

TRENDS ANALYSIS: BEARS DESTROYED

FALL 2015



What does this measure & why is it important?

This indicator monitors the number of bears destroyed by Conservation Officers on an annual basis in the Columbia Basin-Boundary region. It also tracks reported attractants that lead to bears coming into conflict with humans. Data for this indicator were provided by the Conservation Officer Service.

There are both grizzly and black bears living throughout our region, and the vast majority of the time, humans co-exist peacefully with bears. A number of factors can cause unwanted encounters between humans and wildlife. These include factors beyond an individual's control, such as expanding development or unusual weather that causes wildlife to seek refuge outside of its natural habitat. However, the majority of human-wildlife conflict in our region is linked to bears that are drawn into our communities as a result of improper management of attractants (such as garbage or fruit trees). Unfortunately, hundreds of bears are destroyed in BC each year when they become conditioned to human food sources and therefore to humans themselves. "Human-habituated" bears represent a risk to public safety because they are less wary of humans and, in some cases, become aggressive.

Fortunately, there are many groups and individuals working to reduce human-wildlife conflict in our region. For example, WildSafeBC (formerly Bear Aware) works closely with communities and Conservation Officers to enhance public awareness of strategies to reduce bear encounters, while also implementing innovative conflict-reduction programs.

What are the trends & current conditions?

In 2014, over 90 bears were destroyed in our region by Conservation Officers (Figure 1). In comparison to 2013, that represents an approximately 47% increase. The number of bears destroyed on an annual basis varies due to a number of factors. One of the most influential factors in our region is the size of the berry crop. Strong berry (e.g., huckleberry) crops can keep bears satisfied with a natural food source, but when the crop is poor, bears tend to look elsewhere for food.

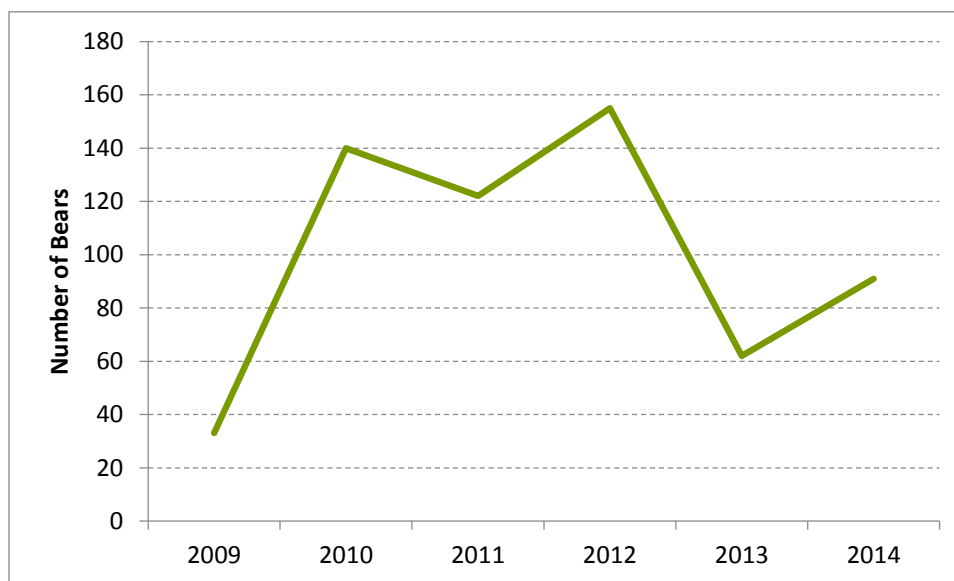


Figure 1: Total number of bears destroyed by Conservation Officers in the Basin-Boundary region, 2009-2014
Source: BC Conservation Officer Service (custom data), 2013 and 2015

Garbage is the attractant associated with the largest percentage of incidents with noted attractants, accounting for 56% of incidents in 2014 and 53% of incidents in 2013. Unpicked fruit trees (8% of 2014

incidents) and livestock/livestock feed (11% of 2014 incidents) are other commonly-cited attractants (Figure 2). For information on how to manage these attractants around your home, visit wildsafebc.com.

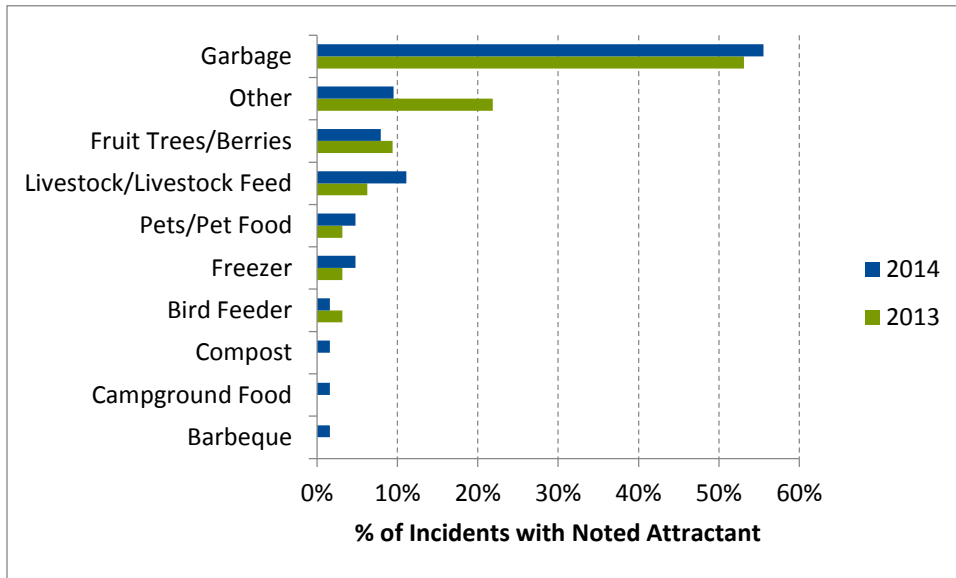


Figure 2: Attractants linked to incidents resulting in bear(s) being destroyed by Conservation Officer
Source: Conservation Officer Service (custom data), 2013 and 2015



The Columbia Basin Rural Development Institute, at Selkirk College, is a regional research centre with a mandate to support informed decision-making by Columbia Basin-Boundary communities through the provision of information, applied research and related outreach and extension support. Visit www.cbrdi.ca for more information.