

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2021

Columbia Shuswap

Prepared by: Julia Helland

WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Coordinator



Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Program between May 17th and November 30th, 2021. This is the first season for the program and WildSafeBC appreciates the efforts of all involved to bring this program to the community. The Columbia Shuswap Community Program covers the Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD) Areas C and E (Figure 1). This includes the communities of Blind Bay, Sorrento, Eagle Bay, Wild Rose Bay, White Lake, Sunnybrae, Tappen, Notch Hill, Swansea Point, Malakwa, and the Sicamous District. WildSafeBC acknowledges that the program takes place on the unceded traditional territory of the Secwépemc People. Consistent with previous years, black bears were the most reported species to the Conservation Officer Service (COS), with a total of 38 reports made from January 1 – October 31st, 2021. Black bear reports were lower than in the previous five years. After black bears, cougars and deer were the next most reported species, followed closely by grizzly bears.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed various outreach activities with the goal of preventing human-wildlife conflict in communities. Due to COVID-19, several of the standard WildSafeBC program activities were modified to ensure proper sanitization and physical distancing measures were in place. The following summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the season:

- 3 WildSafe Ranger presentations and 45 youth reached
- 11 presentations given to various community groups with a total of 213 participants
- 30 people reached through door-to-door in person and 299 door hangers with letters were left
- 6 bin tagging outings and 94 bins tagged in total, 79% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey were not found on the curb again during the second survey
- 8 display booths held at various community events and 332 people reached
- 62 Facebook posts on the WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap page and 94 new Facebook page followers from May 1st, 2021 to date
- 6 businesses approached and introduced to the Business Pledge Program
- Two campgrounds interested in participating in Bare Campsite Program in 2022 and three campgrounds were contacted and introduced to the program

WildSafeBC was involved in the formation of the Columbia Shuswap Wildlife Working Group in partnership with the Sunnybrae Stewardship Society. The purpose of the Wildlife Working Group is to facilitate knowledge sharing between the COS, local government, various community organizations, and community members to address human-wildlife conflict in the region.

Thank you to the British Columbia Conservation Foundation, the Province of British Columbia, and the Columbia Shuswap Regional District for funding and supporting the WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Program. The WCC is grateful for the support and collaborative efforts of many community organizations that were instrumental to the success of the program in its first year. Unsecured garbage and residential fruit trees, among other unnatural food sources, continue to draw wildlife into residential areas. Building on connections made this year in the community and continuing with WildSafeBC outreach activities will help to address these challenges and help “keep wildlife wild and communities safe”.

WildSafeBC CSRD Areas C & E Program Coverage

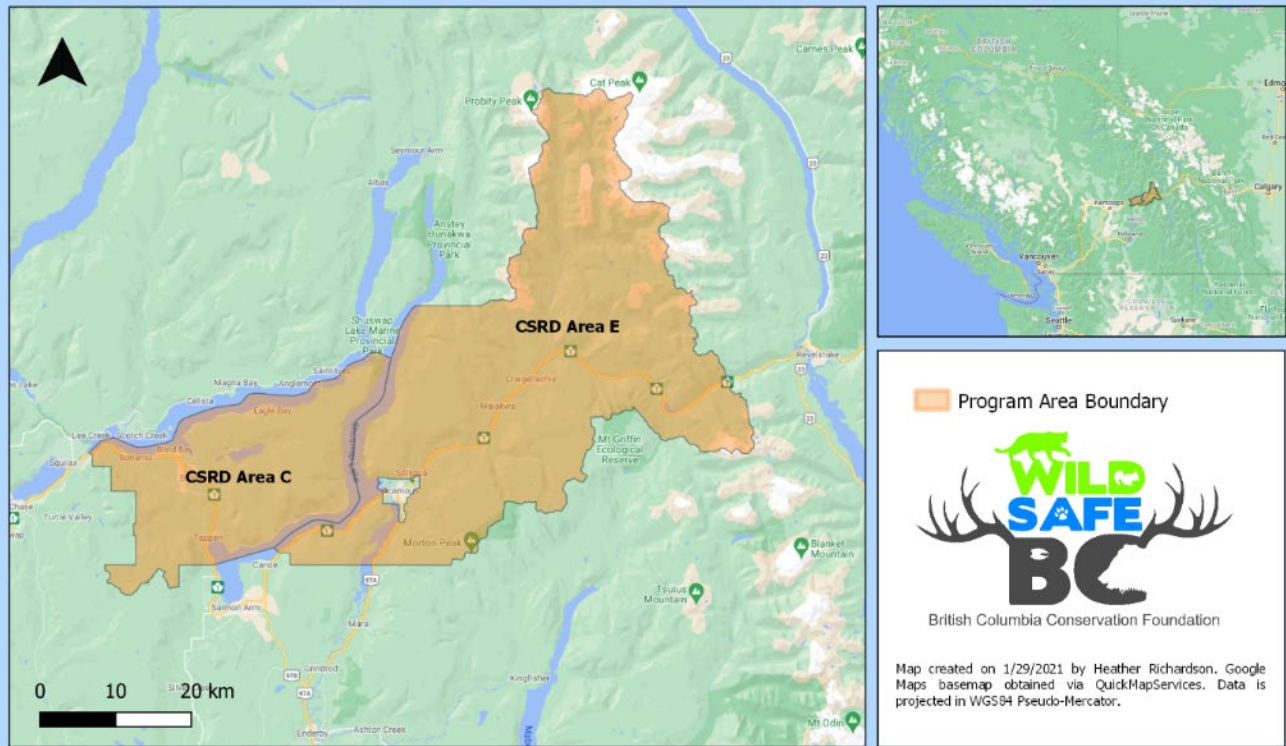


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Program coverage area in 2021 which includes Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD) Areas C and E.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Highlights from the 2021 Season	5
Wildlife Activity	5
WildSafe Ranger Program	7
Presentations to Community Groups	7
Display Booths	9
Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging	10
Social Media and Press	11
Wildlife in Area Signs	11
Collaborations	12
WildSafe Business Pledge	12
WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program	12
Indigenous Awareness and Engagement	12
Special Initiatives	12
Challenges and Opportunities	13
Acknowledgements	14

Table of Figures

Figure 1. WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Program coverage area which includes Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD) Areas C and E	2
Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2016 to October 31st, 2021	5
Figure 3. Reports made to the COS and WARP regarding black bears by month from January 1st, 2016 – October 31st, 2021	6
Figure 4. The number of calls made regarding black bears to the Conservation Officer Service and the attractant associated with the report from January 1st, 2016 – October 31st, 2021	6
Table 1. Schools and community organizations that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2021	7
Figure 5. WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, Julia Helland, delivers a WildSafe Rangers presentation to the Blind Bay Junior Forest Wardens on October 25th, 2021. Photo courtesy of Shannon Plantinga.	7
Figure 6. WCC, Julia Helland, demonstrating how to properly use bear spray at a bear spray workshop in Sunnybrae	8

Figure 7. WCC, Julia Helland, presenting at a bear spray workshop at the Eagle Bay Community Hall.....	8
Table 2. Community organizations that partnered with WildSafeBC to host presentations.....	8
Figure 8. WCC Julia Helland with Wildlife Safety Response Officer, Lyra Tuck, at display booth at the Sorrento Village Farmers Market September 18, 2021.....	9
Table 3. Community events that the WCC attended with the WildSafeBC display booth and the number of people reached.....	9
Figure 9. Number of garbage bins placed out early during the first and second survey of a community and the number of bins tagged in both surveys. Surveys took place from July - September 2021.....	10
Figure 10. Bin tagged in White Lake in August 2021.	11
Table 4. List of media stories that included information provided by the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator in 2021.	15

Cover Photo: WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Community Coordinator, Julia Helland, presents at a bear spray workshop in Wild Rose Bay on August 18, 2021. Photo courtesy of Wendy Morley.

Highlights from the 2021 Season

Wildlife Activity

Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) or online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) and are uploaded daily. This report includes data from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

Similar to previous years, black bears were the species most often reported to the COS, followed by cougars and deer. This year there were 38 black bear reports, which is lower than the yearly average over the past five years of 90 reports (Figure 2). This year, black bear reports were highest in June, August, and September and lower in July (Figure 3). The increase in reports in the fall follows expected seasonal trends as bears enter a period of extreme eating, called hyperphagia, to prepare for winter denning. There were 18 reports of cougars and 14 reports of deer made to the RAPP line, which is comparable to past years. Reports of grizzly bears were lower than the five-year average, with 5 reports made in 2021, all in Area E.

Garbage continues to be the attractant most often associated with black bear reports (Figure 4). Although there was only one report of a black bear accessing residential fruit trees made this season, the WCC spoke with many residents who claimed to have seen black bears accessing fruit in their community but did not report the incident to the COS. Underreporting of human-bear conflict appears to be a common trend in most communities in the WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap coverage area.

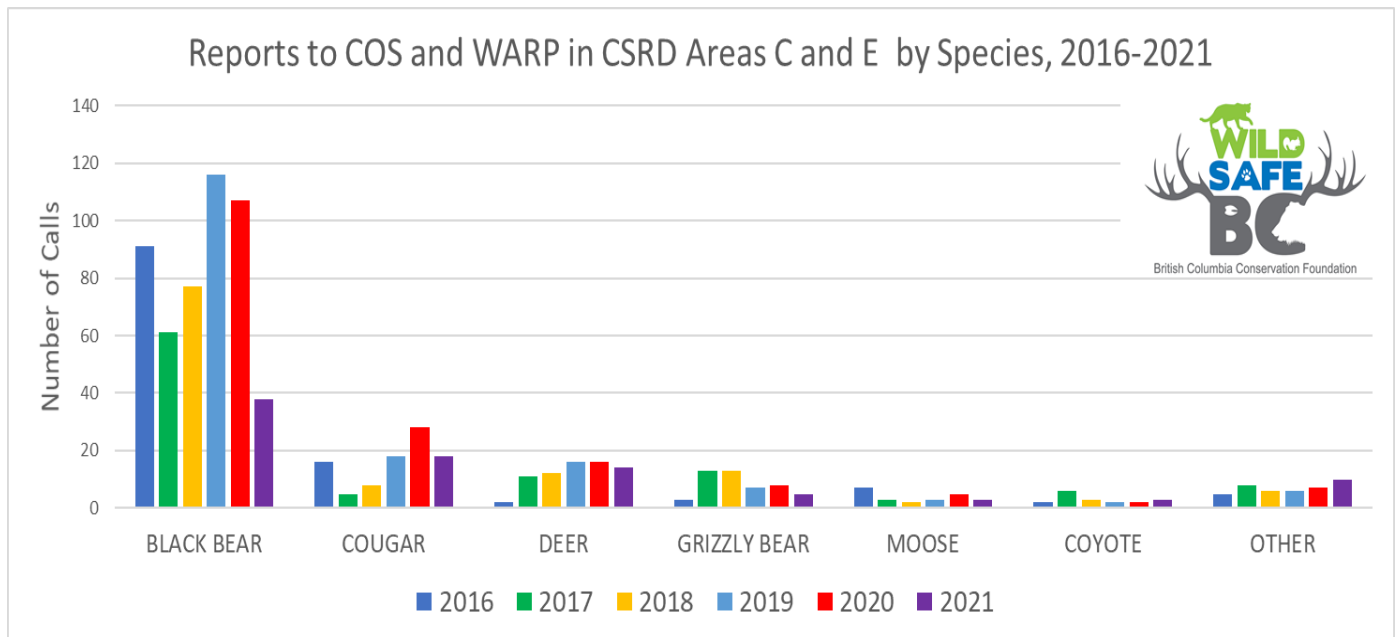


Figure 2. Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) by species from January 1, 2016 to October 31st, 2021 in CSRD Areas C and E.

Reports to COS and WARP Regarding Black Bears in CSRD Areas C and E by Month, 2016-2021

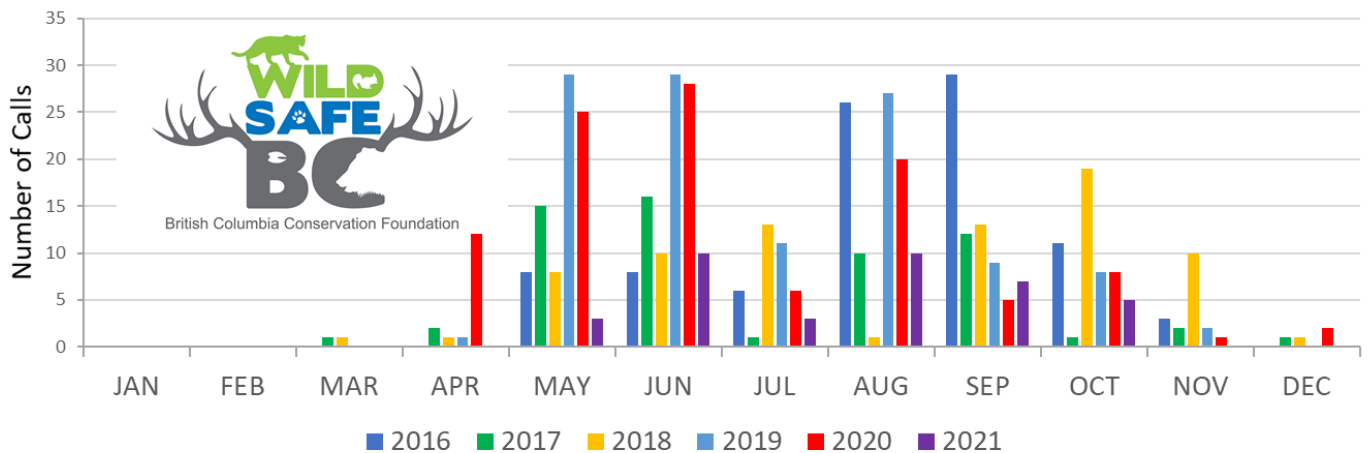


Figure 3. Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) regarding black bears by month from January 1st, 2016 – October 31st, 2021 in CSRD Areas C and E.

Black Bear Reports to COS and WARP in CSRD Areas C and E by Attractant, 2016-2021

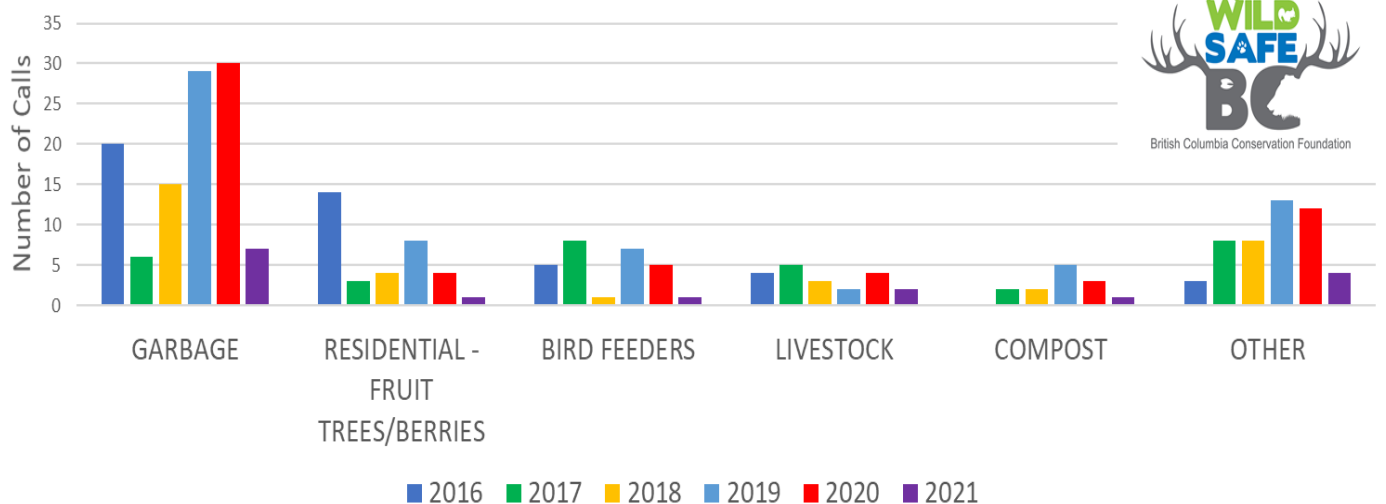


Figure 4. The number of calls made regarding black bears to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) and the attractant associated with the report from January 1st, 2016 – October 31st, 2021 in CSRD Areas C and E.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. Two community organizations and one online school participated in the WildSafe Rangers Program this season. A total of 45 children became WildSafe Rangers and received a WildSafe Ranger kit which included an activity book, an informative brochure about wildlife, and other materials such as stickers and bookmarks.

Table 1. Schools and community organizations that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2021.

School / Community Organization	Grade	Students	Extended
White Lake Residents Association	1 - 5	20	Yes
Heritage Christian Online School	K - 4	12	Yes
Blind Bay Junior Forest Wardens	K - 4	13	No



Figure 5. WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, Julia Helland, delivers a WildSafe Ranger presentation to the Blind Bay Junior Forest Wardens on October 25th, 2021. Photo courtesy of Shannon Plantinga.

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave a total of 11 presentations to 213 participants (Table 2). There were 7 bear spray workshops that were offered and were well attended (Figures 6 and 7). In addition, 4 presentations were given that introduced the WildSafeBC Community Program and gave an overview of attractant management and staying safe in wildlife country.



Figure 6. WCC, Julia Helland, demonstrating how to properly use bear spray at a workshop in Sunnybrae. Photo courtesy of Barbra Fairclough.



Figure 7. WCC, Julia Helland, presenting at a bear spray workshop at the Eagle Bay Community Hall. Photo Courtesy of Margaret McCormick.

Table 2. Community organizations that partnered with WildSafeBC to host presentations in 2021.

Community Organization	Type of Presentation	Date	Number of Attendees
Shuswap Trail Alliance	Wildlife Awareness and Safety Level 2 Certification	June 29, 2021	6
Shuswap Trail Alliance	Bear Spray Workshop	July 10, 2021	23
Wild Rose Bay Properties	Bear Spray Workshop	August 18, 2021	18
Shuswap Rotary Club	Overview of WildSafeBC	August 24, 2021	16
Sunnybrae Community Association	Bear Spray Workshop	September 1, 2021	20
Eagle Bay Garden Club / Eagle Bay Community Association	Bear Spray Workshop	September 2, 2021	25
Sunnybrae Community Association	Bear Spray Workshop	September 8, 2021	10
Copper Island PROBUS Club	Overview of WildSafeBC	September 9, 2021	30
White Lake Residents Association	Bear Spray Workshop (BC Goes Wild)	September 25, 2021	10
Sunnybrae Seniors Society	Overview of WildSafeBC	October 14, 2021	12
Lakeview PROBUS Club	Overview of WildSafeBC	November 4, 2021	43

Display Booths

The WCC held 8 display booths at community events in CSRD Areas C and E, reaching a total of 332 people (Table 3). These events provided an opportunity for the WCC to introduce both tourists and residents to WildSafeBC and make connections with local businesses and community organizations. The display booths also presented an opportunity to collaborate with members of the COS (Figure 8).



Figure 8. WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, Julia Helland, with Wildlife Safety Response Officer, Lyra Tuck, at a display booth at the Sorrento Village Farmers Market September 18, 2021.

Table 3. Community events that the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator attended with the WildSafeBC display booth, and the number of people reached.

Community Event	Date	Number of People Reached
Sicamous Farmers Market	June 25, 2021	15
Market by the Bay (Blind Bay)	July 15, 2021	60
Sicamous Farmers Market	July 16, 2021	35
Market by the Bay (Blind Bay)	August 5, 2021	64
Eagle Bay Fire Department Open House	August 7, 2021	58
Sicamous Farmers Market	August 13, 2021	32
Market by the Bay (Blind Bay)	August 19, 2021	25
Sorrento Village Farmers Market	September 18, 2021	43

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Through door-to-door education, a total of 299 residents were reached with door hangers with an accompanying letter, and 30 people were reached with an in-person conversation. The locations of door-to-door education were determined based on reports made to WARP as well as recommendations from Conservation Officers and CSRD Area C and E Directors.

Garbage tagging is an educational activity where the WCC places a removable warning sticker on garbage bins that have been placed on the curb the night before garbage collection (Figure 10). Garbage tagging surveys were conducted on six evenings throughout the summer. Each community was surveyed twice with the same route taken by the WCC. Garbage tagging surveys were purposefully conducted before the September long weekend when many seasonal residents leave the area. In total, 94 bins were tagged and there were 12 addresses that had their bins tagged in both surveys (Figure 9). 79% of residences that had their bin tagged during the first survey, did not have their bin placed out during the second survey. This clearly demonstrates that garbage tagging is an effective tool to educate residents and change behaviors.

Curbside garbage collection in CSRD Areas C and E is provided by private companies. Some communities have two different garbage pick-up days depending on which provider the residents have signed on with. The WCC determined which days to go bin tagging based on discussions with residents and waste contractors regarding which company provided curbside collection to more residents in each community.

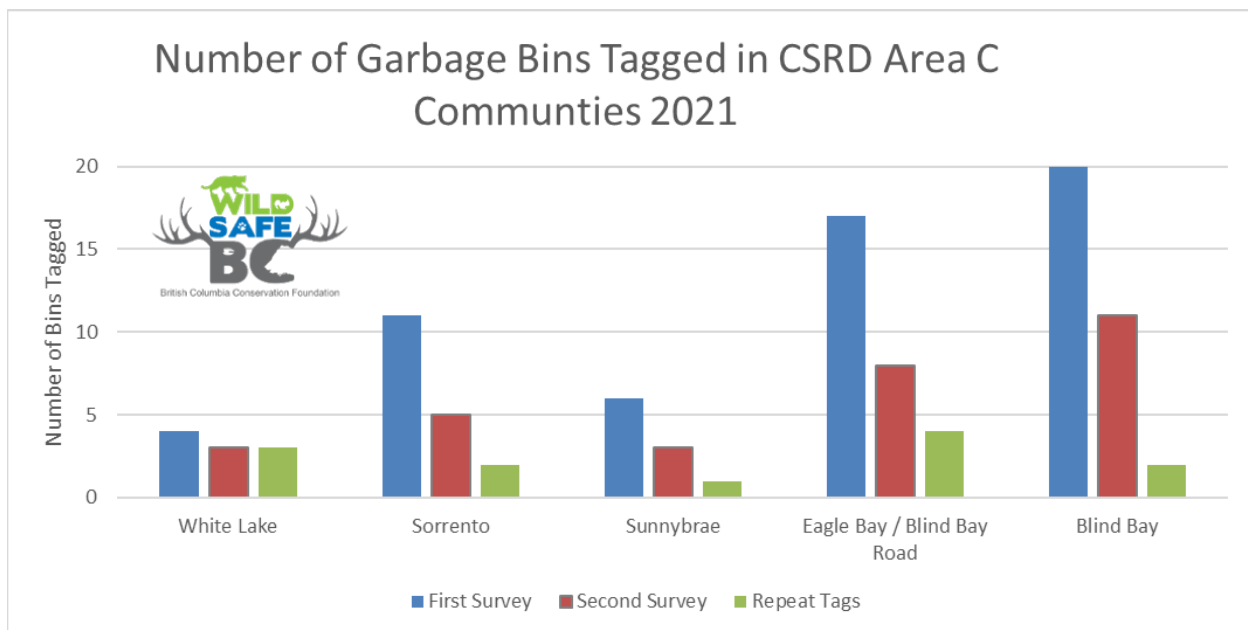


Figure 9. Number of garbage bins placed out early during the first and second survey of a community and the number of bins tagged in both surveys. Surveys took place from July to September 2021.



Figure 10. Bin tagged in White Lake in August 2021.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Facebook page was created in May 2021 and has grown to 94 followers. The posts that reached the most people were weekly updates on wildlife activity. The WCC made posts regarding upcoming events or recent wildlife activity in local community Facebook pages such as the 'Blind Bay & Area Wildlife Sightings' and the 'Cambie Solsqua Neighborhood Watch' group. This proved valuable in reaching more people through social media and directed people to the local WildSafeBC Facebook page. By monitoring local community Facebook pages, the WCC was able to gather information about wildlife sightings and conflicts that occurred in the region that were not reported to the COS. The WCC also collaborated with CSRD staff to create posts for the CSRD Facebook page regarding various WildSafeBC outreach activities.

News releases were submitted to the Eagle Valley News which resulted in three articles in the Eagle Valley News and Salmon Arm Observer. The WCC also submitted press releases and collaborated with writers at the South Shuswap Scoop to produce an article in each monthly issue from June to November (Addendum, Table 4). WildSafeBC information was shared in newsletters from the Wild Rose Bay Properties, the Eagle Bay Community Association, and the Pacific Quorum Strata.

Wildlife in Area Signs

Wildlife in area signs were placed in areas where there were confirmed reports of wildlife, typically black or grizzly bears, frequenting an area. The signs were placed in high-traffic areas and were used to alert people to wildlife activity in the area. Due to the large WildSafeBC Community Program coverage area, the WCC relied on the help of volunteers to assist in putting up signs and taking them down in a timely manner.

Collaborations

WildSafeBC received support from many community organizations that assisted the WCC in spreading information about human-wildlife conflict and/or facilitated a WildSafeBC presentation or workshop (Table 2). As this was the first year that there was a WildSafeBC Community Program in this region, collaborations with various community organizations were vital to the success of the program.

WildSafeBC collaborated with staff from the CSRD and the Shuswap Trail Alliance to produce an informative sign that is to be placed at the Reinecker Creek trailhead. The WCC worked with members of the COS to identify hotspots of wildlife activity and provide consistent messaging to residents dealing with human-wildlife conflict. Members of the COS joined the WCC at community events, such as farmers' markets, when possible.

WildSafe Business Pledge

The WildSafe Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses to be good examples in their community on how to safely co-exist with wildlife. To take the pledge, a business is required to follow best practices in solid waste management, provide adequate training to staff and support WildSafeBC's safety and conflict reduction information. In return, WildSafeBC will provide ongoing support to the business in the form of staff training, WildSafeBC materials (subject to budget constraints) and a WildSafeBC Business Pledge poster. A total of six businesses were introduced to the Business Pledge Program in 2021.

WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

Through the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program, WildSafeBC can provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife. The WCC approached three campsites about the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program. Of these three, two have committed to participate in the program in 2022, including a resort that hosts semi-permanent residents.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The WCC introduced herself and offered information about the WildSafeBC program to nearby First Nations bands.

Special Initiatives

WildSafeBC collaborated with the Sunnybrae Stewardship Society to create a Wildlife Working Group for the Columbia Shuswap region. The first Wildlife Working Group meeting took place in September and included the WCC and WildSafeBC Provincial Coordinator, the president of the Sunnybrae Stewardship Society, members of the COS, staff from the CSRD, and directors of CSRD Areas C and E. The Wildlife Working Group was formed to help create a space for local issues pertaining to human-wildlife conflict to be discussed and addressed.

Challenges and Opportunities

Nearby wildfires and changing COVID-19 regulations affected the delivery of some WildSafeBC activities. CSRD Area E was particularly affected by wildfires this summer and several communities had to be evacuated or were placed on evacuation alert. Even in communities that were not at risk of fire, dense smoke remained for several weeks. Understandably, some community organizations were not gathering at this time and community events and presentations were not planned. A change in COVID-19 safety regulations in late summer caused some community events to be cancelled or postponed in both CSRD Areas C and E.

Unsecured garbage continues to draw bears and other wildlife into residential areas. Waste management practices are extremely varied throughout CSRD Areas C and E. Residents may receive curbside collection from a private waste management company, or they may take their waste to a CSRD landfill or transfer station. There is a mixture of permanent residents, seasonal residents, and tourists all with a different knowledge base about human-wildlife conflict and attractant management. These different groups also have a different tolerance for wildlife. Those with a higher tolerance of large predators may not be as inclined to report conflicts to the COS. This may explain why there were so few official reports in areas where there were anecdotal reports made to the WCC of bear / cougar activity. WildSafeBC outreach activities must be strategically used to reach different cohorts in the community. Continued efforts to educate the public about attractant management will not only help to reduce human-bear conflicts, but will also help reduce conflicts with rats, raccoons, and marmots, which are prevalent in some communities.

Residential fruit trees are a common wildlife attractant, and they are often considered a natural food source by some residents. However, they also lead to food-conditioning and habituation to people which in turn can lead to future conflicts and the intervention of the COS. To prevent future conflicts involving fruit trees, educational efforts on social media and in person should be made early in the season next year to reduce spring blossoms. Although there is not an official gleaning program in the region, gleaning days are sometimes organized by community organizations. Promoting gleaning initiatives as well as fruit-sharing groups on Facebook would help draw attention to the issue of residential fruit trees as a wildlife attractant. The area would benefit from electric fencing workshops, not only to secure fruit trees but also beehives, chickens, or other livestock in rural areas.

The following opportunities exist for the 2022 season to continue “keeping wildlife wild and communities safe”:

- Continue promoting the Bare Campsite Program to local campgrounds and assist already interested campgrounds in implementing the program in spring
- Increase door-to-door campaigns in hotspots and recruit volunteers to assist in canvassing neighborhoods
- Continue to promote WRP in schools to increase number of youths reached
- Continue to promote the Business Pledge Program and re-visit businesses that were approached in 2021

- Build on existing relationships with community organizations such as the White Lake Residents Association, the Sunnybrae Stewardship Society, the Eagle Bay Community Association, the Shuswap Trail Alliance, the Blind Bay Junior Forest Wardens, the Swansea Point Community Association, and the Malakwa Community Association
- Engage other community organizations and collaborate with organizations that have already expressed interest in working with WildSafeBC in 2022
- Continue to build relationships with local First Nations bands
- Continue to facilitate and support the Columbia Shuswap Wildlife Working Group that is working towards conflict-reduction strategies
- Consider implementing wildlife attractant bylaws in the CSRD
- Expand the reach of the program on social media by continuing to post engaging and relevant content and running a few promotions throughout the season

The WildSafeBC Community Program was well received and gained support of many residents and community organizations that saw the need and the value of the program. Connections made in the community this year can be built upon in the future to increase the reach of the program and further reduce human-wildlife conflict.

Acknowledgements

The WCC is grateful for the financial support of the WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Program provided by the Columbia Shuswap Regional District, the province of British Columbia, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation.

Thank you to Barbra Fairclough for her instrumental role in bringing WildSafeBC to the region, for her continued support, and for sharing her local knowledge with the WCC throughout the season. The WCC also thanks the Conservation Officer Service staff in both the Kelowna and Vernon offices for their support. Thank you to CSRD Area C Director Paul Demenok, Area E Director Rhona Martin, Ben Van Nostrand, Tracy Hughes, and the rest of the staff at the CSRD. The WCC is grateful for the BCCF team for their ongoing guidance and assistance throughout the season. Finally, thank you to the many community members and organizations throughout CSRD Areas C and E that took part in the WildSafeBC Community Program in some way and helped to make the first year of the program a success.

Addendum

Table 4. List of media stories that included information provided by the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator in 2021. South Shuswap Scoop articles can be accessed at <https://shuswapscoop.ca/pdf-issues/>.

Release Date	Media Outlet	Article Title
June 11, 2021	South Shuswap Scoop	WildSafeBC Arrives in the Columbia Shuswap
June 12, 2021	Eagle Valley News	Go wild for animal safety this summer in the Shuswap
June 23, 2021	Salmon Arm Observer / Eagle Valley News	Get your bearings with bear spray at upcoming Shuswap workshop
July 9, 2021	South Shuswap Scoop	WildSafeBC in a Neighborhood Near You
August 6, 2021	South Shuswap Scoop	Manage your fruit trees
September 17, 2021	Salmon Arm Observer / Eagle Valley News	Columbia-Shuswap residents warned September usually when human-bear conflicts highest
September 3, 2021	South Shuswap Scoop	Free bear spray workshops popular
October 8, 2021	South Shuswap Scoop	Fall garden clean up prevents bear encounters
November 4, 2021	South Shuswap Scoop	End of Season for WildSafeBC