

Revelstoke Bear Aware Society
Annual Report Appendix 2.0
Press Releases

December 31, 2014



Photo: Sandy Adams



Sue Davies
Revelstoke Bear Aware Community Coordinator
www.revelstokebearaware.org
250 837 8624
PO Box 674, V0E2S0, Revelstoke, BC

Press Release: June 5

Revelstoke Bear Aware has a new look website!

Just in time for the new bear season, Revelstoke Bear Aware has a whole new look to their website (www.revelstokebearaware.org). “The new site will be easier to navigate, have lots of fun new resources, and still be the same fantastic source of good, local information about how to reduce conflict with bears”, said Sue Davies, Revelstoke Bear Aware Coordinator.

“We have made it easier to do what it is you want to do when visiting the site”, said Davies. “If you want to report a sighting, click the button for ‘Report’; if you want to be more bear aware, click that button. And of course if you want to donate or volunteer we have buttons for those too!” she said. “We have put our main message front and centre too; the front page now has 4 check-marked items regarding the most common bear attractants, make sure that you can check these off at your home too.”

The new ‘Resources’ section has everything from colouring pages and crosswords for the kids, to instructions for building an electric fence to protect your chickens. These resources are available to download and use for free - a great recourse for those wanting to be more bear aware.

The interactive map of local bear sightings is still on the site and gives a good indication of what bear activity there has been in and around town. You can look either at historical data stretching back to 2009, or just at the most recent sightings. The map is updated as new sightings are reported, so if you see a bear, be sure to report it.

The number to call to report a sighting is 1 877 952 RAPP (7277). This number gets you through to the provincial call centre and the information then comes through to Revelstoke Bear Aware and the Conservation Officer Service. Davies explained that Revelstoke lost its Conservation Officer last December when the position was transferred to Golden. “The more calls to the RAPP line, the more likely we are to get a Conservation Officer back in Revelstoke,” said Davies.

Bear Aware is a non-profit organization and gets it’s funding from various sources. The cost of the new website is not insignificant and Bear Aware has been fortunate to have Ryan Anderson of Perimeter Design donate time and expertise to recreating the website. Ben Dorsey of Parks Canada has also donated time and effort to the system that runs the bear sightings map, and CBT Community Initiatives, BC Hydro, Revelstoke Credit Union, Revelstoke Community Foundation, and Lush Cosmetics have contributed financially to the program this year. It would not have been possible to upgrade the site so quickly and effortlessly without the dedicated volunteer effort from Jackie Morris who transferred all the content of the pages and organized the rebuild.

For more information on managing bear attractants please visit www.revelstokebearaware.org or call Sue Davies on 250 837 8624.

To report bear sightings or conflicts with bears please call the 24 hour hotline at 1-877-952 RAPP (7277).

Press Release: June 21

WildSafeBC asks homeowners to start taking responsibility for garbage.

Up till now there have been relatively few bear sightings in Revelstoke this season, and those have been mostly just bears eating natural food in the wild. However that has all changed in recent days. “Bears have been reported damaging property, getting into garbage, disturbing compost and stealing garbage cans in four different areas of town this week”, said Sue Davies, WildSafeBC Coordinator.

“Fortunately people have been calling the RAPP line (1 877 952 7277) to report these incidents, which helps get the information out there,” said Davies. She wanted to convey the importance of calling the RAPP line to report these incidents so that information could be gathered and shared. “People are worried that if they call the RAPP line, the conservation officer will come and shoot the bear. That is not necessarily the case. Destroying the bear is the last thing anyone wants, and is only used as a last resort if the bear has become conditioned to eating human food, has lost its fear of people and is a serious threat to human safety,” said Davies.

The first line of defence is with the homeowner, to ensure that bears and other wildlife don't get access to human food. Revelstoke's new garbage bylaw (#2006) states that garbage must be secured against wildlife. A regular plastic or metal garbage bin will not protect your garbage. Unless you have one of the bear resistant bins, it must be in a locked shed or garage to keep it secure.

Other foods bears are attracted to are birdfeeders, fruit, smelly compost, livestock and livestock feed, pet food, and dirty barbecues. “Ensure these things are not available to wildlife and chances are that bears will just wander on by and cause no conflict,” said Davies. “The bonus is that removing the availability of these food sources also means that rodents, coyotes, and cougars are less likely to pay a visit to your property.”

For more information on managing bear attractants please visit www.wildsafebc.com. To report wildlife sightings or conflicts with wildlife please call the RAPP Line at 1-877-952 7277.

WildSafeBC gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Columbia Basin Trust, BC Conservation Foundation, the Ministry of Environment, and Revelstoke Bear Aware. Revelstoke WildSafeBC also appreciates the on-going in-kind support from Parks Canada.

Press Release: July 04

Got fruit ripening on the tree? Call the Gleaning Project!

Revelstoke Bear Aware is once again running the Gleaning Project in 2014. For those not in the know, the Gleaning Project is where volunteers help harvest excess fruit and take it to Community Connections Food Bank.

“Leaving fruit on the tree or on the ground to rot is just asking for bears to come and snack at your place,” said Sue Davies, coordinator for Revelstoke Bear Aware. “And as the saying goes, a fed bear is a dead bear, and a far more dangerous bear too,” she said. “If you can pick your own fruit, then do so; if you have too much, take it to the food bank. If you can't harvest your own fruit, that's when to call the Gleaning Project to come help. Volunteers will harvest the fruit, the volunteer pickers get to keep some, and the rest goes to the food bank. It's a win-win-win situation,” said Davies.

“Last year I noticed that many people were independently gleaning fruit around town,” said Davies. “People were just asking their neighbours or other fruit tree owners if they could help with harvesting, and many good relationships developed, which is great. People who want to eat local and harvest whatever is available are exactly what we need here in bear country!”

At this time of year, cherries are just beginning to come ripe. If your tree is ready and you can't manage, or if you want to be one of those volunteer pickers, call Sue Davies on 250 837 8624 or email beaware@telus.net.

If you have harvested your fruit and there is too much for you to enjoy it all, you can either take the excess directly to the food bank on Friday mornings from 8:00am at 600 1st St. W., or call Sue and she will take it to the food bank for you.

If you spot a bear eating fruit (or any other human food) the number to call to report it is 1 877 952 RAPP (7277). This number gets you through to the provincial call centre and the information

then comes through to Revelstoke Bear Aware and is entered into the interactive map of bear sightings.

Revelstoke Bear Aware thanks the Revelstoke Community Foundation, Columbia Basin Trust, Revelstoke Credit Union, Lush Cosmetics, BC Hydro, the BC Conservation Foundation, and Parks Canada for support for the program this year. For more information on managing bear attractants please visit www.revelstokebearaware.org or call Sue Davies on 250 837 8624.

Press Release: July 14

WildSafeBC encourages Revelstoke residents to heed “Bear in Area” signs

In the last few weeks there have been two separate incidents in Revelstoke where bears have either tried to enter houses or have actually broken in. Revelstoke has been lucky in the recent past; there have been no really serious conflicts with bears. However, this year looks set to a busy one for bears. “Two mild years with good wild food have probably increased the natural bear survival rate,” said Sue Davies, coordinator for WildSafeBC, “which means that pressure on town food sources will be on the increase. If bears come to town in search of food, it is everyone’s responsibility to ensure that they don’t find anything.”

So we know there are bears in Revelstoke, but where exactly? WildSafeBC is now making the presence of bears highly visible on the street. Observant residents of the Big Eddy, CPR hill, Columbia Park, Arrow Heights, and Red Devil Hill areas will have noticed bright yellow lawn signs stating that there is a bear in the area and asking that all bear attractants are secured.

“I get to know where all the bears are because people report them to the RAPP line”, said Davies “and I wanted everyone else to know too. So I thought I’d put up those very visible signs. I’ll be putting them there only for a day or two, so if you see one you know there is a really good reason to make sure your property is not going to be the one attracting the bear.”

If you see a sign, please ensure that your garbage is locked away, your fruit trees are harvested, your barbeque is clean and locked away, your birdfeeder is taken down for the summer, outdoor fridges and freezers are secured against wildlife, and your pet and livestock food is securely stored. These are the primary things that bears and other wildlife such as coyotes tend to get into.

For more information on managing wildlife attractants please visit www.wildsafebc.com. To report wildlife sightings or conflicts with wildlife please call the RAPP line at 1-877-952 7277. WildSafeBC gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Columbia Basin Trust, BC Conservation Foundation, the Ministry of Environment, and Revelstoke Bear Aware. Revelstoke WildSafeBC also appreciates the on-going in-kind support from Parks Canada.

Press Release: July 19

Glacier House teams up with WildSafeBC for positive changes

Glacier House Resort recently called in Sue Davies of WildSafeBC to present to their entire staff about keeping conflict with wildlife to a minimum. The resort is under new management and the new owner, Daniel Kellie, has great enthusiasm for making sure that the environmental impact of the resort is as small as possible.

“They called me to help with making the property less attractive to wildlife and with educating the staff, so the staff could pass on their understanding of wildlife to their guests. I just wish everyone were as proactive about reducing conflict with wildlife. Some other businesses are going a long

way toward being wildlife-aware, but Glacier House has really gone the extra mile”, said Davies. “The very best way to approach the problem of wildlife conflict is to avoid it in the first place, and Glacier House is on the right track,” she said.

Earlier consultation with WildSafeBC led to the installation of bear-resistant steel bins on the property, secure storage of food waste including a locked grease barrel, and now the staff have had a full presentation on wildlife and how to avoid conflict. Each room will also have brochures on bears, coyotes, cougar, and deer, with brochures available for guests to take away also.

WildSafeBC is committed to teaching people how to reduce conflict with wild animals in Revelstoke. “I’d love for other resorts, hotels, camp grounds, and even restaurants in the area to be as proactive as Glacier House”, said Davies. “I’d be more than willing to put together a package to suit each business; brochures, information session with staff, helping with reducing wildlife attractants on the property and such. And this applies to those businesses down town too. Remember, there are certainly bears and coyotes throughout the whole town, even the occasional cougar too,” she said.

You can contact Sue Davies on 250 837 8624 or at revelstoke@wildsafebc.com to take up her offer of wildlife-proofing your business. For more information on managing wildlife attractants please visit www.wildsafebc.com or www.revelstokebearaware.org. To report wildlife sightings or conflicts with wildlife please call the RAPP line at 1-877-952 7277.

WildSafeBC gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Columbia Basin Trust, BC Conservation Foundation, the Ministry of Environment, and Revelstoke Bear Aware. Revelstoke WildSafeBC also appreciates the on going in-kind support from Parks Canada.

Press Release: July 30

WildSafeBC predicts a bumper crop of bears in fruit trees this year.

WildSafeBC coordinator, Sue Davies says that this year is shaping up to be a very busy year for bear conflicts. “Already this year we have had 67 reports of bears in town, nearly twice as many as the total count last year, and we are not even into the really busy time yet,” she said.

Most of the bear reports involved bears into either garbage or cherry trees. “For a week or two there, the phone was going non-stop with people complaining that there was a bear in their cherry tree,” said Davies. “I had to keep telling people over and over, the bear is there because the fruit is there. If you don’t want the bear, harvest your fruit.”

The problem many people have is that their fruit tree is enormous - too tall and a huge job to harvest. So, prune the tree. A tree that is well pruned can still provide good shade, and the upside is that the fruit is likely to be much higher quality, as well as being far easier to harvest.

“We need to be more proactive about our fruit trees. Leaving food, including fruit “for the bears” is actually an offence under the Wildlife Act, as well as a significant danger to people in the neighbourhood, and the ultimate cause of many instances of bears being destroyed,” said Davies. “Now plum and apple season is coming up fast and people need to be responsible for their fruit.”

The Conservation Officers from Golden and Vernon are active here in town and have set several bear traps in areas where bears have become food conditioned, although no bears have yet been caught. Conservation Officers have the power to issue fines to those people who consistently allow wildlife access to food such as rotting fruit or garbage on their property. So far they have not issued any fines, but the likelihood is that they will need to take some action if residents don’t look after their fruit and garbage.

If you don’t want all your own fruit, consider taking the excess to the food bank (open 8am on Friday mornings at the Legion on Garden St), or advertise it on the Stoke List as pick-your-own.

If you are unable to harvest your tree, please call the Gleaning Project (250 837 8624) and volunteers will harvest the fruit and take it to the food bank for you.

WildSafeBC will be also conducting garbage tagging over the next few weeks to remind people that garbage should be kept secure from wildlife at all times and only be at the curb from 6am to midnight on the day of collection.

For more information on managing wildlife attractants please visit www.wildsafebc.com. To report wildlife sightings or conflicts with wildlife please call the RAPP line at 1-877-952 7277.

WildSafeBC gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Columbia Basin Trust, BC Conservation Foundation, the Ministry of Environment, and Revelstoke Bear Aware. Revelstoke WildSafeBC also appreciates the on-going in-kind support from Parks Canada.

Press Release: August 26

Three bears destroyed in town - WildSafeBC issues a Public Advisory.

As expected from early numbers of bear reports, Revelstoke now has large numbers of bears roaming town and looking for food. “Three bears have now been destroyed in Revelstoke this season,” said Sue Davies of WildSafeBC, “and if we don’t clean up the garbage and ripe fruit, more are likely to follow.” WildSafeBC, in partnership with Revelstoke Bear Aware, are issuing a public advisory to help raise awareness of the issue, and encourage residents to manage all bear attractants.

“Look for the public advisory flyer in your mail, on public notice boards, and on social media,” said Davies. “Read the list on the flyer of all the things bears might be attracted to, then put yourself in the bear’s shoes, and look at your property as an area to forage for food. If you find anything that a bear might eat, secure it! If you don’t secure your bear attractants then the story below, which happened here just a few days ago, will unfold over and over again this season.”

A habituated black bear walked down the middle of the street in the middle of the day systematically going through garbage cans put out for collection. Probably the same bear that showed interest in entering a home in the same area. The Conservation Officer was called and a trap was set. Within the day the bear was caught and destroyed as a ‘problem bear’.

But before you get all riled up about the Conservation Officers having to shoot this bear, consider the history of this bear and the reason it is in this situation in the first place.

It was probably living a wild life accessing all sorts of wild foods with a healthy respect for humans and the danger they posed to it, when it noticed a huge cherry tree just dripping with ripe fruit so it stopped by for a feed. People in the neighbourhood saw the bear and stopped to take photos, some of them shouted and honked their horns, some dogs barked, but the bear soon learned that the shouting, honking, and barking didn’t hurt, so it continued to eat cherries. Then it moved on to the tree next door.

A couple of weeks of this had it very comfortable with the presence of humans, and when the cherries dried up and ran out, it moved on to the garbage can that was left beside the back door of one of the houses. The next day was garbage day in the neighbourhood and suddenly there were garbage cans everywhere. The bear’s lack of fear of humans led it to wander down the middle of the road checking out each bin, even though people were still shouting at it.

The bear’s next move was to go up the steps and sniff at the screen door of one of those houses. Suddenly the humans saw this as a serious threat to their safety and the bear is now a ‘problem bear’.

But really, it is not the bear that’s the problem; the problem is the cherry tree, the garbage, and the humans that didn’t manage to keep these things from feeding the bear.

We have a very good public awareness program in Revelstoke concerning what to do to reduce the risk of conflict with bears, but many residents choose not to follow the basic advice, which is to secure all items that attract bears.

Cherry and other fruit trees are allowed to grow out of control, the fruit left to drop and rot on the ground; garbage is stored by the back door or on the front deck; fridges and freezers are kept on porches; people believe that their chickens are safe because they are in the middle of town or they have a wooden coop (even though bears naturally rip apart logs to get at insects); birdfeeders are stuffed full of high calorie bird (or bear) food and left hanging in a tree as an open invitation to a bear.

The problem is not the bear! Secure all bear attractants now to encourage bears to go and forage in the wild and avoid being destroyed or becoming dangerous and causing someone harm.

For more information on managing wildlife attractants please visit www.wildsafebc.com. To report wildlife sightings or conflicts with wildlife please call the RAPP line at 1-877-952 7277.

WildSafeBC gratefully acknowledges the financial support of Columbia Basin Trust, BC Conservation Foundation, the Ministry of Environment, and Revelstoke Bear Aware. Revelstoke WildSafeBC also appreciates the on-going in-kind support from Parks Canada.

Press Release: October 27

Breaking and entering - food-conditioned bears dining in Revelstoke

Last week, a bear broke into several homes in Arrow Heights, some of them twice. Bears in other parts of town have also been causing havoc - ripping siding off houses, breaking fences, tearing into garbage sheds, pushing on windows, and generally becoming very comfortable dining on our unmanaged foods. These bears have a history of getting into our non-natural food sources; they didn't just suddenly start breaking into homes, they came to it because we left garbage and other foods out as an invitation.

Many people feel that bears were here first and we should just accept that they are a part of the natural world here in Revelstoke. That may be true, however when bears were in this valley before the town of Revelstoke was here, this was just another valley, and garbage, garden-variety fruit trees, bird-feeders, and pet food were not here as an attractant. We, the community of Revelstoke, have made this area a place where non-natural food sources for bears are over abundant. We cannot blame the bears for acting on their instincts and coming here from far and wide to partake of the food we leave out.

The prognosis for these food-conditioned bears is not good. As with the bear that was destroyed after spending the night in a tree by Home Hardware, and the other 8 bears that have so far been destroyed this year in Revelstoke, these bears will probably be removed and destroyed as soon as possible. They have become conditioned to eating human food, habituated to humans, and are now considered a public safety concern.

As responsible humans, we can think this through and realize that attracting bears and then destroying them because they are large, powerful, and unpredictable is unacceptable. To live here in harmony with the local population of bears we need to make absolutely sure that we keep all our food sources secured.

Garbage is the most common bear attractant in Revelstoke, especially at this time of year when fruit trees are mostly finished. **It is the responsibility of each and every resident of Revelstoke to ensure that their garbage is not accessible to bears.** Quite aside from the bylaw that says as much, our neighbourhood safekeeping depends upon it.

Unfortunately there are many people in Revelstoke who do not have a garage or access to another form of bear resistant garbage storage. We suggest that careful management of your

garbage is the best practice. Keep all food waste separate and store in the freezer in a sealed bag until collection day.

The City is currently considering creating a bear-resistant garbage collection system. Please lend your support to this issue by asking council candidates their views on timely implementation of the system.

For more information regarding management of wildlife attractants, please see www.revelstokebearaware.org. To report a conflict with a bear please call the RAPP line on 1 877 952 7277. Conservation Officers from Golden and Vernon will respond to calls in Revelstoke.

Revelstoke Bear Aware gratefully acknowledges support from Columbia Basin Trust, BC Hydro, Lush Cosmetics, Revelstoke Credit Union, Revelstoke Community Foundation, and WildSafeBC. Revelstoke WildSafeBC and also appreciates the on-going in-kind support from Parks Canada.