

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2022

Rossland-Trail

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Rossland/Trail Program between May 1 and November 30, 2022. This program covers the Cities of Rossland (Figure 1) and Trail (Figure 2). WildSafeBC acknowledges that this area is within the traditional and unceded territory of the Sinixt, Ktunaxa and Syilx Peoples and strives to work collaboratively and respectfully with all Indigenous Nations to protect wildlife and keep communities safe.

The 2022 season data showed reports of sightings or conflicts with black bears, grizzly bears, coyotes, cougars, and deer. Smaller wildlife such as raccoons, skunks and ground squirrels were also discussed with locals.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activities with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community. The following list summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the season:

- 5 WildSafe Ranger Program presentations for 94 students.
- 3 presentations given to community groups reaching 30 participants.
- Door-to-door canvassing reached over 50 individuals and 100 door hangers were left at households with no one present for an in-person conversation
- Rossland had no bins tagged throughout the season but bins were noticed as not being secured on private property. Trail had only one tagged bin but unsecured bins were visible.
- There was 1 display booth setup at a public event which engaged 200 people.
- 31 Facebook posts and 171 new followers from January 1 to November 20, 2022.
- 2 businesses signed on with the WildSafeBC Business Pledge Program.

The community of Rossland has begun pursuing Bear Smart Community designation and has formed a working group to help advance those efforts. WildSafeBC and the Bear Smart Working Group in Rossland are collaborating on strategies to recommend to the City of Rossland for reducing human-wildlife conflicts.

Key challenges throughout the year included low reporting of incidents to the Conservation Office Service by the public, lack of access to bear-resistant waste receptacles, inconsistent trash pickup times, improper management of garbage between collection days by residents, mismanaged and unsecured fruit trees attracting wildlife into city limits, and food-conditioned bears breaking into homes.

WildSafeBC thanks the Cities of Rossland and Trail, the BC Conservation Foundation, Columbia Basin Trust, and the Province of British Columbia for funding this program.

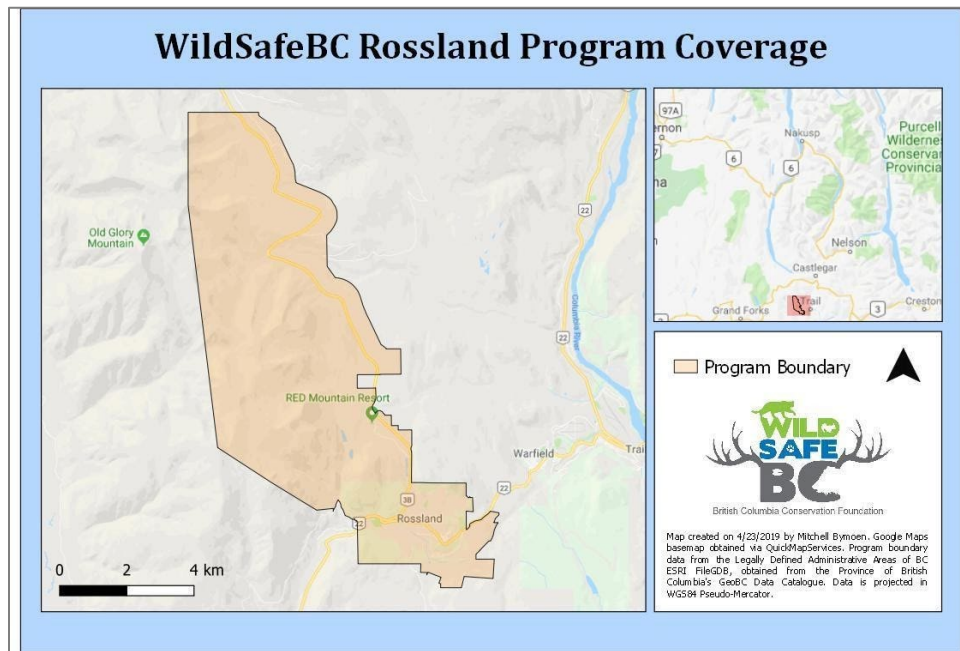


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Rossland program coverage area



Figure 2. WildSafeBC Trail program coverage area.

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Cover Photo: WCC at Display Booth for event in the coverage area.

Highlights from the 2022 Season

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 the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). The data is updated daily and this report for Rossland and Trail includes data from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.

In Rossland, black bears remained the most reported species to the RAPP line (Figure 3). There were 54 black bear reports made to the COS in 2022, which was lower than the 2021 reports of 97. Reports of black bears were highest in the month of May with 24 reports (Figure 4). This could be attributed to the fact that the area endured a colder than usual spring and natural food sources were delayed and remained limited so bears were seeking out other food sources within nearby urban areas.

Previous years WARP data included reported attractants. The 2022 data does not include attractant information but after speaking to residents and the COS directly, the WCC can confirm that garbage shows as a common attractant in Rossland, followed by fruit trees. Reports of conflict with other species included grizzly bears (6), coyotes (4) and other (4) (Figure 3).

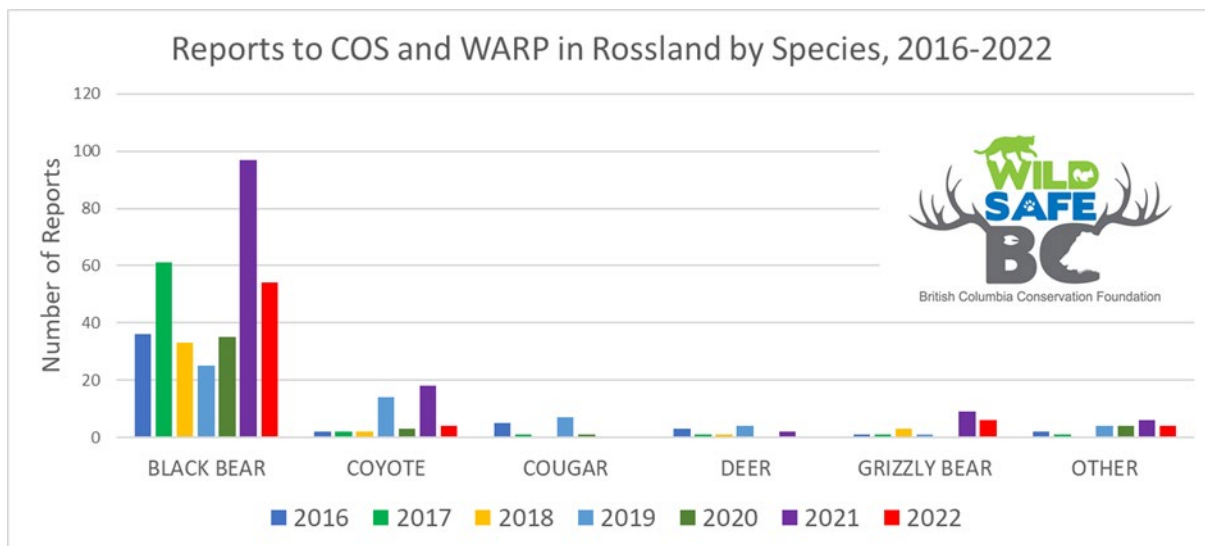


Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP by species in Rossland from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.

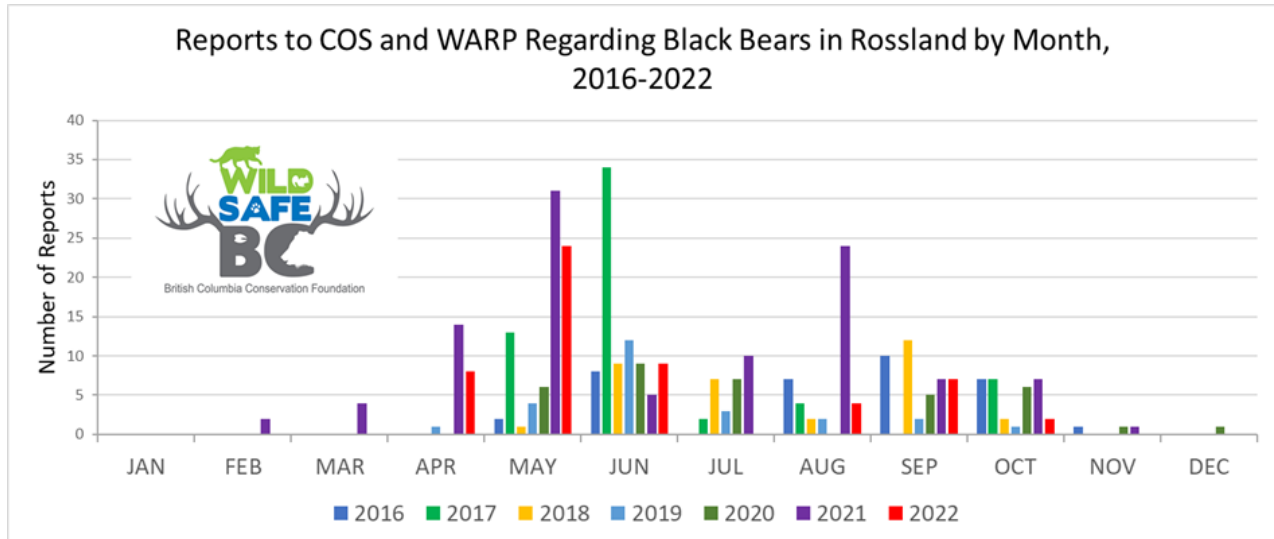


Figure 4. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears in Rossland from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.

In Trail, black bears were also the most commonly reported wildlife species this season (Figure 5). There were 126 reports made to the COS in 2022, which is slightly higher compared with the 7-year average of 120 reports of black bears. Black bear reports were highest in the month of June with 40 reports (Figure 6). Again, this could be due to a colder than usual spring limiting natural food sources for bears to find away from urban areas.

Specific attractants are unknown for Trail, as well, but with the City not requiring bear-resistant garbage bins, garbage is the most likely attractant for Trail.

Reports of conflict with other species were higher this year with coyote and deer each at 11 reports for the 2022 season (Figure 5).

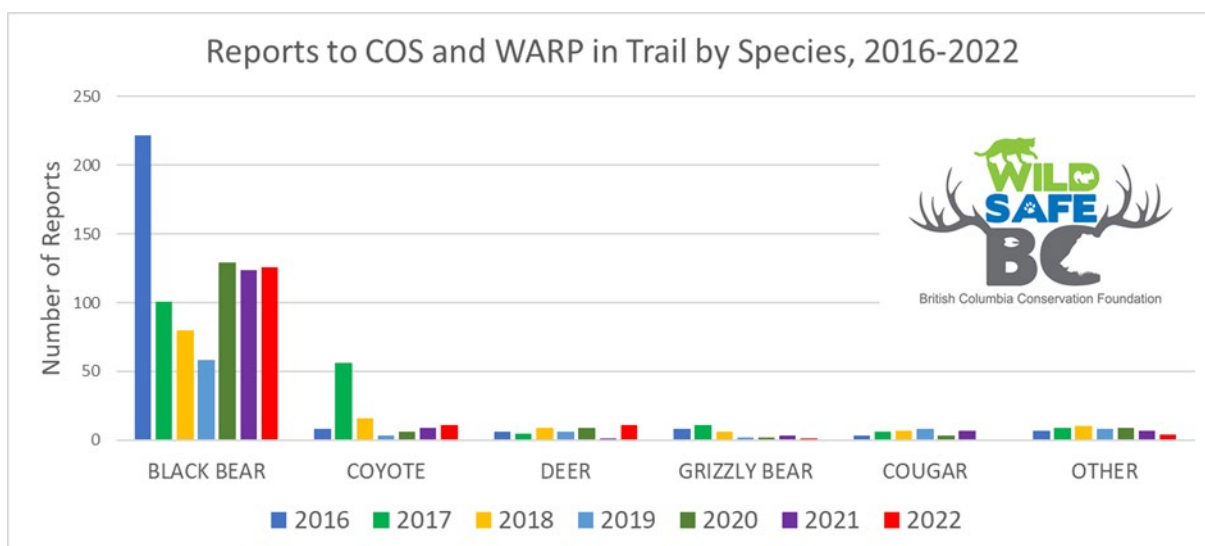


Figure 5. Reports to the COS and WARP by species in Trail from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.

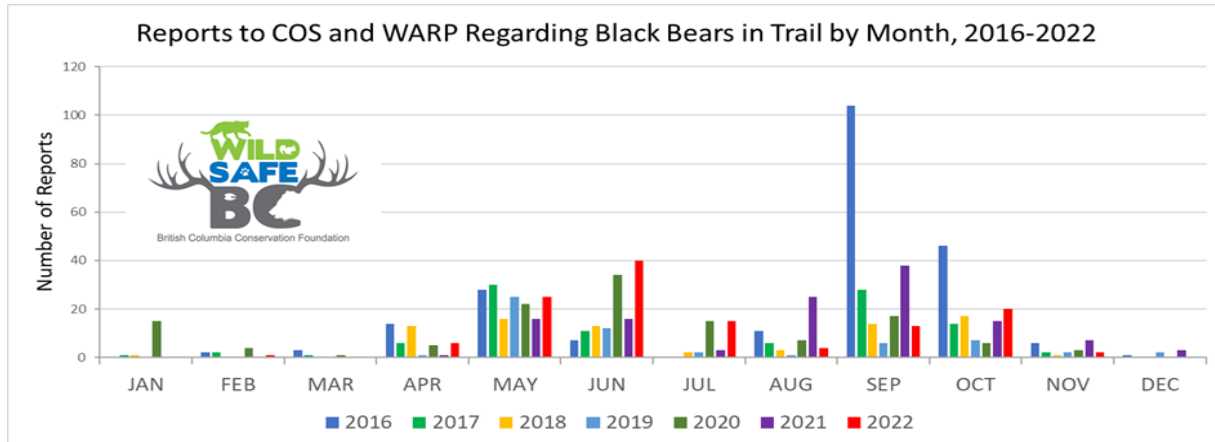


Figure 6. Reports to COS and WARP of black bears in Trail from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict and engages them with ideas around the importance of respecting wildlife and managing attractants to help “keep wildlife wild and communities safe”. A total of two schools, three summer camps, and one other youth organization, participated in the WildSafe Ranger Program during the 2022 season (Table 1). These program sessions reached 94 youth that received WildSafe Ranger Program materials to take home and share with their families.

Table 1. Schools and community organizations that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2022.

School/Organization	Date	Grade/Age	Students
Glenmerry Elementary	June 28 2022	Grade 2	19
Rossland Museum	July 29 2022	Ages 5-9	7
Rossland Museum	September 02 2022	Ages 6-13	14
TALC	October 19 2022	Ages 8-15	13
Webster Elementary	November 9 2022	K, K-1	41

Presentations to Community Groups

A total of three presentations on Wildlife Safety and Awareness reached 30 participants with the support of the Trail Aquatic and Leisure Centre (TALC) (Table 2). These presentations were combined with bear spray workshops. Participants were able to gain some understanding of local wildlife and wildlife behaviour patterns. As well, they were given the opportunity to practice handling and deploying bear spray and other deterrent techniques, in the potential event of having a negative interaction with wildlife.

Table 2. Community presentations provided and participant numbers for the 2022 season.

Event	Date	Participants
TALC	July 11 2022	12
TALC	September 22 2022	6
TALC	October 26 2022	12

Display Booths

One display booth held during Canada Day Celebrations hosted at the Rossland Museum on July 1st. The WCC was able to engage with over 200 participants at this event which provided an opportunity for the WCC to introduce both tourists and residents to WildSafeBC messaging, make connections with local businesses and community organizations, and to learn from locals about local wildlife conflicts.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

With door-to-door canvassing efforts, the WCC had in-person conversations with over 50 residents and 100 door hangers were left at homes where residents were not available to discuss issues and ask questions in person. The areas that were prioritized for the door-to-door canvassing sessions this year were those that had recent wildlife sightings and or conflicts.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable sticker on top of containers set curbside the evening before garbage collection.

For canvassing sessions within Rossland no bins were out on the curb ahead of time and so no bins were tagged. It is worth noting though that some residents did have visible unsecured bins on private property. These areas were revisited for door-to-door education to inform residents that unsecured garbage is a leading cause of human-wildlife conflicts in the community, leading to safety concerns and unnecessary harm to wildlife.

With the City of Trail not requiring garbage bins for pickup, bags were left out by residents on collection day. With no container to place a sticker, bags that were placed out before the required times were noted and door-to-door canvassing was conducted in that area. Within Trail only one bin was tagged but other bags were visible and canvassing was done on a following date.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Rossland Trail page gained 171 new followers in 2022 and had 31 Facebook postings from the season. Posts that were popular with page followers were updates on local wildlife activity, as well as posts about special events. The WCC released the “Bears are Back in Town” publication to a local news outlet at the beginning of the season.

Wildlife in Area Signs

Wildlife in Area signs were installed in areas with higher levels of conflict. Placement of signs was usually followed up with some door-to-door canvassing within the same area. There was a sign placed in Glenmerry for two weeks following reports of a black bear visiting the apartment buildings.

WildSafeBC Business Pledge

The WildSafeBC Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses to become examples in their community for how to safely co-exist with wildlife. To take the WildSafeBC Business Pledge, a business is required to follow best practices in solid waste management, provide adequate training to staff and support the WildSafeBC safety and conflict reduction information. In return, WildSafeBC will provide ongoing support to the businesses in

the form of staff training, WildSafeBC materials (subject to budget constraints) and a WildSafeBC Business pledge poster. Two businesses signed the pledge in 2022, Ferraro Foods Trail and Glenmerry Bowl.

Collaborations

WildSafeBC Rossland/Trail continued its collaboration with the Conservation Office Service (COS) including regular discussions and joint efforts in identifying areas to focus on for public education. There was also collaboration with the City of Trail Bylaw Officer, who forwarded and identified neighbourhoods for canvassing and public concern.

Special Initiatives

Rossland is currently pursuing a Bear Smart Community status and there is a Bear Hazard Assessment being completed by WildSafeBC staff to provide some relevant guidance on what the City can prioritize with this initiative.

WildSafeBC and the Bear Smart Working Group in Rossland are collaborating on strategies to recommend to the City of Rossland, including looking into options for more communal garbage receptacles which are secured from wildlife accessing them. In 2022, Rossland had four communal dumpsters residents could access at any time for a small donation. Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help “keep wildlife wild and our community safe”.

Challenges and Opportunities

Key challenges throughout the season included low reporting of incidents to the Conservation Office Service, lack of access to affordable bear-resistant waste receptacles, and inconsistent trash pick-up times.

The Natural Control Alternatives Society manages communal public waste bins in which residents of Rossland can dispose of their garbage by donation (suggested \$5/bag). This option is especially important for those unable to be present on collection day or for those who have excess garbage. These bins are often full, and at times misused by residents, despite the clear signage and efforts made by the Society.

Inconsistent pick-up times for garbage results in garbage bins being left on the curb for long periods of time each morning, and local bears have learned that garbage will be present before noon on these days, leading to food-conditioned bears.

Another issue in both Trail and Rossland is the improper securing of waste bins between collection days. Many residents are waiting until the morning of collection to put their garbage on the curb, but they are not keeping this attractant secure between garbage days. With both cities now considering adding composting bins along with solid waste pickup, education efforts next year should focus on how to better manage garbage and other attractants on private property, and why making this effort a priority is so important to community safety and wildlife safety.

Fruit trees continue to be an attractant in both Rossland and Trail. This unnatural food source draws many species of wildlife into residential areas. Several areas have been identified as

hotspots in each community and these areas would benefit from increased education and fruit gleaning activities.

To address the abundance of fruit in the community, Rossland has commissioned an App to be created for fruit gleaning purposes. The App is still being developed but community members can access it on the City of Rossland website to test out and see how it could be a useful tool once it is fully functional. This year the location of fruit and nut trees throughout Rossland are being mapped to make the App data functional for local residents. Once fully utilized by the community, the App will aid identifying potential problem areas early so education efforts can become more preventative rather than reactive.

Further initiatives suggested for the 2023 season are as follows:

- Host electric fence demonstrations for residents
- Continue education campaigns focusing on the hazards and solutions through social media and news articles, workshops, flyer in municipal tax information
- Increase door-to-door canvassing and continue to focus on human-wildlife conflict hotspots
- Continue with recommendations for replacement of fruit-bearing trees with non-fruit and non-nut bearing trees on public property and private property for interested land-owners who do not harvest their fruit and nut trees

Within Rossland and Trail, there has been increase in the occurrence of bears breaking into residents' homes and buildings. Education efforts next year should focus on how to address the root causes that lead to this behaviour. Food conditioning stems from garbage and fruit trees that are not sufficiently stored or managed. Recommending that the public lock their doors can also help reduce the chances of animals entering homes. Engaging residents in adopting best practices must continue as a priority for the region in order to keep wildlife wild and communities safe.

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Rossland/Trail Coordinator is grateful for the generous support the program receives from its funders including the Cities of Rossland and Trail, the Columbia Basin Trust, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF) and the Province of British Columbia. The WCC also thanks the BCCF team, the local Conservation Office Service team, and the Bylaw Officers for communication and shared knowledge of wildlife activity and advice.