

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2020

## Town of Golden

Prepared by: Johanne Lamoureux,  
WildSafeBC Golden Coordinator



## Executive Summary

This report describes the 2020 activities of the WildSafeBC Program in Golden and the Columbia Shuswap Regional District Area A (CSRDA). 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 (Figure 1). It is located on the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation and the Secwépemc People. The Métis are the largest Indigenous group that reside 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. Black bear reports were below average this year, possibly the result of increased natural food availability or better attractant management. However, garbage remains the most reported attractant, followed by fruit trees. This valuable knowledge helps guiding the WildSafeBC Golden program as to when and where to focus its educational efforts.

In 2020, 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 pandemic greatly affected the number of possible public events. 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.

Garbage tagging took place over 32 outings and 257 warning stickers were placed on garbage bins set out on the curb the night before collection. Overall, there has been a noticeable improvement year-over-year with most residents in compliance with the local bylaw regarding cart set out times. Door-to-door canvassing reached more than 600 homes and more than 100 direct contacts.

Through collaboration with key organizations, the WCC participated in public events including 8 Farmers' Markets and 2 bear spray demonstrations, reaching more than 300 people. Through social media and newspaper articles, the WildSafeBC Golden program furthered its reach to over 21,000 people and counting. The WildSafeBC Golden Facebook page increased its number of followers by 14% from 469 to 533.

The program is thankful for the ongoing financial support by the British Columbia Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF), the Town of Golden, and the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT). Together with its community members, the WildSafeBC Golden program works at keeping wildlife wild and communities safe.



Figure 1. WildSafeBC Golden & CSRD-A program coverage area.

## Table of Contents

Highlights from the 2020 Season .....	4
Wildlife Activity .....	4
WildSafeBC COVID-19 Mitigation.....	5
WildSafe Ranger Program.....	5
Display Booths .....	6
BC Goes Wild.....	7
Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging .....	7
Social Media and Press.....	9
Collaborations .....	10
WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program .....	10
Special Initiatives.....	10
Challenges and Opportunities .....	11
Acknowledgements.....	11

## Table of Figures

Figure 1. WildSafeBC Golden & CSRD-A program coverage area.....	2
Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP in Golden and Area by species from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020. ....	4
Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears in Golden and Area from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020. ....	5
Figure 4. Black bear reports in Golden and Area by attractant from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.....	5
Figure 5. WCC at various Farmers Market public displays throughout 2020. ....	6
Figure 6. Role playing a human-bear encounter and how to use the S.P.R.A.Y. acronym to recall the necessary step. Here, the WCC is an approaching aggressive bear (Golden, September 2020). ....	7
Figure 7. Number of warnings on bins placed out early for collection by season, in Golden, BC. ....	8
Figure 8. The WCC using Bear in Area signage at a local trail head to talk about bear safety, May 2020. ....	9
Figure 9. Bear in Area signage used in hotspots and promoted in local newspaper. ....	9
Figure 10. The WCC using WildSafe tips to promote fruit gleaning. ....	10

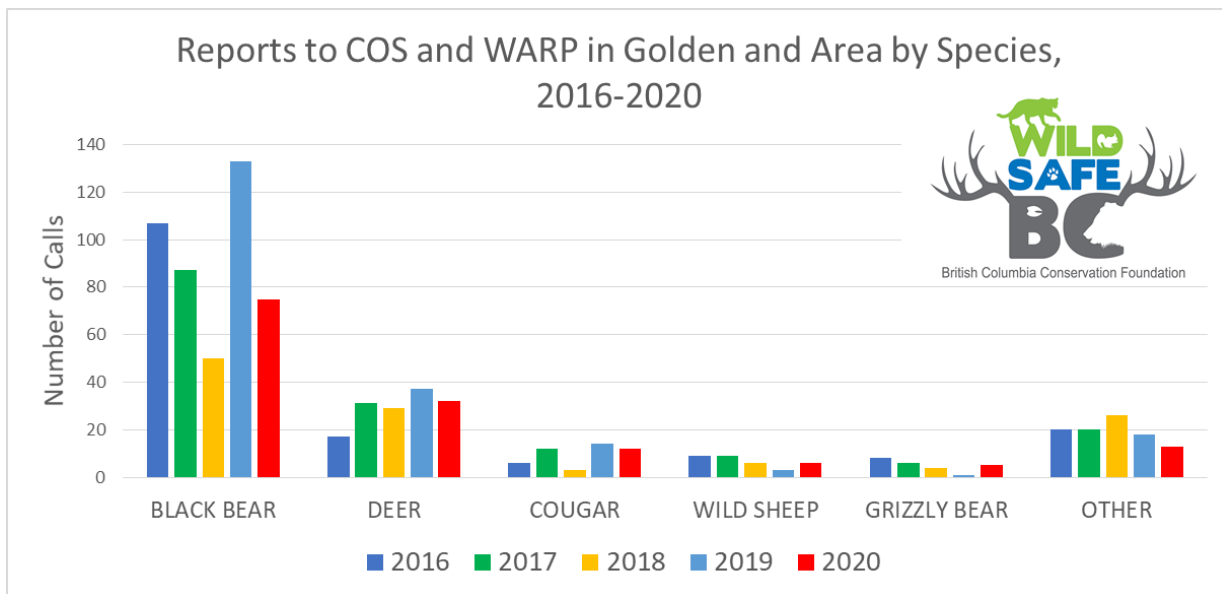
Cover Photo: WildSafeBC Golden Community Coordinator, Johanne Lamoureux, in action at the local BC Farmers' Market, in Spirit Square, on July 15<sup>th</sup> 2020.

## Highlights from the 2020 Season

### Wildlife Activity

Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) and online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program ([WARP](#)) on the WildSafeBC website. The data in this report ranges from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.

For the Town of Golden and the CSRD-A, the top three reported wildlife species are black bear, deer and cougar (Figure 2). In 2020, there were five reports of grizzly bear activity, a number close to the three-year average of four reports. There were 75 black bear reports (Figure 2) which accounted for 52% of the total reports. This is slightly lower than the last three-year average of 90 reports (55%). This trend may be a result of increased natural food availability.



**Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP in Golden and Area by species from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.**

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 their dens (Figure 3). Also worth noting for 2020 is that garbage remained the most reported attractant (53%) followed by fruit trees (12%) (Figure 4). The number of reports for deer and cougar were close to average (Figure 2).



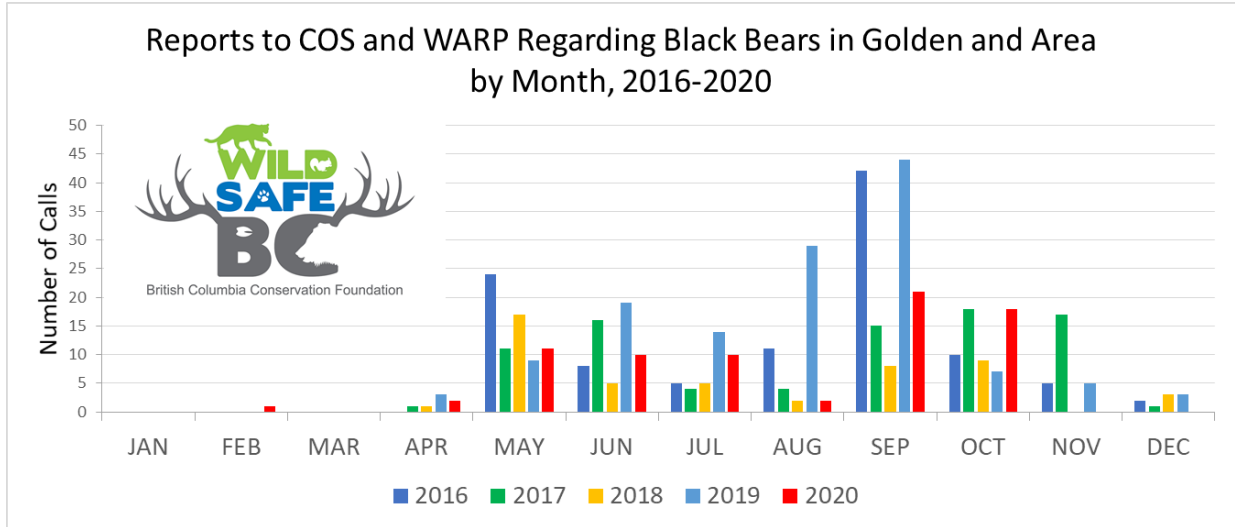


Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears in Golden and Area from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.

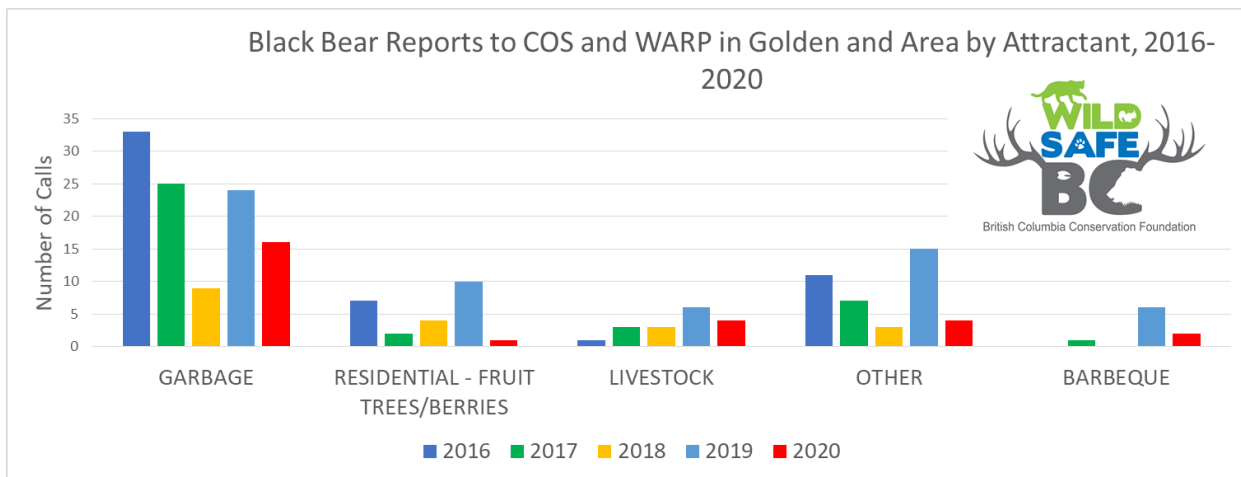


Figure 4. Black bear reports in Golden and Area by attractant from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2020.

## WildSafeBC COVID-19 Mitigation

All of the activities performed this season followed safety guidelines provided by the Province, WorkSafeBC and/or the BC Conservation Foundation’s Safety Coordinator. The WCCs were required to provide safety plans if they were organizing events where people would congregate. Wherever possible, in person activities were replaced with video conferencing. WildSafeBC adapted and modified requirements as the Province moved from Phase 1 to Phase 3. The WCCs worked closely with their local communities to ensure that all local requirements and restrictions were respected.

## WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. The WCC organized one outdoor wildlife safety presentation for WildSight’s Get Wild Day Camp

kids with ten children in attendance and another presentation at Alexander Park Elementary School with 19 children.

## Display Booths

Thankfully this year, the BC Farmers' Market for the Town of Golden resumed in Spirit Square, though with shorter gathering periods and greater preventive measures. Over a three-month period the WCC carried out 8 market booths which lead to more than 300 engagements with a mixture of locals and visitors alike. The booth is popular with people of all ages (Figure 5).



Figure 5. WCC at various Farmers Market public displays throughout 2020.

## BC Goes Wild

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. Given the COVID-19 constraints, the WCC planned a more modest event which focused on bear spray demonstrations in Field and 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 12 satisfied participants got to individually acquire experience manipulating inert spray (Figure 6).

Here is a testimonial:

"I attended this session and recommend others to do so when it is offered again. For the past 15 years I have carried a spray canister in a holster on my belt while hiking during bear season. I figured I was safe and ready if I had the rare misfortune to run into a bear situation. During this short training session I was able to practice unholstering the canister and releasing an inert spray, only to discover that my holster was very grabby, probably on the wrong side and that the spray was more powerful than I expected. It took several seconds to perform the task and it was not instinctive. This practice was very enlightening! I feel much more capable of properly using this deterrent." –Joyce deBoer.



**Figure 6. Role playing a human-bear encounter and how to use the S.P.R.A.Y. acronym to recall the necessary step. Here, the WCC is an approaching aggressive bear (Golden, September 2020).**

## Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Despite the many challenges encountered in 2020, it was an opportune year to increase the amount of door-to-door campaigns using an adapted approach of limiting direct interactions and increasing physical distancing. The WCC did not knock on doors and instead, distributed door



hangers and with a note mentioning the attractants and a brochure on the wildlife of concerns. More than a dozen door-to-door campaigns took place, with the first two-thirds carried out in the spring. There were still 121 direct engagements that took place when people were outside and wanted to have a discussion from a safe distance. This focus on door-to-door meant that more than 681 homes were visited, an increase in outreach compared to previous years. These educational efforts were directed to areas with unsecured attractants, based on Conservation Officer or resident requests, and/or 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 on the curb unclipped. While WildSafeBC Golden provides information on these bylaws, it does not enforce them or deliver fines.

In 2020, as for previous years, the garbage tagging was planned to coincide with the peaks in wildlife activity based on WARP data from 2014-2020: spring and fall. Garbage tagging efforts were tripled this year, with a total of 257 warning stickers being distributed over 32 outings, equally spread between these seasonal peaks (Figure 7). From late April to early June, 112 warning stickers were installed for an average of 7 warnings per night, whereas from late September to mid-November, 145 warning stickers were distributed with an average of 9 per night.

While there is an unfortunate slight increase in the fall numbers compared with the spring, two encouraging trends are worth noting. First, the overall yearly average of 8.0 warnings per night is lower than that of previous two years (15.3 in 2018; 12.5 in 2019). Second, there seems to be a decrease in the number of warnings issued as the season progress, most likely due to the effectiveness of garbage tagging in changing behaviours. The weekly average means that out of the 1,500 bear-resistant bins surveyed (the entire Town is surveyed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays combined), about 1% were non-compliant (Figure 9). Of the 257 garbage tags placed, 83% of residents had their bins tagged on the initial survey and not found out early again. This indicates the effectiveness of this activity for changing human behaviour.

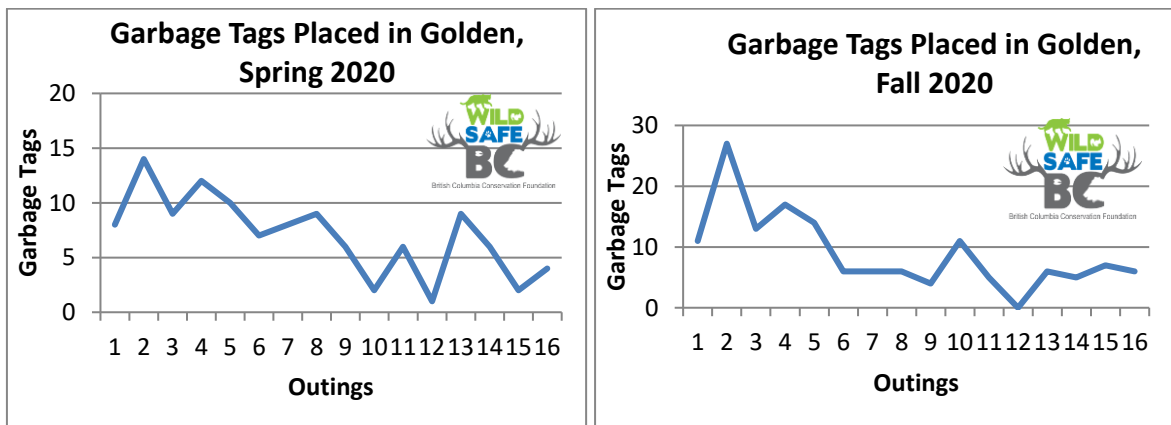


Figure 7. Number of warnings on bins placed out early for collection by season, in Golden, BC.

## Bear in Area Signage

Bear in area signage was a tool greatly used to inform the locals and visitors of the presence of bears in their neighbourhoods. The signs were used in numerous hotspot locations, mostly in the spring and fall. As a new concept, the bear in area sign was also used to attract the attention of people when the WCC was set up to provide education at a popular location on Kicking Horse Trail (Figure 8). The signage was a good conversation starter with locals and visitors that were recreating in the area. The WCC directly connected with more than 30 people and a dozen more vehicles. Bear in area signage was also promoted in the media (Figure 9).



Figure 8. The WCC using Bear in Area signage at a local trail head to talk about bear safety, May 2020.

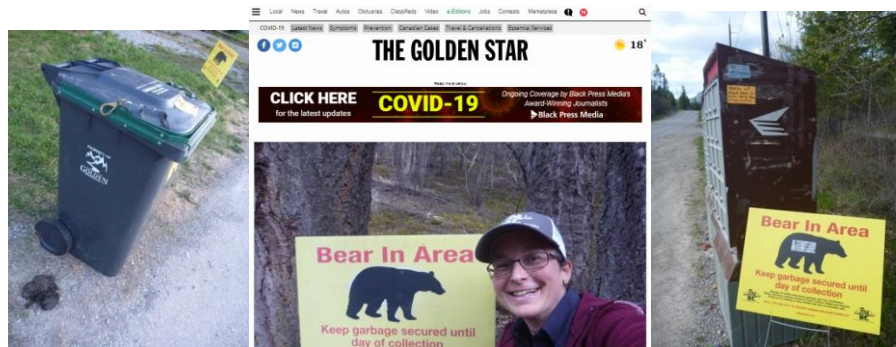


Figure 9. Bear in Area signage used in hotspots and promoted in local newspaper.

## Social Media and Press

Through social media, WildSafeBC connects to hundreds of thousands of people per year through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Vimeo. More locally, the [WildSafeBC Golden FB](#) page actively posts to promote local activities and engagements while also sharing provincial Wild Wednesdays and Saturday Spotlights. In 2020, with more than 100 posts reaching over 21,000 people and counting, the WildSafeBC Golden page increased its followers by 14% from 469 to 533. Popular themes included: wildlife collision prevention (education on bear jams, wildlife crossings), bare camping, fruit gleaning recommendations, safe avoidance and encounters to reduce conflicts, and safe recreation in bear country. The most visited and engaging posts were on garbage tagging. Furthermore, the WCC was featured in two newspaper and online articles in [The Golden Star](#) on the general local WildSafeBC activities, managing attractants and on fruit gleaning in particular.

## Collaborations

WildSafeBC Golden can play a role in connecting local volunteers with local fruit tree and animal owners. Domestic fruit and surrounding berries are a reliable source of high calorie food at a time when bears are preparing for winter hibernation. It is important to keep bears away from these human sources of food by picking fruit early and often. The WildSafeBC Golden Facebook page is instrumental in bringing together community efforts to reduce attractants by using educational posts (Figure 10) and by helping to connect fruit-picking volunteers with fruit-tree owners and with those interested in picked fruits (e.g. horse and pig owners).



Figure 10. The WCC using WildSafe tips to promote fruit gleaning.

## WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

The WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program is a new initiative in 2020. Through the program, WildSafeBC is able to provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife. This year, “Bare Camping” brochures and other WildSafeBC related material were distributed to the Golden Municipal Campground and the Cedar Lake Recreation Site. A number of campsites should be contacted in 2021 to complete Bare Campsite Program training.

## Special Initiatives

The WCC continued to promote the WildSafeBC WildSafe Ranger Contest (colouring and/or drawing activities) and the annual WildSafeBC Photo Contest with its wildlife photography code of conduct.

## 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. For instance, bears have been reported in people's yards, thus impacting the safety of their neighbourhood. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community and would benefit to increased education and fruit gleaning activities. To address the abundance of improperly managed fruit and garbage in the community, the following initiatives are recommended for 2021:

- Promoting the use of electric fencing.
- Conducting educational campaigns focused on the hazards of attractants along with solutions through social media, news articles, workshops, flyer in municipal tax information, etc.
- Encouraging residents to connect through social media non-profit food sharing groups (Local Food Matters, Golden Food Bank).
- Increasing door-to-door campaigns and using wildlife in area signage in hotspots.
- The WildSafe Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses 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 the form of staff training, WildSafeBC materials (subject to budget constraints) and a WildSafeBC Business Pledge poster. For 2021, a survey should be done to assess which business could be interested in signing the pledge.
- Ongoing progress in becoming a Bear Smart Community.

## Acknowledgements

The WCC would like to thank its sponsors for their ongoing financial support: the British Columbia Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Strategy, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF), the Town of Golden, and the Columbia Basin Trust (CBT).

Thanks to Jon Wilsgard, Chief Administrative Officer for The Town of Golden. Thanks also to GIS Specialist Alyson Marjerrison, Communications Official Alysha Saville, Operations Manager Chris Cochran, Manager of Legislative Services Vis Thoss, and Manager of Recreation Services Jordan Petrovics. Special thanks to Bylaw Enforcement Officer Nadine Edner and Conservation Officers Kevin Mayowski, Alexandre Desjardins and Dan Bartol. Thank you also to the BCCF Team for their support during this challenging year. Special thanks for the much appreciated contribution of the local program volunteers:

Madeleine Leblond, Julie Sheard, Mel Worth, Evelyne Garon, Paulina O'Brien, Garry Walker, Gail Sheard, Mikolaj Raszek, Richard Lebel, Phébée Richard and beloved Bella. Finally, thanks to the cooperative residents for their precious help in keeping wildlife wild and communities safe!  
♥ **Merci !**