

WildSafeBC Year End Report 2016

Regional District of Okanagan-Similkameen

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Executive Summary

The RDOS continues to support the WildSafeBC program throughout the region through a line item in the RDOS Solid Waste Management Plan which guarantees a small amount of seed funding each year. This enables the region to keep a stable program operating, part-time through the busy summer season.

Many activities are undertaken each year to raise awareness of human-wildlife conflict issues. The program enjoys a high profile image due to local media support and the support of the BC Conservation Officer Service. The journey to imbed best practices in attraction management does not have an end, as constantly new people move into or recreate in the region. But, a base level of understanding is the goal of the program, and milestones created to measure progress. One such milestone is the successful designation of Bear Smart Community status achieved by Naramata, which continues to be the benchmark used by the RDOS to keep the momentum of education moving forward.

Naramata celebrated its Second anniversary of being Bear Smart - June 23rd 2016. A small second anniversary celebration was held at the community farmer's market where goody bags were given away with one special bag containing a gift certificate to a local restaurant.

This year the program's focus turned to the next 'hot spots' in the region; Princeton and Summerland. They have both been long standing hot spots for human-bear conflict and wildlife issues.

For the Second time, the RDOS employed a Canada Summer Jobs Student to assist with outreach in the 2016 season. Savanna Maddock, hired in May, trained by the BC Conservation Foundation and worked throughout the region until August 26th.

The program was very successful this year, pushing the 'baseline' bar ahead a large distance. Deer issues continue to increase as bear issues decline. Cougar calls and issues are also increasing. The urban-wildlife conflict landscape is changing, as bears begin to take second stage in concerns expressed by residents.



Figure 1. Naramata- 2nd anniversary celebration as a bear smart community

Highlights from the 2016 Season

Canada Summer Jobs Student – Savanna Maddock

In early May, Savanna Maddock was hired as a WildSafeBC summer student. After receiving her training at Kamloops she started working in the RDOS/ Princeton area. Due to time and distance, Princeton added additional funding to offset mileage and wages. Savanna conducted outreach by attending markets, regional events - booth displays, presenting 'kids talks' at Libraries and the SPCA kids camp. A significant portion of time was spent canvassing door-to-door in hot spot areas specifically in Princeton, Summerland and once in Kaleden. Savanna performed a wildlife hazard assessment and management plan(s) for Princeton which involved gathering information from locals, first hand observation and utilizing field mapping data. This was all summarized into a report. Savanna worked on a mapping project for wildlife (deer) corridors on HWY 97 south from the Kaleden junction to Osoyoos.



Figure 2. Summer student Savanna Maddock

Princeton

Princeton, at the far western edge of the region was a high priority for a more direct campaign for 2016. The geography and proximity to wilderness areas attracts bears and other predators (along with urban deer – who find safe harbour) into the community. The schools in Princeton were set with the Wildlife Alert reporting program WARP. Savanna attended the local farmers market, conducted door-to-door campaigns in hot spot neighbourhoods and was actively working on a Wildlife Hazard Assessment and management plan for Princeton throughout the duration of her contract. Savanna also assisted the town of Princeton in monthly deer counts.





Photo Steve Brodie

Figure 3. Urban deer Princeton

Summerland

Savanna set up the elementary and middle school with the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) to ensure the schools were made aware of wildlife sightings in Summerland. Savanna performed door-to-door canvassing in the hot spot areas of Summerland.

WARP

The Wildlife Alert Reporting program was set up at several schools within the regional district.

- Vermillion Forks –Princeton
- John Allison-Princeton
- Cawston Elementary
- Summerland Middle school
- Giants Head Elementary- Summerland
- Carmi Elementary- Penticton
- KVR Middle school-Penticton
- Skaha Lake Middle school-Penticton
- Queens Park Elementary
- Okanagan Falls Elementary
- Kaleden Elementary school
- Columbia Elementary-Penticton

Presentations

Presentations were updated and honed for a wide range of audiences this season; to provide insight into the reasons human-wildlife conflict occurs and what we can do to reduce it. Presentations were given to kindergarten children through to mature adults. RDOS WildSafeBC provided presentations (or demonstrations) to the following total audience of **(Sav's Total 205)** people this season:

- BC Wine Grape Council Conference – July 19 - bear safety training (Zoe and Savanna)
- Okanagan Falls Library Summer reading club presentation- July 12th (Savanna)
- Kaleden Library Summer reading club presentation - July 20th (Savanna)
- Osoyoos Library Summer reading club presentation- July 26th (Savanna)
- Keremeos Library Summer reading club presentation- August 5th (Savanna)
- SPCA kids camp presentation- July 11th, July 26th, Aug. 2nd and Aug 9th. (Savanna)



Figure 3. WildSafe BC library talks with the summer reading clubs



Figure 4. SPCA kids talk and bear spray training at the BC wine and grape convention

Displays

Educational displays at local events prove to be an effective part of the program's delivery. The display is continuously being updated with materials and was once again a big hit with the public. It is always was a great place to begin a discussion on local wildlife issues with residents. People share their stories and are able to access information and solutions for their own attractant management challenges. WildSafeBC spent XXX days and interacted with (279 Saves total) people at the following local events:

- Summerland Market-2 (Savanna)
- Penticton Market-1 (Savanna, Zoe and Frank)
- Naramata Market-1 (Savanna and Zoe)
- Princeton Market-1 (Savanna)
- Summerland Ornamental Gardens 100 year anniversary- 1 (Savanna and Zoe)
- BC Wine Grape Council Conference – July (2 days) (Savanna and Zoe)



Figure 5. Event displays

Small Graph of outreach totals:

Challenges of the 2016 Season

- The mapping performed by Savanna was hindered by technological issues with the tablet and mapping application but this was the first year that the tablet was used for WildSafeBC mapping and the kinks were worked out by the end of the project.
- In 2016, changes made by Canada Summer Jobs Program reduced the number of weeks eligible from 14 to 9. This reduction required WildSafeBC, The RDOS, and the Town of Princeton to source and secure additional resources in order to run a minimal summer program that would be of benefit to the RDOS and the communities it serves.

Goals for 2017

Looking forward to the 2017 season, RDOS WildSafeBC hopes to continue to collaborate with community partners to ‘Keep wildlife wild and communities safe’.

- Continue with Princeton to broaden educational campaigns and encourage attractant management
- Continue work towards the community of Princeton becoming Bear Smart
- Work towards the community of Kaleden in Electoral Area D becoming Bear Smart
- Continue to assist with the urban deer issue
- Continue to offer educational presentations to a wide range of audiences, integrating new materials and timely ‘angles’ keeping the message consistent but ‘fresh’
- Work with other partners to increase the overall budget of the RDOS WildSafeBC program.
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