



WildSmart Community Program

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

2016 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.

Recognition



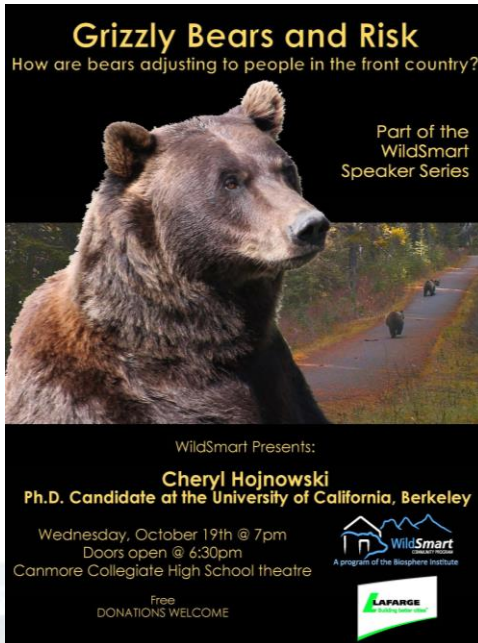
In 2016, the Volunteer Wildlife Ambassador Program, co-managed by WildSmart and Alberta Parks, won the Paul Greig Memorial Award for Environmental Stewardship as part of the Mayor's Awards for Volunteer Excellence in Canmore. WildSmart's successes will also be highlighted in *Living with Wildlife*, an upcoming documentary on the subject of the human-wildlife relationship in the Bow Valley.

Highlights of 2016

- WildSmart attended 28 *community events* in 2016. 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 to spark new conversations, sometimes with the same people.



- 26 *children's programs* (Preschool-Grade 12) were presented in schools within our operating area. Programs progressively build on human-wildlife safety messages from recognizing animals, to giving them space, to active avoidance, and actively 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 *WildSmart Speaker Series* continues to educate and create interest in the Bow Valley community. Speakers are generally wildlife experts who can speak to human-wildlife issues that are taking place in our area or similar locations across Alberta and Western Canada. In 2016, 2 events averaging more than 100 attendees each were made possible with support from Lafarge Canada.

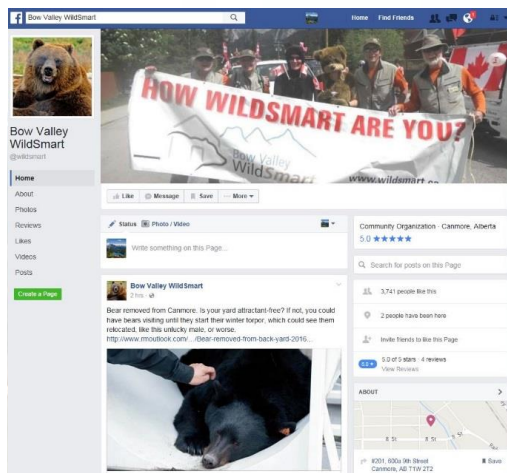
- 24 *Wildlife Awareness Talks* were presented in 2016. These talks teach attendees about local wildlife, what we know about them, and how we can use that information to avoid/handle potential conflicts at home, in town, and on the trail. In 2016, 2 new talks were created on the subject of avoiding encounters with wildlife in summer and winter.



- 32 *bear spray training* sessions took place in 2016. 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.

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- The *Volunteer Wildlife Ambassadors* Program, co-managed by WildSmart and Alberta Parks, had 20 dedicated participants on trails and at local events throughout the summer discussing the needs of wildlife and conflict avoidance in our valley. Volunteers contributed over 440 hours and spoke with over 6,450 people on local trails.



- Social Media grew quickly in 2016, largely due to increased postings by WildSmart staff. We maintain a popular website, Facebook and twitter pages, and a weekly bear report during the bear season. Facebook continues to be an effective outreach tool for reaching large numbers quickly with our messages (some posts reached over 23,000 people). However, the interactive aspects of Facebook were not fully utilized due to the staff time required for site moderation.

Platform	Following – Jan 1 2016	Following – Dec 31 2016	Growth in 2016
Facebook	3,234	3,800	+ 566
twitter	1,441	1,624	+ 183
Mailing List	773	922	+ 149



- 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 presentations.



- *Media Relations* continue to be a big part of sharing our messages. WildSmart had 41 media contacts in 2016, including TV, radio, print, and online articles. 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 2016, WildSmart Education Programs were delivered to **19,908** individuals through personal interpretation (in-person) methods. As in previous years, 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.

WILDSMART PARTICIPANTS



WildSmart Website Visits



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 to Our Funders

The WildSmart Advisory Committee and the Biosphere Institute's Board of Directors and staff wish to thank those who have generously supported our efforts this past year:





Contact Us

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Support the WildSmart Program!

Contributions from the community help support WildSmart programs.

Registered Charitable Number:
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To support the WildSmart Program, please contact:
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Tax receipts for donations are provided upon request.