

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2022

Town of Golden and Columbia Shuswap Regional District Electoral Area A

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Executive Summary

This report describes the 2022 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. The program area is located on the 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. This valuable knowledge helps guide the WildSafeBC Golden Program as to when and where to focus educational efforts.

In 2022, 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 affect the program delivery, though many public events were able to resume this year. 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:

- 4 hands-on bear spray demonstrations given to 30 participants
- 57 people reached through Door-To-Door in person and 62 door hangers left
- 16 bin tagging outings and 111 bins tagged
- 16 display booths and 1300+people reached
- Facebook followers are now at 610 by the end November as a result of more than 100 Facebook posts

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



Figure 1. WildSafeBC Program Coverage includes the Town of Golden (shown) and Columbia Shuswap Electoral Area A (not shown).

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Cover Photo: WildSafeBC Golden Community Coordinator, Johanne Lamoureux, reminding Golden residents to keep their bear-resistant bins clipped.

Highlights from the 2022 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 the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP), which is updated daily. The data in this report ranges from January 1, 2017 to November 26, 2022. For the Town of Golden and the CSRD Electoral Area A, the most reported wildlife in 2022 were black bears (53), deer (20), grizzly bears (9) and cougars (7) (Figure 2).

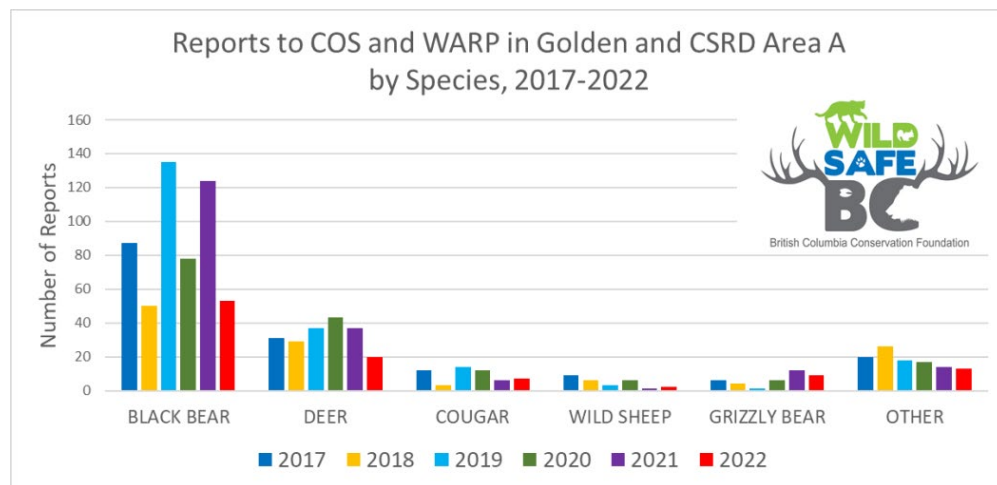


Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding wildlife in Golden and CSRD Area A from January 1, 2017 to November 26, 2022.

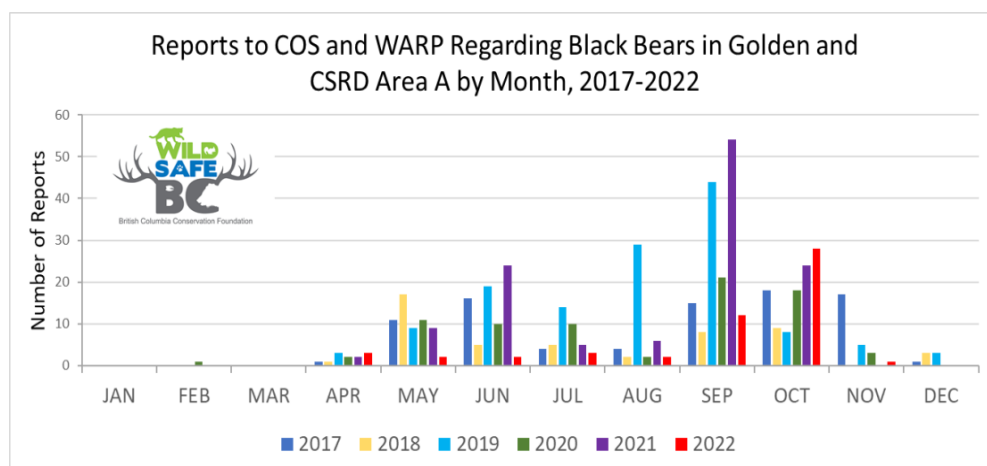


Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears in Golden and CSRD Area A from January 1, 2017 to November 26, 2022.

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 particularly quiet month compared with last year. Interestingly, the number of black bear reports has decreased over the years shown here (Figure 4).

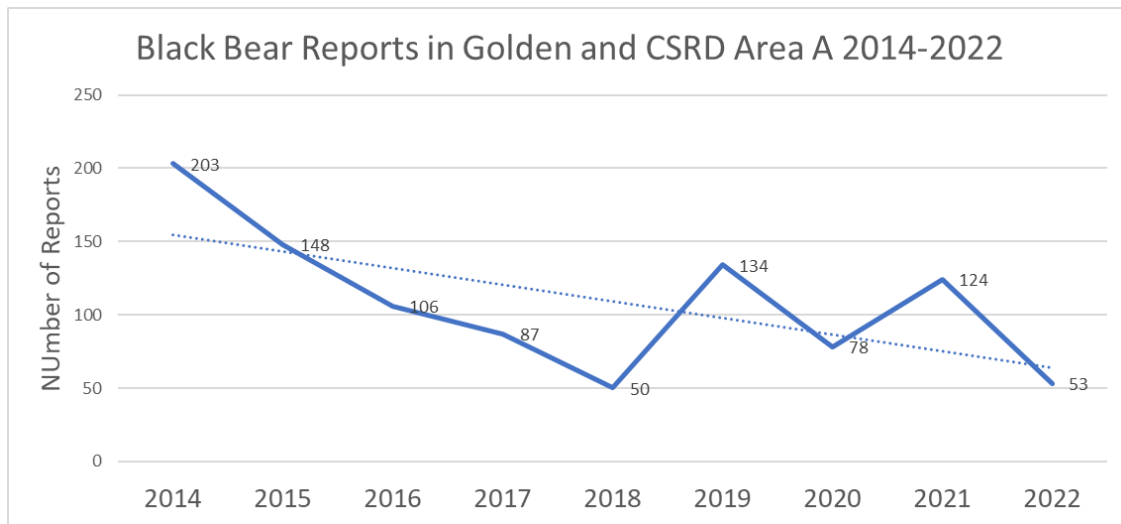


Figure 4. Black Bears Reports are decreasing in Golden and CSRD Area A.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. In 2022, the participation of schools in the WRP were postponed due some to the impacts of COVID-19 in the spring and as well due to the season wrapping up as teachers started to be available for presentation sessions in the fall. Future options for this program aspect to become more utilized in the area include earlier reach out by WCC to schools and teachers to schedule presentations earlier in the season as well as promotion of the opportunity to have the WildSafe Ranger Program in classrooms on social media and event boards for the community.

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC organized one outdoor wildlife safety presentation and two hands-on bear spray training demonstrations. There was one presentation to a gathering of 28 people at a Block Party event in Parson, where the WCC did a presentation on wildlife safety with emphasis on bear encounters, how to avoid them and what to do when they happen (Figure 5). This event led to a private bear spray hands-on demonstration a few weeks later for a group of 15 participants, the largest attendance to such event so far. Another private bear spray hands-on demonstration was carried for a group of 6 participants in late October.



Figure 5. The WCC presenting at a private event in Parson.

Display Booths

Thankfully this year, the BC Farmers' Market for the Town of Golden occurred, in Spirit Square, with extended hours compared to 2021. As in 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. Fortunately in 2022, many other opportunities for public events were welcomed. Over a five-month period the WCC had 16 market booths/displays which led to approximatively 1,300 engagements with a mixture of locals and visitors (Table 1 & Figure 6). This is almost double the engagements from 2021.

Table 1. WildSafeBC events in 2022.

Public Display Booth Event	Engagements	Date
Golden BC Farmers' Market	84	Sat., April 30 th
Golden Skybridge: Community Day Event	88	Mon., May 7 th
Golden BC Farmers' Market	80	Wed., June 15 th
Special Request For Public Event: Akisqnuq First Nations Health Fair in Windermere	50	Thurs., June 23 rd
Golden BC Farmers' Market	103	Wed., June 29 th
CANADA DAY Market Golden Skybridge First Night Market	73	Fri., July 1 st
Wildsight Summer Outreach Project First participation for WSBC as a guest!	12	Fri., July 8 th
Kicking Horse Mountain Resort Celebrating Boo's 20 th birthday	128	Sat., July 9 th
Golden BC Farmers' Market	73	Wed., July 13 th

Golden BC Farmers' Market	104	Wed., July 27 th
Golden Tourism: Saturday Showcase	48	Sat., July 30 th
Golden BC Farmers' Market	126	Wed., August 11 th
Golden BC Farmers' Market	98	Wed., August 25 th
Golden BC Farmers' Market	90	Wed., September 7 th
Golden BC Farmers' Market	36	Wed., September 21 nd
Golden BC Farmers' Market	102	Sat., October 8 th



Figure 6. The WCC at various public events and Farmers' Markets throughout 2022.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

This year was an opportune time to carry out door-to-door campaigns using an adapted approach of both direct contact and limiting direct interactions and maintaining physical distancing, i.e. no direct knocking at doors. A few door-to-door campaigns took place, carried out in the spring and in the fall. The WCC reached 57 people through in-person conversation and in addition, 62 homes received information including a door-hanger with a note mentioning the attractants to keep track of and a brochure on the wildlife 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 the bylaws or deliver fines.

In 2022, garbage tagging was planned to coincide with the spring and fall peaks in wildlife activity based on WARP data from 2016-2021. Garbage tagging efforts were maintained this year again, with a total of 111 warning stickers being distributed over 16 outings, equally spread between these seasonal peaks (Figure 7). From mid-May to late June, 57 warning stickers were distributed for an average of 7.1 per night (compared with 6 warnings per night in spring 2021), whereas from mid-September to late October, 54 warning stickers were distributed with an average of 6.8 per night (compared with 5 per night for fall 2021). Not only was there a slight decrease in the fall numbers compared with the spring, but two trends are worth noting. First, the overall yearly average of 6.9 warnings per night, although slightly higher than that of last year, is still lower than that of previous years (15.3 in 2018; 12.5 in 2019, 8.0 in 2020, 5.7 in 2021). 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 human behaviours. From the 1,500 bear-resistant bins surveyed (the entire Town is surveyed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays combined), less than 1% were less receptive to education and received stickers more than once.

Garbage Tagging in the Town of Golden

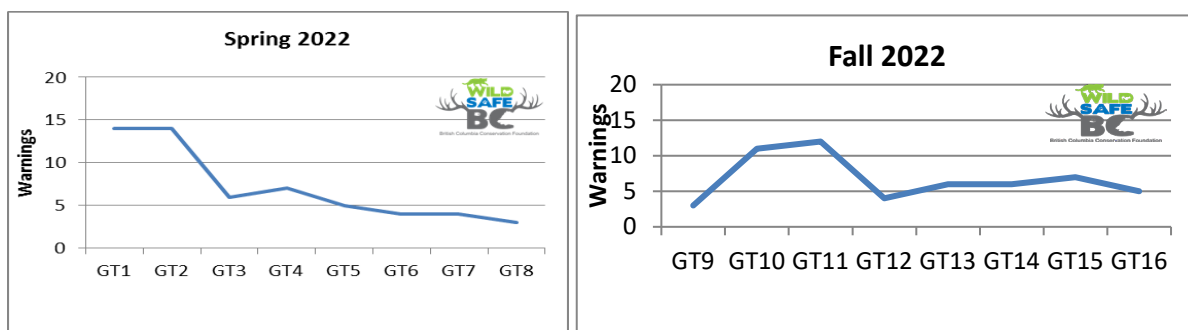


Figure 7. Number of education stickers placed on bins set out early for collection by season in Golden, BC.

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 2022, with more than 100 posts reaching thousands of people, the WildSafeBC Golden page increased its followers, now counting more than 600 followers. 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 practices in bear country. The most visited and engaging posts were on garbage tagging. Furthermore, The WCC was featured in the local newspaper, *The Golden Star* on topics such as local WildSafeBC activities, managing attractants, and wildlife reporting in particular.

Wildlife in Area Signs

Bear in area signage was a tool used to inform the locals and visitors of the presence of bears in their neighbourhoods. The signs give indication of a local wildlife species being spotted nearby as well as attractant management warnings. The signs were used in numerous hotspot locations, mostly in the spring and fall (Figure 8).



Figure 8. The WCC placing various Wildlife in Area warning signage around Golden, BC.

Collaborations

In an effort to ensure residents use their bear-resistant bins in an effective way to minimize human-wildlife conflicts, a special garbage tagging mission took place this summer. On two consecutive collection days in mid-July, the WCC set out to locate any bear-resistant bin that was missing its bear-shaped instructions sticker on its front (see Figure 9 and cover photo). In total, 50 stickers were added. On the label, one can clearly read the following instructions:

“Expectation of use: To use the bin, unclip the locking latches, place your garbage in the container, close the lid and ensure BOTH latches are locked again. This container MUST remain locked 24 hours a day. On the morning of garbage pick-up, leave the bin UNLOCKED until your garbage has been collected. The bin MUST be relocked”.



Figure 9. Bear-shaped instruction sticker for the Town of Golden bear-resistant bins, and warning labels used for residential bin tagging.

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 materials (posters) were distributed to the Golden Municipal Campground and at the Cedar Lake Recreation Site.

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 in 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 9 satisfied participants got to individually acquire experience manipulating inert spray (Figure 10).



Figure 10. The WCC giving bear spray demonstrations, in Field and in Golden.

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. This year bears have been reported in people's yards, thus impacting the safety of the neighbourhood. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community and would benefit from increased education and fruit gleaning activities. To address the abundance of improperly managed fruit trees and garbage in the community, the following initiatives are recommended for 2023:

- Promoting the use of electric fencing.
- Conducting educational campaigns focused on the hazards of attractants along with solutions for securing these attractants through social media, news articles, workshops, flyer included in municipal tax information
- 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.
- Supporting ongoing progress for Golden to become a Bear Smart Community.

Acknowledgements

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

Thanks to Jon Wilsgard, Chief Administrative Officer for the Town of Golden. Thanks also to Communications Official Alysha Saville, Operations Manager Chris Cochran, and Manager of Recreation Services Jordan Petrovics.

WildSafeBC appreciates collaborations with the Golden Cycling Club, and the efforts of the VP Waste Solutions Ltd Team. A special thanks is in order for Jérôme Cyr for his valuable help in the field. Thanks also to Cat Cowan, Manager of the Grizzly Bear Refuge at Kicking Horse Mountain Resort.

Lest not we forget our Conservation Officer Service: Officer Alexandre Desjardins 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, Gail Sheard, Garry Walker, Steve Kenny, Evelyne Garon, Alex Goatcher, Reanna Bonomo, Connie Tieu, Phébée Richard and Brandon Tayler. Finally, thanks to the cooperative residents for their continuing help in keeping wildlife wild and communities safe! ♥ ***Merci !***