



WildSmart Community Program

A proactive conservation strategy that encourages efforts by communities to reduce negative human - wildlife interactions

2017 Annual Report

WildSmart is a Program of the



Our Goal

To develop a coordinated approach to education/outreach programs and help support direct management activities that will aid in increasing public safety and enjoyment as well as contribute towards sustainable wildlife populations.

Highlights of 2017



- 25 *Wildlife Awareness Talks* were presented in 2017. These talks teach attendees about local wildlife, what we know about them, and how we can use that information to avoid/handle potential conflicts at home, in town, and on the trail. We also developed a new interactive “WildSmart on the Trail” program designed to give participants an experiential learning opportunity through various “bear” encounters out on the trail.

- 39 *bear spray training sessions* took place in 2017. These demos with inert training bear spray give participants the opportunity to feel comfortable with this deterrent before they find themselves in a high-pressure situation. Typically, a cut-out black bear silhouette is used to help participants better understand the size of an animal and the effective range of the spray.



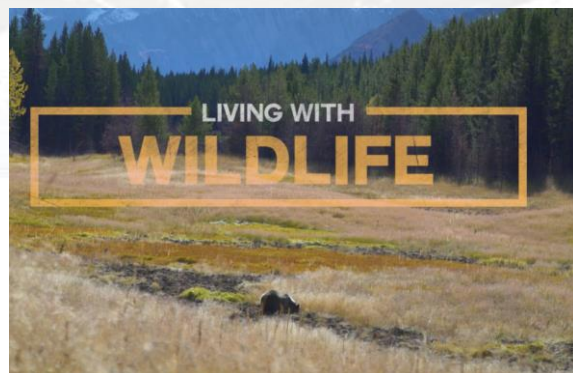
- WildSmart attended 23 *community events* in 2017. Booths at these events encourage participants to ask questions on a variety of topics. Props and visuals allow the facilitator to steer dialogue towards reducing negative human-wildlife interactions. Booths are catered to different events in order to spark conversations about topics that are relevant to the event and its participants.

- 36 *children's programs* (Preschool-Grade 12) were presented in schools, summer camps, and youth groups within our operating area. Programs progressively build on human-wildlife safety messages from recognizing animals, to giving them space, to active avoidance, and handling conflicts. These programs continue to receive positive feedback, and have helped build good working relationships with teachers at all of our local schools.



- The *Volunteer Wildlife Ambassadors Program*, co-managed by WildSmart and Alberta Parks, had 20 dedicated volunteers on trails and at local events throughout 2017 discussing the needs of wildlife and conflict avoidance in our valley. Volunteers contributed over 390 hours and spoke with over 4,146 people on local trails.

- The *WildSmart Speaker Series* continues to educate and create interest in the Bow Valley community. Speakers are generally wildlife experts who discuss relevant human-wildlife issues that are taking place in our area, or in similar locations across Alberta. In 2017, two film screening events averaging more than 200 attendees each were made possible with support from Lafarge Canada and the Rotary Club of Canmore. One of these films *Living with Wildlife*, highlights some of the innovative programs (including WildSmart) that exist in the Bow Valley in order for people and wildlife to co-exist.



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- In 2017, WildSmart produced a new *Living Smart with Wildlife* brochure to help visitors and residents avoid and manage wildlife encounters. The highly popular brochure is distributed throughout the Bow Valley and Kananaskis Country. This updated version includes extra information about road side wildlife viewing, mountain biking and pets.

- Social Media continued to grow in 2017, largely due to increased postings by WildSmart staff. We maintain a popular website, Facebook and Twitter pages. During bear season, WildSmart provides a weekly bear report prepared in collaboration with Alberta Environment and Parks. Facebook continues to be an effective outreach tool for reaching large numbers quickly with our messages (some posts reached over 26,000 people). However, the interactive aspects of Facebook were not fully utilized due to the staff time required for site moderation.

Platform	Followers – Jan 1, 2017	Followers – Dec 31, 2017	Growth in 2017
Facebook	3,800	4,766	+ 966
Twitter	1,624	1,766	+ 142
Mailing List	922	1,215	+ 293



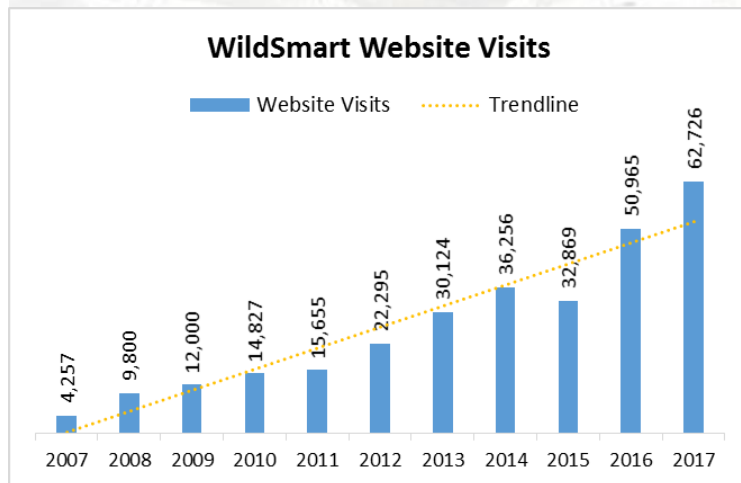
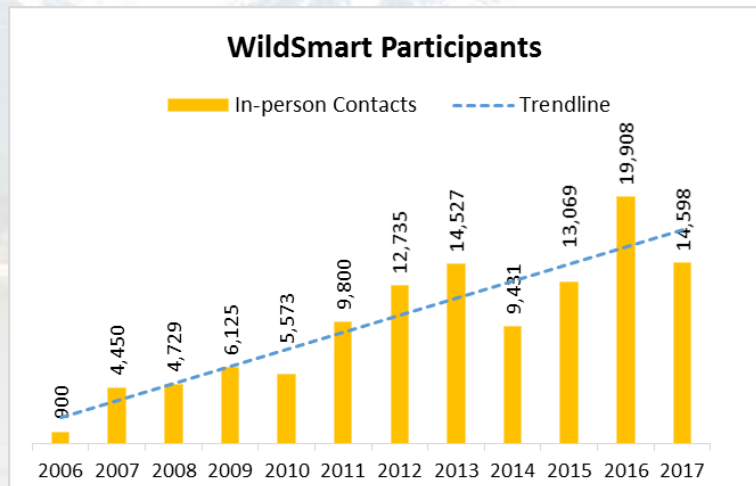
- WildSmart’s *Nature for Newcomers* Program provides avoidance and safety messages in different languages to meet the needs of locals and visitors. These resources are available online and in hard copy from our office and at events and presentations.

- *Media Relations* continue to be a big part of sharing our messages. WildSmart had 56 media contacts in 2017, including TV, radio, print, and online articles. During the busy berry season from the end of July to early September, WildSmart provided a weekly spot on Global TV Morning News to deliver safety messages to the greater Calgary area. We are continuously building positive relationships with media outlets locally and across Alberta to share proactive messages and safety comments pertaining to current events.



Contact Summary

- In 2017, WildSmart education programs were delivered to **14,598** individuals through in-person methods. This number includes personal contacts by Volunteer Wildlife Ambassadors. This number does not include non-personal online contacts via social media, brochures, print/radio/television media, or visits to our website.



- Visits to our website continue to grow alongside our knowledge of how to drive traffic to our website from other social media sources. We expect to grow our use of the website as we continue to explore synergies between our various online resources and those of our partners.

Thank You!

The success of our WildSmart Program relies on working collaboratively with our partners. The WildSmart Advisory Committee and the Biosphere Institute’s Board of Directors and staff wish to thank all the sponsors, partners and volunteers who make our work possible. Thanks to the following, as well as to all our other donors, who have generously supported our efforts this past year.



TD Friends of the Environment Foundation





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Support the WildSmart Program!

Contributions from the community help support WildSmart programs.

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To support the WildSmart Program, please contact:

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Tax receipts for donations are provided upon request.

