

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2021

Kaslo and Area D

Prepared by Brian Montgomery
WildSafeBC Kaslo and Area D Coordinator



*Village of
Kaslo*



British Columbia Conservation Foundation



Executive Summary

This year-end report will describe the activities and deliverables of the 2021 WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) in Kaslo and Area D (Figure 1). WildSafeBC respectfully acknowledges that this program operates on the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa, Syilx (Okanagan), and Sinixt Peoples. The WCC is grateful to have the opportunity to work in in this territory. In 2021, wildlife activity reported was steady with previous years and there were 42 wildlife reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS). The majority of these (67%) were reports of black bears (n=28).

The 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:

- There were 3 WildSafe Rangers presentations and 47 youth reached.
- Through door-to-door activities, 65 people were contacted in person and 44 received door hangers.
- There were 19 bin tagging outings and 6 bins tagged for being set out early. None of the residences repeated the behaviour after receiving a sticker.
- There were 4 booths were held at the Kaslo Saturday Market and the Lardeau Valley Sunday Market and 188 people reached.
- A total of 2 compost workshop presentations were given with 14 participants.
- The WildSafeBC Kaslo Facebook page grew from 237 to 351 followers (an increase of 48%) as a result of 122 posts made from January 1, 2021 to October 31, 2021.
- The program is grateful to 5 businesses who signed the WildSafeBC Business Pledge.
- 14 campgrounds and sites were provided Bare Campsite Program materials.

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 the BC Government for recognizing and supporting this work in Kaslo and Area D. The WCC is grateful for cooperation and collaborations with several organizations including: the BCCF team and local Conservation Service Officers; North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society and the Kaslo Food Hub; the Kaslo Community Garden Society, the Lardeau Valley Sunday Saturday Market; the Kaslo Saturday Market, Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions; and the Kaslo Bear Smart Community Working Group.

The key attractants in 2021 were livestock and pets, freezers, garbage, and fruit trees resulting in 96% 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 education and outreach, door-to-door visits, fruit gleaning, electric fencing workshops, and supporting the Village of Kaslo in progressing towards a Bear Smart Community will help “keep wildlife wild and our community safe”.

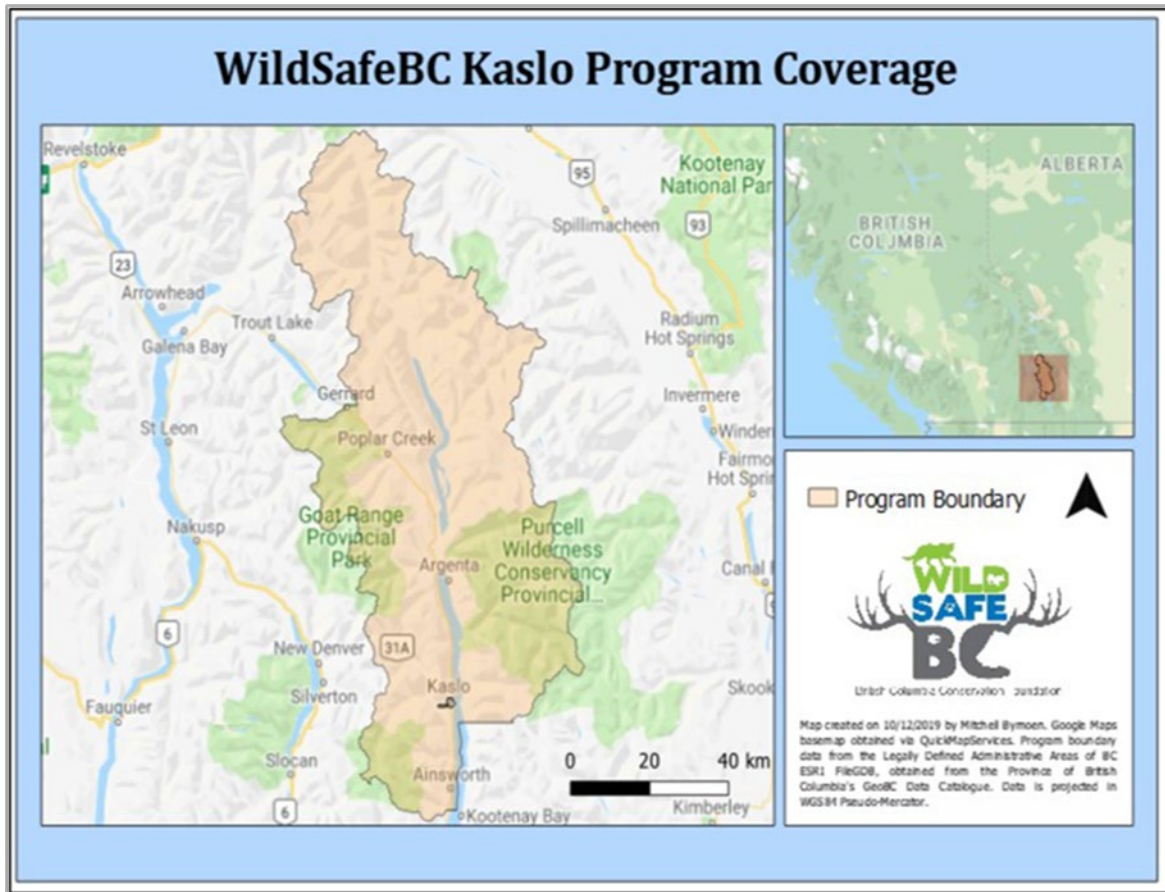


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Kaslo and Area D program coverage area.

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, Shutt Bench, Kaslo, Fletchers Falls, Mirror Lake and Ainsworth (Figure 1).

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Cover Photo: Black bear wandering through in Kaslo, BC.

Highlights from the 2021 Season

Wildlife Activity

Data for wildlife activity is captured by reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) and on-line 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, 2021 (Figure 2).

There were 28 black bear reports for Kaslo and Area D which is consistent with the past three years. Garbage remained the most reported attractant followed by livestock, other (pets, bird feed, livestock feed, and freezers) and fruit trees (Figure 3). These attractants match those reported to the WCC in conversations with residents while canvassing in Kaslo, Ainsworth, Lardeau and Cooper Creek.

There were five grizzly bear reports which occurred in the Meadow Creek and Cooper Creek, which is consistent with 2020. Grizzly bear attractants reported were livestock (chickens).

Deer were reported as the third highest wildlife reported in Kaslo and Area D with five reports which is consistent with previous years. In these cases, deer were found to be injured or distressed in the months of April, July, and October 2021.

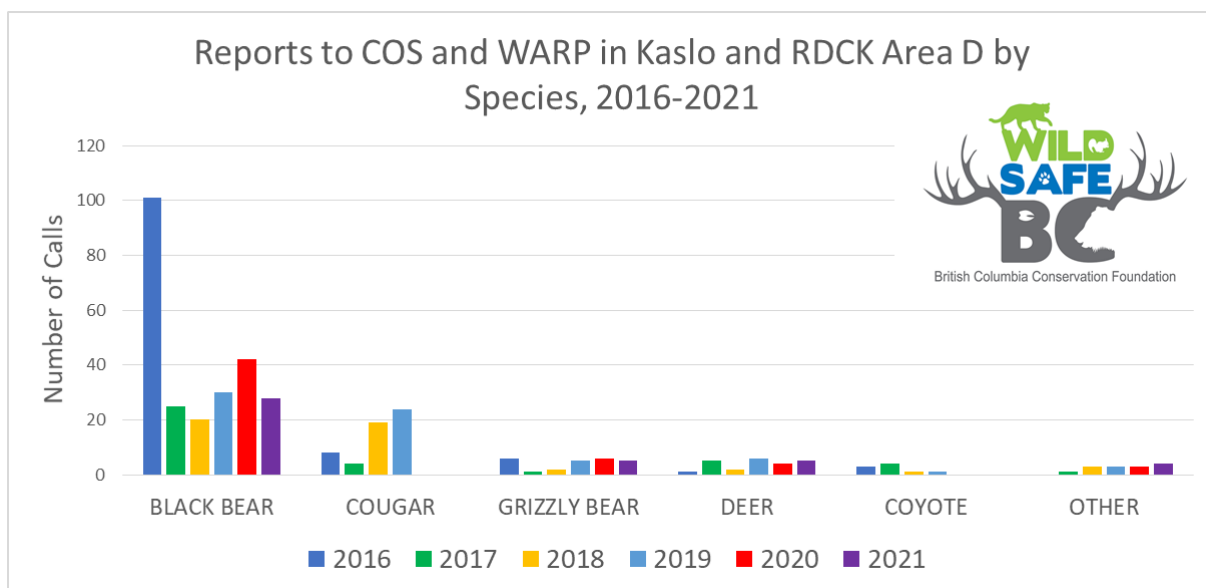


Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP by species from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

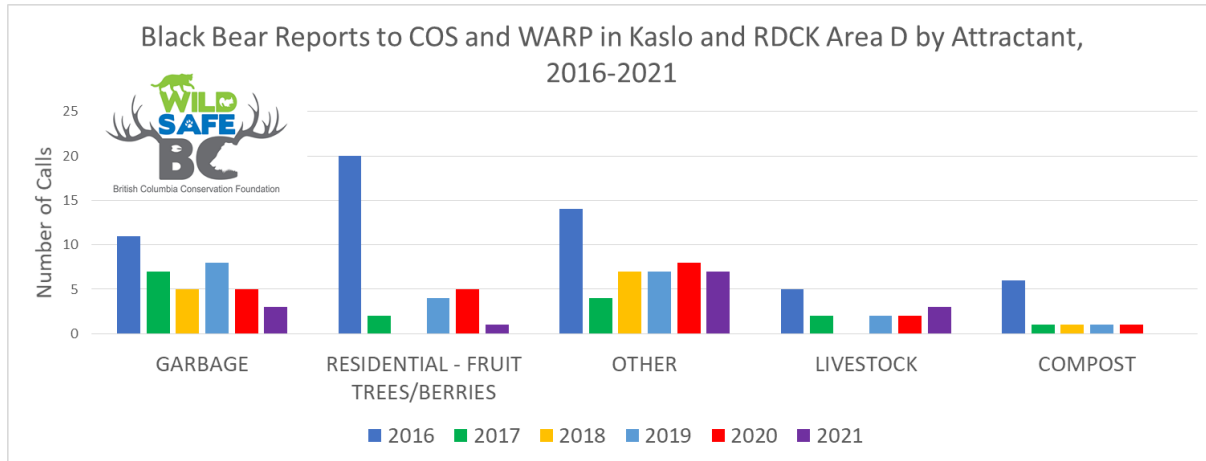


Figure 3. Black bear attractants reported in Kaslo and Area D between January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

Note that the highest reported attractant is garbage followed by other (pets, livestock and pet feed, freezers), livestock and residential fruit trees.

Black bears reported in Kaslo made up 64% (18 reports) of the total black bear reported to COS and WARP this season (Figure 4). Black bears reported in Area D made up 36% (10 reports) of the total number of black bear reports to the COS and WARP this season. Areas where black bears were reported in Area D included Ainsworth, Shuttly Bench, Cooper Creek, lower Argenta, and Meadow Creek.

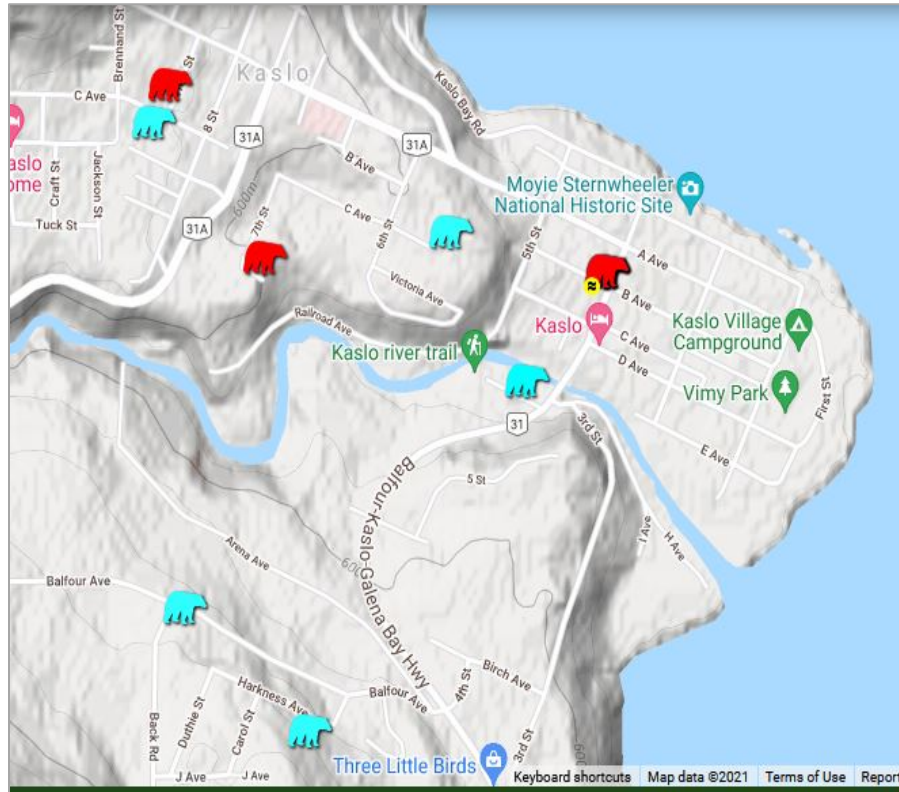


Figure 4. Map of black bear calls in Kaslo from COS and WARP, 2021.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the basic needs of local wildlife (water, food, shelter and space), the concept of human-wildlife conflict and how we can reduce to at home and staying safe in wildlife country.

There were two WRP presentations were held at the J.V. Humphries School in Kaslo on October 28, with over 45 students from Kindergarten to Grade 3. The students became WildSafe Rangers and received WRP activity kits (activity book, bookmark, stickers or buttons) to take home with them. On May 18, a WRP presentation was held on request in a resident's backyard in Upper Kaslo to educate their two children about bear and wildlife safety and human-wildlife conflict.

Community Workshops

The WCC gave a total of two presentations at two outdoor workshops at the Kaslo Community Garden around composting to reduce waste and manage bear attractants to 14 participants. These community composting workshops were based on requests and interest in the Kaslo and Area D community around composting and the concerns of composting as a bear attractant (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Compost Workshop items

Attendees to the workshops were given information on how to properly compost, the types of composts methods, how to reduce bear attractants when composting, and sharing of tips. These workshops were organized with the Kaslo Community Garden Society, the North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society, Kaslo Food Hub, and the Kaslo BearSmart Working Group.

Display Booths

Working within COVID-19 restrictions around markets and local community events, the WCC was able to attend two Kaslo Saturday Markets in June and September and two Lardeau Valley Sunday Markets in Meadow Creek in July and September (Figure 6; Table 1).



Figure 6. Booth display at the Kaslo Saturday Market, 2021.

Table 1: Displays at Farmers and Community Markets, 2021.

Event	People Reached
June 26, 2021 - Kaslo Saturday Market	50 - 2 youths, 48 adults
July 18, 2021 - Lardeau Valley Sunday Market	35 - 8 youths, 27 adults
September 11 - Kaslo Saturday Market	65 - 5 youths, 60 adults
September 12 - Lardeau Valley Sunday Market	38 - 5 youths, 33 adults
TOTAL = 4 Events	188 - 20 youths, 168 adults

Door-to-Door Education and Community Support

In the beginning of the season, the WCC visited communities in the Kaslo and Area D program area and posted WildSafeBC posters on community bulletin boards. 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, Gerrard, and Trout Lake.

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, the BearSmart Working Group or directly to the WCC. The intent of the canvassing was to ensure that everyone in the area impacted was aware of recent wildlife activity and reminded about managing attractants. The WCC also gained information in areas with increased wildlife activity that may have not been reported directly to the COS or WARP.

Door-to-door education took place in Cooper Creek, Lardeau, Arena Avenue in Kaslo, the neighborhoods around J.V. Humphries School, and Upper Kaslo (8th St, Washington St, C Ave, Brennand St, View St) and lower Kaslo (A – C Ave). In total, 109 dwellings were visited with conversations with 65 residents in these areas.

Door-to-door education also 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, 44 residents (or 40% 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 WCC 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, skunks, electric fencing, fruit tree management, waste management, human-wildlife encounters on properties, and composting. In total, over 200 conversations with residents that contacted the WCC were had between April to October 2021. Of these conversations, 12 were focused on electric fencing assistance, and 18 were focused on fruit tree management and referrals to fruit gleaning.

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 bin tagging only occurs in Kaslo, as the Village of Kaslo has a day of residential collection which is Tuesday. 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).

WildSafeBC 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.

During 18 outings between May and October 2021, a total of six garbage or recycling bins were tagged in the Village of Kaslo and none repeated the behaviour on follow up visits (Figure 7). The effectiveness of garbage and recycling bin tagging for changing behaviours is demonstrated by the 100% response rates of residences whose bins were not found out on the curb again during follow up surveys (Figure 7).

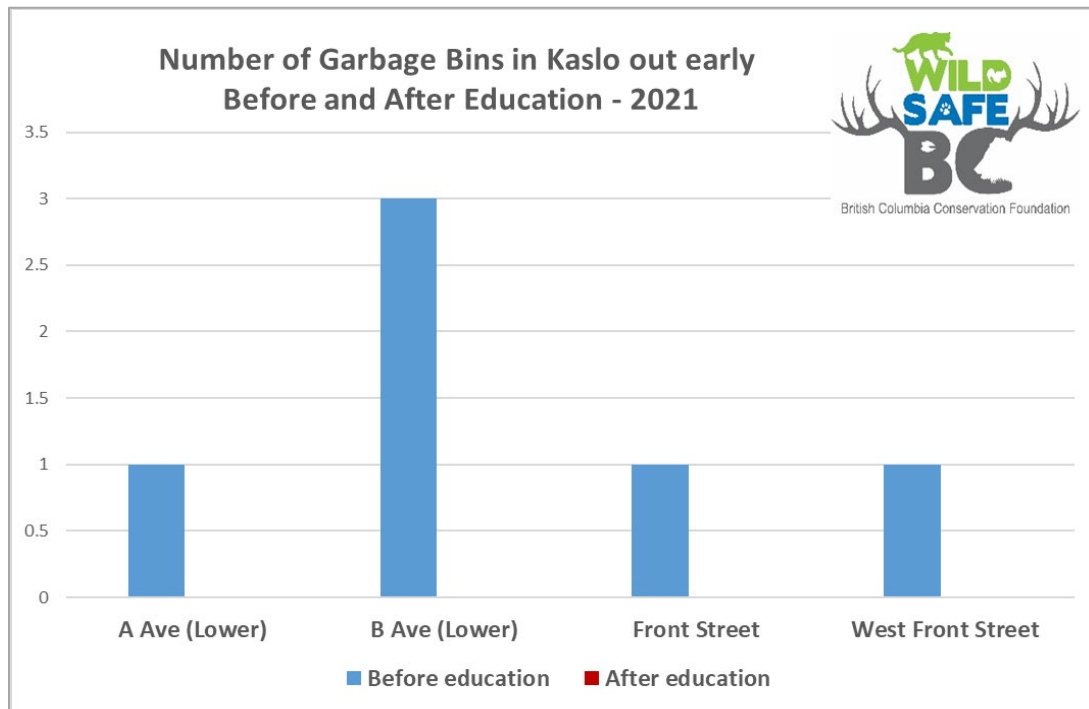


Figure 7. Number if bins tagged with education stickers in Kaslo in 2021.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Kaslo and Area D Facebook page grew 48% in 2021 from 237 to 351 page followers. The highest number of viewers for a Facebook posting was 948 in August and 569 in July. 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 the Kaslo Outdoor Recreation and Trails Society (KORTS).

There were several news articles co-written with the WildSafeBC New Denver and Nakusp Coordinator in 2021. This collaboration allowed both WildSafeBC 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:

May 3, 2021 – Bears Are Back in Town and so is WildSafeBC

Pennywise - <https://www.pennywiseads.com/project/may-3-pennywise-kootenay-lake/>

Valley Voice - [www.valleyvoice.ca/ PDF_2016/ValleyVoice210506web.pdf](http://www.valleyvoice.ca/PDF_2016/ValleyVoice210506web.pdf)

July 29, 2021 - WildSafeBC Reminds Residents to Manage Their Fruit Trees – Valley Voice [http://www.valleyvoice.ca/ PDF_2016/ValleyVoice210729web.pdf](http://www.valleyvoice.ca/PDF_2016/ValleyVoice210729web.pdf)

August 26, 2021 – BC Goes Wild Events 2021: Bear Spray Workshops, Biology Walks, Virtual Art Exhibits and More! – Valley Voice - [http://www.valleyvoice.ca/ PDF_2016/ValleyVoice210826web.pdf](http://www.valleyvoice.ca/PDF_2016/ValleyVoice210826web.pdf)

The WCC was approached by the Valley Voice to provide some insights around the impacts of the 2021 heat and wildfires on black bears in July 2021. The resulting article titled “Bear in the Pool? Keep Cool, says WildSafeBC” (July 15, 2021) which was seen in the Valley Voice and shared with newspapers outlets across Canada including the Toronto Star and the Globe and Mail: [www.valleyvoice.ca/ PDF_2016/ValleyVoice210715web.pdf](http://www.valleyvoice.ca/PDF_2016/ValleyVoice210715web.pdf)

Wildlife in Area Signs

In July 2021, a Bear in the Area sign was placed near the Unity Bridge in Kaslo that crosses the lower Kaslo River (Figure 8). This was in response to a bear that had been encountered by hikers in June and again in July and to warn users that a black bear was using the space to travel and forage.



Figure 8. Bear in Area sign posted near Unity Bridge, Kaslo, 2021.

Collaborations

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

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

WildSafeBC Business Pledge

WildSafeBC and the WCC introduced the WildSafeBC Business Pledge Program to Kaslo this year. The WildSafeBC Business Pledge has been developed to encourage businesses to become good examples in their community and demonstrate through their actions on how to safely co-exist with wildlife. The WildSafeBC Pledge helps support communities in becoming Bear Smart.

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, and a WildSafeBC Business Pledge poster.



Figure 9. True Blue Kaslo Home Hardware taking the WildSafeBC Business Pledge.

A total of five businesses in Kaslo signed the WildSafeBC Business Pledge this year. They are.

- True Blue Kaslo Home Hardware, June 2021 (Figure 9)
- The Kaslo Adventure Centre, August 2021
- Kaslo Kayaking, August 2021
- Mel B Digital, September 2021
- The Treehouse Restaurant, October 2021

WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

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.

For this inaugural year, the WCC visited and provided both manned and unmanned campgrounds with posters and brochures informing users about wildlife and camping in bear country (Figure 10). The areas covered in Kaslo and Area D were from Trout Lake and Howser to Lost Ledge and Davis Creek to Glacier Creek Park and Mirror Lake.



Figure 10. Brochures at local campgrounds

With increased demand and interest in outdoor camping by locals and visitors again this year and aiming to reduce attractants such as garbage at campsites in Kaslo and Area D, this program could be piloted with more campground operators in the area.

Special Initiatives

On May 24, the WCC was invited to be part of the Kaslo Chamber of Commerce's "Don't Burst Your Bubble Parade" in lieu of a May Days weekend event and following COVID-19 protocols. The WCC decorated a vehicle as a "float" and drove through the parade route in Kaslo to promote and advertise the WSBC Kaslo and Area D program to the community (Figure 11). The parade had a large community turnout, and it is estimated that 80 youth and adults were along the parade route.



Figure 11. Float at Kaslo May Day Parade, 2021.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Village of Kaslo has made great progress in becoming Bear Smart with the Animal Attractant Bylaw. In addition, the Village supported updating the 2005 Bear Hazard Assessment in 2021. A Kaslo Bear Smart Working Group has been formed and working since Fall of 2020. The purpose of the group is to support the Village and residents in becoming a Bear Smart Community. The working group has supported the work of the WCC and has been involved in education and outreach opportunities as well as identifying locations with fruit trees as attractants in Kaslo. Maintaining communications and support to the Village and staff by the Kaslo Bear Smart Working Group and the WCC can assist them in their progress and abilities to become a Bear Smart Community.

There has been an increased interest and discussions with residents during WCC site visits regarding electric fencing opportunities and learning, especially with increased interest in local food security. A series of electric fencing demonstrations and workshops in Kaslo could benefit increased knowledge and skills for local residents.

Fruit trees continue to be a source of attractants in the community that draw wildlife into residential areas. Bears have been reported damaging trees 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, tree trimming or removal, and/or fruit gleaning activities. There has been an increase in communications around fruit sharing and assistance with overabundant fruit as seen in social media postings.

To address the abundance of fruit in the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2022:

- Electric fence demonstration and workshops.
- Continue to connect residents through a social media food sharing group.
- Education campaign focusing on the hazards and solutions through social media, news articles, and workshops.
- Increased door-to-door campaigns in hotspots.

The interest in composting and proper waste management to deter bears has increased as well through conversation with Kaslo residents. Composting education workshops this season addressed some community interest and should continue in 2022.

Opportunities to address local food security, waste management, and managing bear attractants needs to continue through dialogue and the common interests of many residents and community groups in Kaslo.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the BCCF team and local Conservation Officers Nathan Smienk and Jason Hawkes, whose support was invaluable this 2021 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 Government as well for recognizing the need for this work in Kaslo and Area D and providing funding.

Thank you to Patrick Steiner and Kathy Allaire 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, and Patricia Feeney of the Bear Smart Working Group for Kaslo for your efforts to support Kaslo's interest in becoming a Bear Smart Community and continued efforts to educate and reduce bear attractants in the community.

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