

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2023

Town of Golden and Columbia Shuswap Regional District Electoral Area A

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Program in Golden and the Columbia Shuswap Regional District Area A (CSRDA) between May 15th and November 30th, 2023. WildSafeBC continues to deliver programming in Golden and the CSRDA (Figure 1). The program covers 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 traditional unceded territory of the Ktunaxa Nation, Secwépemc Nation, and is the chosen home of the Métis Nation.

Multiple large wildlife species reside in Golden and the CSRDA, but most wildlife concerns reported to the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) pertain to bears. In 2023, the WCC performed the following outreach activities with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community:

- 6 WildSafe Ranger Presentations and 126 youth reached.
- 1 hands-on bear spray demonstration given to 8 participants.
- 1 Wildlife Safety and Awareness presentation given to 22 participants.
- 29 people reached through Door-To-Door in person and 131 door hangers left.
- 12 bin tagging outings with 112 bins tagged and 15 of those being retagged.
- 13 display booths and over 900 people reached.
- Over 60 Facebook posts on the community page, gaining nearly 40 followers in 2023.

This year WildSafeBC Golden was fortunate enough to connect with the Métis Nation Columbia River Society by participating in their event for National Truth and Reconciliation Day. WildSafeBC Golden hopes to further this relationship and continue to participate in events over time. In addition, this year the WCC collaborated with Wildsight as they hosted Golden's first Wild Bear Festival; Keeping Bears Wild. The WCC hopes that this is the first of many annual bear aware festivals for this community that WildSafeBC Golden can participate in.

Key challenges this year were the increased number of black bears in the Town of Golden during the fall, with many accessing fruit trees, chicken coops, and seldom garbage. The WCC used this an opportunity to connect with residents and the local Conservation Officer on multiple occasions about the importance of securing attractants to prevent human-wildlife conflict.

WildSafeBC Golden is grateful for the financial support provided by the Province of British Columbia, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF), the Town of Golden, and the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT). WildSafeBC Golden appreciates its sponsors, the British Columbia Conservation Officer Service (COS), the local Bylaw Officers, volunteers, and its community members in furthering the WildSafeBC Golden Program in keeping wildlife wild and communities safe.



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

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Cover Photo: WildSafeBC Golden Community Coordinator, Jenni Barrera with her display booth open at the Golden Farmers’ Market. Photo credit: Johanne Lamoureux.

Highlights from the 2023 Season

Wildlife Activity

The WCC received wildlife activity reports from social media, public inquiries, concerns addressed among locals, and informal reports from our local COS. Wildlife reports indicate that the program area experienced high levels of wildlife activity in the fall with numerous black bears active in the Town of Golden during September and October. This activity is consistent with the timing for bears to enter hyperphagia and prepare for their winter dormancy period. Fruit trees, chicken coops and garbage were informally reported to be attractants.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. A total of two summer day camps and one school participated in the WRP, reaching 126 students through outdoor and indoor presentations (Table 1). Each student received a WildSafe Ranger kit with engaging activities to take home.

Table 1. Schools and camps that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2023.

School	Grade(s)	Students (#)
Town of Golden Summer Day Camp	K-5	25
GET WILD! Summer Day Camp	1-5	15
Nicholson Elementary School	K/1, 1/2/3, 4/5, 6/7	86
Total Students		126

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave a total of 2 outdoor presentations to 30 participants this year, including one outdoor wildlife safety presentation and one hands-on bear spray training demonstration (Table 2). During the Wildlife Safety and Awareness Presentation, the WCC discussed wildlife safety with emphasis on bear encounters, how to avoid them, what to do when they happen, and provided a visual aid on how to handle bear spray. The hands-on bear spray training and demonstration involved coaching the public to use bear spray safely and took place during Golden’s First Annual Wild Bear Festival as part of WildSafeBC’s 8th annual BC Goes Wild Event (Figure 2).

Table 2. WildSafeBC presentations provided to community groups in the program area during 2023.

Type of presentation	Organization	Participants (#)	Date
Wildlife Safety and Awareness Presentation	Kicking Horse Mountain Resort	22	July 8 th , 2023
Bear Spray Training and Demonstration	Wildsight	8	September 23 rd , 2023
Total Engagements		30	



Figure 2. The WCC and past coordinator demonstrating how to properly use bear spray. Photo credit: Johanne Lamoureux.

Display Booths

The WCC held a total of 13 display booths, which led to over 900 engagements with residents and visitors (Table 3). This is on par with engagements from last year. The nine booths held at the Golden Farmers’ Market typically reached the largest number of people, many of which benefited greatly from WildSafeBC messaging. As in previous years, the WCC attendance was bi-weekly and scattered from the market opening to the closing dates between mid-June to late September. The WCC also made an additional appearance for the last farmers market of the season, where the Golden Farmers’ Market appreciated its locals. The WCC also attended multiple community events in 2023 to share WildSafeBC messaging to the public (Figure 3).

Table 3. WildSafeBC display booth events in 2023, including number of attendees and dates.

Public Display Booth Event	Engagements (#)	Date
Golden BC Farmers’ Market	62	June 14 th , 2023
Golden BC Farmers’ Market	101	June 28 th , 2023
Kicking Horse Mountain Resort: Boo’s 21 st Birthday	63	July 9 th , 2023
Golden BC Farmers’ Market	96	July 12 th , 2023
Golden BC Farmers’ Market	132	July 26 th , 2023
Golden Visitor Center: Saturday Showcase Series	39	July 29 th , 2023
Golden Skybridge: Night Market	85	July 29 th , 2023

Golden BC Farmers' Market	115	August 12 th , 2023
Golden BC Farmers' Market	62	August 23 rd , 2023
Golden BC Farmers' Market	56	September 6 th , 2023
Golden BC Farmers' Market	41	September 20 th , 2023
Wildsight's Annual Golden Wild Bear Festival; Keeping Bears Wild	23	September 23 rd , 2023
Golden BC Farmers' Market: Locals Appreciation Market	57	September 27 th , 2023
Total Engagements	932	



Figure 3. The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator at various public events throughout 2023. Photo credit: Johanne Lamoureux.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

This year was an opportune time to carry out door-to-door campaigns by either knocking on the door or leaving informative door hangers. Multiple door-to-door campaigns took place this season in the summer and in the fall and the WCC reached 29 people through in-person conversations and 131 households with leave-behind information, which included a door-hanger with education about managing attractants and a brochure on the wildlife frequenting that area. The WCC focused educational efforts in areas where wildlife activity was high, areas requested by the COS or the public, as well as areas identified through bin tagging data.

Bin tagging is an educational activity which consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of solid waste containers set curbside the day before collection. Solid waste containers are a significant wildlife attractant and setting them out the night before collection is not permitted by local bylaws. In 2023, garbage tagging efforts were equally spread throughout the season with a total of 112 warning stickers being distributed over 12 outings (Figure 4). From late May to late June, a total of 60 warning stickers were distributed over 6 outings for an average of 10 per night in the spring. From mid-September to mid-October, 52 warning stickers were distributed over 6 outings for an average of 8.7 per night in the fall. Not only was there a slight decrease in the fall numbers compared with the spring, but two trends are worth noting. First,

there were no repeat offenders in the fall from those that left their bins out more than once in the spring (Figure 4). Second, there seems to be an overall decrease in the number of warnings issued as the season progresses, most likely due to the effectiveness of bin tagging and follow up door-to-door outreach education for repeat offenders in changing human behaviour. From the 1,500 bear-resistant bins surveyed throughout the Town of Golden, on average 13% received stickers more than once and less than 1% received bin tags after door-to-door outreach initiatives occurred (Figure 5).

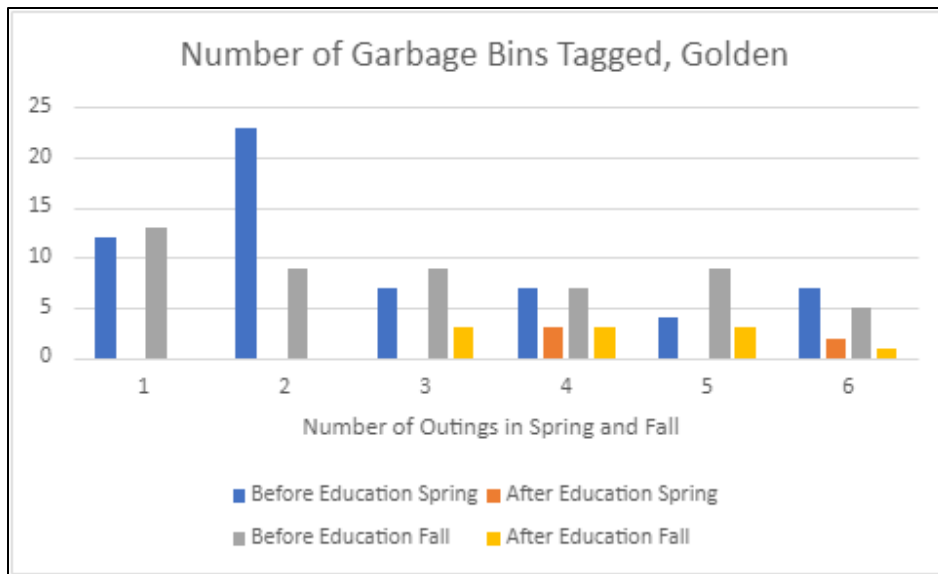


Figure 4. Number of education stickers placed on garbage bins set curbside the night before collection day, indicating the season and whether education efforts have taken place in Golden, BC.

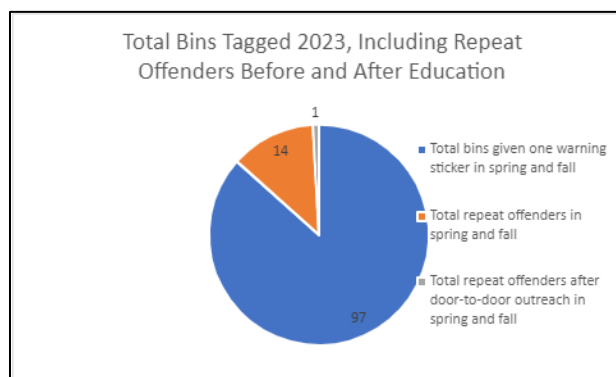


Figure 5. Total bins tagged during 12 outings, including the number of repeat tags given to repeat offenders and number of repeat offenders after door-to-door outreach initiatives took place, in Golden, BC.

Social Media and Press

Through online outreach, WildSafeBC connects to thousands of community members with engaging Facebook posts. More locally, the WildSafeBC Golden Facebook page actively posts to promote local activities, engagements, and educational tips to prevent human-wildlife conflict.

In 2023, the page created over 60 posts, reaching thousands of people and increasing the page following by 5%, now totalling 658 followers. Popular themes included: wildlife awareness and safety, wildlife collision prevention, bare camping, fruit gleaning recommendations, safe recreation practices in bear country, bear in area warnings, and electric fencing recommendations. The most engaging posts pertained to garbage tagging and promoting WildSafeBC's presence at local events.

Wildlife in Area Signs

Wildlife in area signage is a tool used to inform locals and visitors of the presence of wildlife in residential areas. The signs give indication of a local wildlife species reported in the area, as well as attractant management warnings. The WCC worked with the local COS to place Bear in Area signs in the Town of Golden on numerous occasions throughout the fall due to black bears activity (Figure 6). Locations where large signs were placed were typically in high traffic areas that were frequented by families or children. Other signage was placed and transitioned in other high traffic walking areas throughout town.



Figure 6. The WCC placing various Wildlife in Area warning signage around Golden, BC.

Collaborations

WildSafeBC Golden collaborated with a local non-profit, Wildsight Golden, this year, resulting in a bear spray demonstration and a display booth at Wildsight's Golden Wild Bear Festival. This public event allowed both locals and visitors to celebrate bears, learn more about bear behaviour, understand wildlife safety and awareness, and how to properly use bear spray. This event offered the opportunity to further connect with Wildsight Golden about their local initiatives, as well as the local COS, who attended the event.

This year, the WCC continued collaborations with the COS throughout the season. The COS informed the WCC of wildlife activity reports in the area and requested the WCC deliver follow-up education or place wildlife in area signage in specific areas where bears were frequenting.

WildSafe Business Pledge

The WildSafe Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses to be 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 will provide ongoing support to the business in through provision of staff training and educational WildSafeBC materials. No businesses signed the pledge this year.

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. No new campsites were approached or participated in the program this season and this should be prioritized by future WCC's due to the high volume of recreational camping and tourism in the area.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

This year, the WCC made efforts to engage with local Indigenous communities. At the start of the season, the WCC completed an Indigenous Corporate Training course offered to all WCCs across the province. The WCC was also fortunate to connect with the Executive Director of the Métis Nation Columbia River Society and was invited to participate in their interactive and engaging blanket exercise hosted at the Golden Skybridge for National Truth and Reconciliation Day. The WCC hopes to build this relationship over time. 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 in.

Special Initiatives

In September, WildSafeBC celebrates its annual BC Goes Wild event throughout the province. The timing coincides with the weeks of highest human-bear conflicts in BC. Similar to last year, the WCC performed a bear spray demonstration and held a display booth at the Golden Wild Bear Festival hosted by Wildsight Golden. The display booth engaged 23 locals and hand-on bear spray demonstration had 8 adult participants. The hands-on bear spray demonstration began with a discussion on how to avoid wildlife encounters, 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 whereby a total of 8 satisfied participants got to individually practice deploying inert bear spray using our acronym [S.P.R.A.Y.](#) (Figure 7).



Figure 7. The WCC is giving a bear spray demonstration (left) and display booth set up (right) in Golden, BC for WildSafeBC’s 8th Annual BC Goes Wild Event. Photo credit: Johanne Lamoureux.

Challenges and Opportunities

Garbage and poorly maintained fruit trees continue to be the most reported attractant in local communities throughout the province, drawing wildlife into residential areas. In the Town of Golden, bears have been reported accessing people’s yards, walking around the community during the day, frequenting playgrounds, and other public areas. 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 garbage and fruit trees in the community, the following initiatives are recommended for 2024:

- 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, or 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).
- Continuing to conduct door-to-door campaigns and using wildlife in area signage in public areas frequented by wildlife.
- Supporting the ongoing progress for Golden to become a Bear Smart Community.
- Further collaboration with local businesses to sign the WildSafe Business Pledge.
- Supporting the Bare Camping Program.

Acknowledgements

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

Thank you to the many municipal staff for the Town of Golden that supported the WCC this season: Jon Wilsgard, Chief Administrative Officer; Carrie White, Manager of Corporate Services/Deputy Corporate Officer; Alysha Saville, Director of Corporate Services/Corporate Officer; Diana Nagera, Administrative Clerk; and Jordan Petrovics, Manager of Recreation Services.

Further, WildSafeBC appreciates the efforts of the VP Waste Solutions Ltd Team. WildSafeBC Golden also appreciates the opportunity to collaborate with Wildsight Golden for their Annual Golden Wild Bear Festival, organized by Leslie Adams, Branch Manager of Wildsight Golden.

Additionally, the WCC is grateful to have connected and collaborated with Shelley MacGregor, Executive Director for Métis Nation Columbia River Society.

Lest not we forget our Conservation Officer Service: Officer Dan Bartol, for keeping the WCC informed and up to date with wildlife in the area and areas to target for outreach. Thank you also to Bylaw Officer: Barry Klassen.

Special thanks for the generous contribution of the local program volunteers: Jessica Barrera, Charles Laumet, Dominique DeVries, Cal Meulenbeld, Yentoff Wuyts, Julie Sheard, and Peter Sheard. Additionally, thank you to previous community coordinator Johanne Lamoureux, for her continued support and transfer of knowledge about this program and community. Finally, thank you to the cooperative residents for their continued assistance in keeping wildlife wild and communities safe!