

Revelstoke Bear Aware



Revelstoke Bear Aware Society Coordinator's Annual Report 2005



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December 2005**

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Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Bear Aware Coordinator's annual report is:

- Present a detailed description of the coordinator's activities and program progress throughout the year;
- Accountability and progression from each year to the next;
- Maintain a sustainable and progressive program with both long and short term goals;
- Maintain records such that the program may be reviewed and new objectives addressed in the upcoming year.

Summary

The year 2005 was an excellent year for the Bear Aware program and the community of Revelstoke. No serious bear/human conflict problems arose until October and November, when three bears were destroyed as a result of food conditioning and exposure to attractants.

Revelstoke has enjoyed two successive years with very little bear activity within the city. As a result, many residents have become less rigorous in controlling attractants on their property. The three bears destroyed in October and November were all exposed to attractants that, by city bylaw and the provincial Wildlife Act, were not legally contained. The destruction of these bears would have been easily avoidable had the residents in the neighbourhood managed their attractants properly.

The program in 2005 also enjoyed the benefits of fundraising success in 2004. This allowed focus to remain on program delivery and development without continued worry about funding the program. A sustainability plan will be developed in 2006 to ensure that funding remains at the levels necessary to provide a high quality, enduring program in the future.

Being new to the position of Coordinator, I ran into several preconceived notions about the Bear Aware program that I did my best to dispel over the course of the year:

- Many residents would not call to report bear activity in their neighbourhood because they feared I would bring in the Conservation Officer to destroy the bear;
- That the program was designed to save bears, above and beyond all other priorities;
- That the program was against the legal hunting of bears in the province.

There are, of course, a number of other opinions floating about, but those are the three most common complaints that reached me. None of them are true. Through door to door visits, public presentations, and newspaper articles, I tried my best to relay the real purpose of the Revelstoke Bear Aware program.

The purpose of Revelstoke Bear Aware is to reduce bear/human conflict in and around the city of Revelstoke by:

(a) Identifying and eliminating or reducing human caused bear attractants, and

(b) Educating Revelstoke citizens about:

The importance of reducing bear attractants on their properties and within the community, how to recognize bear attractants on their properties and within the community, and how to eliminate or reduce bear attractants for which they are responsible.

(c) Accepting donations, grants and goods in kind contributions to achieve the purpose of the Society.

While fruit trees remain a large attractant issue in the community, only one complaint was received concerning bears and fruit in 2005. The three bears that were destroyed had all been reported in residential garbage that was not properly stored. Two of these bears were destroyed after they vandalized and consumed chickens in a coop that was illegal under the city bylaws for that neighbourhood. A lack of compliance, combined with a lack of enforcement, resulted in the creation of three habituated, food conditioned bears that were subsequently destroyed.

Members of the community, by and large, are very familiar with the Bear Aware message. Residents know what they are supposed to do to manage attractants on their property; however, after several years with little activity, they have lapsed in their vigilance. As coordinator, I found a visit and a short talk reminded residents of their responsibilities.

One of the greatest concerns facing the community is the looming development associated with the Mt. Mackenzie resort. Development projects are blossoming everywhere, not just in the Arrow Heights area. Many developments are in, or adjacent to, prime bear habitat. There are also many new people moving to town who are unfamiliar with the Bear Aware program. It is a priority of the program to ensure that all new development meets the Bear Smart criteria, as the city has outlined in its environmental strategy. Currently, Bear Aware and the municipality are working together to alter planning documents and bylaws to address bear conflict issues that may arise from further development, as well as those problems which already exist. It is a priority to help the municipality with its growth and change, particularly in respect to solid waste management.

Draft documents for the Bear Hazard Assessment and Human/Bear Conflict Management Plan were completed in 2005. These documents will be finalized in 2006.

As a newly formed society, the Revelstoke Bear Aware society is looking to form a sustainability plan for 2006, to ensure continuation of this very important education program in our community.

The following is a short summary of activities in 2005. A more detailed explanation may be found in the Program Delivery section of this document.

Revelstoke Bear Aware 2005 Program Delivery Summary		
Volunteers	Volunteers picked and processed fruit, participated in door to door campaigns, conducted research for the website, developed posters and public notices, and created a waste reduction brochure.	7 individuals volunteered for a total of 170 hours of work.
Door to Door Visits	The coordinator and volunteers conducted door to door visits to pass out brochures and information about bear activity.	138 homes were contacted.
Information Displays	The Bear Aware public information display was set up at: Revelstoke Timber Days Farmers Market (6 times) Beats and Blues Festival Kokanee Fish Festival Bear Smart workshop At each location, the display was staffed by the coordinator.	Approximately 326 contacts were made.
School Programs	The Bear Aware program was delivered to 8 school groups.	216 children, teachers, and adults were reached.
Media Presentations	The following media coverage was utilized: Eight newspaper articles, One web-published article, One radio interview, One radio advertisement, One newspaper advertisements, And 520 brochures.	Costly media coverage was used less this year, and personal contact through public presentations pursued instead.
Fruit Picking	Over 20 crates of fruit were picked by volunteers. 60 fruit brochures were distributed to homeowners.	Fruit picking program enjoyed modest success.
Fundraising	Fundraising efforts were localized during the summer season.	\$4,530 raised.
Other	A website was created for the Revelstoke Bear Aware Society and launched in December. Bear Smart status continued to be pursued; relations with the city are very encouraging and progress has been good.	

Acknowledgements

The Revelstoke Bear Aware Society and Coordinator would like to express gratitude to the following individuals and organizations:

Program Funding and In-Kind Support

- BC Conservation Foundation
- BC Hydro
- Canadian Mountain Holidays
- City of Revelstoke
- Columbia Basin Trust
- Columbia Shuswap Regional District
- Downie Street Sawmill
- Friends of Mt. Revelstoke And Glacier
- Parks Canada
- Revelstoke Times Review
- Selkirk Tangiers Helicopter Skiing

Volunteers and Community Contributions

- Canada World Youth supervisors Laura Roberts and Agnes Somses, and participants Annie Doucet and Usieline Kamabato;
- Local volunteers Kat Mather, James Shaw, Julie McKay, and Kris Shaw;
- Conservation Officer Adam Christie and the local RCMP;
- Concerned citizens for their input, ideas, calls and emails of support and reports of bear movements;
- Mt. Begbie, Arrow Heights, Mountain View and Columbia Park Elementary Schools;
- Tom Knight, Tim Luini, Ron Tisdale, Debbie Williams, Public Works and city staff for their support, help and input;
- Community Connections, Visitor Info centre staff, Welcome Wagon, RE/MAX Realty, and the Revelstoke English Language School for participation and helping to spread the word;
- The BC Conservation Foundation for its continued efforts and support of Bear Aware programs throughout the province;
- Previous Bear Aware Coordinators in the city of Revelstoke: Karen Bennett, Debby Robinson, Francis Maltby, Paula Couturier, Todd Arthurs, and Steve Kent for making the path so smooth;
- Current Bear Aware program specialists throughout BC for your ideas, support, hard work, and laughter throughout the year;
- The Revelstoke Bear Aware Society for your tireless efforts in sustaining our community's program and the direction with which you have provided me.

Background Information

Located snugly between the Selkirk and Monashee Mountains, Revelstoke is a meeting place in more ways than one. Five valleys join here—the Columbia River Valley, the Illecillewaet River valley, the Jordan River valley, and the Eagle Pass. The city itself is quite contained on the valley floor, hemmed in by the surrounding peaks and waterways. What is good habitat for people is also prime habitat for bears.

Not only are the surrounding mountain slopes abundant in food and shelter for bears, they are protected for the most part from further settlement or development. Revelstoke sits just below Mount Revelstoke National Park and west of Glacier National Park, both protected areas for bears. Development has been limited to the north, south, and west by geographical constraints. The result is that residents of the community, no matter which part of town they live in, reside in bear country.

Prior to the fencing of the municipal landfill by the regional district, garbage at the dump was a major local bear food source. It was also an attraction for residents and tourists alike, allowing them to view bears in broad daylight. However, the result was a large number of food conditioned grizzly and black bears in the community. These bears, conditioned to the attractants at the landfill, began to make their way into the community.

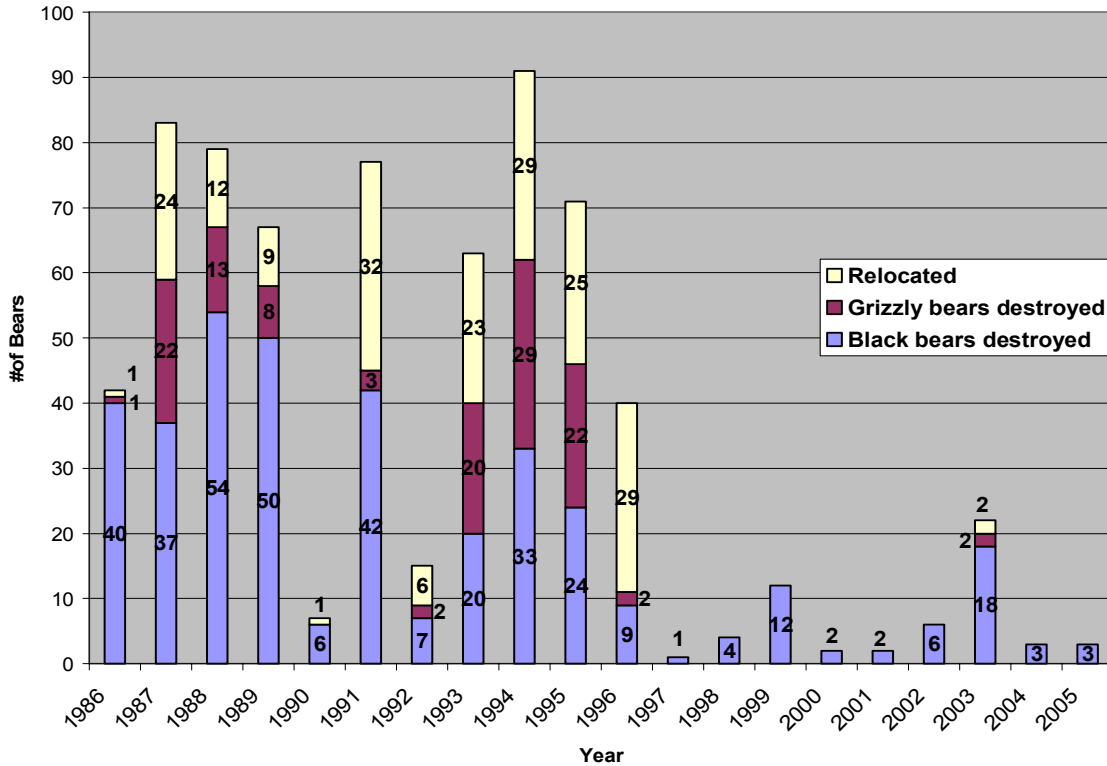
Before 1994, an average of 40 bears were destroyed annually within the community.

Without warning to the community, the landfill was fenced in 1994. All the food conditioned bears, deprived of their food source, began searching in town for the garbage to which they had become accustomed. The direct result was the destruction of most of these bears. In 1994, 33 black bears and 29 grizzlies were “managed”; in 1995, 24 black bears and 22 grizzlies had the same fate. This sparked an outcry among the community, even though the management numbers were not that dissimilar compared with previous years (consider 1988, when 54 black bears and 13 grizzlies were managed). The community was frustrated with the ineffectiveness of creating, then killing, these large numbers of bears.

In response to the outcry, local residents, agencies, organizations, and levels of government created the Bear Management Committee. This committee was created to reduce human/bear conflicts and thus avoid destroyed bears needlessly. From this committee, the Bear Aware education program was born.

The education program is simple: identify human behaviours that attract bears to urban areas and educate to remove the problem. The program has been very successful, and similar programs have sprouted up across the country. In Revelstoke, the average number of bears destroyed annually has been reduced from 27 to 7.

Bear Management in Revelstoke 1986-2005



The residents of Revelstoke have been receiving the Bear Aware message for almost ten years. They respond to, and respect, the educational components of the message. When a resident has a problem on their property, they are normally fast to correct it once it has been pointed out. For the most part, it is complacency resulting from fewer bear encounters that result in behavioural lapses. Because the Bear Aware program is so successful, residents no longer perceive bears as a problem, resulting in a continued need for the program's existence.

The delivery of the Bear Aware program has been consistent since 1996. In 2003, which was a very bad year for bears across the province, the provincial government abruptly ended their funding of the program. Unlike most communities, the program continued in Revelstoke, thanks to the support of local organizations and the persistence of the coordinator and management committee. The continuation of the program is a testament to community support for Bear Aware in Revelstoke.

In 2005, the Revelstoke Bear Aware Society has functioned as a non-profit organization within the community, with great success. The aim is for the program to continue as a sustainable and necessary part of the community throughout its future growth and change. With continued effort, Revelstoke will remain a beautiful, safe place for bears and humans alike.

Program Delivery

Volunteers

The number of volunteers participating in the program dropped from 14 individuals in 2004 to only 7 in 2005 (excluding members of the Bear Management committee, who also donate their time). These seven individuals provided 170 hours of work in the form of:

- Fruit picking
- Creating brochures
- Helping with presentations and displays
- Door to door campaigns
- Gathering information for the website
-

Volunteer participation in certain activities was limited by language barriers and supervisory time on the part of the coordinator. Because the year was very quiet in terms of bear activity, I found that it was less time consuming to complete many tasks myself instead of finding, training, supervising, and advising volunteers to do the same task.

The majority of volunteer time was provided by the Canada World Youth program participants. Two individuals were available to the program for approximately 16 hours a week from September to November. The participants helped to create a waste reduction brochure, warning posters and public notices, posters for fundraising, local fundraising lists, collecting information for our new website, fruit picking, and door to door campaigns. Though participating in the program is a valuable experience for Bear Aware, it is imperative that specific guidelines and projects be outlined for the participants, and they do require a large amount of supervision. The participants I received this year were not comfortable enough in speaking English to conduct door to door visits on their own, which heavily restricted their activities with the program during the fall months.

The remaining volunteers were collecting, processing, and picking fruit from abandoned properties and from residents who requested help with fruit. This program was underutilized, however, and the Food Bank was unwilling to accept large quantities of certain fruits (plums). It was a bumper crop for fruit this year, and the Food Bank was inundated with more fruit than it could store or process.

Door to Door

The door to door program is always successful at impacting attractant management in problem areas. The summer of 2005 was a very quiet time in terms of bear activity, with no sightings or complaints until late August and September. Consequently, I focused my activities on other areas. Door to door visits were done in a specific manner to target homes and individuals in problem areas or with visible attractant problems.

During the summer, I visited neighbourhoods or homes where attractants were obvious or when I received a complaint from neighbours. Until the bears became active, I focused on individual dwellings instead of doing sweeping campaigns through neighbourhoods.

From August until December, I focused door to door campaigns in areas where I received bear complaints or that were traditional problem areas. For the most part, if a resident was not home, I would leave information but do not really count this as “contact”. If there were continuing attractant problems, I would repeat the visits. On two occasions I requested that the city bylaw officer visit the property, as the residents would not comply with my requests.

The majority of homeowners were glad to see me at their door, and peppered me with questions about bears in the area. However, there were also a number of residents who did not agree with the program. As well, I encountered a large number of new residents to the area that had no idea what the city bylaws were or how to control bear attractants. The largest resistance I met concerned residents who allowed bears to access fruit trees in their yards. Most people I spoke with enjoy seeing the bears and have no problems with the bears eating the fruit from their trees. I tried my best to explain the safety hazard they are creating, but for the most part my replies fell on deaf ears.

In total, I contacted 138 residents in Arrow Heights, Columbia Park, CPR Hill, Southside, and the downtown area. This number is down from previous years, due to my approach on the issue. I also had less volunteer support for this component of the program, which I hope to increase in 2006. I believe that while the overall number is down, the timing and location of the door to door visits was more effective than a blanketing campaign. I hope to increase this number in 2006, reaching more residents now that we have a hazard assessment and conflict management plan from which to work.

Community Events and Public Presentations

As the new Bear Aware coordinator, I spent considerable time and effort to increase my profile by introducing myself to the community in 2005. In order for people to listen and respect the message, they must first be able to relate with and respect the messenger. By letting people see who I am, I was able to forge new relationships with residents and city officials alike.

My first presentation was that of the 2004 annual report to City Council. Council was receptive to the suggestions made by the previous Bear Aware coordinator and referred me to the Public Works department with my concerns about bylaws and garbage. Though I have since met several times with Public Works staff and had interesting discussions, very little forward progress has been made in terms of seeing change on the ground. The presentation was a fairly simple way to introduce myself to council and familiarize myself with the workings of the local government.

The Farmer's Market is an example of a community event where I was able to increase the profile of Bear Aware in the community. Thanks to our smart new public display, we attracted attention and questions whenever it was set up. I attended the Farmer's Market six times over the course of the summer. In total, 154 people were contacted and given the Bear Aware message. Of these people, 112 were residents of Revelstoke.

It is also interesting to note that, as a result of the Farmer's Market display, I received calls concerning the program from other communities and individuals from across the country. In the future, however, I will not be attending the Market as often as in 2005. The frequency of the displays was an effort to make myself known within the community, and will not be as necessary in 2006 for program delivery.

I also made a presentation (or educational seminar) to the Visitor Information Centre staff, at the request of the Chamber of Commerce. The most frequent question the staff receives is, "where are the bears?" and while these tourists are not residents of Revelstoke, it is important they know how to behave in bear country. As the number of visitors to this area increases, we will have a greater number of people potentially encountering dangerous wildlife. As well, many new or potential residents visit the centres for information, and it is vital that they realize what bear attractants can do. The staff was very thankful for my help. Over 50,000 people passed through the Visitor Information centres this summer, and received correct bear safety information as a result of these efforts. I created a short script on bear safety for the centres that was incredibly popular; the staff went through as many as 100 copies per day.

The Revelstoke Beats and Blues Festival was held in June 2005. I attended this two day event with the Bear Aware display. Though I heard a lot of great music, there was not a large turnout for the event and the majority of people who stopped by the booth were not residents of Revelstoke. I did, however, make contact with 35 people and sold one membership during my time at the festival. I do not think that it was a worthwhile event, and will not attend in 2006 unless otherwise directed.

The other large event that I attended with the Bear Aware display was Timber Days in July. Through this event, I contacted 60 people, 40 of which were locals. Because of the number of other educational displays on site, the people attending were keen on stopping to chat and gather information than were the people at the music festival. Because of the demographics of people attending this event, I felt that the effort was worthwhile. I received many positive comments about the program from the people who stopped to chat at the booth.

In September, I was asked to make a presentation to the Community Connections staff about bears. There were approximately 25 people in attendance, and the basic fundamentals of the Bear Aware program were provided. The presentation was requested due to the location of the depot (near Bridge Creek) and concerns from the manager about managing attractants. The group was very receptive to the Bear Aware message and they enjoyed the information.

The Columbia Mountains Institute hosted a two day conference in November entitled, “Creating Bear Smart Communities”. As part of this conference, I presented a case study of the Revelstoke Bear Aware program to the 50 people in attendance. Though attendees were from across BC and Alberta, members of Public Works, city staff, and the Revelstoke Bear Aware Society were also present. The display was also set up for the duration of the conference, as well as our hazard assessment maps.

In December, I made a presentation directly to the city Planning Committee concerning adapting planning documents and bylaws to meet the Bear Smart criteria. The members of the committee and the city staff involved are very enthusiastic about the project. Following my presentation, they agreed that I should work with the city planner to identify specific areas which need to be changed and provide a draft, which they will then present to Council. This is an encouraging sign that the city is taking steps to become Bear Smart.

I believe that my focus on public presentations and community events resulted in positive gains for the program. Now that the community is familiar and comfortable with me in this position, I will be able to direct my energy more strategically and diplomatically.

School Presentations

There was an increased demand for school presentations in 2005 in comparison to the previous three years. During May, I sent a letter, along with Bear Aware information, to each of the elementary schools in the area. As well, several of my newspaper articles focused on the safety of children in our community when bear attractants are left unmanaged. This new approach had people thinking more about bear safety for their children. As well, several high profile bear attacks, including one involving children in northern BC, piqued the concern of parents and educators.

Presentations were made as following:

Columbia Park Elementary kindergarten class

Community Centre preschool class

Revelstoke English Language School Taiwan exchange

Kokanee Fish Festival-all city elementary schools

Arrow Heights grade 3-4 class

Jumping Jacks preschool class (2 classes, 2 presentations)

The total number of students reached through presentations was 216. Compared to previous years, this is a dramatic increase. It was found that older students had received the Bear Aware message in school when they were much younger, and younger students had little knowledge (or incorrect knowledge) on the subject of bears and bear safety. Even though the older children had heard the message before, they had mixed up their facts and were due for a little refresher. As well, many of the teachers did not have a comprehensive understanding of the subject and could not answer student questions. I believe that the amount of requests I received for presentations was also a result of my approachability and ease with working with youth.

All of the presentations were successful in that students were interested in the subject, receptive to the message, and willing to carry that message home to their parents. I received several calls later in the year from parents and children to report bears or attractants in their neighbourhoods. In particular, the Kokanee Fish Festival was very worthwhile. Over 100 students participated at the outdoor program in September at the Bridge Creek spawning channel. Each group of five students also had a parent with them who heard the message. I received a lot of positive feedback about this event (as well as front page photo coverage) and I think we should help Mt. Begbie School in keeping this event alive.

Most importantly, I updated some of the educational materials and took a new approach to the school presentations, which aided the increase in requests for presentations. Because I spent a large amount of time in the community raising the profile of the Bear Aware program, I believe many teachers and parents wanted the education programs to be delivered. I hope to continue the education program on the same pace in 2006.

Media Coverage

Eight newspaper articles were written in the Revelstoke Times Review during the 2005 season. Two letters to the editor were written concerning bear issues. In addition, two articles were picked up and circulated by other publications. Most notably, Telus carried the June article on its internet news webpage.

One public service bulletin was aired on the local radio station on October 31. A public announcement was placed in the Revelstoke Times Review in November as a reminder for residents to control attractants.

The Bear Aware display at the Kokanee Fish Festival in September was featured on the front page edition of the Revelstoke Times Review on September 28.

The Coordinator's comments were also aired on CBC Radio Morning in June. An interview was also given to the Prince George Citizen in relation to that community's attempts to restrict curbside collection times in December.

The coordinator was also contacted for advice on program development and delivery in Alberta, Ontario, New Brunswick, and other BC communities including Vernon, Golden, Kelowna, and Tumbler Ridge.

The first biannual Society newsletter was published in September 2005. A total of 150 copies were distributed to members, organizations, and businesses within the community.

Bear Aware material was again handed out as a part of the Welcome Wagon baskets for new residents in the community.

Garbage Raids

Garbage can tagging raids were not conducted in 2005 due to volunteer constraints and bylaw compliance. For the most part, there were very few residents that placed their garbage at the curb the night before collection. Problem properties were noted when garbage was at the curb outside of collection times. These homes were specifically targeted for visits by the coordinator. After two visits, the city bylaw officer was contacted and informed of the situation in order to enforce the bylaw. This approach was effective in most cases; however, there were several homeowners who complied with the curbside bylaw but did not store their garbage in a secure location. There were also several instances where attractants were not removed, garbage was not cleaned up or moved, and the bylaws were not enforced.

For the 2006 calendar year, the Public Works department made several changes to the garbage schedule, based on my suggestions. These include a picture of a bear on each month where bears may be a problem, as a visual reminder to homeowners.

Fruit Trees

Fruit trees are an ongoing headache in the city of Revelstoke. While the majority of fruit tree owners are conscientious in maintaining and caring for their trees, there are exceptions.

2005 in particular produced a spectacular crop of fruit in the community. Domestic and wild trees and shrubs were heavily loaded, which may be the reason many bears remained outside of the city until later in the season. Natural food sources, such as huckleberries, were abundant on the slopes surrounding the city. Mountain ash trees were heavily loaded with berries. In the city, there were plums everywhere! So many, in fact, the Food Bank couldn't accept any more of them. The fruit picking/exchange program was revived, with limited success. Our Bear Aware volunteers personally picked over 30 crates of plums in a three week period. I did not advertise for volunteers or fruit exchanges, as I did not have the time to devote to supervising the project. The Food Bank developed its own project independently.

The direct result of a good fruit crop was an abundance of rotting fruit lying on the ground throughout the city. Residents with fruit trees were targeted for door to door visits, particularly in the Southside region. They were given the fruit brochure (from 2004) and our volunteers were offered to help pick the fruit. As in 2004, the focus was on the personal responsibility of the resident to manage the fruit. In most instances, the resident(s) cleaned up the fruit. We received five requests to pick fruit, mostly plums, from residents or neighbours.

Despite the significant amount of fruit attractants in the community, we received only one complaint concerning bears and fruit trees (from a new resident who didn't realize there was even a fruit tree on the property). The number of complaints is not a true indicator of the number of bears eating fruit, however. Many residents enjoy seeing bears and some actually leave the fruit out for the bears to eat. They see no problems with bears feeding on fruit, as it is a "natural" food. Most residents are resistant to the idea that bears

feeding on fruit can become problem bears. The common attitude is, “there have been bears in my backyard, eating my fruit, for forty years, and we haven’t had any problems yet”. This attitude is very difficult to work with, and residents are reluctant to call lest they be chastised for feeding the bears.

To address the fruit tree problem, I have been discussing ideas with the planning committee and public works employees. We hope to include fruit tree management in the Bear Smart amendments to planning documents and bylaws in 2006.

Fundraising

Fundraising efforts were limited in the summer season of 2005, due to the success of fundraising in 2004. I was able to focus on providing the program in the community without having to worry about significant fundraising during the busiest months. The small amount of fundraising done focused on local organizations that had previously contributed to the program.

In 2005, we received the following:

- \$1500 from Friends of Mt. Revelstoke and Glacier;
- \$1750 as final payment on 2004’s donation from Columbia Basin Trust Environmental Fund;
- \$400 from Selkirk Tangiers Heliskiing;
- \$250 from Canadian Mountain Holidays;
- \$250 from the Revelstoke Community Forest Corporation;
- \$250 from Downie Timber.

Due to the carryover from the very successful fundraising of 2004, program delivery was smooth. The majority of fundraising efforts for 2006 will begin in January.

The groundwork was completed by several volunteers for a community based silent auction to benefit Bear Aware. As has been noted in the past, local businesses are reluctant to donate money to the program, but are very willing to donate goods or services. Many local businesspeople support the program ideals but are simply unable to contribute financially. Though the idea of a public auction is not a large fundraising opportunity, it is a chance for local businesses and residents to become part of the program, creating a feeling of community ownership. It is possible that such an event will be held in 2006.

Membership

2005 was the first year that memberships were sold for the Revelstoke Bear Aware Society. Though the membership rates are very reasonable, less than ten memberships were sold over the course of the year. However, no concerted campaigns were undertaken to increase the membership base. Members received a copy of the first newsletter published by Revelstoke Bear Aware in September.

Newsletter

A newsletter was penned in September for current members of the Bear Aware Society. As well, 150 copies were distributed through various organizations and businesses in the community. I received very positive feedback about the newsletter from a variety of individuals and businesses. I also included a copy of the newsletter in many of my door to door visits during the month.

The distribution method worked well for the newsletter, though I would like to have a greater membership base to contact directly in 2006.

Bear Smart

Bear Smart is a provincial initiative aimed at having communities reduce the amount of human/bear conflict by taking personal responsibility for change. Revelstoke has begun to participate in this program, making a concerted effort to eliminate bear attractants in the community. The program focuses on six criteria that a community must complete in order to achieve Bear Smart status:

- 1. Prepare a bear hazard assessment of the community and surrounding area.** In 2004, a bear hazard assessment was completed for the Revelstoke area with funding provided by the provincial Bear Smart program. This map was digitized in 2005 and expanded to include pertinent 2005 complaints, sightings, and improvements. This updating process will occur each year, as things change within the community.
- 2. Prepare a bear/human conflict management plan that is designed to address the bear hazards identified above.** This is in progress. A draft was created in 2005 by the coordinator, which will be discussed and expanded by the Bear Management committee in February of 2006.
- 3. Revise planning and decision making documents to be consistent with the bear/human conflict management plan.** The city of Revelstoke has an environmental strategy document which states the Bear Smart criteria are of medium priority for completion. However, with the impending development of commercial, recreational, and residential areas associated with the ski hill project, it is imperative that Bear Smart become incorporated into other planning documents and bylaws. The coordinator will be working with city staff to achieve this goal in 2006.
- 4. Implement a continuing education program directed at all sectors of the community.** We have completed this step. This is the Bear Aware program.
- 5. Develop and maintain a bear-proof municipal solid waste management system.** I have been speaking with various people in Public Works about this, and I would like to approach it the same way as with the planning committee. By speaking directly with the committee, I have the ability to take their experience and knowledge. My recommendations are then more likely to be consistent with the city's current plans and much more feasible. This step does not necessarily mean converting to a bear proof

centralized garbage system and spending millions of dollars. In speaking with Public Works employees, I have found a number of creative ideas that would make our current system, with a few minor changes, “Bear Smart” along with bylaw enforcement.

6. Implement “Bear Smart” bylaws prohibiting the provision of food to bears as a result of intent, neglect, or irresponsible management of attractants. We already have bylaws in place that cover this issue, for the most part. The bylaws just need to be refined slightly, but more importantly, be enforced. The bylaws in question would be the garbage collection bylaw and the unsightly premises bylaw. I am in the process of refining the bylaws, in cooperation with the city staff.

To date, no community in BC has received “Bear Smart” status.

What would Revelstoke receive for becoming a Bear Smart community? We become, once again, the innovative leader in environmental issues in the province. We will receive official recognition through provincial tourism as a Bear Smart community; the city will receive plaques and signs for the community. As well, the province will then fund alternate management options within the community for conflict issues. This includes non-lethal bear management and aversive conditioning. As well, they are still pursuing avenues for other rewards. The government has a website with information about the program. <http://wlapwww.gov.bc.ca/wld/bearsmart/bearsmintro.html>

For more information concerning the Bear Smart program in Revelstoke, please see the section entitled “Municipal Concerns”.

Website

In 2005, it was decided that Revelstoke Bear Aware needed a presence on the Internet. The website was designed and created over the summer and autumn months. It was launched in December. The official address of the site is <http://www.revelstokebearaware.org> and it is a useful source of information for residents. The content is still being updated and expanded. In the spring of 2006, a campaign to raise awareness about the website and the program will be launched in the community to increase traffic and let the public know the site is available.

Bridge Creek Spawning Channel

The Bridge Creek Spawning Channel project is an ongoing concern for the Bear Aware Society. While it is commendable that efforts are being made to restore local Kokanee spawning grounds, Bridge Creek is in close proximity to residential areas and presents a problem as a potential bear attractant.

The Bear Management Committee has been working with the stakeholders in order to ensure that the fish populations in the creek do not increase to dangerous numbers.

Municipal Concerns

Continued growth and cooperation with the city of Revelstoke resulted in encouraging forward progress in 2005. In order for the community to truly become Bear Smart, it is necessary for individuals, the municipality, the regional district, and the provincial government to work together.

Bear Smart Bylaws

The city of Revelstoke currently has two bylaws that are partially Bear Smart. These are:

- Bylaw #1759, Garbage Collection
- Bylaw #1378, Unsightly Premises

The garbage collection bylaw restricts the curbside collection times within the city from 7am to 7pm on the day of collection. However, there is nothing pertaining to the secure storage of garbage on private property outside of these times. As well, it does not require dumpsters to be locked or bear proof. Commercial dumpsters in the city are contracted with Bresco, Ltd. These issues need to be addressed by the city.

Secure storage of garbage outside of collection times is the largest issue concerning garbage. Storing empty or full cans outside the house, on the deck, or in the carport does not deter a bear (as the residents in the Cashato Bench and Columbia Park are well aware). Some bears will go to great lengths to access attractants when food is scarce elsewhere.

The unsightly premises bylaw states that rubbish and filth may not accumulate on private property. To meet Bear Smart criteria, the bylaw could be reworded to include secure indoor garbage storage or use of approved animal proof containers. As well, this bylaw could be amended to address neglect of fruit trees on private property.

The problem with bylaws in the city is not the content, but the enforcement. Revelstoke has very strong bylaws that only need minor changes; the problem comes with compliance and enforcement.

Bylaw Enforcement

A reoccurring theme in Bear Aware annual reports is the frustration concerning bylaw enforcement in the city. Revelstoke has a soft enforcement policy regarding bylaws, and does not have sufficient staff to enforce the bylaws currently on record.

In order to have a person ticketed for breaking a bylaw, I must contact the bylaw enforcement officer, who may not be available to visit the property for several days. The property owner, who has already had at least one visit and reminder from me, is again warned by the bylaw officer to comply. It is only after this that a ticket may be issued.

The issue with soft enforcement lies in the ability of a bear to become food conditioned in only one or two visits to a source of food. By the time one owner is ticketed and removes the attractant, the bear already recognizes garbage as food, and moves on to the next source it can find.

In October and November of 2005, a black bear was doing just this in the Columbia Park area. This bear became adept at finding cans, empty or full, wherever they might be on a person's property. The bear collected and dragged bags of garbage on garbage day (or the night before) across the highway to the park border, where it would have a veritable feast for several days. Residents were visited and made aware of the bear's presence, but the bear continued to find food. Though the bear began hibernation before it was shot, I would not be surprised if it is destroyed early in the spring upon waking. It is thoroughly food conditioned.

Another issue arose in 2005 that was unique. Two bears were destroyed after they themselves destroyed a chicken coop and devoured most of the chickens therein. The owner of the home called the RCMP, who destroyed one bear. The other bear was destroyed the next day by the conservation officer.

Sad as this story is, it gets worse. The chicken coop, under city bylaws and zoning restrictions for the area, was illegal. The area is identified as a wildlife interface and such attractants are illegal on the property. Therefore, two bears were destroyed because the homeowners not only had illegal attractants, but did not secure the attractants properly.

Why was the chicken coop on the property? Because the city, notwithstanding its soft enforcement policy, does not have the staff to investigate and enforce bylaw violations.

Another resident of the city had been visited three times because they not only had their garbage out on the wrong collection day, the can remained at the curb until pickup the next week. The owners refused to answer the door. Bear Aware information and a garbage schedule were left for the owners. As the owners failed to comply, I then contacted the bylaw enforcement officer. The result? The homeowner dragged his garbage can three or four metres onto his property. He was then in compliance with city bylaws by not having his garbage at the curb. By changing the bylaws to include garbage storage, we would not have this issue.

Currently, the city and Bear Aware are working together to amend the bylaws in question and looking for ways to improve enforcement within the community.

Municipal Waste Management

The municipal waste management system in Revelstoke has remained largely unchanged throughout the last nine years. Collection services are provided at curbside, with lane pickup during the summer months. Dumpsters are, for the most part, unlocked and in some cases overflowing.

With the impending development of large areas of the city, the municipality must begin updating its collection systems and waste management practices. Bear Aware and Public Works have been discussing different management techniques that may work financially and environmentally. One of the recommendations is that all new development in the city have centralized garbage systems and stringent storage requirements. With the completion of the Human/Bear Conflict Management Plan in 2006, we should have a much clearer vision and direction in which to proceed to update waste management in the city. Perhaps a partnership with another municipality can be fostered to increase order amounts and reduce costs of purchasing new equipment.

Bear Proof Bins

The city has embarked on a replacement program for garbage bins in all public areas. For the most part, conversion to bear proof bins in municipal parks is complete. However, there are still many open barrels throughout city parks in the summer months in close proximity to the bear proof bins. This is especially true in smaller, less used parks such as the tennis courts in Columbia Park (where, coincidentally, several residents have been illegally dumping fruit over the riverbank). Also, in high traffic areas such as Centennial Park and Williamson Lake, there are a multitude of open barrels next to a wildlife corridor. In the photo below, you will notice a bear proof container in the foreground, with an open barrel in the background. This is taken at the skateboard park, next to the Greenbelt trails.



In its Master Parks Plan, the city has committed to replacing all open garbage barrels on city trails and in parks with bear proof containers. However, no timeline has been given as to when the replacement will be complete.

Revelstoke has four elementary schools and one high school. The Arrow Heights School, the Columbia Park School, and Revelstoke Secondary are all adjacent to green areas which bears frequent. In fact, bears have been trapped and destroyed on school grounds in the past. Yet, there are not bear proof containers for garbage at these elementary

schools! I found open garbage barrels at each elementary school and in the parks and private property adjacent to the schools.

In a community that is concerned for the welfare and safety of its children, it is disappointing to find such a blatant disregard for a dangerous wildlife attractant. I have been told that some children find the can lids too heavy to operate. This is not an issue, as the manufacturer of the cans (Haul-All) has a lid for recycling that could be installed at schools, allowing children to use the bins without lifting the lids. As well, a new underground system has been developed that would be useful in these areas. Replacing these cans should be a high priority for the city and the school board.

Municipal Planning Documents

Currently, the Bear Smart criteria are included in the city's Environmental Strategy document. In the strategy, meeting these priorities is of medium priority. However, with the impending development (see below) I believe it is imperative these changes occur as soon as possible.

With the completion of the Human/Bear Conflict Management Plan in early 2006, we will be able to provide direction to the city's planning department in terms of targets for changing and implementing Bear Smart changes.

Currently, the coordinator and city staff are working to identify specific areas for amendment in the following documents, as well as others:

- The Official Community Plan, sections 5, 10, and 11
- The Parks Master Plan
- Mount Mackenzie Development Plan

The push for change has been accepted by the planning committee, city staff, and Council. They are willing to work towards achieving Bear Smart status and becoming the first community in BC to do so.

Ski Hill Development

The "big buzz" in Revelstoke over the past year has been the approval of the Mt. Mackenzie Resort Development project. With new runs cut on the mountain in the summer of 2005, the project is creating not only development in the ski hill area, but throughout the city. Several large development projects, including the old Highways property between the railway and the Trans Canada highway, are creating concerns within the community.

Coinciding with the ski hill development is the subdivision of land in the Arrow Heights area, as well as in other areas of town. Creation of new residential areas poses several problems relating to Bear Aware.

First of all, the ski hill itself will be located in prime bear (and cougar) habitat. The impact of cutting runs and building high density housing along a wildlife interface cannot be ignored. The current ski runs already attract a number of bears in early spring with the green vegetation that grows on the sunny slopes; the attraction will be compounded as the

number of runs grows. If waste management practices are not changed, there will also be significant garbage attractants in the area, in addition to the fruit trees that already populate the Arrow Heights region.

Another area of concern is the influx of part time residents that has begun and will inevitably increase in the future. These residents are unaware of the city's garbage collection bylaws. If they leave town on the weekend, garbage will sit on their property or at the curb until collection day. Some dump their garbage in commercial dumpsters, increasing costs for local businesses. Either way, it is a growing problem that must be addressed.

If planning documents and zoning restrictions are not stringent enough, a huge potential for conflict exists. We have examples of this from towns such as Whistler and Fernie, who spend countless dollars each year dealing with wildlife conflicts. When someone has already made a mistake, we would be foolish to make the same mistake again. The opportunity exists to create a unique community that will be upheld as an example to all others that we should not pass by.

We have examples from other communities of what happens when attractant management is poorly planned and executed. Whistler and North Vancouver have huge bear problems, and both communities are now struggling to implement bear proof waste management systems. If we implement the system before we have problems, we are ahead of the game.

Because the development is just beginning, we still have the opportunity to facilitate change with little cost. Cost breakdowns of centralized garbage systems show the economic benefits are greater than with traditional curbside collection (see Appendix #4). By making bear proof systems a requirement, we are setting the stage for the eventual replacement of the city's current system, but at a manageable rate and cost. Estimated implementation costs for a centralized system were between \$1 and \$1.5 million in 2001; these costs will only increase if the city is allowed to grow with the current system.

Fruit Trees

What can be said about fruit trees that has not been said in the past nine years? Each year, the coordinator reports his or her frustration with the unmanageable amount of fruit that accumulates in the community. Here are some of the problems associated with fruit trees in Revelstoke:

- Many trees are not pruned, sprayed, or picked, resulting in bear attractants
- Many trees stand on commercial property, empty lots, or unkempt property
- Residents are very resistant to removal of fruit trees, regardless of whether they use the fruit
- Residents like having bears eating fruit and actually have trees on their properties specifically for that purpose
- Abundance of certain types of fruit (i.e. plums) results in illegal dumping
- Picking fruit is time consuming and becoming physically challenging for older residents

- The Food Bank has very limited storage space and cannot accept large donations
- Bears like to eat fruit before it is considered ripe for human consumption

That said there was only one fruit related bear complaint in 2005. There were several complaints about unmanaged trees, but only one report of a bear accessing fruit as a food source (in the Southside area). Due to the abundance of natural food available to bears, it is not surprising they remained outside of town until well into October. The most abundant fruit, plums, was finished by the time the bears began looking for food in town. However, one good year can quickly turn into a bad year, such as happened in 2003. A strategy must be created to address the fruit tree problem.

Fruit trees remain the most contentious issue that the Bear Aware program faces in the city. A fruit picking program was modestly successful this summer, but requires a large time commitment for organization. In addition, the Food Bank was unable to take much of the fruit because of storage issues. Homes with fruit trees were specifically targeted for door to door visits and were given the fruit tree brochure created in 2004.

A fruit tree management strategy will be part of the Human/Bear Conflict Management Plan currently in progress. Bear Aware, the city, and residents must work out a unique solution to this unique problem.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on observations and needs from the 2005 season:

- Pursue Bear Smart status as a high priority. Specific changes will be outlined in further recommendations.
- Amendments of the garbage collection bylaw and the unsightly premises bylaw to be completed in 2006.
- Completion of the Bear/Human Conflict Management Plan (BHCMP) by May 2006.
- Inclusion of Bear Smart principles in relevant city planning documents by the end of 2006.
- Bylaw enforcement strategy be developed, in cooperation with Public Works and the Planning Department, by May 2006.
- Meet and discuss solid waste management strategies with Public Works to meet goals outlined in the BHCMP.
- Implement target dates for completion of bear proof container conversion in all municipal parks and green spaces, in accordance with the BHCMP.
- Work with the school district and the municipality to eliminate open garbage barrels at all schools and playgrounds by 2009.
- Council approval of targets set out in the BHCMP.
- Ensure Bear Smart solid waste management systems and attractant management is required of all future development in the city.
- Increase individual membership base for the Revelstoke Bear Aware Society.
- Create a sustainability plan, programming strategy and fundraising strategy for the Revelstoke Bear Aware Society.
- Work with the city and the regional district to create a single location for recycling.
- Continue with public education about bears, bear ecology, bear attractants, and bear safety. Encourage growth and support of the Bear Aware program.
- Work with teachers, the school district, and the provincial government to create and implement Bear Aware into the BC curriculum. A number of teachers have created different educational units on bears that could be expanded and carried throughout the province.
- Work closely with developers and the city to find workable solutions with respect to bear attractant management.
- Work with other environmental organizations and the regional district to create an education campaign aimed at reducing the amount of garbage people and businesses create.
- Continue to foster and develop a working relationship with Council, committee members, and city staff in order to achieve these goals through respect and good communication.
- Monitor and continue working with the Bridge Creek Spawning channel issue to ensure the proper balance between fish populations and inadvertent bear attractants in an urban area.

Conclusion

The Revelstoke Bear Aware program has made extraordinary progress since its conception in 1996. As a public education program, it has been successful in reducing the amount of bear/human conflict in the city and reducing the number of relocated or destroyed bears.

The community has reached the point where more is required than simple education. The Society needs to create a sustainability plan to ensure the continued survival of the program in the future, as the city changes and grows. The support and opportunity exist; we must simply seize the moment.

The creation of Bear Smart documents such as the Hazard Assessment and Bear/Human Conflict Management plan give the city and the coordinator a focused, targeted vision of what is needed in the community. This direction is wonderful, as it allows all those involved in creating a Bear Aware and Bear Smart Revelstoke see their roles more clearly. Clarity and direction produce results, and the result we will see is a safer community for both bears and humans.

Creating a safer community for all residents is of the utmost importance. By reducing the number of bears attracted into our community, we are limiting the chance that residents will have a negative encounter with wildlife. Our property, children, pets, and loved ones are much safer as a result of the efforts of this program. By eliminating attractants for dangerous wildlife, we avoid potentially dangerous situations that are entirely preventable.

Revelstoke is a unique community that prides itself on its innovation and vision. It is these very properties which created the Bear Aware program. With continued support from all levels of the community, Revelstoke will remain the positive example for municipalities throughout Canada in dealing with wildlife issues.

I would like to personally thank each person who has supported the Bear Aware program this year and in the past. The openness, the friendliness, and support of everyone has made my first year in this position a wonderful experience. I look forward being part of the continued growth of the program, and the city, in the future.

Sincerely,

Abby Pond
Revelstoke Bear Aware Coordinator, 2005

Appendices

1. Newspaper Articles

It's time to wake up! – May 2005

Yes, we are all excited in these early days of spring. Each Saturday morning finds the children out on their bicycles and the gardeners out in the yard. We all want to squeeze every drop of sunshine from the day.

I would like to introduce myself. My name is Abby Pond, and I am the new Bear Aware coordinator for the city of Revelstoke. I look forward to meeting and speaking with all of you. My background is in biology, herbalism, education, and eco-tourism.

Just as we enjoy waking up to the sunlight streaming in our window, so too do the animals that dwell in the forests around us. As we rake, prune, and play in the spring sunshine, the bears are beginning to stir from their long winter's rest.

After a long winter, we may need a wake-up call as well, to remember our responsibility in keeping our community safe. It is easy to forget that bag of garbage in the carport, or how much extra fruit will fall from a neglected fruit tree. The bears, however, learn more quickly and are less likely to forget where the food can be found. Though we may have forgotten, they have not!

The bears are waking, and they are hungry. I don't blame them-I can't imagine going without food for the winter! There are plenty of food sources in the wild for our bears, and it is up to us to keep them out of town.

What can we do? It's simple. Keep your garbage stored inside the house or a secure shed (not the deck or the carport) until garbage day. Make sure dumpsters are kept closed and secure. Keep your compost odor-free. Give those fruit trees a trim, and move any animal food indoors. We tidy up our neighbourhoods to keep our children safe.

These are small tasks with large rewards. If we start these practices now, any bear that wanders into town will not be rewarded with food, and will go elsewhere. It's a win-win situation, where our community is safe and bears are not killed.

Do you have questions about bears or the Bear Aware program? I would be happy to speak with you. Need to contact a conservation officer? Dial 1-800-663-WILD. You may telephone me at 837-5507 or email me at beaware@telus.net. Enjoy your time in the sunshine!

A Bear Aware Community is a Safe Place to Live- June 2005

With several bear attacks in Alberta and BC grabbing media attention, I would like to address the issue of community safety with regards to bears.

We live in prime bear habitat. The shores of the Columbia and Illecillewaet Rivers are abundant in food and provide wonderful cover for humans and bears alike. The more we expand into bear country, the more likely we are to have negative encounters. Citizens of Revelstoke, on the cusp of such development, need to learn why bears do what they do.

The most dangerous bears are those that are habituated and/or food conditioned. What is the difference? A *habituated* bear has lost its fear of humans-it has had no negative experience with human contact. These are bears that seem unconcerned by your presence in the backyard or along the highway. They do not run away. A *food conditioned* bear recognizes human attractants as food, by sight and smell. This includes fruit trees, garbage, smelly compost, petroleum products, and pet food. These bears may or may not be wary of humans. It can take less than ten days for a bear to become food conditioned.

Why are these bears dangerous? They are more likely to come into contact with us. You may not really care if a bear snacks on the fruit tree in your yard every night, but as he becomes conditioned and habituated, he becomes a threat. That same bear may move on to your neighbour's house, where a small child or pet may be mistaken for its next meal. It is easy to get too close to a habituated bear, and once you enter his personal space, you are in danger.

Keep bears from becoming habituated and food conditioned. Store your garbage properly and reduce the amount of garbage you create. Ensure your compost is odor-free. Pick your fruit and keep your yard clean. Remove any dense brush that may provide cover for bears. We do not want our ignorance or lack of action to result in a bear attack. Most of all, educate yourself on bear behaviour, especially if you participate in recreational activities. We are lucky to live in a community with many respected people who can teach us. Take advantage!

If you have any questions about food conditioned and habituated bears, removing attractants from your house, composting, joining our fruit picking volunteer team, or bear behaviour, please call me, Abby Pond, at 837-5507 or email beaware@telus.net. Report any bear incidents to the Conservation Service at 1-877-952-7277.

Cherries and Peaches and Bears, Oh My!-July 2005

July is one of my favourite months for one simple reason-the food! The first veggies are ready in the garden, and the cherries are ripening. What tastes good to us also tastes good to the bear. Do we want them in our yards, eating our fruit?

The answer should be no. You may enjoy watching the bears, and believe that eating fruit is not harmful. It is your actions, or lack thereof, that are deadly.

A fruit-eating bear is comfortable around humans. It will remember your yard as a source of food, and move on to other food sources in the area. It becomes food conditioned bolder in searching for new sources of goodies. It may become habituated, or accustomed to the presence of humans. These bears are hazardous to everyone.

A bear is a beautiful sight, but what happens if the bear starts defending its food? You may have heard that a fed bear is a dead bear. This not only applies to garbage, but to fruit trees. It is not the fruit that kills the bear, it is us. Do you want to be responsible for the death of a bear, or the injury or death of a person? Bears that are allowed to eat fruit and garbage remain in our communities, increasing the risk of serious encounters.

Most of us enjoy bears and hate to see them destroyed. They are a symbol of our community; we should not be shooting them. Unfortunately, by the time a bear has become a nuisance in town, there is little we can do to save it. Relocation is expensive, difficult, and unsuccessful. Relocated bears usually end up shot in another community or starve to death, unable to find food in its new home. Our actions attract the bears, keep them here, and get them in trouble or killed.

I am not asking you to dig out the chainsaw and remove the problem. Fruit trees are not only pleasing and tasty, they are a responsibility. It is easy to keep bears from being rewarded in our yards. Pick your fruit! Clean up windfall daily, and pick your fruit as soon as it ripens. If your tree produces more fruit than you can use, prune it to a manageable size. If you do not want the tree or the responsibility, consider removing it. I would be happy to discuss fruit management ideas.

Do you have more fruit than you need? Need help picking? Would you like to donate your fruit to a good cause? Want to volunteer? Call Bear Aware or the Food Bank! We have a group of volunteers who will come to your house and pick your fruit. Your goodies will be given out by the Food Bank (837-2920) to those who cannot afford the luxury of fresh fruit. You may reach me at 837-5507 or beaware@telus.net with all your bear questions and concerns.

Got Bears? August 2005

Where has the summer gone? Time seems to be flying by in a blur of sunshine and rain. Where are the bears, everyone asks? In the woods, eating berries and fish, where they belong! Soon, however, we will begin to see more bears looking for food.

Summer months are punctuated with holiday weekends, time to spend enjoying the outdoors and our families. In Revelstoke, each holiday also means that garbage pickup moves a day forward. Confused? You aren't the only one. As I travel the streets and alleyways, I notice many cans out a day early. Many are simply left in the alley and garbage added through the week.

Do you know when garbage day is in your area? Did you also know that Revelstoke's garbage bylaw states that garbage containers "shall be placed on the streets or lands only between the hours of 6:00 am and 7:00 pm on the day of collection"? Now you do! Any household may be fined under this bylaw if your garbage is out at the wrong time.

The garbage schedule is available online at www.cityofrevelstoke.com under the Public Works section. You may also call me, or Public Works, if you are unsure about garbage day in your area.

Have you seen a bear in your area of town? What was it doing? What did it look like? If you have seen a bear, Bear Aware would like to know. I will not arrive, conservation officer in tow, to shoot it on the spot. If a bear is in your neighbourhood, I wish to speak to you and your neighbours about its behaviour, what attractants brought it there, and how we can ensure its safety as well as your own. My goal is to make Revelstoke safe for people and bears, not to have bears destroyed.

Do you have bear stories or pictures you would like to share? We are creating a Bear Aware website, and would like to feature local pictures and stories. We are always looking for volunteers to help with our display, fruit picking, and other activities as well.

If you would like to report a bear sighting, or would like me to visit your neighbourhood, please contact me. I can be reached at 837-5507 or by email at beaware@telus.net. All information will be kept confidential. I look forward to seeing your photos and hearing your bear tales!

Bear in Mind for Back to School-September 2005

September has arrived. Excitement prevails in the air as children young and old anticipate (and dread) the return of school days.

What does school have to do with bears, you ask? Everything, of course. In Revelstoke, our schools and parks are located along greenbelts, rivers, forests, and fruit trees. At a time of year when bears are doing little other than eating, it is very important to recognize these food sources. The education and prevention of potential bear conflict in these areas is vital to our children's safety.

Bears are in search and consume mode during the fall. They must consume enough food to last through 6 winter months in the den without eating. Many bears do not even sleep from now until they begin their dormant winter rest. It is a common misconception that we are safe in town during daylight hours, free to leave garbage, fruit, barbeques and pet food lying around. A bear on a mission to gain weight will eat anything, regardless of the time of day. That is why bears become bolder at this time of year.

Children travel to school every day along paths, streams and rivers that abound with bear food. They walk the streets past untended fruit trees and overgrown thickets. They play daily in our parks and playgrounds without bear proof garbage containers. If we care about kids, we should not be leaving these blatant bear attractants in their recreational space.

What can you do? You can take responsibility for your yard and property. Become a concerned citizen. Contact your school's Parent Advisory Committee and request bear

proof containers in the school yard. Organize a garbage cleanup for your local playground or park. Call City Hall and request that municipal parks and pathways have ONLY bear proof garbage facilities, including any new parks or trails in development.

Most importantly, educate our children about bears, waste, and attractants. It is pointless to have bear proof containers if kids do not know why they are there and how to use them. It is also important to teach children to pick up their garbage instead of throwing it on the ground or in the bushes. Think your kids know that? Take a walk along the edges of any playground or park in town, and think again. Teach your kids about proper waste disposal.

If your group, class, or school would like to learn more about bears and bear safety, please contact me, Abby Pond, at 837-5507 or beaware@telus.net. Keep watch for our newsletter, coming soon!

Where are all the bears? –October 2005

The question I am asked daily is, “where are all the bears?”

Residents haven’t been seeing the bears in areas where they are normally found. Why could that be? I’d like to say that it’s because I’ve done such a wonderful job that there are no bear attractants left in the city, but that’s wishful thinking.

The bears are out there. The berries were good this year keeping bears up in the mountains longer. Now they are arriving in town, primed to plunder your precious plums. A good berry crop in the wild also translated to an abundance of fruit in town, so if you leave it in your yard, chances are a bear will find it.

I’ve spent the last week in the Southside area, speaking with residents about bears, fruit, and garbage. Many residents informed me that they don’t have a bear problem there. Well, in that same neighbourhood, a bear was spotted three times in one day, up a fruit tree in someone’s yard that night, and lolling along the riverbank the next morning. No bear problems? There soon could be.

If that bear doesn’t find any food, he will wander back into the woods for his next meal. I would like to extend my thanks to those responsible homeowners in the area who thanked me for my visit, took care of their fruit, or called Bear Aware for clean up. We’ve only two months to go-please make the effort to keep bears out of our community!

Are you a “problem person” creating a “problem bear”? Is your fruit ripe and ready but unpicked? Does your garbage sit out by the curb all week? Does your pet food remain outside all night by your door? These bear buffets are not only extremely dangerous for you and your family, they are illegal. To provide food, intentionally or otherwise, for dangerous wildlife is an offence under the British Columbia Wildlife Act, and you may be subject to clean up orders and fines. If your garbage is at the curb before 6 am or after

7 pm on the designated garbage day, you are also subject to a fine from the city of Revelstoke. I implore you to properly care for your property and waste.

Call Bear Aware! We will help you determine if you have any bear attractants in your yard and work with you to remove them, free of charge. We can be reached at 837-5507 or beaware@telus.net.

Is Your Silence Deadly? – November 2005

Silence. This was the sound of bear reports and bear activity in our city until late October. My phone is plugged in, my email works. So what's going on?

Have you seen a bear? Great! Call me and tell me about it. What type of bear did you see? What was it doing? Where was it? How big was it? Have you seen this bear before? Is it causing any problems for you, your family, or your neighbours? How can I help you?

This is simple information I collect to keep track of what bears in the area are doing. If you wake up to find a bear in your garbage, I'm not going to barrel through your door and reprimand you. If a bear knocks over your birdfeeder or has a snooze in your trees, I'm not going to show up, Conservation Officer in tow, with rifles firing. I will do my utmost to ensure that you and the bear remain safe, happy, and alive.

Just because you know the bear is there doesn't mean your neighbours do too. In every neighbourhood I've visited where bears are active, I meet people who have no idea there are bears around. There are many new residents who do not know how to act around bears.

For some reason, no one is sharing their information about bears with the vital people. I received a call last week, at five in the morning, about two bears in a backyard in Arrow Heights, eating garbage. My dawn explorations found four houses where these bears had found improperly stored garbage. As I talked to residents in the area, I discovered a number of people had previously seen the bears. Why did no one call two weeks ago? Had I known the bears were there, I would have gone door to door to inform people about the steps they can take to prevent problems. Residents could then be extra vigilant in protecting their property, families, and pets. I did this several weeks ago in another part of town with great success. No major problems, no bears killed.

If you have the best interest of the bears at heart, it is in your best interest to let me know where they are. The reasons bears are destroyed usually boil down to human carelessness with food attractants. If I know where the bears are, I can educate the people in that area so that the bears, and the people, will remain safe. If your neighbours do not know the bears are there, they could put themselves or the bear in a dangerous position.

Please contact Bear Aware if you see a bear, regardless of whether it is being "good" or "bad". Wandering bears, sleeping bears, fat lazy bears-tell me everything! Let's use our

common sense to protect our common interests. Phone 837-5507 or email beaware@telus.net.

2. Public Notices and Posters

PUBLIC NOTICE

BE AWARE OF THE BEARS

At this time of the year, the bears are now looking more actively for food because they need to gain weight for hibernation. Bears have been spotted in the following neighbourhoods:

- **Arrow Heights**
- **CPR Hill**
- **Southside**
- **Big Eddy**

For your safety and the safety of your neighbours, please:

- Pick your fruit and clean up the fruit on the ground. It can be dumped at the Public Works yard. PLEASE DO NOT DUMP ILLEGALLY, you are creating a larger problem.
- Store your garbage INDOORS until the morning of garbage day, cans and all. This means in your house, garage, or a secure shed. The carport or porch doesn't count. If your garbage is out the night before, YOU CAN BE FINED under city bylaw.
- Store your pet food indoors. Do not put out your birdfeeders until the snow comes, or bring them in each night.
- KEEP LIVESTOCK SECURE at night, such as chickens. Electric fences are a great form of deterrent.

If you see a bear, or have further questions, please call Abby at Bear Aware: (250) 837-5507. To report a wildlife incident, call a Conservation Officer at 1-877-952-7277



CAUTION

BEARS IN AREA



A bear has been spotted in your area!

Please be aware and follow these recommendations for your safety:

- Stay on open paths and in open area
- Make some noise.
- Children should be accompanied by adults at all times
- Pets should be on leash

Most bear activity occurs in September and October.

At this time of the year, the bears are now looking more actively for food because they need to take weight for the hibernation. We need to eliminate the sources of the problem that can bring bears to the city. By following these few simple steps we can prevent conflicts and keep our community safe:

1. Pick up all your fruit that is lying on the ground and take it to the public works yard.
2. Pick all your fruit that is growing on trees and eat it, store it or give it at the food bank.
3. Keep your pet food indoors or in the garage.
4. Keep your garbage indoors, in the garage or in a locked shed and keep them indoors until pick-up.



Thank you and be careful!!!

3. Revelstoke Bear Aware Society Board of Directors 2005

Loni Parker	President
Susan Hall	Vice President
Jackie Morris	Treasurer
Maureen Weddell	Secretary
Brian Gadbois	Director

4. Example of Funding Request



Box 674 Revelstoke, BC V0E 2S0
(250) 837-5507 beaware@telus.net

Date

Address, etc.

Dear _____:

I am writing both as an introduction of myself, Revelstoke's new Bear Aware coordinator, and as a request. As a past contributor, you and others in Revelstoke provide the support needed to continue our important work. Your encouragement demonstrates that the program is important to the community on an ongoing basis, and allows us to expand our efforts.

The year 2004 was an excellent year for Bear Aware. In total, only three bears were destroyed in the Revelstoke district, compared to 18 in 2003. The Bear Aware message is reaching the public, and we are proud to set an example that is followed across the province. Our aim is to eliminate bear conflict entirely within our city.

The Revelstoke Bear Aware Society was formed in late 2004 in response to a loss of provincial funding. We are now a non-profit charity operated, funded, and controlled entirely by our community. Now more than ever, we are asking the community for help.

One focus in 2005 will be an initiative to replace all garbage containers in our school playgrounds and parks with bearproof garbage containers. Providing the containers is one thing; we must also educate the children, staff and residents not only to use them, but to stop littering, clean up existing garbage, and reduce the amount of waste they create. The result will be cleaner, safer recreational and learning areas for our children.

I sincerely hope you will be able to support our program again and provide us with a donation. We would greatly appreciate any amount you are able to give, whether it is the same amount as previously or a different amount. Note that (business name) will be acknowledged in all local Bear Aware display media and that a full tax receipt for charitable donation will be provided.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

