

**City of Rossland
Bear Aware Program**

Year End Report 2006

Prepared By:

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**City of Rossland Bear Aware Program
2006 Year End Report**

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Program Start Date: May 15 2006

Program End Date: October 27 2006

Area of Program Delivery: City of Rossland and immediate
area including Red Mountain.

Introduction

After more than half a decade of operating, Bear Aware is a well established community program in Rossland and has clearly made an impression on this town. The Bear Aware 'Brand' is well recognized and it's services are known and used. Most residents clearly understand the role that this program plays and behaviours have changed noticeably since it's inception. Repetition is the key to learning however and some residents grow complacent with regard to managing attractants. Also, there is a definite transient nature to the city of Rossland and new residents definitely need and value this education. The Bear Aware program is succeeding but with continuing development at Red Resort and the Golf Course it definitely needs a place in this community for the future.

Community Profile

Historic

An alpine city in the Selkirk Mountains of more than 3500 people, Rossland is located at a high elevation (about 3800 feet) in close proximity to both Black and Grizzly Bear habitat. Bears den in the winter close by and use the alpine meadows to feed. Travel corridors for these large mammals go through town and over the course of the season Bears move all the way down to the valley bottoms through Warfield and into Trail. Sub-Alpine forests and meadows surround this community and in their travels bears often find themselves surrounded by residential development. Although our community can be somewhat porous to bear travel, there are

reports of highly habituated bears in city limits every year. So far there have been no serious encounters with bears in Rossland. With continued development however, the risk of conflict increases. Numbers of complaints about bears also relates to availability of natural food. An early thaw provided little food and more bear complaints were received in the spring. While the huckleberry crop failed this fall, blue elderberry and mountain ash were in abundance.

When bears pose a threat to human safety, conservation officers have to destroy bears. These animals are always human food conditioned and highly habituated. While bears seem to move throughout all areas of the town, there are some high traffic areas where more complaints and sightings were reported. Trail-heads near the town perimeter, ravines and green corridors are obvious examples of these areas however there are examples of bears in the downtown corridor this season. While many of these sightings are just bears passing through town many are seeking the popular attractants of garbage and fruit trees.

In Rossland most residents are responsible with bear attractants. Rossland has both curbside pick-up and a central transfer station for household waste. There are many fruit trees in this town. A lot of people use this fruit but much of it falls to the ground unused and provides a free lunch to bears travelling through. Residents are still hesitant to remove these unused trees. Many residents enjoy watching bears eating their fruit and have trouble associating this as an unnatural attractant. Many 'rogue' fruit trees are scattered throughout town as a result of bear droppings. Other bear food in city limits includes mountain ash, blue elderberry, rosehips and oregon grape. Many feel that removal of this food source would be like 'sterilizing' the community. The solution is not an easy one.

There are no large commercial bear-proof dumpsters in town but those that are used here keep bears out as long as they are locked. Several of these bins are damaged and will not close and there were a couple of cases in which businesses were not keeping these bins locked and thus, bears were attracted. This occurred in the downtown area with the Prestige Inn and Subway.

Current

2006 appears to have been a slightly higher than average year for bear activity in Rossland. Bears have the ability to delay implantation of fertilized eggs until a desired body weight is met. With the bumper crop of huckleberries in the fall of 2005, many new cubs were born in the late winter. With an early heat wave and snow-pack thaw in May of 2006 bears awoke to find very little food and as a result juvenile bears on their own were searching farther for food resulting in high numbers of bear complaints in the spring. More than half of the calls to Conservation Officers were made in the spring. Over 60 calls to the RAPP line were made this season and only two bears were destroyed by CO's. There were a couple of instances where residents took it upon themselves to destroy bears. Mid-season, most of the program delivery specialists got together in Midway to discuss ideas, share stories and bond as a team. It was an excellent opportunity to relax with co-workers and exchange information.

Rossland Bear Sightings/Complaints

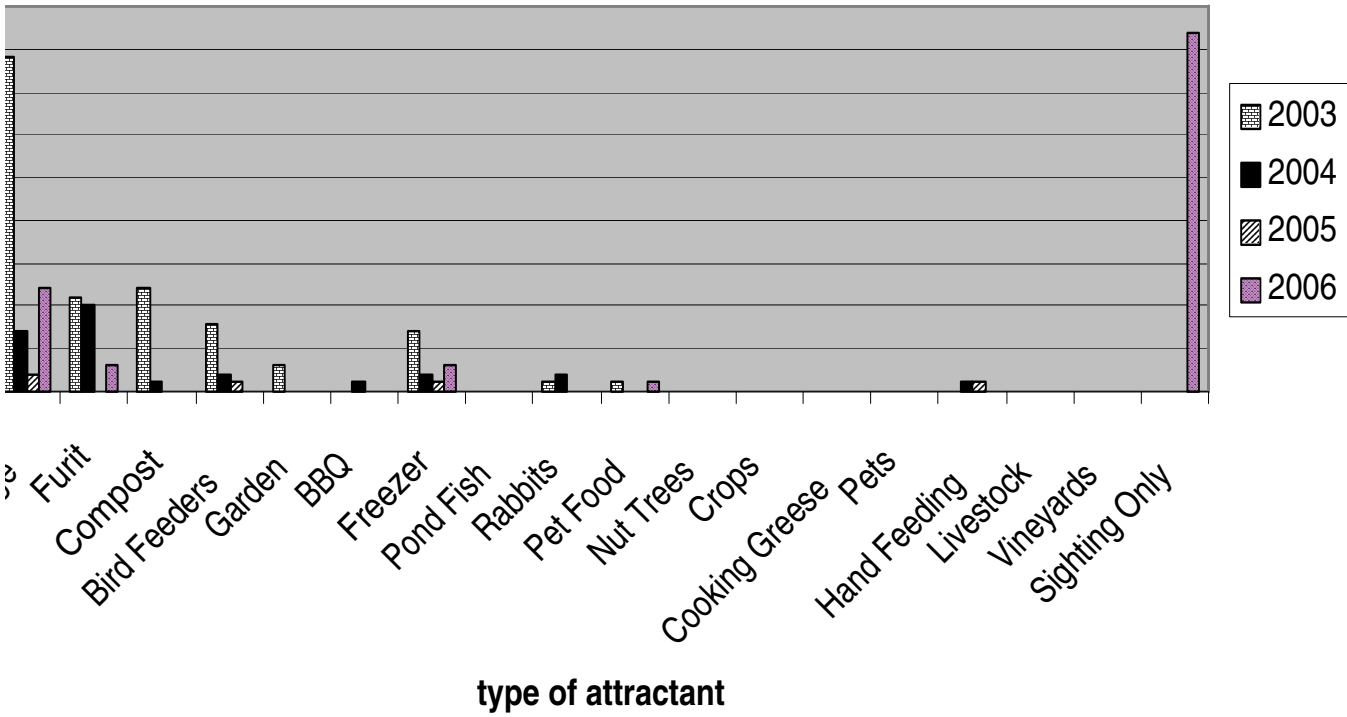
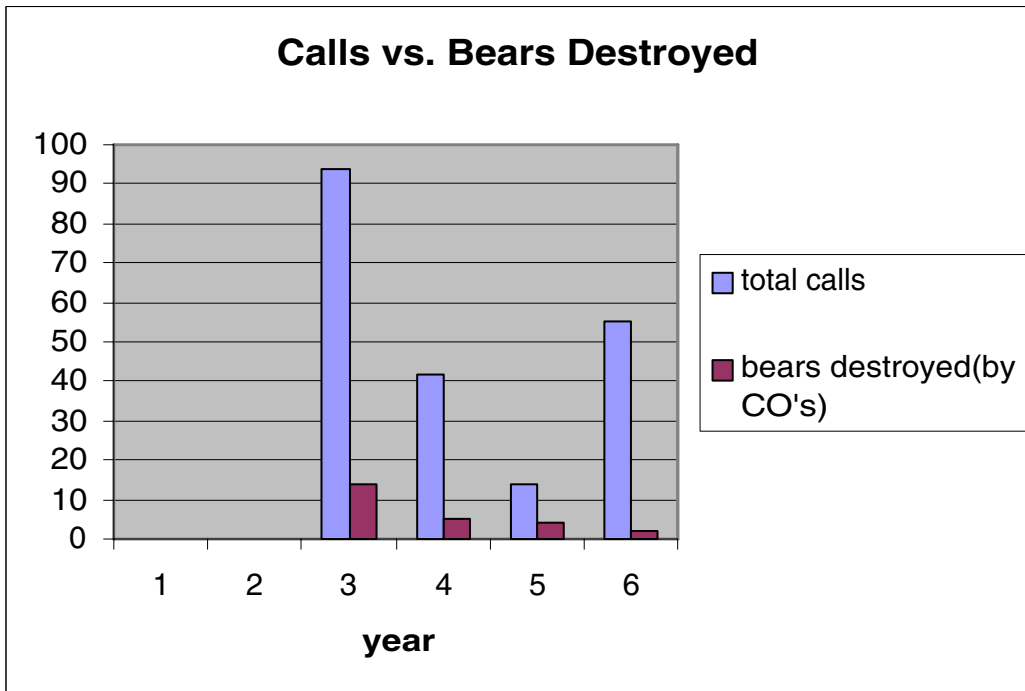


figure 1



Program Delivery

A variety of methods were used this season to deliver the Bear Aware Program in Rossland. Adding some new and different approaches helped to reach different groups of people in the community and kept the message fresh in the minds of residents. Methods for delivering the program are preventative or reactive.

Preventative methods included:

- Upgrading and showing our display at community events.
- Education presentations at schools and other events.
- Working with media to give up to date reports of bear activity and Encouraging listeners / readers to properly manage attractants
- Bear lore/mythology series and story telling
- Bear theme movie night
- Fruit tree stripping and management program
- Municipal policy: pursuing a bear attractant bylaw.

Reactive methods included:

- Posting of signs where bears were seen- specifically on trails and trailheads
- Door to door campaigning
- Dangerous Wildlife Protection Orders by Conservation Officers

Displays at community events

Bear Aware set up a display to educate, distribute literature, updated bear sightings and collect bear stories at several events in the course of the season.

These included:

- Spring Wing Ding Sidewalk Sales in Rossland
- Canada Day celebrations in Jubilee Park,
- BC Rivers Day in Trail
- The Fall Fair (Golden City Days),
- Ferraro Foods
- Golden City Days parade

Door to Door Campaigns

This method of program delivery was used in Rossland in a reactive way. Almost all of the residents of this town have heard of the Bear Aware Program and understand that many bears travel through their neighborhoods. Bear sightings and encounters are compiled by Kamloops dispatchers (RAPP line) and sent regularly. Alan Davies, the waste management person in Rossland stays in touch and relates areas or households that are having problems managing their attractants. Also, residents who were hesitant about calling the RAPP line contacted Bear Aware directly and passed on complaints. Using this information, door-to-door work was carried out in these spots. In all but one of these instances there was some degree of success.

Door to Door campaigns included:

- **June:** Nickel Plate and 4th ave
Behind old hospital / ambulance
Columbia and Highway 3 (behind Grind Coffee House)

- **July:** Behind Subway
Thompson and Victoria ave.

- **September:** Monte Cristo and Fifth
Victoria and Leroi area

Posting of Bear Warning Signs

Since bear activity in city limits is so common in Rossland, the posting of 'Bear in Area' signs would be a busy and futile job. Instead, door-to-door work was used in town and some signs were posted on outlying trails. Signs were posted on the seven summits trail and in Squaw Basin warning hikers of recent Grizzly bear sightings. A more proactive approach was taken by posting bear safety signs on all the trailheads in the area educating users about the differences between black and grizzly bears and how to react in an encounter, etc.

Fruit Tree Management Program

The fruit tree stripping program has been strong for almost five years now. Volunteers receive calls and fully pick fruit trees that residents are unable to pick for whatever reason. Excess fruit is taken to BEAKS (bird rehabilitation) in Blueberry or to the Trail landfill. Advertisements were placed in the newspapers/periodicals in the area and calls were received from Rossland, Warfield, Trail, and Montrose. In all cases residents were encouraged to heavily prune or remove these trees.

Waste Management

Residents are diligent about putting garbage out only on the morning of collection day but there were reports of bears getting into household garbage left outside overnight. Rossland also has a central transfer station that people can bring their garbage to. This spot is located on the outside of town in high bear traffic areas and has always been a concern. These containers are open so they can be accessed by the public but this creates a safety concern as it is a constant bear attractant as well. Working with Alan Davies (waste management), costing for a modular fenced compound to go around these bins was carried out. This option was too expensive and not safe. It has been decided that new bear-proof bins with a latching door would be a better and less costly alternative and the Rossland Bear Aware program has agreed to pay a portion of this cost using the funds that the City of Rossland contributed to the program. These bins will be ready for use next season.

Public Presentations

Several different groups requested Bear Aware presentations throughout the season. These were tailored to the age groups and venue in each case. In the spring, each class at MacLean Elementary was given a presentation in the library. Children are very receptive to the Bear Aware message and feedback from teachers and parents was all positive. 'Bear Sign' hikes were conducted with Rossland Recreation day camps during the course of the summer.

Presentations included:**June:**

- Bear Safety presentation to the Girl Guides at Camp Rory in Patterson.
- Bear safety presentation to the 'Green Lady Spirit Gathering' at Camp Rory in Patterson.

July:

- Guided a group of day camp kids with Rossland Recreation where we hiked a short local trail and discussed bear safety and bear 'sign'.

August:

- Presented a 'Bear Movie Night' and showed 'Grizzly Man' and 'Staying Safe in Bear Country'. A table was set up to educate and distribute literature as well as obtain signatures for the bylaw petition.

September:

- Presentation to the boy scouts

Bear Lore/Mythology series

Research into the anthropological side of bears and their role in our folktales and mythology was conducted and a series of articles were published in local periodicals. This was a new way of reaching a different audience and keeping residents thinking about bear activity in town and helping to promote awareness for the program.

These included:

- 'The Girl Who Married a Bear' - a North American Native tale- published in the Pennywise (buy and sell)
- How the Bear Lost its Tale- published in the CoffeeMate

- The Calista Myth of Ursa Major- published in the CoffeeMate
- 'The Circumpolar Bear Cult and You' (to be published in West Kootenay Family this fall)

Bears in Art Show

Local artists were contacted and a collective of art with bears as the central theme was successfully shown for just over one month at a busy coffee house. Again this was a new and creative way to keep the Bear Aware message fresh. Literature was available throughout the showing and an opening night was successful with the cooperation of the local arts council.

Working With Local Government

Since Bear Aware has been in Rossland, the city council here has supported the program both financially and in-kind. This season waste management bylaws were looked into and the final draft of the bear attractant bylaw was again proposed to the current council. A petition was circulated by volunteers and many residents signed the petition to support passing this bylaw. City council voted against pursuing the bylaw further for several reasons including:

- they felt that such a bylaw would not be enforceable
- it would be costly to replace existing garbage cans just recently purchased for the downtown corridor.
- it would be better to rework the existing waste management bylaws

In the fall several complaints were received about open garbage cans in city limits. These included the centennial trail-head, the high school soccer fields and the soccer fields next to the lions campground. Council agreed to temporarily remove these bins and look into purchasing / costs for bear proof bins in the upcoming budget.

Media Relations

Getting the Bear Aware message to the people through the local media is a key element in this position. Several interviews were conducted with KBS and articles were a

regular occurrence in the Trail Times. A public service loop was seen on Shaw cable and an interview early in the season was widely viewed. Bear Aware has partnerships with the Rossland Radio Co-op and gains much exposure there.

Bear Aware Radio Interview Series

The Bear Aware program shares office space with the Rossland Radio Cooperative. Three half hour and one short interview were conducted with regard to bears, bear aware and wildlife concerns. Interviews have been played repetetively on the community radio station and will be made available for downloading at rosslandradio.com and rosslandbearaware.org.

Guests included:

- Aileen Zanier: a local woman who encountered a bear while mountain biking.
- Joanne Siderius, program delivery specialist and senior mentor with Bear Aware in the Kootenay area.
- Ann Quarterman, former Bear Aware program delivery specialist and Grizzly attack survivor.
- Tobe Sprado, conservation officer.

Volunteers

Volunteers were very helpful this season to carry out tasks such as the fruit tree picking program, gaining signatures for the bear attractant bylaw, updating and managing our website, cleaning up 'staging areas', posting trailhead signs and compiling map data for our display.

Working with Conservation Officers

Over the course of the season two Dangerous Wildlife Protection orders were issued by conservation officers. The Prestige Inn was compliant when ordered to change their dumpster system. Bears were not reported in this location after the changes were made. Subway restaurant was also compliant. RAPP line sightings were made available and the lines of communication and support between the Conservation

Officers in Castlegar and Rossland Bear Aware are symbiotic.

The Future of Rossland Bear Aware

- Continued funding from the City of Rossland will be pursued for the upcoming season as well as requesting additional funding from the City of Trail, Warfield and the Regional District. Bears do not recognize municipal boundaries and there are many calls from other areas. Fruit trees and attractant problems are a concern here and shared funding for this program should be expected.
- Continue to update bear Hazard Assessment and sightings map and have a smaller version printed for public.
- **Promote Bear Smart in Rossland.** Like Whistler, Revelstoke and North Vancouver, Rossland has the potential to be seen as a bear tolerant community. With the right attitudes we can co-exist with these intelligent large mammals and promote this to tourists from areas where the bear is extirpated.
- An ongoing bear sightings posting in the downtown area.
- **Improvement of the Fruit Program** including: Fruit drives to help with the removal of this attractant. Fruit exchanges, and a public canning area like the one in Summerland to use rather than dump this food. Partnerships with local pruners and greenhouses to replace or better utilize this resource.
- **Arts and Culture:** Continue research into the anthropological side of this iconic animal and pursue publishing a book of local bear stories and bear lore with local artists contributing. Work with Renate Flemming to find funding for artwork in the downtown area.
- **By-Laws:** Begin working with city administrators and council to rethink the proposed bear attractant bylaw.
- Continue education and public information displays. With additional funding from other political units this will mean reaching many more people.

- **Downtown Bear Walk:** organize volunteers and local shop owners with the cooperation of the Chamber of Commerce and the City of Rossland to paint a trail of bear paw prints on the city sidewalks. If businesses want to contribute the prints could go to their door.

§ **Grizzly Bears:** There **are** Brown Bears in this area. Areas include the southern end of Nancy Green Lake, Red Mountain, Violin Lakes, Squaw Basin and Seven Summits trail. It is difficult to predict how many bears there are but they are still considered threatened in this region and small isolated populations such as this warrant more attention. I would like to see the mapping of grizzly territory and look into the potential for increased research here.

Acknowledgements



Of course the BCCF needs to be thanked, Barb and Angela as well as the City of Rossland for their support of monetary and in-kind funding. Alan Davies, Ann Quarterman, Joanne Siderius and all program delivery specialists that kept the networking going. Jacques and Bridgette, Stuart Spooner with the Rossland Trails society, and all the volunteers who helped out. Thanks to Tobe and Ben the conservation officers who were very cooperative. Woniya and all of the fruit pickers who stripped a lot of trees. Maritza Reilly at the Chamber of Commerce, Liz Arsenault at Jelly Bean Junction, Kim and Brad at the Alpine Grind coffee house. Also, thanks to anyone else who helped out and thanks to the bears.