School	Grade	No. Participants
<b>April 24, 2020</b>	South Nelson	3/4	12
<b>May 11, 2020</b>	South Nelson	3/4	11
<b>October 2, 2020</b>	South Nelson	3/4	17
<b>October 8, 2020</b>	South Nelson	3/4	21
<b>October 15, 2020</b>	South Nelson	4	14



**Figure 4. Bear safety Cottonwood Lake Grade 3/4 South Nelson Elementary**



**Figure 5. Trail camera installation demonstration (left) and black bear captured from trail camera (right).**

## Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC provided 4 presentations to 143 participants (Table 2, Figure 6). The number of presentations were impacted by COVID-19 restrictions, but where still allowed, the program made the most of the opportunities available.

**Table 2. Presentations to community groups in 2020.**

Date	Organization	Topic	Number of Participants
<b>May 29, 2020</b>	Waldorf School (Teachers and Admin)	Bear Spray Workshop	12
<b>Late June to August Late</b>	Kokanee Creek Provincial Park Visitor Center (12 presentations)	Safety around wildlife	96
<b>October 6, 2020</b>	Public Works Staff, City of Nelson	Bear and cougar safety and update on rat situation	27
<b>October 30, 2020</b>	City of Nelson Council	Year end report	8



**Figure 6 Bear spray workshop**



## Display Booths

Large events such as Balfour Daze and Canada day at Lakeside Park were cancelled this year, and the Farmers' Market at Cottonwood Park was restricted to food vendors only. However, Harrop Market was open to non-food related booths this year, so the WCC participated in as many markets in Harrop as possible and reached 227 people (Table 3). The program normally attends the the Harrop market at least three times, but attending nearly all the markets this year helped to build a really strong relationship with Harrop and Proctor. These two communities are growing, and developing a strong relationship here is great for the program and these communities.

**Table 3. Summary of people reached through public displays in 2020.**

Date	Event	Number of People Reached
June 21, 28; July 5, 11, 18, 25; Aug. 2, 9, 17, 30; Sep. 6	Harrop Market	227

## Door-to-Door and Garbage Tagging

The Nelson program engaged in a large door-to-door campaign to provide information on rat mitigation. Normally this would involve knocking on doors and holding conversations. By leaving information instead of talking directly to people, more people could be reached and a total of 450 door hangers were left (Figure 7). Residents that wanted more information could call and discuss their particular issue. For door-to-door campaigns regarding bears, this was less effective as you often want to engage with particular households that are not managing attractants. However, it was a benefit to be able to reach more households especially in regards to rats, as more of the community was covered.

Door-to-door campaigns directed by requests from the Conservation Officer Service also continued, mostly as a result of black bear and cougar conflict. Nearly 90 hours were spent conducting door-to-door campaigns.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection (Figure 7). This is followed by a friendly visit the next day to discuss the hazards of leaving garbage on the curb throughout the night. During 3 outings, only one bin was tagged. This indicates that the program has been effective over the years in increasing awareness and many residents are now adopting better practices.



**Figure 7. Information left during door-to-door campaign (left) and garbage tags left on a bin that was placed on the curb on the evening before collection (right).**

## Brochure Distribution

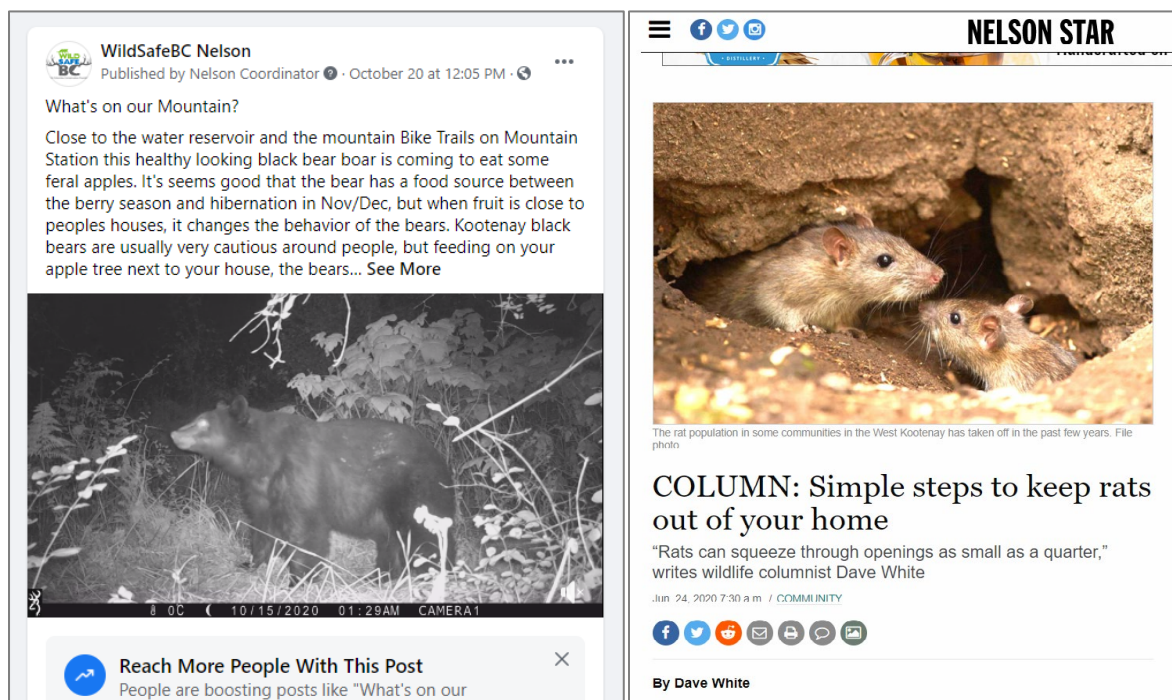
The WCC delivered brochures to outdoor product retailers, the Nelson Visitor Centre, the office of Natural Resources, and Kokanee Creek Park Visitor Center which is a popular destination in which many brochures are used (Figure 8).



**Figure 8. WildSafeBC brochures.**

## Social Media and Press

The Nelson program continued its tradition of writing articles for the Nelson Star with two articles published this summer (Figure 9). The Nelson program increased its presence on Facebook by publishing 12 posts. The number of followers on the WildSafeBC Nelson page grew from 588 to 655 this year. Most of the posts included trail camera videos collected from the areas surrounding Nelson. The Nelson Program also made radio appearances three times on the Kootenay Coop Radio 93.5 and 5 times on Mountain FM 103.5.



**Figure 9. Example of post to the WildSafeBC Nelson Facebook page (left) and column in the Nelson Star (right).**

## Special Initiatives

### 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 involved providing cost share bear-resistant garbage carts to the public. Utilizing RDCK funding, the program began by using the Bear Saver brand bins. It got to a point where these bins became too expensive to make the program viable. The Nelson WSBC coordinator researched the available certified bear-resistant bins



available and found a product made by Toter that was IGBC (Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee) certified grizzly bear-resistant and affordable, due to direct sales (Figure 10). A proposal was drafted where Toter would sell the bins directly to the City of Nelson. This allowed for the bins to be sold at cost which would allow nearly full cost recover. The City of Nelson adopted the proposal and 100 Toter bins were purchased to be sold at cost through public works.

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 City purchased 150 more bins, which continued to be sold at cost. In 2020, the WCC continued to promote and support this program. Of the 150 bins, half have sold so far this season. The program has gained attention across the Kootenays and beyond with several communities considering this as a best practice for adoption.



**Figure 10. Toter bear-resistant carts for sale at the City of Nelson's public works compound.**

## Challenges and Opportunities

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the WCC adapted and was able to deliver a modified program safely and effectively. Improperly managed garbage and fruit continue to be the main sources of human-wildlife conflict in the Nelson area. To address these challenges, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2021:

- Continue education on attractant management and wildlife safety through door-to-door, presentations, display booths, social media, and the press.
- Engage businesses through the new WildSafe Business Pledge.
- Increase the use and acceptance of bear spray through bear spray workshops.
- Support campgrounds through the new WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program.
- Continue to foster and build relationships with local groups that share common goals.



## Acknowledgments

The Nelson WildSafeBC 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 WildSafe Ranger 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 WildSafeBC messaging to the community at large and helping us deliver our safety information to a wider audience.