

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2020

New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp & RDCK Areas H & K

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and the Regional District of Central Kootenay Areas H & K, between May 1st and November 30th, 2020. This region is on the traditional and unceded territory of many First Nations groups, namely the Sinixt Peoples, but also the Syilx, Ktunaxa, and Secwépemc Peoples. It extends as far south as Edgewood and Fauquier in the west and Silverton in the East, with communities from Slocan south being serviced by the Valhalla Wilderness Society (Figure 1). The northern boundary of this region occurs at Halcyon Hot Springs on BC Highway 23. Few reports of conflict occurred in the spring, but reports of black bears visiting fruit trees increased in late July to mid-August, causing an increase in conflicts reported throughout the region for the remainder of the season.

The WildSafeBC New Denver & Area Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activities in a variety of forms with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community. Many of these outreach activities required modification as a result of COVID-19 mitigation measures. WildSafeBC successfully took advantage of new technologies to continue to deliver their program safely and effectively. The WCC focused on workshops and display booths, and had an increased presence in the Nakusp region this year compared to previous years.

The WCC reached over 1,700 people in person this year, including residents and many visitors who were travelling from areas with less human-wildlife conflict. The WCC hosted 3 electric fencing workshops in collaboration with Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions, reaching 23 participants. In total, 36 people were taught how to use bear spray across 5 workshops. There were 2 Wildlife Awareness and Safety Presentations that reached 10 people. There were 20 display booths at trailheads, farmers markets, recycling depots, and grocery stores that reached over 850 people. The WildSafe Ranger Program was delivered to over 200 students over 17 presentations at elementary schools, preschools and local community groups in New Denver and Nakusp. Door hangers were left at 311 resident's homes in New Denver, Nakusp, Rosebery and Silverton, and 56 individuals were spoken to directly during this activity. Few households left their garbage bins out the night before collection, with a total of 36 bins tagged over 9 nights of bin tagging in Nakusp and 3 nights in New Denver. The number of followers on the WildSafeBC New Denver – Nakusp page grew this year from 335 in January to 426 in November, an increase of 27%. Over 100 posts were made to Facebook, with a cumulative reach of approximately 31,000. WildSafeBC messaging was promoted regularly in the regional newspaper, the Valley Voice, with ten submitted articles published. The WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program was launched mid-season and two campgrounds took Bare Camping posters and brochures to distribute around their campsites. New Denver received a renewal of its Bear Smart Community status at the five-year assessment period in 2020, being one of eight communities in BC with this designation.

The New Denver & Area WCC collaborated with several organizations, including Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions, Harvest Share, Root and Shoot, The Healthy Community Society, and the Kaslo WildSafeBC Program. Collaborations included education on electric fencing and wildlife awareness and safety, supporting the installation of loaner electric fences, and participation in shared events (e.g., Harvest Fest).

Some of the recommended activities for 2021 include: discussions about potential bylaws and/or tagging recycling bins put out early the night before in Nakusp; increasing the number of loaner electric fences in New Denver and collaborating with Root and Branch for loaner electric fences in Nakusp; continuing conversations with Nakusp about taking steps to move towards becoming a Bear Smart Community if desired; approaching campgrounds in April so there is an opportunity

to incorporate the Bare Campsite Program into staff training; and getting messaging out about reducing blossoms on residential fruit trees in the spring. Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help “keep wildlife wild and our community safe”.

WildSafeBC is grateful for the generous support the program receives from its funders including the Village of New Denver, Nakusp, Silverton and other surrounding communities, Regional District of Central Kootenay, Columbia Basin Trust, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation and the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy.



Figure 1. WildSafeBC New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and Area H & K coverage area.

*Areas south of Silverton are covered by the Valhalla Wilderness Society with their Bear Smart Program.

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Cover Photo: The WCC giving a WildSafe Ranger presentation at Burton Elementary School. Photo Credit: Sean Johnston.

Highlights from the 2020 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 WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). This data is updated daily and this report for the New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and Area H & K region includes data from January 1, 2020 to October 31, 2020 (Figure 2). Black bears were the most commonly reported wildlife species, consistent with other years (Figure 2). There were 64 black bear reports in 2020, similar to the four-year average of 66, but much lower than the 235 reports made in 2016 (Figure 2). Reports of black bears were highest in August and September (Figure 3). Unlike previous years, residential fruit trees and livestock were the most commonly reported attractant in 2020, followed by garbage (Figure 4).

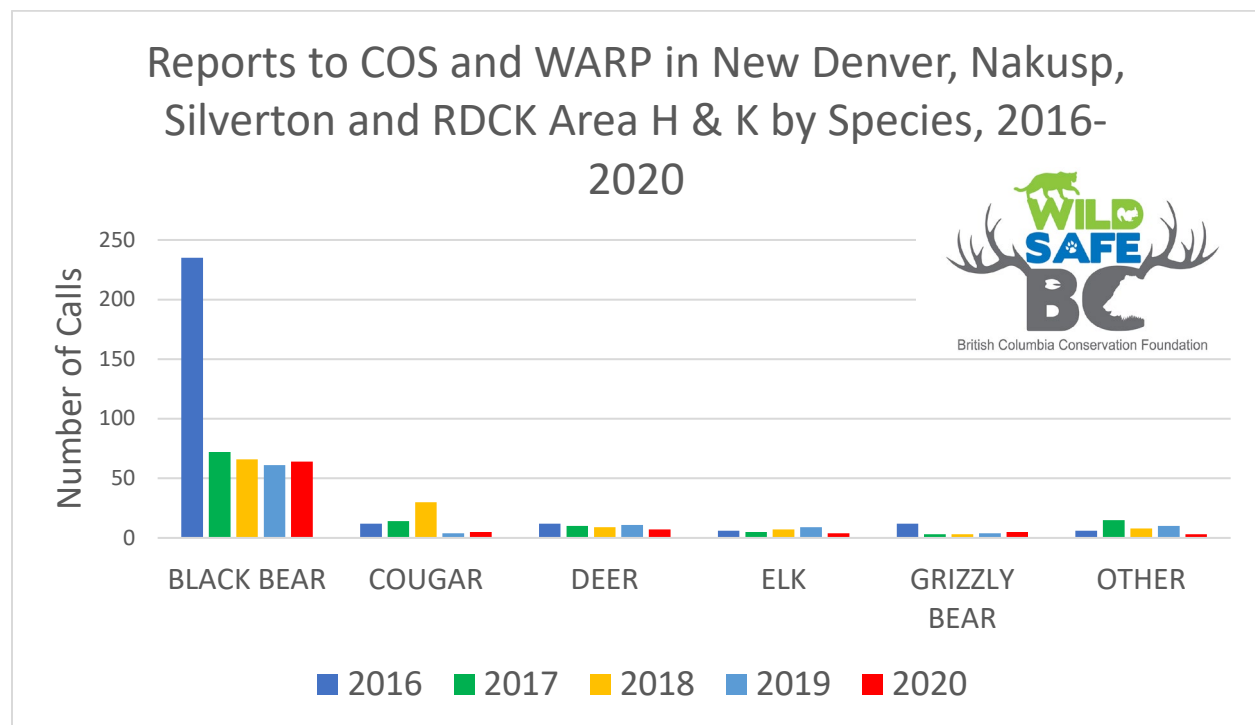


Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding different wildlife species from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.

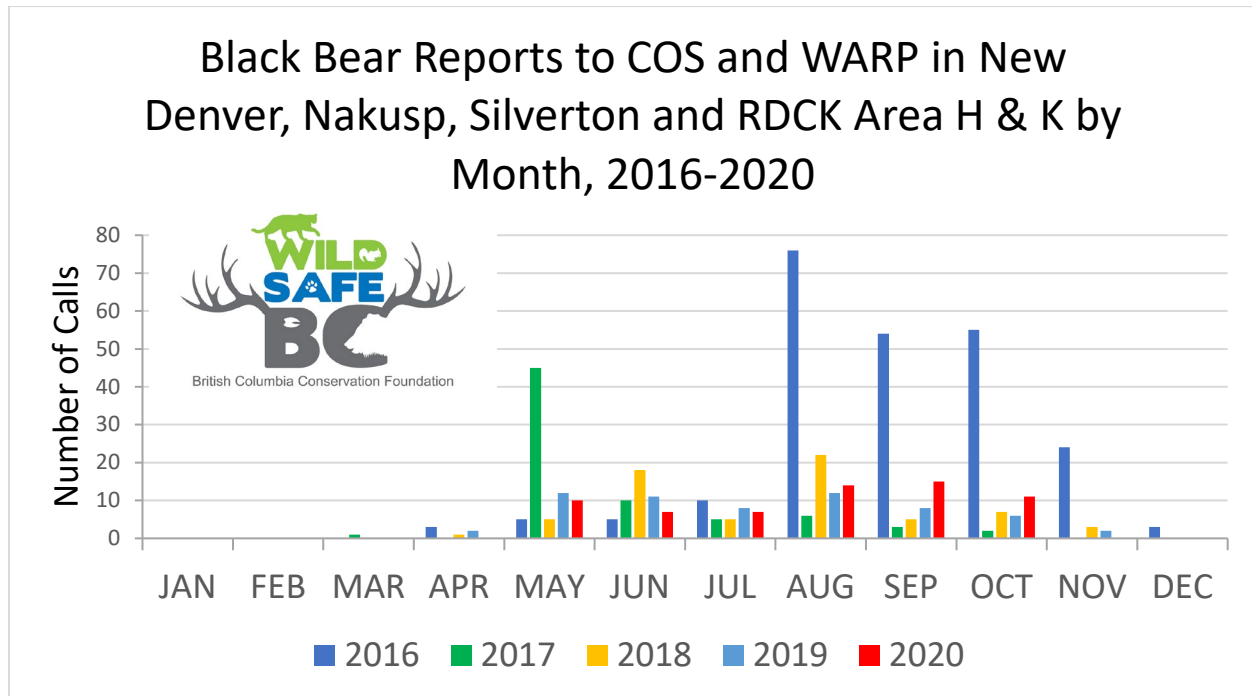


Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2020 to October 31, 2020.

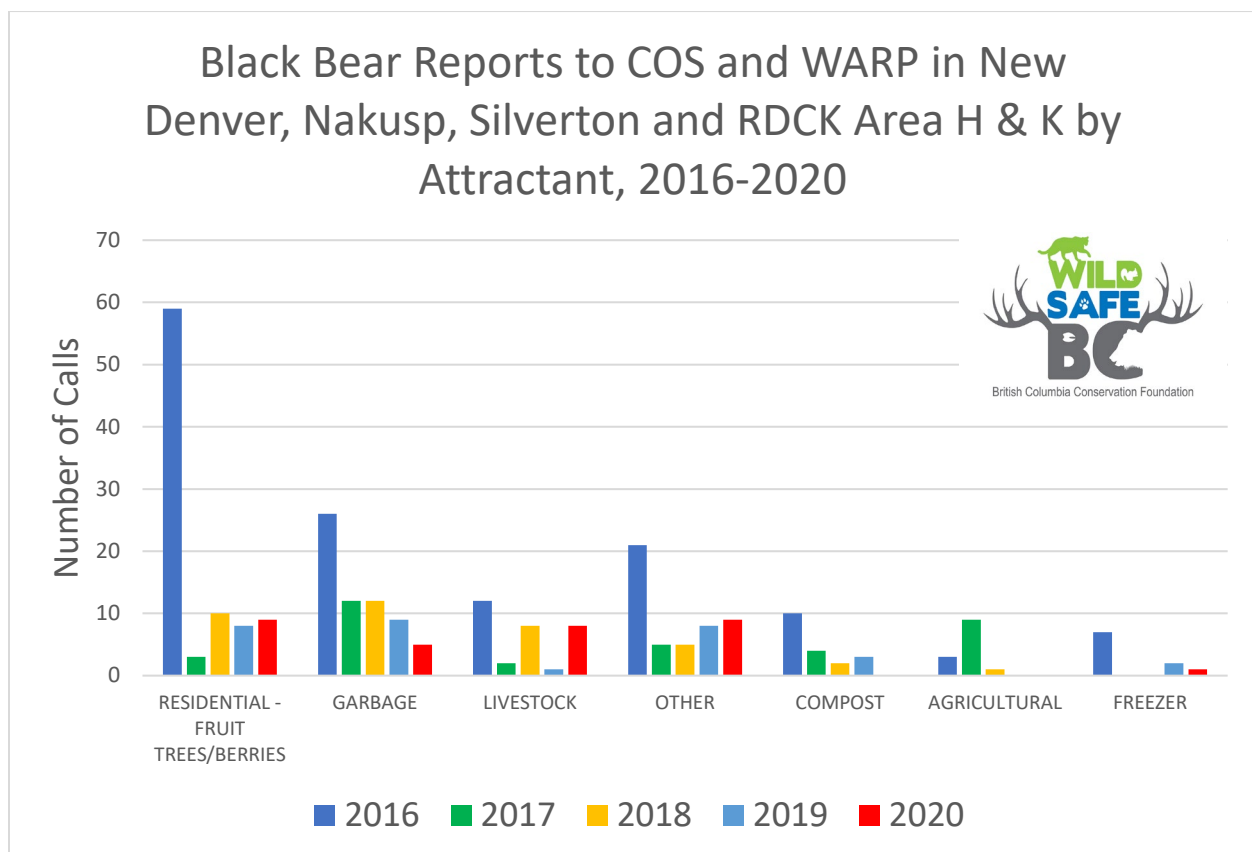


Figure 4. Reports to the COS and WARP by attractant type from January 1, 2020 to October 31, 2020.

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 introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. A total of seven schools, preschools and community groups in the New Denver – Nakusp region participated in the WildSafe Ranger Program through outdoor presentations that allowed for physical distancing (e.g., Figure 5). Approximately 200 students and children became WildSafe Rangers and received kits in 2020 across 17 presentations (Table 1). Many groups participated in additional activities such as scavenger hunts or wildlife track identification.

Table 1. Schools that received the WildSafe Ranger Program, or a subset of the curriculum, in 2020.

School	Date	Grade	Students
Lucerne Elementary Secondary School	June 18, 2020	K to 3	21
Harvest Fest @ Lucerne School (3 presentations)	September 25, 2020	K to 7	45
New Denver Preschool			
WildSafe Rangers Presentation	October 1, 2020	Pre-K	9
Tracking Exercise	October 8, 2020	Pre-K	8
Sit-Spot Nature, Think Like a Deer	October 15, 2020	Pre-K	9
Think Like a Bear, Bear Dens	November 5, 2029	Pre-K	8
Nakusp Elementary School (4 presentations)	October 9, 2020	K, 1, 2 and 5/6	67
Edgewood Elementary School	October 27, 2020	K-2	11
Burton Elementary School (2 presentations)	October 27, 2020	K-3 and 4-6	29
New Denver Strong Start WildSafe Rangers Presentation	October 29, 2020	Pre-K	5
New Denver Girl Guides	November 3, 2020	Ages 5-11	8



Figure 5. Children attending an outdoor WildSafe Rangers presentation at Lucerne Elementary Secondary School, with physical distancing protocols in place. Photo Credit: Kyoko Conne.

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave a total of 10 presentations (e.g., Wilderness Awareness and Safety presentations, Electric Fencing Workshops, Bear Spray Workshops; Figures 6-9) through webinars and outdoor presentations to 69 participants (Table 2). Communities expressed a desire to have more of these types of workshops hosted next year.

Table 2. Dates and number of participants for each of the presentation types in the New Denver – Nakusp region in 2020: Wilderness Awareness and Safety presentations, Electric Fencing workshops and Bear Spray workshops.

Event	Date	Number of Attendees
Wilderness Awareness and Safety		
Online webinar	July 14, 2020	2
Halcyon Hot Springs Staff	August 17, 2020	8
Electric Fencing Workshops		
New Denver	June 23, 2020	9
Nakusp	July 21, 2020	4
Burton	September 29, 2020	10
Bear Spray Workshops		
Halcyon Hot Springs Staff	August 17, 2020	8
New Denver – BC Goes Wild	September 25, 2020	6
New Denver – Part 2	September 28, 2020	2
Lucerne School Outdoor Ed	October 6, 2020	14
Goat Mountain Kids Centre Staff	October 29, 2020	6



Figure 6. Physically-distanced set-up for the Burton Electric Fencing workshop.

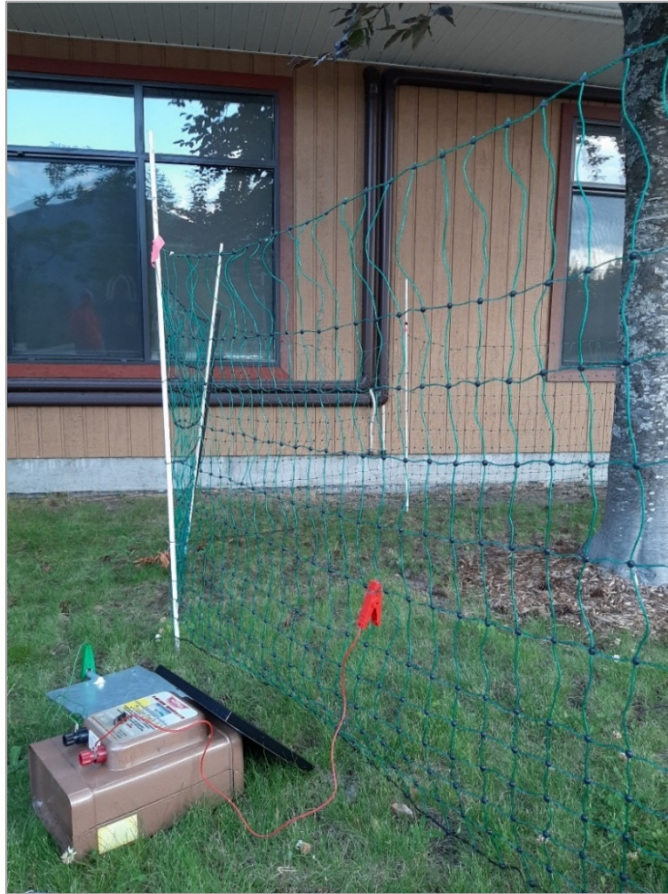


Figure 7. Demonstration fence set-up at the Nakusp Electric Fence Workshop.



Figure 8. Wilderness Awareness and Safety Presentation presented to staff of Halcyon Hot Springs. Photo Credit: Drake Green.



Figure 9. Inert bear spray demonstration during Bear Spray Workshop delivered at Halcyon Hot Springs. Photo Credit: Drake Green.

Display Booths

The WCC hosted 20 booths at farmers markets, trailheads, recycling depots, grocery stores and other events this year, reaching over 850 people, accounting for approximately 50% of the individuals reached through the program in 2020 (Table 3; Figure 10). Despite lower reach at recycling depots, these booths provided opportunities to connect with residents who provided valuable information on local wildlife activity, and provided opportunities to connect individuals with Harvest Share and Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions.

Table 3. Dates and number of attendees at display booths in the New Denver – Nakusp region in 2020.

Event	Date	Number Attendees
Nakusp Hot Springs Trailhead Booth	June 20, 2020	9
Mt Abriel Trailhead Booth	June 20, 2020	5
Nakusp Farmers Market	July 4, 2020	125
New Denver Farmers Market	July 24, 2020	70
Nakusp Farmers Market	July 25, 2020	136
Mt Abriel Trailhead Booth	August 8, 2020	23
Nakusp Hot Springs Trailhead Booth	August 9, 2020	28
Nakusp Farmers Market	August 15, 2020	140
New Denver Farmers Market	August 21, 2020	50
New Denver Recycling Transfer Station	September 3, 2020	15
Silverton Recycling Transfer Station	September 4, 2020	8
New Denver Recycling Transfer Station	September 10, 2020	8
New Denver Farmers Market	September 18, 2020	33
New Denver Recycling Transfer Station	September 22, 2020	11
Nakusp Farmers Market	September 26, 2020	77
New Denver Recycling Transfer Station	September 29, 2020	8
Nakusp Hot Springs Trailhead Booth	October 11, 2020	64
New Denver Recycling Transfer Station	October 22, 2020	13
Nakusp Save-on Foods (Grocery Store)	October 28, 2020	15
Nakusp Hot Springs Trailhead Booth	November 1, 2020	16



Figure 10. Display booth set up at the Nakusp Farmers Market. Photo credit: Casey Law.

BC Goes Wild

BC Goes Wild is a campaign to celebrate wildlife in BC and it occurs in September which is typically the month when human-bear conflicts are at their highest in BC. Throughout September, the WCC promoted the photo contest and other BC Goes Wild related content via Facebook, the local newspaper and Farmers Markets in New Denver and Nakusp. On September 25th, WildSafeBC hosted a booth during Harvest Fest in New Denver where 47 school-aged children participated in biodiversity bingo and talked about what to do if you encounter a bear (Figure 11). That evening, 6 individuals attended the bear spray workshop hosted in New Denver, with 1 additional attendee for a Monday make-up workshop (Table 2). Festivities continued with an electric fencing workshop in Burton the subsequent Tuesday, September 29th, which had 10 attendees (Table 2). Overall, a total of 64 people participated in the BC Goes Wild specific events. Throughout September, garbage tagging occurred in New Denver and in all three collection zones in Nakusp, and door-to-door canvassing occurred in New Denver and Silverton.



Figure 11. Children participating in the WildSafe Ranger presentation at Harvest Fest as part of BC Goes Wild 2020. Photo credit: Nicholas Graves.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Door-to-door education was modified this year to consist of only leaving door hangers; the WCC did not knock on doors as has been done in the past due to COVID-19. New Denver, Nakusp, Rosebery and Silverton all received door hangers during periods of high human-wildlife conflict, mostly with black bears seeking food rewards from chicken coops and residential fruit trees, but also for the growing rat problem in New Denver and Silverton in September (Figure 12). A total of 311 people or households were reached with door hangers, and an additional 56 people were spoken to directly while door hangers were being delivered.



Figure 12. Door hangers left at people's homes, with additional information on the BC Wildlife Act.

Garbage bin tagging consisted of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection. In New Denver, a total of 8 bins were tagged over 3 outings with no repeat offenders, accounting for 2.6% of houses surveyed (8 of 312; Figure 13). No bins were detected on the third evening of garbage tagging in New Denver. In Nakusp, a total of 28 bins were tagged over nine outings (3 zones, each visited 3 times; garbage zones can be seen [here](#)) with 4 repeat offenders, accounting for 2.2% of households that had their bin tagged at least once (24 of 1084; Figure 14). Overall, the WCC suggests that garbage tagging was effective for changing behaviour, as demonstrated by: (1) only 4 repeat offenders; and (2) fewer, or no, garbage bins tagged by the third visit compared to the first in both New Denver and Nakusp (Figures 13-14).

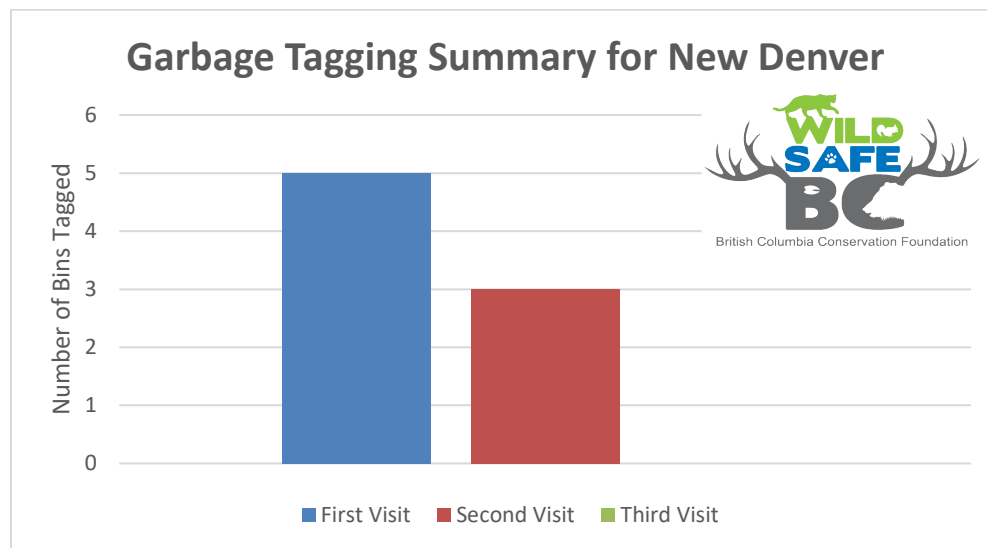


Figure 13. Number of garbage bins placed out early for collection over three visits in New Denver from June to October, 2020.

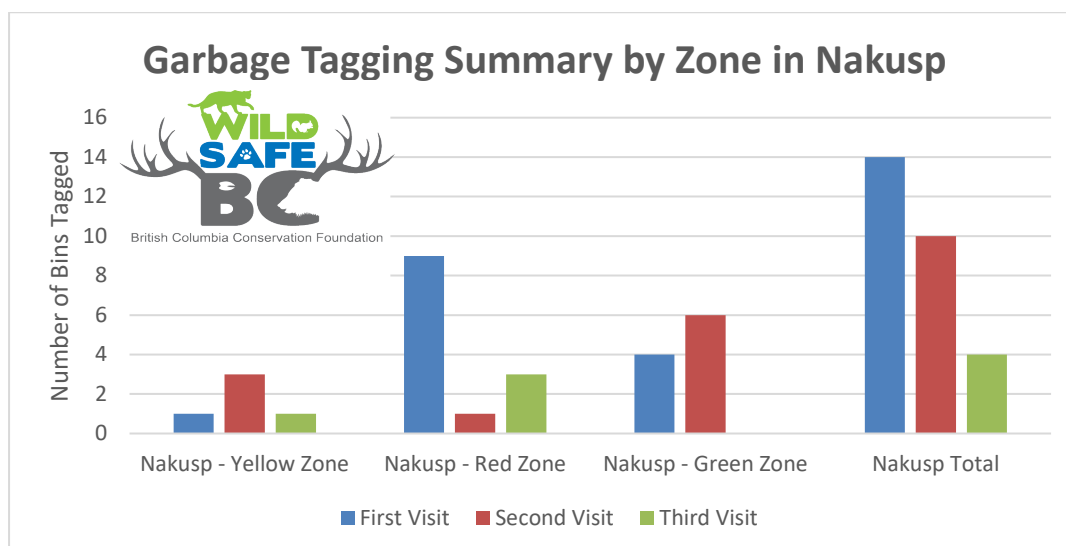


Figure 14. Number of garbage bins placed out early for collection over three visits and three zones in Nakusp from June to October, 2020.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC New Denver - Nakusp page grew from 335 to 426 followers from January to November 2020, an increase of 27%. Over 100 posts were made to Facebook from May 11, 2020 to November 15, 2020, with posts cumulatively reaching approximately 31,000 people. The WCC submitted ten news articles that were published in the Valley Voice in 2020, including articles about bear biology and fruit tree management, BC Goes Wild events, and announcing the renewal of New Denver's Bear Smart status at the five-year review.

Wildlife in Area Signs

Wildlife in Area signs were established in Rosebery (e.g., along Galena Trail), New Denver (e.g., campground and along river) and Silverton between May and October when reports of potentially dangerous black bear activity were reported to the WCC by residents or the Conservation Office Service (Figures 15-16). While putting up signs, the WCC had the opportunity to talk to many residents in the area to warn them of current bear activity. Signs were established at trail entrances or in areas where users would be most likely to see the warning. They were kept up for ten days and then removed once no further reports of the bear were made. This was done so as to keep the warnings relevant and updated. If reports continued, signs were left up for longer. "BC is Wildlife Country" posters were also provided to local trail organizations to put along trails with reports of high bear activity.



Figure 15. Bear in Area sign put up at entrance to Galena Trail in Rosebery after a large black bear was reported in the area.



Figure 16. Bear in Area sign put up along the river in New Denver after a large number of reports of black bears in the area.

Collaborations

WildSafeBC New Denver – Nakusp continues to collaborate with Bree Lillies from Harvest Share for fruit gleanings referrals and electric fencing consultations and setups. The two programs together oversee five loaner electric fences within New Denver and Silverton that can be established on private property to secure fruit trees before harvesting. The two organizations also collaborated on providing advice to residents of New Denver and Silverton for setting up private electric fences. This year, the WCC also worked with Root and Shoot, the fruit-gleaning organization in Nakusp.

WildSafeBC New Denver – Nakusp also collaborated with Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions to co-host three electric fencing workshops in 2020. The WCC referred residents to Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions to discuss cost-sharing options for residents and general advice for electric fencing considerations. The WCC also referred residents to the Bear Smart program with the Valhalla Wilderness Society to discuss cost-share options on the energizer for electric fencing within the region.

Additional collaborations included working with the Kaslo WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, and with the Healthy Community Society based in New Denver and Silverton which oversees the community composting program.

Special Initiatives

New Denver completed its five-year review to successfully continue its Bear Smart status in 2020. As of this year, New Denver is one of eight communities with this status. New Denver continues to have an active role in reducing human-wildlife conflict through its by-laws, bear-resistant garbage containers, active fruit tree management, and promotion of WildSafeBC educational programs. This achievement was celebrated with an article published in the Valley Voice.

Challenges and Opportunities

The biggest challenge faced in 2020 was how COVID-19 impacted the capability to deliver educational programs, especially early in the season. In-person events were prevented or restricted due to COVID-19, and online formats did not work for all groups. Additionally, many individuals were suffering from fatigue from attending online training tools, resulting in low attendance for online events. Some of these challenges were overcome by hosting outdoor events with physical distancing and adequate sanitation protocols in place.

Fruit trees continued to be a source of attractants in the community that drew wildlife into residential areas. Bears have been reported damaging fences and remaining in people's yards which impacts the safety of the neighbourhood. To address the abundance of fruit in the community, the following initiatives are recommended for 2021:

- Continue with electric fence workshops and demonstrations;
- Continue education campaign focusing on the hazards and solutions through social media, news articles, workshops, flyer in municipal tax information;

- Connect residents with Harvest Share, the local fruit-gleaning organization in New Denver, or Root and Branch, the fruit-gleaning organization in Nakusp;
- Increased door-to-door campaigns in hotspots; and
- Start messaging early about reducing blossoms on residential fruit trees in the spring via social media and door-to-door visits.

Opportunities for 2021 include the implementation of the Business Pledge and the Bare Camping Program. The WildSafe Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses to be good examples in their community regarding how to safely co-exist with wildlife. To take the pledge, a business is required to follow best practices in solid waste management, provide adequate training to staff and support WildSafeBC's safety and conflict reduction information. In return, WildSafeBC will provide ongoing support to the business in the form of staff training, WildSafeBC materials, and a WildSafeBC Business Pledge poster. The WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program is a new initiative in 2020. Through the program, WildSafeBC is able to provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife.

Considerations and opportunities for 2021:

- Approach campgrounds in April so there is an opportunity to incorporate the Bare Smart program into staff training;
- Begin approaching businesses about the Business Pledge early in the season (spring);
- Consider creating bylaws around and/or tagging recycling bins put out early the night before in Nakusp, with accompanying education campaign;
- Have a larger presence in communities South of Nakusp towards Fauquier;
- Consider the purchase of additional loaner electric fences in New Denver and collaborating with Root and Branch for loaner electric fences in Nakusp; and
- Continue conversations with Nakusp about taking steps to move towards becoming a Bear Smart Community.

Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC is grateful for the generous support the program receives from its funders including the Villages of New Denver, Nakusp, Silverton and other surrounding communities, Regional District of Central Kootenay, Columbia Basin Trust, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF) and the BC Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy. The WCC also thanks the BCCF team and the local Conservation Office Service team for communication that shared knowledge of wildlife activity and advice. Lastly, thanks to all the individuals and organizations the WCC collaborated with, including Bree Lillies with Harvest Share, Gillian Sanders with Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions, Julia Greenlaw with the Healthy Community Society, Kim Frederiksen with the Valhalla Wilderness Society, and Brian Montgomery from the Kaslo WildSafeBC Program.