

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2021

## Town of Golden

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## Executive Summary

This report describes the 2021 activities of the WildSafeBC Program in Golden and the Columbia Shuswap Regional District Area A (CSRD-A). Thanks to the financial support of the Province of British Columbia, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF), the Town of Golden, and the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT), WildSafeBC continues to deliver programming in Golden and the CSRD-A (Figure 1). This rural area of the North-East Kootenays includes the Town of Golden, along with the unincorporated communities of Harrogate, Castledale, Parson, Nicholson, Donald and Blaeberry as well as the Town of Field. It is located on unceded traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation, the traditional territory of the Secwépemc, and the traditional territory of the Métis Nation (the largest Indigenous group that resides in Golden).

In terms of wildlife activity, there are generally two peaks observed in reporting bears: one in the spring, when bears come out of hibernation, and one in the fall as they prepare to enter hibernation. Garbage remains a challenge, being the most reported attractant, followed by fruit trees. This valuable knowledge helps guiding the WildSafeBC Golden Program as to when and where to focus its educational efforts. In 2021, the program also initiated steps to support the community in becoming certified Bear Smart by the Province.

In 2021, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activities, from mid-April until the end of November, with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community. The ongoing pandemic continued to greatly affect the number of possible public events. Following COVID-19 safety precautions, several of the standard WildSafeBC program activities were modified to ensure proper sanitization and physical distancing measures were in place. The following summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the season:

- 2 WRP presentations and 25 youth reached
- 2 hands-on bear spray demonstrations given to 11 of participants
- 137 people reached through Door-To-Door in person and 531 door hangers left
- 24 bin tagging outings and 136 number of bins tagged
- 12 display booths and 752 people reached
- Facebook followers grew from 507 in January to 547 in November as a result of more than 100 Facebook posts

Thanks to its sponsors, the Conservation Officer Service (COS), its volunteers and community members, the WildSafeBC Golden Program works at keeping wildlife wild and communities safe.



**Figure 1. WildSafeBC Golden & CSRD-A program coverage area.**

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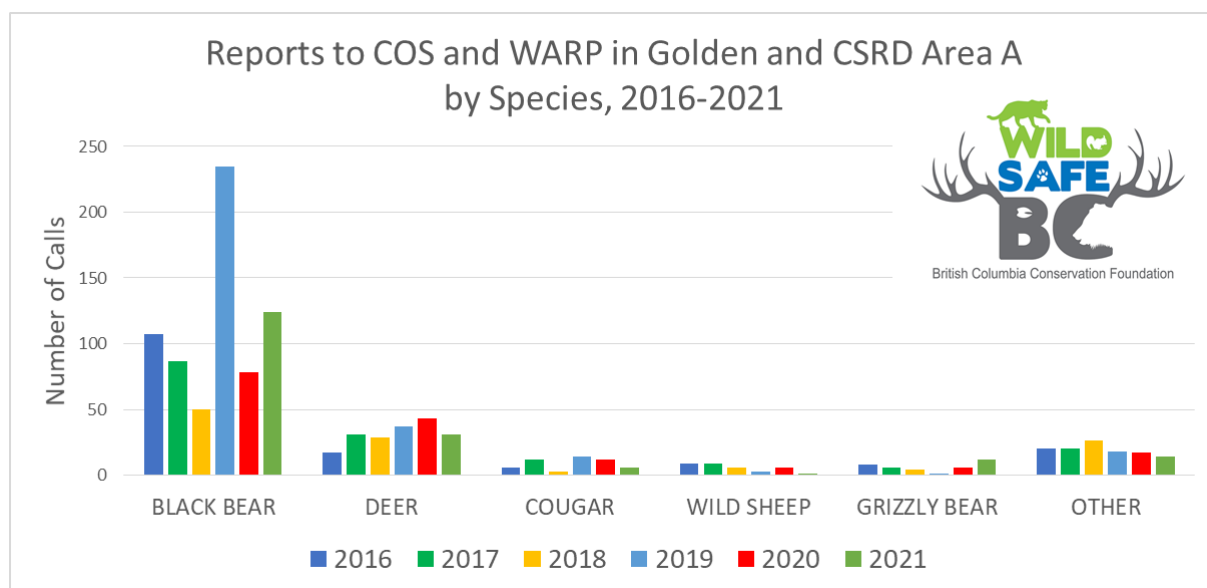
Cover Photo: WildSafeBC Golden Community Coordinator, Johanne Lamoureux, in action during local Community Day Event at the Golden Skybridge (thank you Garry Walker for the photo).

## Highlights from the 2021 Season

### Wildlife Activity

Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) or through the online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP), which is updated daily. The data in this report ranges from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

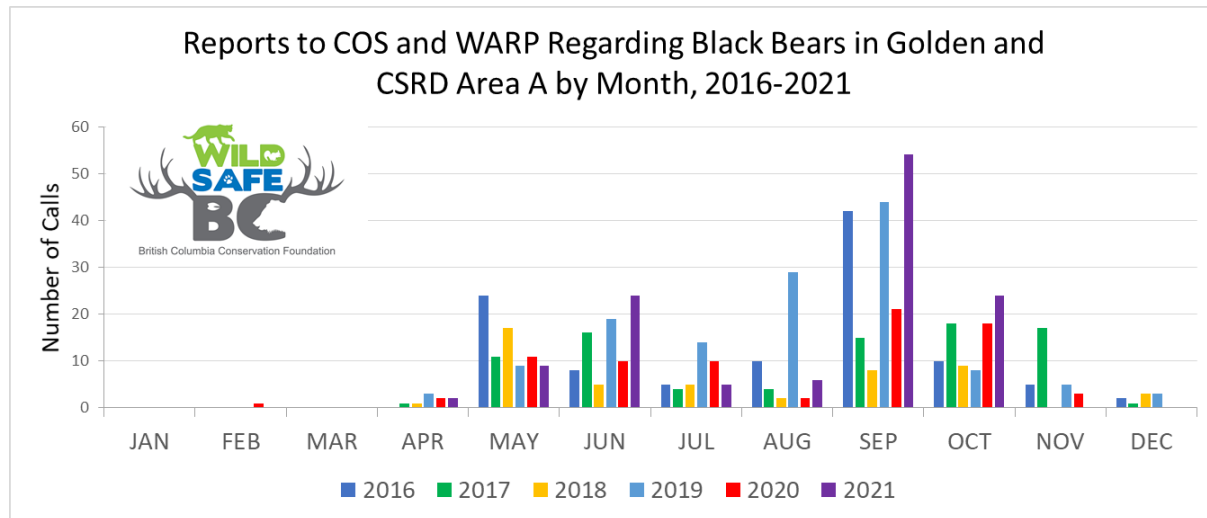
For the Town of Golden and the CSRD-A, the most reported wildlife in 2021 were black bears (124), deer (31), grizzly bears (12) followed by cougars (6) (Figure 2). In 2021, there were 12 reports of grizzly bear activity, a number slightly higher than the last five-year average of 5 reports. However, there were 124 black bear reports, which accounted for 66% of the total reports. This is close to the 5 year average of 111 reports.



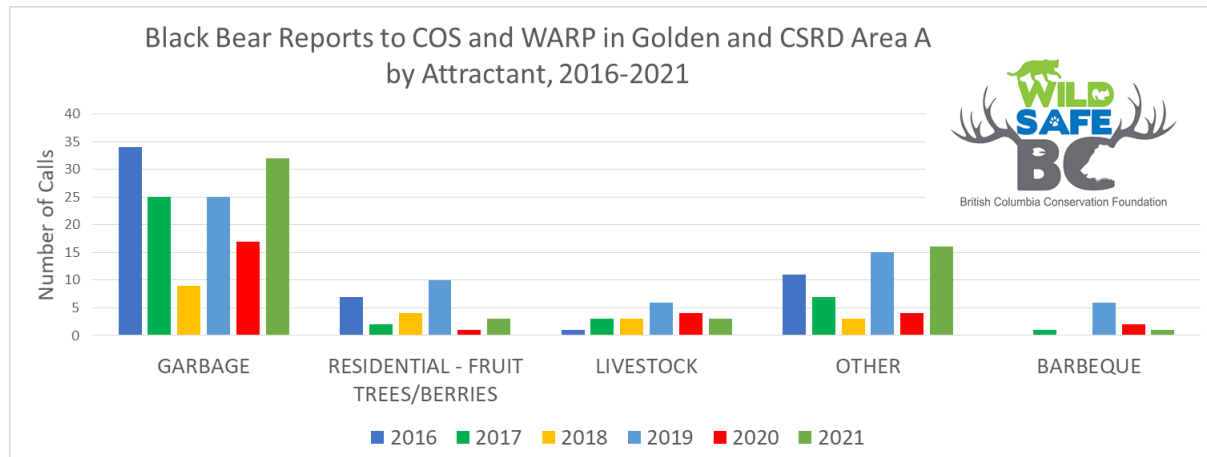
**Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding wildlife in Golden and CSRD Area A from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.**

Reports regarding black bears are generally observed in two peaks; one in the spring when the bears come out of hibernation, and one in the fall as they prepare to enter hibernation (Figure 3). September was a particular busy month with a record of 54 black bear reports. Province-wide, black bear activity was particular high this month, likely as a result of natural food availability as a result of hot and dry summer with multiple wildfires.

Also worth noting for 2021 is that garbage remained the most reported attractant at 58% (Figure 4). However, it is likely that other attractants such as fruit trees remain underreported as they are deemed natural food sources by many members of the public.



**Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears in Golden and CSRD Area A from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.**



**Figure 4. Black bear reports in Golden and CSRD Area A by attractant from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.**

## WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. The participation of schools in the WRP were postponed as the season wrapped up and the impacts of COVID-19. Future alternate delivery modes can be webinars and outdoor presentations that allow for physical distancing.

## Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC organized a total of 2 outdoor wildlife safety presentations to the WildSight's Get Wild Day Camp kids (25 participants).

## Display Booths

Thankfully this year again, the BC Farmers' Market for the Town of Golden resumed in Spirit Square, though with still shorter gathering periods and greater COVID-19 preventive measures. As for previous years, the WCC attendance was bi-weekly, scattered from the opening to the closing dates (mid-June to late September), with one Saturday early spring market and one Saturday fall market. Over a four-month period the WCC had 12 market booths/displays which led to more than 750 engagements with a mixture of locals and visitors alike, from all ages (Table 1).

Table 1. WildSafeBC events in 2021.

Public Display Booth Event	Reach	Date
Golden BC Farmers' Market	69	Sat., May 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Golden Skybridge Community Day Event	56	Mon., May 31 <sup>st</sup>
Golden BC Farmers' Market	39	Wed., June 16 <sup>th</sup>
Golden BC Farmers' Market	42	Wed., June 30 <sup>th</sup>
Golden BC Farmers' Market	85	Wed., July 14 <sup>th</sup>
Golden BC Farmers' Market	63	Wed., July 28 <sup>th</sup>
Kicking Horse Mountain Resort	39	Thu., July 29 <sup>th</sup>
Golden BC Farmers' Market	107	Wed., Aug 11 <sup>th</sup>
Golden BC Farmers' Market	77	Wed., Aug 25 <sup>th</sup>
Golden BC Farmers' Market	55	Wed., Sep 8 <sup>th</sup>
Golden BC Farmers' Market	44	Wed., Sep 22 <sup>nd</sup>
Golden BC Farmers' Market	71	Sat., Oct 9 <sup>th</sup>



**Figure 5. The WCC at various public events and Farmers' Markets throughout 2021.**

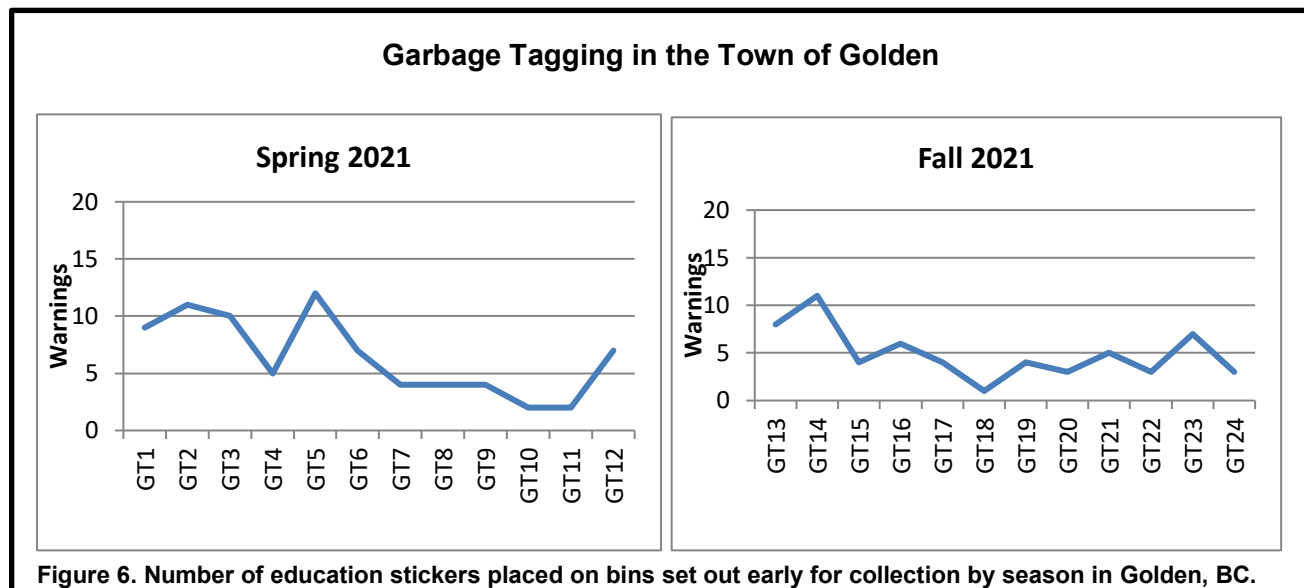
## Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

This year was another opportune time to maintain high level of door-to-door campaigns using an adapted approach of limiting direct interactions and increasing physical distancing, i.e. no direct knocking at doors. More than a dozen door-to-door campaigns took place, with over 60% carried out in the spring and summer. The WCC reached 137 people through in-person conversation and in addition, 531 homes received information including a door-hanger (with a note mentioning the attractants and a brochure on the wildlife of concerns). These educational efforts were directed to areas with unsecured attractants, based on Conservation Officer or resident requests, and perceived needs based on garbage tagging data.

Garbage bin tagging is an educational activity which consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection, outside the

time period permitted by local bylaws. In Golden, the Town's bylaw requires bins to be placed on the curbside between 6 am and 8 am on collection days only; bear-resistant bins should be placed unclipped. While WildSafeBC Golden provides information on these bylaws, it does not enforce them or deliver fines.

In 2021, as for previous years, the garbage tagging was planned to coincide with the peaks in wildlife activity based on WARP data from 2016-2021: spring and fall. Garbage tagging efforts were kept high this year again, with a total of 136 warning stickers being distributed over 24 outings, equally spread between these seasonal peaks (Figure 6). From mid-May to late June, 77 warning stickers were distributed for an average of 6 per night (compared with 7 warnings per night in spring 2020), whereas from mid-September to late October, 59 warning stickers were distributed with an average of 5 per night (compared with 9 per night for fall 2020). Not only was there a slight decrease in the fall numbers compared with the spring, but two encouraging trends are worth noting. First, the overall yearly average of 5.7 warnings per night is lower than that of previous three years (15.3 in 2018; 12.5 in 2019, 8.0 in 2020). Second, there seems to be a decrease in the number of warnings issued as the season progresses, most likely due to the effectiveness of garbage tagging in changing behaviours. From the 1,500 bear-resistant bins surveyed (the entire Town is surveyed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays combined), only 1% were less receptive to education and received stickers more than once.



## Social Media and Press

Through online outreach, WildSafeBC connects to thousands of community members with engaging Instagram and Facebook (FB) posts. More locally, the [WildSafeBC Golden Facebook](#) page actively posts to promote local activities and engagements. In 2021, with more than 100 posts reaching over 11500 people and counting, the WildSafeBC Golden page increased its followers by almost 8 percent from 507 to 547. Popular themes included: wildlife collision prevention (education on bear jams, wildlife crossings), bare camping, fruit gleaning recommendations, wildlife safety advice on the trails and safe recreation in bear country. The most visited and engaging posts were on garbage tagging. Furthermore, The WCC was featured online in the local newspapers [The Golden Star](#) on topics such as local WildSafeBC activities, managing attractants, and W.A.R.P. in particular.

## Wildlife in Area Signs

Bear in area signage was a tool greatly used to inform the locals and visitors of the presence of bears in their neighbourhoods. The signs were used in numerous hotspot locations, mostly in the spring and fall (Figure 7). The bear in area sign was also used to inform trail users at the popular trail heads/parking lot junction on Kicking Horse Trail, and was also promoted in the [media](#).



Figure 7. The WCC placing various Bear in Area warning signage in Golden, BC.

## Collaborations

WildSafeBC Golden can play a role in connecting local volunteers with local fruit tree owners and farmers that can use the fruit. Domestic fruit and surrounding berries are a reliable source of high calorie food at a time when bears are preparing for winter hibernation. It is important to keep bears away from these unnatural food sources by picking fruit early before it is full-ripened. The WildSafeBC Golden Facebook page is instrumental in bringing together community efforts to reduce attractants by using educational posts and when possible, by connecting fruit-picking volunteers with fruit-tree owners and with those interested in picked fruits (e.g. horse and pig owners) (Figure 8). For example, apples picked this year by volunteers were donated to Boo, from the Grizzly Bear Refuge at the Kicking Horse Mountain Resort.



**Figure 8. Volunteers Steve Kenny and Julie Sheard keeping wildlife wild and communities safe through residential fruit gleaning efforts.**

## WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

Through the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program, WildSafeBC is able to provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife. “Bare Camping” brochures and other WildSafeBC related material (posters) were distributed to the Golden Municipal Campground, at the Cedar Lake Recreation Site and at the Eco Adventure Ranch.

## Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

WildSafeBC Golden follows the [Metis Nation Columbia River Society](#) group on Facebook to be aware of local activities in which WildSafeBC Golden could potentially participate.

## Special Initiatives

In September, WildSafeBC celebrates its annual BC Goes Wild event throughout the province. The timing typically coincides with the weeks of highest human-bear conflicts in BC. Similar to last year, given the ongoing COVID-19 constraints, the WCC planned a more modest event which focused on bear spray demonstrations in Field and the Town of Golden. The events began with a discussion on how to react appropriately during wildlife encounters and how to

safely carry, use and store bear spray. It was then followed by a hands-on demonstration of inert bear spray deployment whereby a total of 11 satisfied participants got to individually acquire experience manipulating inert spray (Figure 9).



Figure 9. The WCC giving a bear spray demonstration.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Garbage continues to be the most reported non-natural attractant in our communities. Fruit trees are another source of attractants, drawing wildlife into residential areas. For instance, bears have been reported in people's yards, thus impacting the safety of their neighbourhood. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community and would benefit to increased education and fruit gleaning activities. To address the abundance of improperly managed fruit and garbage in the community, the following initiatives are recommended for 2022:

- Promoting the use of electric fencing.
- Conducting educational campaigns focused on the hazards of attractants along with solutions through social media, news articles, workshops, flyer in municipal tax information, etc.
- Encouraging residents to connect through social media with non-profit food sharing groups (Local Food Matters, Golden Food Bank, Loop Resource).
- Conducting door-to-door campaigns and using wildlife in area signage in hotspots.
- Maintaining ongoing progress in becoming a Bear Smart Community.

## Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Golden Community Coordinator would like to thank its sponsors for their ongoing financial support: the Province of British Columbia, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation, the Town of Golden, and the Columbia Basin Trust.

Thanks to Jon Wilsgard, Chief Administrative Officer for the Town of Golden. Thanks also to GIS Specialist Alyson Marjerrison, Communications Official Alysha Saville, Operations Manager Chris Cochran, Deputy Corporate Officer/Manager of Legislative Services Vis Thoss, and Manager of Recreation Services Jordan Petrovics. WildSafeBC appreciates the efforts of the VP Waste Solutions Ltd Team and collaborations with the Golden Cycling Club.

Lest not we forget our Conservation Officer Service: Officer Kevin Mayowski, Officer Alexandre Desjardins, Officer Karlee Hall, and Officer Dan Bartol. Thank you also to the BCCF Team for their support during yet another challenging year.

**Special thanks** for the much appreciated contribution of the local program volunteers: Madeleine Leblond, Julie Sheard, Peter Sheard, Garry Walker, Gail Sheard, Steve Kenny, Mel Worth, Matt Sweet, Evelyne Garon, Alex Goatcher, Katie Leaf, and Phébée Richard. Finally, thanks to the cooperative residents for their precious help in keeping wildlife wild and communities safe! ♥ ***Merci !***