

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2020

Kimberley – Cranbrook

Prepared by: Danica Roussy, WildSafeBC Kimberley -
Cranbrook Coordinator



Executive Summary

The purpose of the report is to present the activities of the WildSafeBC Kimberley – Cranbrook program between May 1st, 2020 and November 30th, 2020. The WildSafeBC Kimberley - Cranbrook program is located within the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation and includes Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) management zone C including the City of Cranbrook, Kimberley and the surrounding communities from Wycliffe, Wasa, Moyie to Wardner, BC (Figure 1).

The WildSafeBC Kimberley - Cranbrook program provides outreach activity, education and promotes best practices for preventing human-wildlife conflict by working with the Conservation Officer Service (COS), the municipal governments of Cranbrook and Kimberley, local First Nations, businesses, schools, community members and interest groups. Many of these outreach activities could have been severely impacted by COVID-19 mitigation measures. Since many people were spending more time at home and in the outdoors, it was critical, more than ever, to connect with the community. WildSafeBC was able to successfully modify their traditional outreach activities and take advantage of new technologies to continue to deliver their program safely and effectively.

In 2020, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC), Danica Roussy, provided education through: 7 WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) webinars and 13 in person WRP presentations reaching 230 youth; 25 presentations given to community groups reaching 1,062 participants; door hangers and bin tagging reaching 1,547 people; and 7 display booths reaching 176 people. Additionally, 10 new businesses signed up for the WildSafeBC Business Pledge. As this season had high levels of bear activity, bear spray demonstrations were highly valued and well-attended. The WildSafeBC Kimberley – Cranbrook Facebook page has gained an additional 168 follower and now stands at 1,056. Due to COVID-19, many outreach activities were modified to follow safety precautions such as ensuring proper sanitization and physical distancing measures.

Attractant management continues to be a challenge this season. Though in-person outreach activities were less well attended due to concerns over COVID-19, the WCC was still able to connect with many residents safely and effectively. Thanks to continued education efforts, many residents have demonstrated a willingness to change their behaviours to prevent human-wildlife conflict.

WildSafeBC is grateful for the consistent support of its sponsors and would like to acknowledge the Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Regional District of East Kootenay, the City of Cranbrook, the City of Kimberley and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation. Thank you to the community members for participating in the WildSafeBC Kimberley – Cranbrook program throughout the 2020 season. Moving forward, WildSafeBC's initiatives and collaborations continue to help "keep wildlife wild and communities safe".

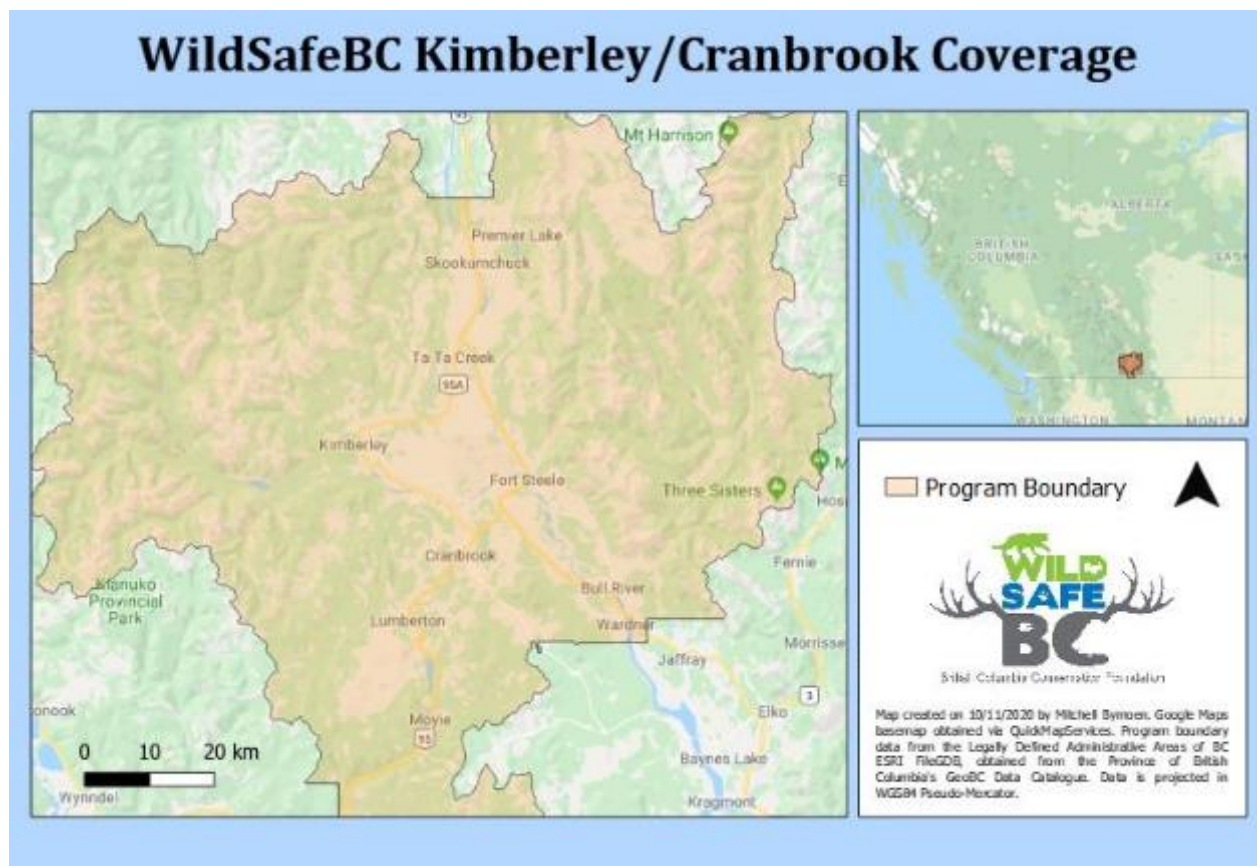


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Kimberley - Cranbrook coverage area.

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Cover Photo: Wildlife Safety Presentation and Bear Spray Demonstration with the East Kootenay JCI Group (credit: Morgan Turner)

Highlights from the 2020 Season

Wildlife Activity

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 (WSBC) website. This data is updated daily. This data does not represent all wildlife activity, only those that are reported. As Cranbrook and Kimberley experience different wildlife conflicts, the data has been broken out by community.

Cranbrook

From January 1st to October 31st, there were 351 reports regarding wildlife. Deer remain the most reported species with a close to average 211 deer reports compared to the 200 reports from 2019 (Figure 2). Many deer conflicts involved does and fawns and mainly involved dogs from May to September. September and October accounted for mostly male deer (bucks) due to the breeding season. Many of the callers were concerned citizens while out walking on city streets and were approached by aggressive does. Many of the reports came from the Parkland area as well as along 14th Avenue South and nearby streets. There was considerable deer activity reported near Idlewild Park. Many of the complaints were about aggressive does protecting their fawn(s) and two thirds of the calls involved dogs on leash.

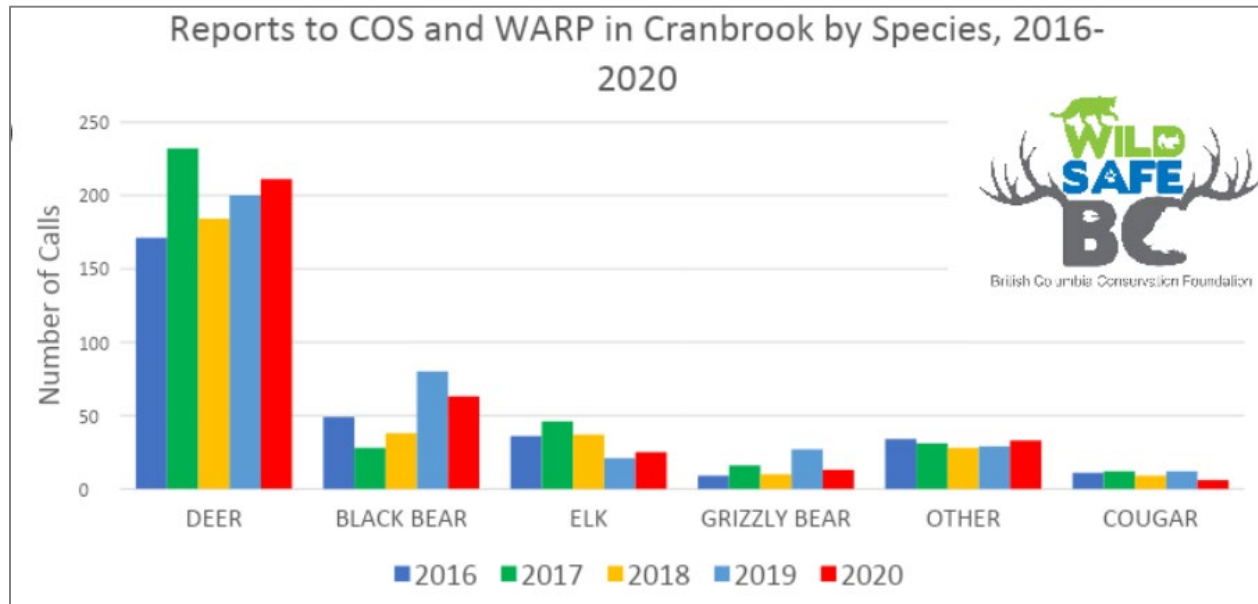


Figure 2. Wildlife reports to the COS and WARP in Cranbrook from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.

So far this year, there were 63 black bear reports which is on track to be lower than the 76 reports in 2019. Black bear activity was high in the Community Forest and surrounding neighborhood. Grizzly bear activity dropped to 13 compared to the 27 in 2019 and were reported outside of city limits but on active hiking trails such as Eager Hill. There were 6 cougar

reports in 2020 compared to 12 in 2019. There were 25 elk reports in 2020 compared to 21 in 2019. Other wildlife include, but is not limited to, moose, raptors and coyotes.

May and September had the most black bear reports in Cranbrook with 12 and 20 respectively (Figure 3). Garbage remained the most reported attractant followed by livestock and residential fruit trees/berries (Figure 4).

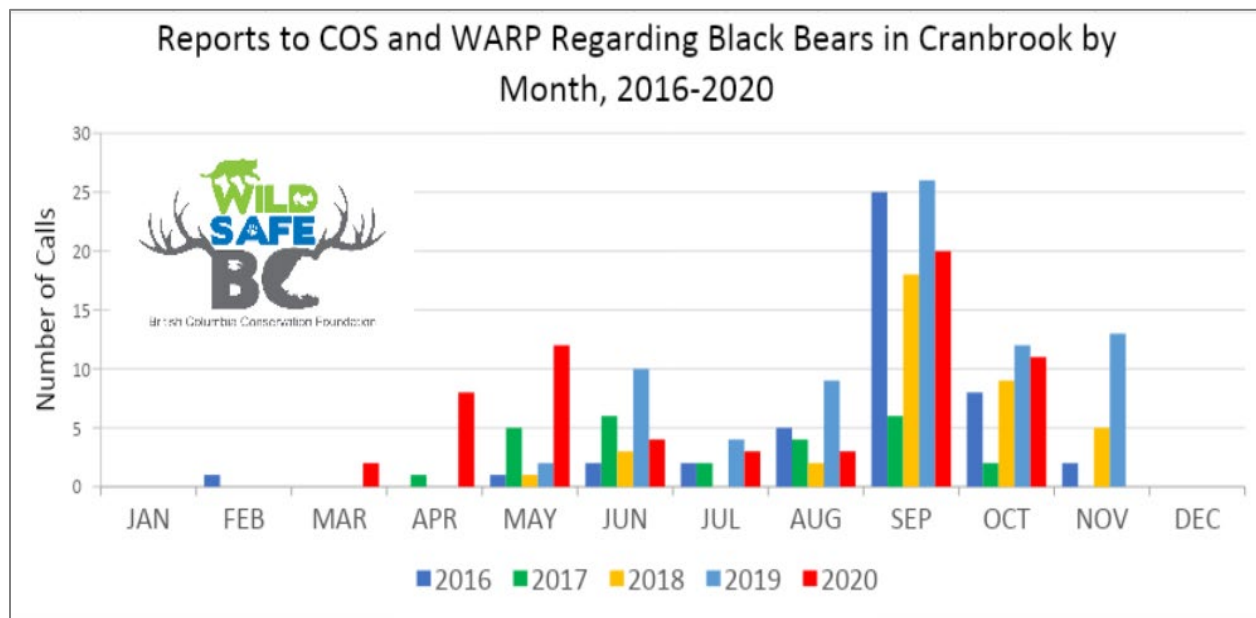


Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears in Cranbrook from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.

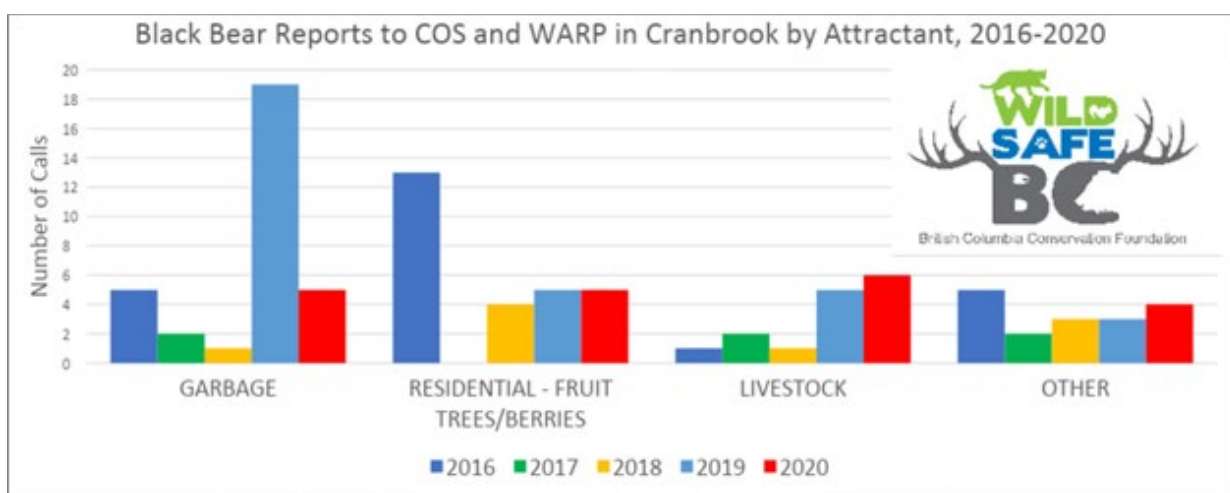


Figure 4. Black bear reports to COS and WARP regarding types of attractants in Cranbrook from January 1, 2020 to October 31, 2020.

Kimberley and Surrounding Areas

This data includes Kimberley and the surrounding rural areas of Meadowbrook, Wycliffe, Moyie, Wasa, Fort Steele, Wardner and Bull River. During 2020, there were 246 wildlife reports made to WARP. Deer and black bear are the most reported species (Figure 5). There were 92 deer reports compared to the 100 reports from 2019. Aggressive does protecting their fawns from dogs was the majority of the conflicts in the spring and summer months however, come October there were many reports of rutting bucks destroying property. So far this year, there were 105 black bear reports which is on track to be lower than the 2019 which was 112. There have been 16 grizzly bear reports which is on par with the past 4 years. There were 3 cougar reports and 15 elk reports in both 2019 and 2020. There remaining reports are classified as other and are not limited to, but mainly include moose, raptors and coyote.

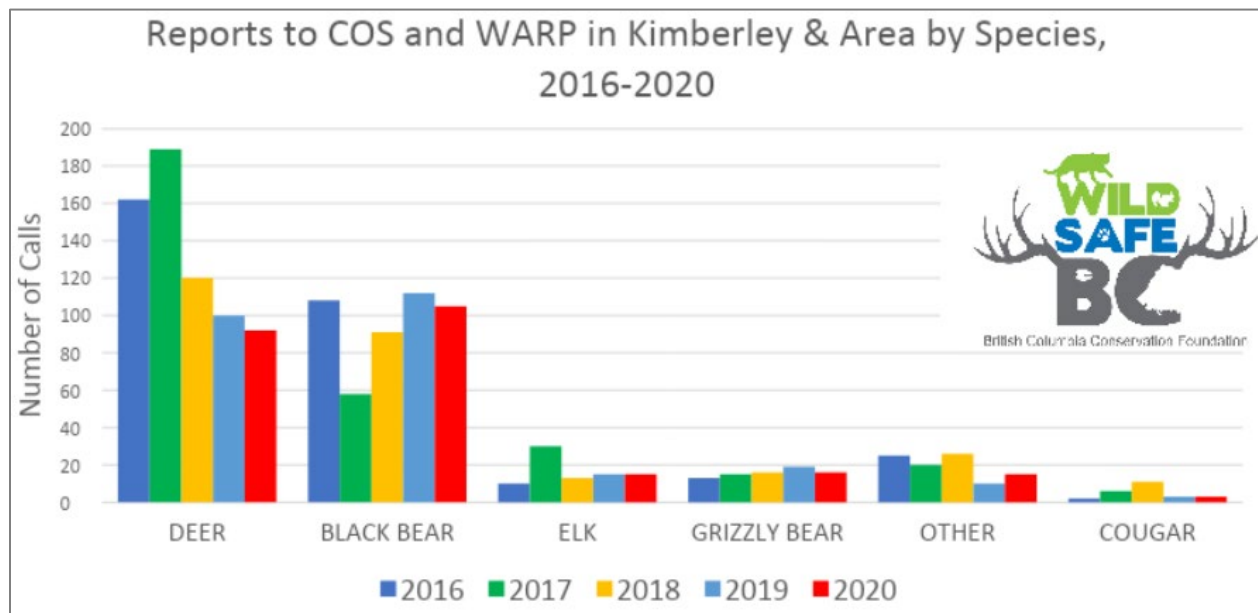


Figure 5. Wildlife reports to the COS and WARP in Kimberley from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.

June and September had the most black bear reports in 2020 with 28 in June, 30 in September and not far behind, October with 26 reports (Figure 6). Garbage remained the most reported attractant followed by livestock then tied for third biggest attractants are residential fruit trees/berries and birdseed (Figure 7).

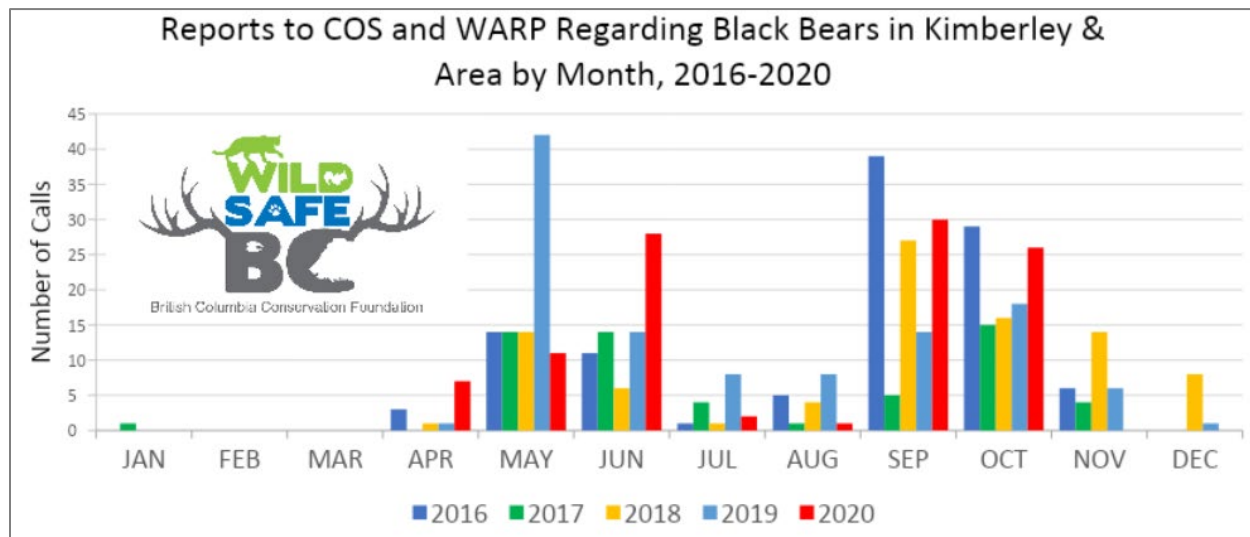


Figure 6. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears in Kimberley from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.

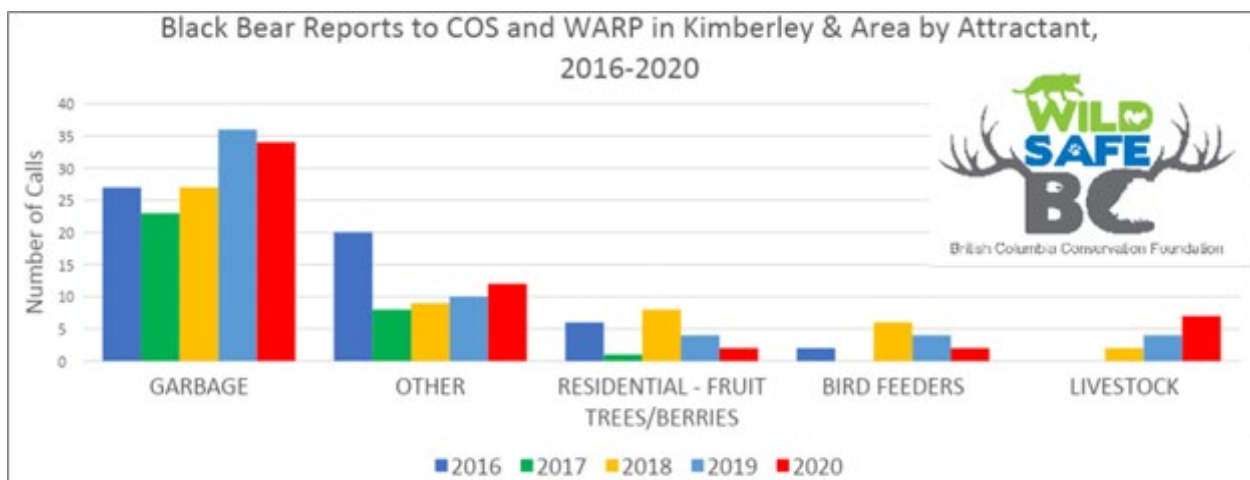


Figure 7. Black bear reports to the COS and WARP regarding attractant type in Kimberley from January 1, 2020 to October 31, 2020.

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 (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. The WRP continues to be a great success and the constant demand for presentations is always increasing. This season there were 21 WRP presentations; 13 in person and 7 via Zoom video conference, reaching 230 students (Table 1). Of the 13 in-person presentations, 5 included the extended program which provides an opportunity for a follow up visit and more hands-on activities. Some of these activities included playing wildlife identification bingo, outdoor wildlife habitat games, and walking through the community forests looking for signs of wildlife activity (Figure 8).

Table 1. Schools that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2020.

School/Club	Grade/Age	# of Students	Extended WRP
Kimberley Independent School	Grades 2 & 3	23	Yes
McKim Middle School	Grade 4	12	Yes
TM Roberts Elementary	Grade 4 & 5	21	No * webinar
St. Mary's Elementary School	Grade 3	13	No * webinar
Steeple Elementary	Grade 2 & 3	20	No * webinar
Gordon Terrace	Grade 4 & 5	25	No * webinar
Amy Woodland Elementary	Grade 4	16	No
Kootenay Orchards Elementary	Grade 3 and 4	19	No*webinar
Parkland Middle School	Grade 6	12	Yes
Lindsay Park Elementary	Grade 2 & 3	14	No *webinar
Marysville Elementary	Grades 3 & 4	22	No *webinar
Wildsight Group	Ages 5 - 9	9	Yes
YouthWise Eco Centre	Ages 7 - 10	13	Yes
Prime Time	Ages 5 – 9	11	No

As a result of COVID-19 restrictions, WildSafeBC offered presentations via the Zoom video conference platform. The WCC would drop off the activity booklets which the teachers appreciated as they could follow along during the presentation. The kids would follow the activity booklet which teaches how to respect wildlife and their habitat, how to manage attractants at home and how to be mindful when exploring trails where wildlife encounters could occur. This was met with positive feedback.



Figure 8. Image the YouthWise Eco Centre students in Cranbrook participating in the WildSafe Rangers Program at Gyro Park.

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC offered 25 wildlife safety presentations to groups and organizations (Table 2). Topics included bears, deer, general backcountry safety, and bear spray demonstrations. A total of 1,062 people were reached during these presentations.

Table 2. Presentations provided throughout the 2020 season along with number of participants.

Club/Organization	# of Participants	Type of Presentation
FLNRORD X2	500	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo X2
East Kootenay Outdoors Club	23	Wildlife Safety Presentation
Cranbrook Com. Forest Society	12	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Range & BCTS Staff	250	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Cranbrook Boys and Girls Club	13	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Games
Scouts – Cubs	6	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Games
Scouts	11	Bear Spray Demo + Hike in Kimberley Nature Park
Wildsight	19	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Recovery Ranch	16	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Riverside Campground Staff	5	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Orienteering Club	9	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Blue Lake Camp	14	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Hike in Lois Creek
Kimberley Wilderness Society	8	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo + Hike in Kimberley Nature Park
Nordic Club	16	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo + Hike in Nordic Trails/Ski Hill area
BC SPCA Staff	4	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Junior Chambers International - Kootenay	18	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
3 Zoom Presentations to Public	67	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Talk
Wasa Provincial Park	14	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Moyie Provincial Park	21	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Idlewild Team	14	Wildlife Safety Presentation - Deer
Munroe Lake Community	17	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Sullivan Landing Crew	5	Bear Spray Demonstration

Display Booths

Though several large events were cancelled this year due to COVID-19, there were opportunities to attend smaller events such as Wildsight's Harvest Party (Figure 9). Additionally, display booths were held at popular trailheads. The WCC would inform the public about wildlife activity in the area, provide advice on bear spray use and transport, provide best practices for staying safe in wildlife country, and answer questions. Taking part in these events contributed greatly to developing community recognition of the WSBC Program. The WCC participated in 7 public displays and reached a total of 176 people (Table 3).



Figure 9. WCC Danica Roussy on September 19th, at a display booth at the Open Gate Garden in Kimberley.

Table 3. Display booths provided throughout the 2020 season.

Date	# of People Reached	Event
2020-06-30	24	Trail Head to Kimberley Nature Park – Swan Entrance * Bear & Cougar Safety
2020-08-11	35	Kimberley, Lois Creek Trail Head – 8 th Avenue entrance* Bear Safety + Checking for Bear Spray
2020-08-19	16	Cranbrook, Eager Hill Trail Head – Grizzly Bears + Checking for Bear Spray
2020-09-10	14	Cranbrook, Gold Creek – focus on Bear Safety + Bear Spray
2020-09-19	39	Wildsight Harvest Party Booth - Kimberley
2020-09-27	36	Kimberley Nature Park – Sunflower Hill Entrance – Grizzly Bear + Black Bears + Bear Spray Check
2020-10-04	17	Wycliffe Regional Park – wildlife safety

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 the third weekend of September, the WCC hosted two combined wildlife safety presentations and bear spray demonstrations, one being on Saturday, September 19th at the College of the Rockies, and the other during Wildsight's 7th Annual Harvest Party (Figure 10). The local gleaning group, Apple Capture, also collaborated with WSBC once again this year and provided a fruit pressing event as well. There was a total of 63 participants throughout the entire weekend.



Figure 10. WildSafeBC Kimberley – Cranbrook BC Goes Wild events on September 19th and 20th, 2020.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Door-to-door education canvassing is an opportunity to have one-on-one conversations and to focus on areas that are experiencing the most conflict. From May to August 2020, this activity

was modified when the province was in Phase 1 and 2 of COVID-19 restrictions. Instead of knocking on doors, the WCCs left door hangers and customized letters as necessary. In Kimberley, the downtown area, townsite and the ski hill neighborhoods were prioritized for this activity due to high levels of wildlife activity. A total of 301 people were reached. In Cranbrook, Zone 4 and 5 were the focus areas and a total of 279 people were reached. The WCC conducted door-to-door education in other areas of both Kimberley and Cranbrook as well when wildlife activity and/or conflict occurred. A total of 1,547 people were reached through door-to-door education in 2020.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection. It is a highly effective program as it directly focuses on behaviours that can lead to higher wildlife conflicts. This was identified as a high priority for 2020. In Kimberley, the WCC went out garbage tagging 25 times. During the 25 outings, a total of 67 bins were tagged in the City of Kimberley and 19 were repeat offenders. These numbers are higher than last year because the number of outings in 2019 was 14. The effectiveness of garbage tagging for changing behaviours is demonstrated by the 72% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey and then were not found on the curb again during the second survey (Figure 11). Downtown, Townsite and the Ski Hill were the three areas of concern this year as there were black bears that were in these areas often.

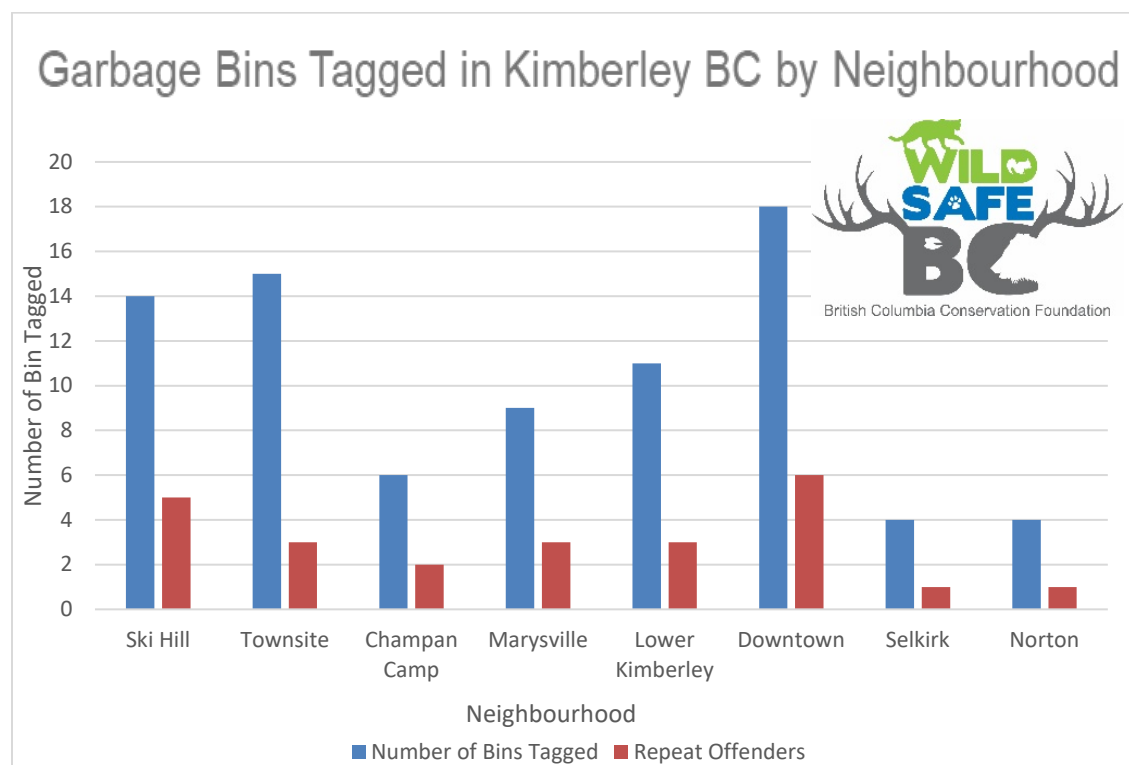


Figure 11. Number of bins placed out early for collection before education activities and repeat offenders after education in Kimberley.

In Cranbrook, the WCC went out garbage tagging 10 times. During the 10 outings, a total of 33 bins were tagged within the City and 12 were repeat offenders. This is the first year the WCC

actively garbage tagged in Cranbrook and the focus was on Zones 4 and 5. The effectiveness of garbage tagging for changing behaviours was demonstrated by the 64% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey and then were not found on the curb again during the second survey (Figure 12).

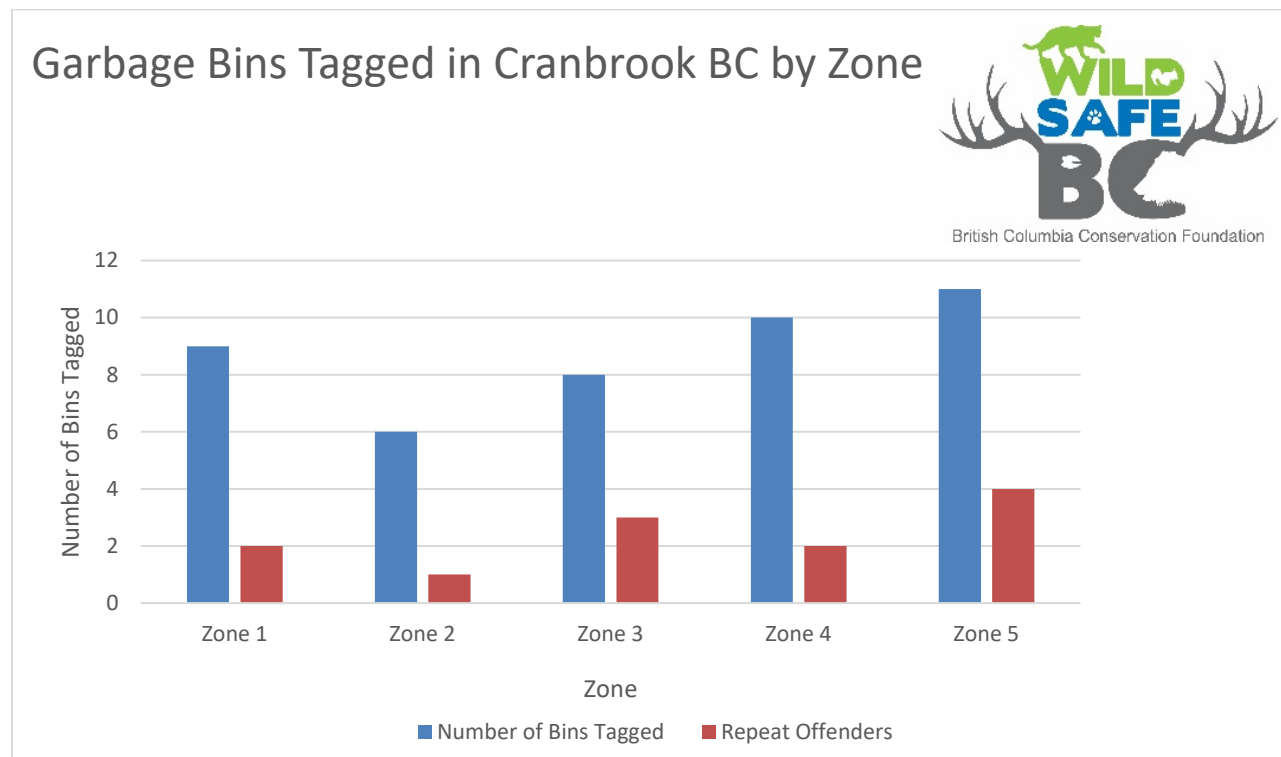


Figure 12. Number of bins placed out early for collection before education activities and repeat offenders after education in Cranbrook.

Social Media and Press

The use of social media and press releases increased this season in order to distribute WildSafeBC messaging and wildlife information. The WildSafeBC Kimberley – Cranbrook’s Facebook page now has 1,056 followers and 959 likes; an increase of 19% over the season. Biweekly updates were made either through radio stations such as The Drive, B104 & Today FM and newspapers such as The Kimberley Bulletin, E-Know, and the Cranbrook Townsman. The WCC connected with radio and newsprint media 39 times over the season. The increased media attention attracted interest from David French (CBC Radio) who reached out to do an article on aggressive deer in the East Kootenays.

WildSafeBC would like to thank the media outlets for advertising important events such as BC Goes Wild, the photo contest of 2020, reminding community members of local bylaws, attractant management tips and reiterating the importance of calling the COS RAPP line. WildSafeBC would also like to thank partners and sponsors for sharing WildSafeBC’s messaging on their websites.

Wildlife in Area Signs

This year WSBC Kimberley – Cranbrook received additional wildlife signage; cougar, grizzly bear, black bear and newly designed deer signs. By responding to calls from the public, viewing Facebook posts and using WARP, areas with high levels of wildlife activity were identified as locations for signs. These areas included active trailheads, nature parks, the community forest, in town, and on golf courses (Figure 13). A challenge with the use of wildlife in area signs is that they sometimes go missing. Black bear signs are deployed most often in Kimberley whereas in Cranbrook, the deer signs are most used. Cranbrook and Kimberley both created their own deer and area signs as WildSafeBC ran out. Cranbrook and Kimberley bylaw officers worked with the WCC to shuffle around deer in area signs to encourage the public to take caution.



Figure 13. Wildlife in Area signs. Bear and Cougar signs created by WSBC and the deer sign created by the City of Kimberley.

Collaborations

The success of the WildSafeBC Program lies with our many collaborations. A few of this season's collaborations include:

- The Cranbrook Community Forest Society provided WSBC links and Information on their website. As well, they provided information on wildlife at their kiosks, regularly maintained bear in area signs, and participated in WSBC events.
- Deer safety education was a big focus this year. Most of the wildlife safety presentations focused on deer and bears. There were many efforts made by the WCC and community members to keep their neighbourhood safe. For example, the WCC printed and laminated deer in area signs and members of the public would hang them in their windows when they noticed the aggressive doe and fawn. The media helped with message delivery around hazing the deer which suggested; banging pots and pans; using water hoses or water guns; using motion activated lights and/or sprinklers. In five instances, property owners removed their fruit trees which seemed to decrease some of the conflict. The Wildlife Safety Officer helped with this as well as the gleaning group - Apple Capture.
- South East Disposal approved the WSBC bear decals and provided 18 dumpsters for the stickers to go on (Figure 14). The bear decals were also reviewed by both the Cities of Kimberley and Cranbrook. They are to promote further awareness of responsible garbage management, and also brings each community one step closer to achieving Bear Smart Community status.



Figure 14. WildSafeBC decal for dumpsters.

- Junior Chambers International – Kootenay provided an honorarium to WSBC Kimberley – Cranbrook to aid in purchasing bear spray and the bear decal stickers for the dumpsters around Kimberley and Cranbrook. JCI – Kootenay members also attended and promoted WSBC events as well as connecting WCC to Blue Lake Camp.
- The WCC worked with the Conservation Officer Service's Wildlife Safety Officer in order to reach more communities during the month of October 2020. Together, they reached residents through the WildSafe Business Pledge, door-to-door, and garbage tagging. Kimberley expressed interest in achieving Bear Smart status from the Ministry of Environment. There are multiple steps throughout this process of achieving Bear Smart status and 6 criteria that must be achieved. One of the ways Kimberley decided to tackle these steps is through ensuring businesses in Kimberley are on board and committed to becoming a Bear Smart Community by having guidelines set in place for reducing human-wildlife conflict.

WildSafe Business Pledge

The WildSafe Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses to set good examples in their community on 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 provides ongoing support to the business in the form of staff training, WildSafeBC materials (subject to budget constraints) and a WildSafeBC Business Pledge poster. Of the 20 that signed the pledge in 2019, 18 businesses recommitted to the pledge in 2020. Of the two remaining, one business is in the middle of changing locations and the other shut down. This season, 10 new pledges were signed for a total of 28.

WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

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. East Kootenay Parks has 12 campsites in the area and have expressed interest in completing the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite training in 2021.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The Paqmi Nuqyuk Aboriginal Early Years Drop in Group always keeps WildSafeBC brochures on hand to ensure safety and education on wildlife species in our area. Plans for a bear spray demonstration for parents are in the works for 2021. Bradley Alexander, WSBC's volunteer, attended a few bear spray demonstrations and provided wildlife signage in his community. Unfortunately, the Indigenous People's Day event did not occur this year with Idlewild, however efforts to reach out for future engagement in 2021 are in the works.

Challenges and Opportunities

Garbage is always a challenge in RDEK area C whether it be tourists, campers, new developments, or new residents who are unaware that garbage is a wildlife attractant. There were a few incidents where black bears were getting into garbage in both Cranbrook and Kimberley that was left out at vacation rentals once the tourist had finished their stay. It is a challenge that there are many absentee landlords. Fortunately, the WCC can work with the bylaw officers so that the owners can be contacted, and attractant management strategies can be discussed. A possible solution can be to build a secure structure to store garbage outside of the house. Another solution could be to work with the cities to distribute a welcome package that may include bylaws and the address to transfer stations. WildSafeBC has recently created an informative poster that can be left in short-term rentals.

New developments can also be tricky as owners are not usually on scene all the time and the dumpsters are temporary and do not have a secure lid. A couple of cases in Kimberley were tackled straight away by contacting the owner of the development and asking for a bin with a lid. The lids showed up, but they were plastic, which in the end didn't work as they were ripped off by black bears. To save money on all ends, a solution to this issue would be to contact the waste management company and ask that they do not provide plastic lids at all, but rather, metal ones with a lock. It is more costly for those dumpsters, but the agreement can be made that it will save money in the long run as the lids are less likely to be ripped off.

Fruit trees continue to draw wildlife into residential areas. Bears have been reported damaging fences and remaining in people's yards which impacts the safety of the neighbourhood. This concern peaks in September when school is back in session, bears enter hyperphagia and are strongly food-motivated, and fruit is abundant on trees. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community and would benefit to increased education and fruit tracking activities. To address the abundance of fruit in the community, it is recommended that the city perform an audit of fruit trees on municipal property and develop plans to address them.

Deer are a challenge in both communities. Despite several education efforts, some community members continue to feed animals directly and indirectly. In these cases, it has been helpful to collaborate with bylaw and COS who can provide a financial incentive.

Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC is grateful for the consistent support of its sponsors: Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Regional District of East Kootenay, the City of Cranbrook, the City of Kimberley, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation.

As always, the WCC would like to give a big thank you to the Conservation Officer Service and their staff, in particular Denny Chretien, Jeffrey Scott, Jim Melenka and Reiker Renz for the great communication and participation in promoting WildSafeBC awareness. These partnerships are vital for the effectiveness and consistency of our messaging and our goal to "keep wildlife wild and communities safe". Another big thank you goes out to the operations,

communications and planning staff of the City of Cranbrook, in particular Chris Zettel. As well as Chris Mummery, Scott Sommerville and Kim Tuff from the City of Kimberley have been proactive in collaborating with WildSafeBC to find lasting solutions to human-wildlife conflict.

Thank you to the community members, clubs, organizations, businesses, schools and other members of the public that participated in WSBC's events. It is such an incredible opportunity to watch community members become more invested in keeping wildlife wild and their communities safe! Thank you for being proactive and taking responsibility in managing attractants in order to minimize the potential for wildlife conflict.