

WildSafeBC Kimberley-Cranbrook Year End Report 2014

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Executive Summary

2014 was the first season of delivery for a WildSafeBC program in the communities of Kimberley and Cranbrook. Although the communities are close geographically, the issues related to human-wildlife conflict vary widely. In 2014, Kimberley featured a comparable number of calls to the Conservation Officer (CO) Service Reporting line as in 2013. In contrast, the call volume in Cranbrook in 2014 had nearly doubled when compared to the previous year: an 83% increase.

Educational programming was a strong focus for the program in 2014, with over 20 presentations conducted in schools and special interest groups. WildSafeBC made contact with a variety of interest groups over the 2014 season: participating in an array of events, conducting door-to-door outreach, and producing media releases.

Good working relationships were forged in 2014 with local Conservation and Bylaw Officers, city sponsors, print and radio media outlets, educators, and conservation groups. With this support, WildSafeBC Kimberley-Cranbrook hopes in 2015 to build upon the momentum of its inaugural season: expanding educational programming, and engaging more community groups and volunteers.

Table of Contents

Highlights from the 2014 Season	1
Educational Sessions	1
Special Interest Groups	1
School and Early Childhood Presentations	2
Events & Displays.....	2
Door-to-door outreach	3
Garbage Management	3
Garbage Tagging	3
City of Kimberley Garbage Bylaw Amendment	5
Media Outreach	5
Print Media	5
Radio	5
“Bear in Area” Trail Signs	5
City of Kimberley Public Fruit Trees.....	6
Challenges in the 2014 Season	6
Goals for the 2015 Season.....	7
Acknowledgements.....	7

Highlights from the 2014 Season

2014 was the first year a WildSafeBC program was delivered for the communities of Kimberley and Cranbrook. For a new program, we made good headway. Educational programming was the primary focus in 2014, with other standard program elements (events/displays, garbage tagging and door-to-door outreach) filling in the remaining contract hours.

Educational Sessions

Presentations were developed for a wide range of audiences in 2014 for delivery both in schools and to special interest groups. These sessions included:

- *Wildlife Safety in the Backcountry* – senior (adults, teens) and junior (pre-teens) levels
- *Understanding Bears* - elementary
- *Creatures with Claws, Beasts with Hooves* (Predators/Ungulates) – pre-teen and elementary

Special Interest Groups

<i>Kimberley</i>	<i>Cranbrook</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Nature Park Society○ Kimberley Riverside Campground (x2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Rocky Mountain Naturalists○ Cranbrook International Exchange Students (Grades 9-12)

School and Early Childhood Presentations

<i>Kimberley</i>	<i>Cranbrook</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Selkirk Secondary (Grade 9-12 Outdoor Ed.) ○ Kimberley Independent School (Grades 3-9) ○ McKim Middle School (Grade 6-7) ○ StrongStart Family Drop-in (Ages 2-4, Adults) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Mount Baker Secondary School (Grade 12 Outdoor Ed.) ○ Laurie Middle School (Grades 7-8) ○ Parkland Middle School (Grade 9 Outdoor Ed) ○ Kootenay Christian Academy (Grade 7-8 Outdoor Ed) ○ TM Roberts Elementary School (Grades 4-6) ○ Gordon Terrace Elementary School (Grades 4-5) ○ St. Mary's Catholic Independent School (Kindergarten)

Events & Displays

Interactive displays proved to be an effective means of reaching out to differing demographics, including: tourists, seasonal residents, rural residents, and seniors. The following events were attended in the 2014 season:

- Kimberley First Saturdays (June & September)
- Top Crop Farm & Garden Centre, Cranbrook
- Kimberley Farmer's Market
- Cranbrook Farmer's Market
- Cranbrook Multicultural Days
- Kootenay Country Fair, Fort Steele (w/ WildSafeBC Fernie/Elk Valley, see Figure 1)



Figure 1 - Display at the Kootenay Country Fair (w/ Kathy Murray), September 14th 2014.

Door-to-door outreach

Throughout the 2014 season, door-to-door outreach was conducted in Kimberley and Cranbrook neighbourhoods experiencing, or likely to experience, conflicts with wildlife. This was the most effective tool in addressing many issues related to household attractant management, including: garbage set out in plastic bags, outdoor fridges/freezers, and unpicked fruit. These face-to-face conversations also proved useful in contacting and educating residents in areas of reported cougar sightings or human-deer conflicts.

WildSafeBC Kimberley-Cranbrook teamed up with Wildsight's Apple Capture Project to reach out to Cranbrook fruit tree owners in October 2014. This collaborative door-to-door campaign educated residents on the importance of managing fruit attractants for wildlife and community initiatives available to help them harvest and utilize their fruit.

Garbage Management

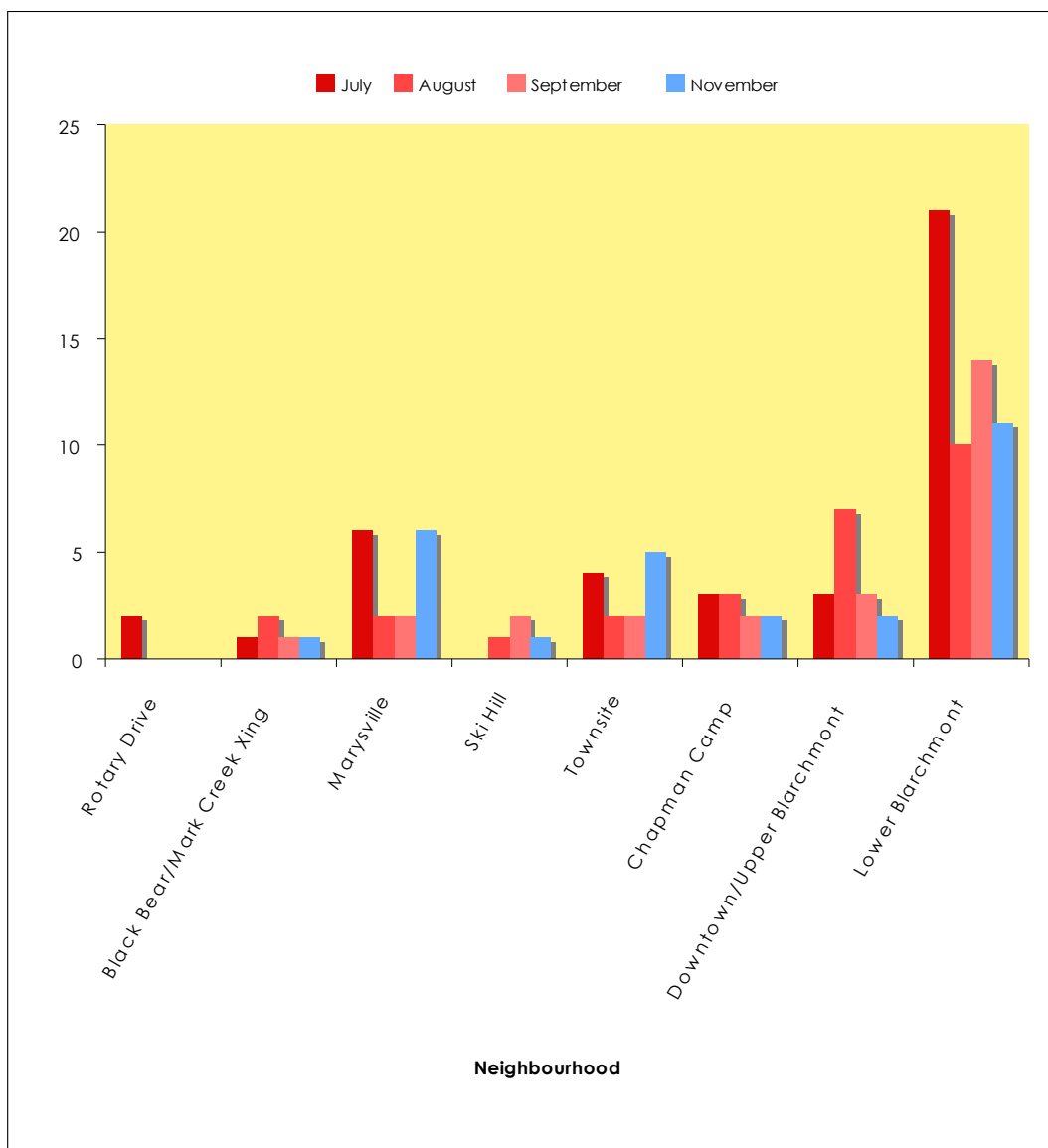
Garbage Tagging

Three different rounds of garbage tagging were completed to identify household waste containers left out overnight in Kimberley and

communicate the offense to homeowners. Results for these are included in Table 1.

The Lower Blarcbmont neighbourhood showed the highest number of offences by far, with many residents not using canisters as recommended by the City. Bylaw Officer Rich Klekowski produced a mail-out for Blarcbmont households placing garbage to the street in bags the night before pickup. This letter provided a means of communicating with residents where stickers were not effective.

Table 1 - Results from WildSafeBC garbage raid activities in Kimberley, 2014.



City of Kimberley Garbage Bylaw Amendment

In the spring of 2014, the City of Kimberley's garbage bylaw, last updated in 2001, stipulated that Kimberley residents put garbage to the street or alley in plastic bags. Enacted for the safety of collection staff, this bylaw section unfortunately made garbage accessible to wildlife (including deer, ravens, and crows as well as bears) and also made tagging initiatives less effective.

The City of Kimberley Planning and Operations staff and Kimberley City Council were engaged for the purpose of amending the bylaw. Review and revision of this bylaw will be addressed upon election of a new council in winter 2014.

Media Outreach

Print Media

In the 2014 season, media releases were prepared for the Kimberley Bulletin (KB) and Cranbrook Townsman (CT), local daily newspapers on the inauguration of the WildSafeBC Program.

- "WildSafeBC Program Launch in Kimberley and Cranbrook" – June 2014 (KB, CT)
- "Best Practices for Garbage Management" – August 2014 (KB)
- "Deer and Dogs" – September 2014 (CT)

Mid-way through the 2014 season, the Bulletin and Townsman began printing bi-weekly segments with recent wildlife sightings, specific to each community. The short articles, prepared by the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, also included relevant pointers for residents to help reduce conflicts with wildlife.

Radio

Radio spots proved another useful tool at reaching out to a variety of user groups in Kimberley and Cranbrook. The Drive FM, a local news and music station, featured interviews with the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator on relevant issues, from raising urban livestock to camping with wildlife in mind. WildSafeBC Kimberley-Cranbrook was also profiled in an interview on CBC Radio One's Daybreak morning show regarding "Deer and Dogs".

"Bear in Area" Trail Signs

In partnership with the Friends of Lois Creek Trails group and with the help of Selkirk Signs, WildSafeBC developed and installed "Bear in Area" trail signs. These signs formalized the user added and updated trail signs

posted at the network's two main kiosks. The new, permanent signs feature space for trail users to add information on recent wildlife sightings and provide links to the Conservation Officer Service 24-hour reporting line and the WildSafeBC website.

City of Kimberley Public Fruit Trees

WildSafeBC met with representatives of Wildsight's Food Sustainability Program and the City of Kimberley to discuss the management of the City's public fruit trees in the spring of 2014. Following the meeting, Public Works staff removed over 50 fruit trees confirmed to be on City land. WildSafeBC will continue to collaborate with Wildsight and the City of Kimberley to support residents in the responsible management of fruit attractants and the reduction of resulting wildlife conflicts: 1,200 plus fruit trees remain on private land in the City of Kimberley.

Challenges in the 2014 Season

To coincide with coordinator training at the end of May, the start date for the Kimberley-Cranbrook WildSafeBC Program in 2014 was June 1st. An earlier contract start date for the Community Coordinator in the 2015 Season would be beneficial in addressing early season wildlife-conflict and attractant management issues. The time between snowmelt (in April) and June is critical as bears become active again and natural foods are hard to come by.

Building awareness of the new WildSafeBC program in its inaugural year proved to be somewhat challenging. Although June media releases and public displays provided some opportunity for early publicity, it was fall before the new program truly gained momentum and exposure. The relationships forged in the 2014 season will without a doubt support a stronger program in 2015.

Job action and lockouts resulting from the BC Teacher's Federation strike limited the time available for school program delivery in June and September 2014. Although some new avenues for educational program delivery arose (including the Special Interest Groups listed above), the reach of programming and the use of the coordinator's hours towards these sessions were limited by the strike.

Goals for the 2015 Season

- Strengthen connections with project partners to support a more unified approach to human-wildlife conflict reduction, management, outreach, and enforcement.
- Build new partnerships with community groups to support residents in proactive attractant management (as with Wildsight's Apple Capture Project in 2014). Including:
 - Local Rod & Gun Clubs
 - Ktunaxa Nation/St. Mary's Band
 - Scouts/Guides
 - Cranbrook 4H
 - CBK Youth/Kimberley Youth Centre
- Deliver Wildlife Safety in the Backcountry sessions to more backcountry user groups; expand to include more material on front and backcountry camping as needed.
- Continue bi-weekly print segments for the Kimberley Bulletin and Cranbrook Townsman; consider weekly segments for fall 2015.
- Acquire and/or develop new materials for hands-on educational programming, including: hides, tracks, skulls, and games for multiple ages.
- Solicit volunteers to assist with project activities and work as WildSafeBC liaisons at the neighbourhood level.
- Engage the Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) to deliver programming to rural residents in the Kimberley/Cranbrook area (RDEK Area's C & E).

Acknowledgements

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Finally, much appreciation must go out to the many community educators, media contacts, City operations and planning staff, non-profit allies and engaged residents for their help in delivering programming and enacting change to keep "wildlife wild and communities safe".