

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2021

Kamloops

Prepared by: Mackenzie Irwin

WildSafeBC Kamloops Coordinator



Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC (WSBC) Kamloops program for the 2021 season. The program coverage area includes the City of Kamloops and is located in the traditional territory of the Secwépemc People (Figure 1). This year was exceptional in terms of black bear reports to the Conservation Officer Service with a total of 516 reports from January 1, 2021 to October 31, 2021. This is likely a result of the early season “heat dome”, ongoing drought, and significant wildfires that occurred near the City.

This year, the COVID-19 pandemic meant that WSBC had to adjust their operations to keep everyone safe, while continuing to deliver the program effectively. The WSBC Community Coordinator (WCC) focused their efforts on bin tagging and door-to-door education in neighbourhoods that showed high conflict in the past and were recommended by the BC Conservation Officer Service (COS). Activities this season included:

- Placing of 15 Bear in Area signs in hot spot locations
- From May to November, 7 presentations with a total of 67 participants that focused on wildlife safety and awareness, and bear spray use
- A total of 648 residents were reached through door-to-door outreach and provided information on attractant management and wildlife safety and awareness
- A total of 1,047 garbage bins were tagged throughout the City of Kamloops through 18 outings
- The WCC attended 6 public events where 441 people were engaged with regarding wildlife
- Facebook followers on the ‘WildSafeBC Kamloops’ page increased from 819 followers in 2020 to 1,019 in 2021
- The coordinator provided 5 media interviews through Castanet, RadioNL, and CFJC Kamloops
- 1,310 students were reached through the WildSafe Rangers Program
- Ongoing participation in the City of Kamloop’s Bear Working Group

Conflicts with rattlesnakes also peaked in the month of June and the WCC worked with the City and Provincial biologists to provide education to residents in Batchelor Heights. Urban deer are a growing concern in the community and the risk of wildlife-vehicle collisions. Kamloops and the surrounding natural areas are prime habitat for coyotes and there continue to be conflicts with people’s pets, especially near den sites and unsecured small livestock.

Improperly managed garbage and fruit trees continue to be a source of wildlife conflict in Kamloops. While some residents are familiar with conflict and how to prevent it, others are less aware of the risks of human-wildlife conflict. Continued outreach is needed to provide education on how to manage wildlife attractants and how to stay safe when in wildlife country.

With limited hours, the WCC was unable to provide bin-tagging education throughout the entire City. In 2022, bin tagging is recommended for areas that did not receive this education this year and those that were not surveyed on multiple occasions. Additionally, the WCC should continue

to grow the following of the 'WildSafeBC Kamloops' Facebook page and support the City of Kamloops as they explore further ways to secure their solid waste and as they rollout the organics collection pilot. Promotion of electric fencing as an effective tool for protecting small livestock should be prioritized for 2022. This would be most effective if supported by bylaws requiring their use in urban or residential settings.

To foster collaborations between the COS, WSBC, the City of Kamloops, and other stakeholders, continued participation in the Bear Working Group would also be beneficial. The WCC recommends considering other wildlife species in a holistic Wildlife Management plan such as deer and "Species-at-Risk" such as rattlesnakes and badgers. Moving forward, these initiatives will help 'keep wildlife wild and communities safe'.

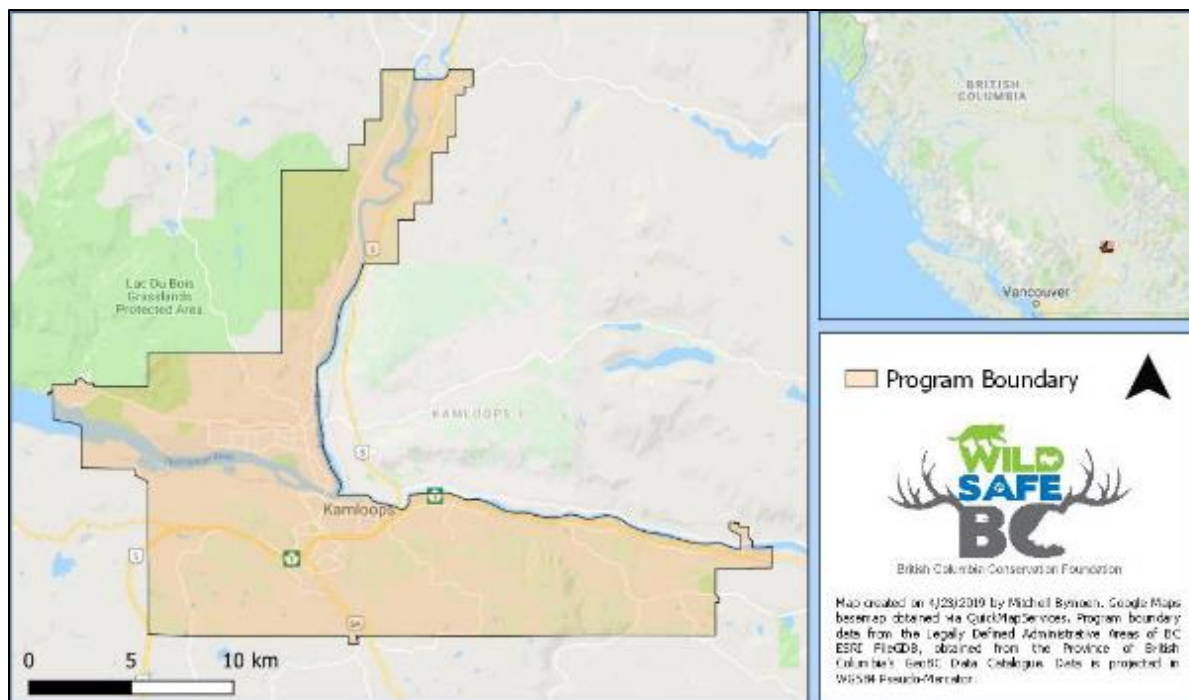


Figure 1. The WildSafeBC Kamloops program coverage area.

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Cover Photo: The WildSafeBC display booth at the Kweseltken Farmer’s and Artisan Market located at the Kamloops Race Central track on August 15, 2021. The background sky is representative of the extreme and relentless smoke the City endured this season.

Highlights from the 2021 Season

Wildlife Activity

Reports made to the BC Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) and online (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). Data is updated daily and this report for the Kamloops WildSafeBC Program includes data from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021 (Figure 2). From January 1, 2021 to October 31, 2021, 961 sightings of wildlife were reported, with black bears being the most reported species (516), followed by deer (258). Coyotes and cougars received less reports than past years (19 and 20, respectively; Figure 3). This season saw record amounts of black bear reports, likely attributed to a dry spring resulting in reduced natural food availability, as well as wildfire activity throughout the region. Black bear activity occurred throughout all Kamloops neighbourhoods this year (Figure 2). Much like past years, black bear activity was most prevalent in Aberdeen, Sahali, Barnhartvale and Juniper. However, there was also black bear activity in neighbourhoods that do not typically receive visits from black bears, such as Batchelor Heights, the North Shore, and Downtown.

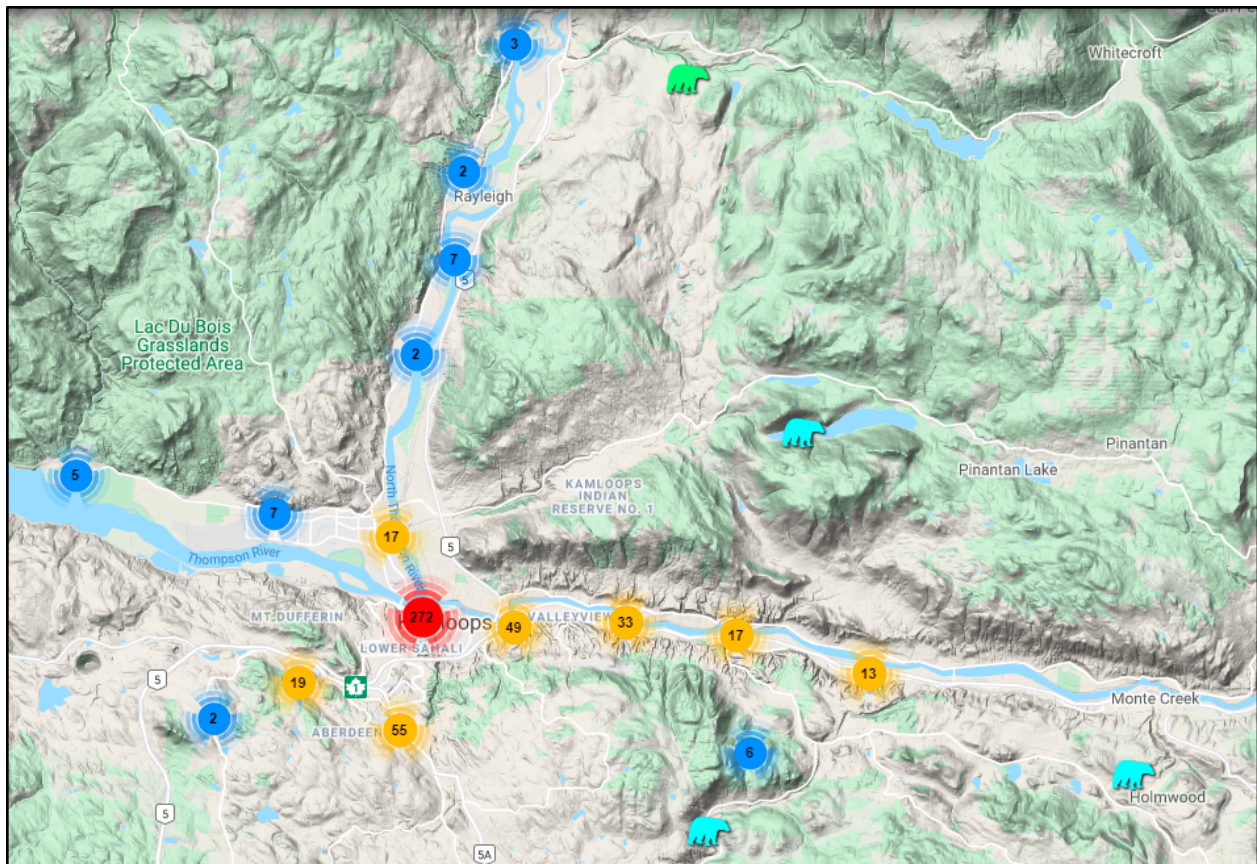


Figure 2. Black bear activity throughout all of Kamloops in 2021, illustrated using a screen shot of the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP).

Typically, deer is the most reported species. Being the second-most reported species in 2021, deer still play a major role in human-wildlife conflict throughout Kamloops. Of the 258 reports of deer from January 1, 2021 to October 31, 2021, 211 were associated with injured or distressed deer, 10 were dead, 9 were orphaned, and 3 were aggressive. Of all the deer reports, only 4 were reported accessing an attractant such as residential gardens or fruit. Deer reports occur throughout all of Kamloops. All the cougar reports (20) were sightings of cougars, not accessing any attractants or interacting with pets. These occurred in Upper and Lower Sahali, Aberdeen, River St, Batchelor Heights, and Dallas. Reports of coyotes (19) occurred primarily in Batchelor Heights, the North Shore, Westsyde, Pineview, Aberdeen, Lower Sahali, River St, Barnhartvale and the majority involved pets, where coyotes acted aggressively.

Other wildlife included an unusually high number of lynx reports early in the season (53). These required a concerted effort by the COS, the City of Kamloops and WildSafeBC to educate the public on how to avoid conflicts with lynx by keeping pets on a leash and to avoid feeding wildlife at McArthur Island. Bobcat reports were also higher than usual this year (18), as well as rattlesnake reports (16). Rattlesnake reports occurred primarily in Batchelor Heights, but there were reports in Westsyde, the North Shore, the Hidden Valley Mobile Park, and Valleyview. It is likely that rattlesnake reports were increased this year as a result of a hot, dry spring and summer, bringing the snakes into residential areas in search of shade and water.

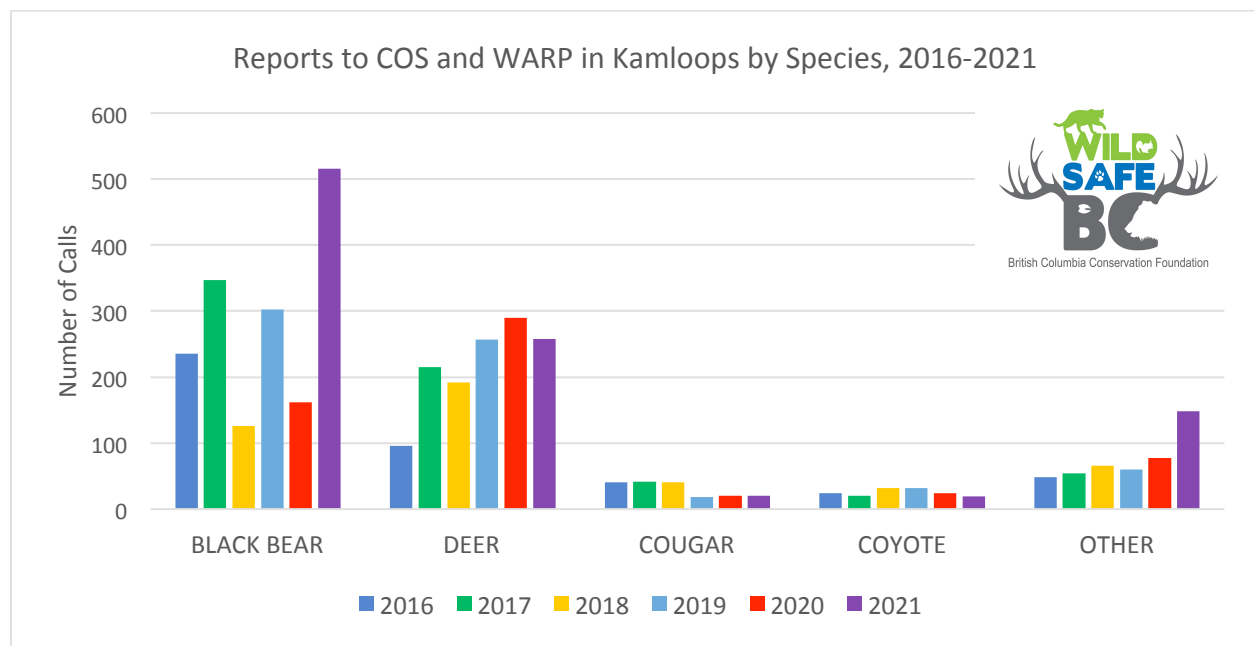


Figure 3. Wildlife reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

There are many natural and anthropogenic bear attractants throughout Kamloops that increase the potential for human-wildlife conflict as well as wildlife travel corridors. Garbage remains the most reported bear attractant, accounting for 108 black bear reports. Residential fruit trees/berries are the next most common attractant with 35 reports, followed by livestock with 15 reports (Figure 4). It is likely that fruit trees are vastly underreported as an attractant as less

evidence of access is visible and many residents do not connect bears accessing fruit trees as a pathway to conflict. Black bear activity followed a standard pattern of frequency throughout the months, beginning in March or April, with peaks occurring in August and September as bears enter hyperphagia and become extremely food-motivated to prepare for winter denning (Figure 5).

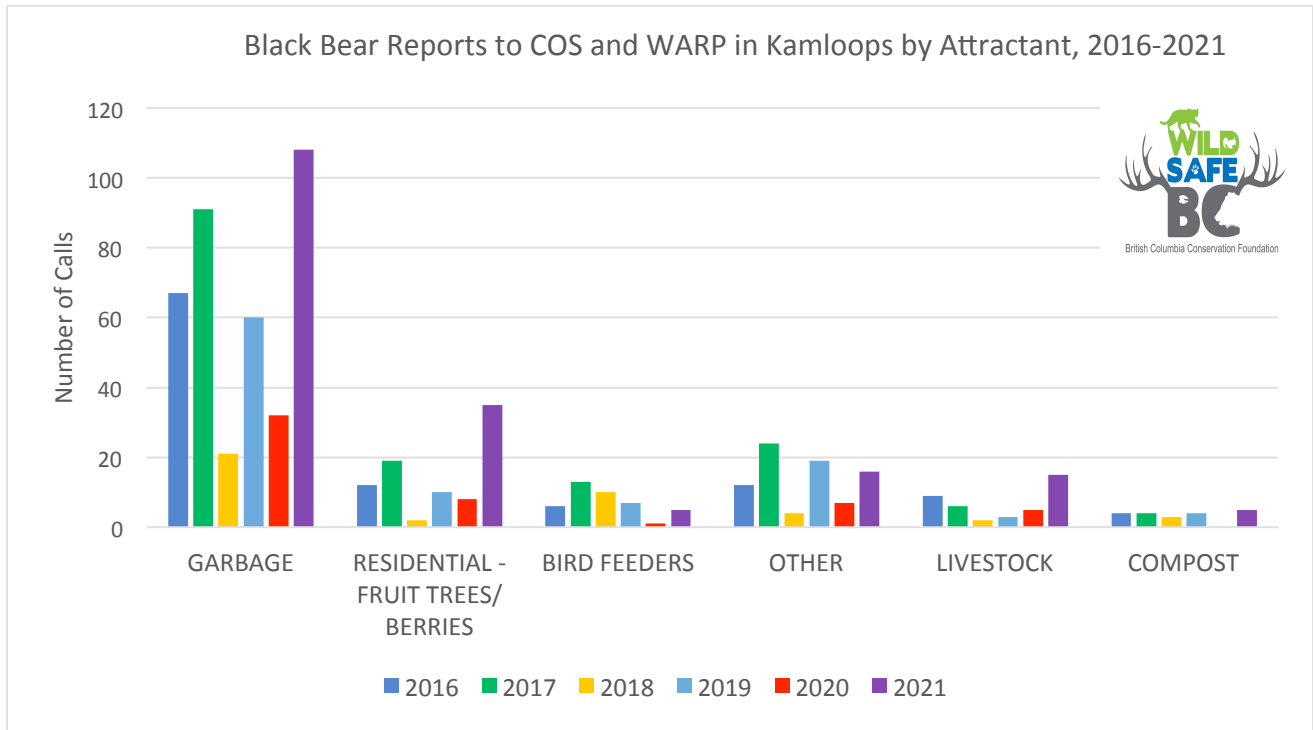


Figure 4. Black bear reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) by attractant from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

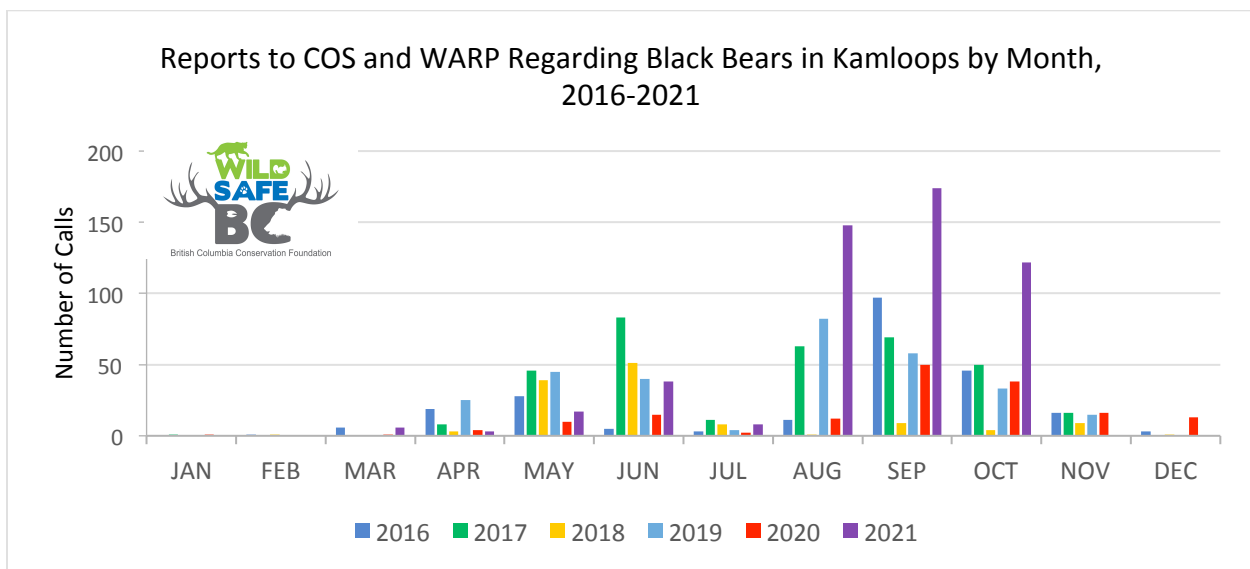


Figure 5. Black bear reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) by month from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

WildSafeBC COVID-19 Mitigation

All the activities performed this season followed safety guidelines provided by the Province, WorkSafeBC and/or the BC Conservation Foundation's Safety Coordinator. The WCCs were required to provide safety plans if they were organizing events where people would congregate. Where possible, video conferencing replaced in person meetings, and outdoor presentations were conducted. WildSafeBC adapted and modified requirements as the Province updated their mitigation measures. The WCCs worked closely with their local communities to ensure that all local requirements and restrictions were respected.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict and encourages them to take on an active role in their communities and at home to help reduce such conflict. Further, students are exposed to the idea of attractant management. In 2021, the program was delivered to a daycare center, two Scouts group, two Girl Guide groups, and a home-schooling group in addition to six elementary schools around Kamloops (Table 1). Overall, the WildSafe Ranger Program reached 1,310 children throughout Kamloops. All children in attendance received WildSafe Ranger kits, which include an educational activity booklet and a bookmark.

Table 1. Schools and groups that received the WildSafe Ranger program in 2021.

School or group	Grade/age group	Number of children	Date
Happy Honey Bees Childcare	5 – 10 years old	28	July 8
Scouts	5 – 11 years old	36	September 29
Parkcrest Elementary	K – Gr. 6	293	October 1 & 4
Girl Guides	12 – 14 years old	8	October 4
Kamloops Christian	K – Gr. 6	143	October 5
Home-school group	6 – 11 years old	8	October 6
South Sahali Elementary	K – Gr. 4	85	October 7
Brownies	7-11 years old	24	October 18
Westmount Elementary	K – Gr. 6	260	October 27 & 28
Rayleigh Elementary	K – Gr. 6	198	November 17 & 18
Summit Elementary	K – Gr. 7	227	November 24 & 25

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC delivered six presentations this year. On June 14, a Wildlife Awareness and Safety presentation was provided to a class at Valleyview Highschool via Zoom (10 participants). There were 5 students from the class that completed the advanced, industry-recognized, Level 2 certification. To achieve this, they were required to complete a comprehensive Level 1 Wildlife Awareness and Safety course online and then receive bear spray training by a qualified WildSafeBC instructor. A bear spray workshop was provided to 20 staff members at the BC Wildlife Park on August 5 (Figure 6). On September 16, a Wildlife Awareness and Safety presentation was provided to two different groups (16 participants) of the Kamloops Immigrant Services. A Wildlife Awareness and Safety presentation was also given to an outdoor-education class (21 participants) at Kamloops Christian School on November 4. Overall, there were 67 participants who received training on wildlife safety or bear spray use this season.



Figure 6. Employees at the BC Wildlife Park participating in bear spray training on August 5, 2021.

Public Displays and Events

Throughout the 2021 season, the WCC attended six events, all in the form of educational display booths. On June 12, July 10, and September 4, a booth was set up at the Kamloops Farmers' Market, reaching 271 people (Figure 7). The Kweseltken Farmer's and Artisan Market was attended on August 15 and September 19, where 120 people were engaged. On

September 18, a booth was set up at the Artisan Square Market, where 50 people interacted with the WCC. During these events, a total of 441 people of various ages were engaged in conversation surrounding wildlife biology, human-wildlife conflict, wildlife safety, and attractant management.



Figure 7. The WildSafeBC Kamloops Community Coordinator at the Kamloops Farmers' Market on June 12, 2021.

BC Goes Wild

Throughout September when human-bear conflicts are at their highest in BC, WildSafeBC celebrates its annual BC Goes Wild campaign to acknowledge the amazing diversity of wildlife we have in our province. This year, the WCC participated in the Sixth Annual BC Goes Wild celebration by putting on a scavenger hunt for children at the BC Wildlife Park. The scavenger hunt was given out to 50 children and their chaperones to complete as they walked through the park. To provide incentive to complete the hunt and engage with the material, completed scavenger hunts were returned at the end of the day and participants were entered to win prizes. To further celebrate BC Goes Wild, a bear-themed paint night was held. The 20 attendees painted the Kamloops landscape with a black bear silhouette and were provided a talk on bears (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Participants painting the Kamloops landscape with a black bear at a paint night as part of the 6th Annual BC Goes Wild provincial celebration.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Door-to-Door education focused on areas that were of high concern and requested by the Conservation Officer Service. Specific messaging on managing attractants and wildlife activity was delivered to homes in Juniper Ridge, Rose Hill, Aberdeen, and Sahali regarding black bear activity. In some cases, residents were left letters outlining the wildlife concerns occurring in their neighbourhood. Residents that were not reached face-to-face were provided information on how to avoid human-wildlife conflict (Figure 9). Outreach regarding rattlesnake activity occurred in Batchelor Heights as conflicts peaked in June. Residents were provided resources on what to do if they find a rattlesnake in their yard and how to make their yards less attractive to snakes. A total of 628 homes received wildlife safety and awareness messaging through such door-to-door education.

The garbage bin-tagging program consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers that are set out on the curbside the day before collection (Figure 10). Several neighborhoods in Kamloops received bin-tagging education this year. The City of

Kamloops “Bear Smart Bylaw” is in effect from April 1 to November 30, which states that carts should not be placed on the curb prior to 4:00 am on collection day.

A total of 1,047 bins were tagged in the following neighbourhoods this year:

- Aberdeen (207 bins tagged)
- Pineview (42 bins tagged)
- Upper Sahali (267 bins tagged)
- Valleyview (113 bins tagged)
- Juniper Ridge and Rose Hill (8 bins tagged)
- North Shore (247 bins tagged)
- Westsyde (128 bins tagged)
- Barnhartvale (35 bins tagged)



Figure 9. A resident in Juniper receives a door hanger and a letter discussing black bear activity in the neighbourhood.



Figure 10. A WildSafeBC volunteer placing a warning sticker on a garbage bin placed out on the curb the night before collection.

Social Media and Press

The WCC participated in five media releases/interviews in the 2021 season:

- Interview with Castanet about bear activity around Kamloops – June
- Interview with Castanet about rattlesnakes in Kamloops – June
- Interview with RadioNL about increased bear activity around Kamloops – August
- Interview with RadioNL about hyperphagia and what to do if you encounter a bear– September
- Interview with CFJC News Kamloops about bear activity around Kamloops – September

The WCC increased the WildSafeBC Kamloops Facebook page followers from 888 in May to 1,016 currently. Throughout the season, requests to join local community groups for neighbourhoods around Kamloops we sent, and if accepted, WildSafeBC posts were shared on their pages. This approach was an effective method to maximize the program's reach. In total, the WCC created 57 Facebook posts that reached 59,566 people. A post regarding increasing black bear activity in all neighbourhoods of Kamloops was the most impactful, reaching 21,201 people (Figure 11).

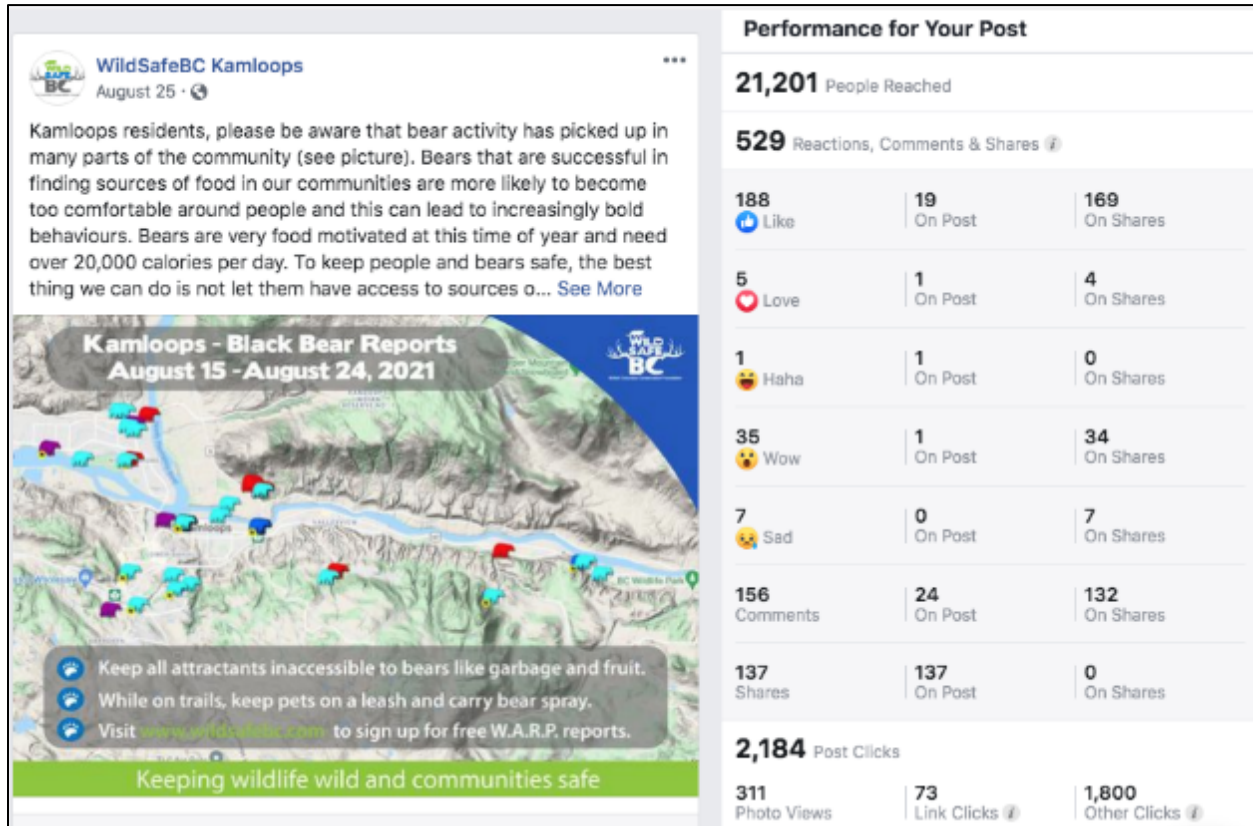


Figure 11. The most popular Kamloops Facebook post of the season was regarding increased black bear activity in all neighbourhoods.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The WCC completed the following activities to increase Indigenous awareness and engagement:

- Set-up the WildSafeBC booth at the Kweseltken Farmers' and Artisan Market on two occasions
- Distributed two TteS publications at community events. The publications, (1) Pepi7se Snake Activity Book and (2) Species at Risk: Pepi7se – Snake Awareness and Appreciation, highlight the cultural significance, appreciation and awareness of snakes
- Reached out to various members of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (TteS) to discuss wildlife activity and education opportunities

Special Initiatives

The 2021 season saw a record-breaking amount of black bear activity within the City of Kamloops. Black bears were active throughout all neighbours and particularly along the North and South Thompson Rivers. With support from the City of Kamloops, "Bear in Area" signs were

produced to warn people of black bear presence. The signs reminded people to not feed wildlife, to keep dogs on a leash, and to travel in groups. The signs (15) were distributed throughout the City in popular recreation areas with black bear activity such as West Highlands Park, Riverside Park, Pioneer Park, and the Riverside Trail (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Bear in Area signs at Pioneer Park and West Highlands Park warning residents of bear activity and reminding them to travel in groups, keep pets on a leash, and to not feed or approach wildlife.

Challenges and Opportunities

Improperly managed garbage, fruit trees, and urban livestock continue to be a source of human-wildlife conflict in Kamloops. While some residents are familiar with conflict and how to prevent it, others are less aware of the risks of human-wildlife conflict. Continued outreach is needed to provide education on how to manage wildlife attractants and how to stay safe when in wildlife country. The WCC recommends the following activities for 2022:

- Continued participation in the Bear Working Group
- Focus bin tagging in areas that did not receive bin tagging education such as Dufferin and Lower Sahali, as well as areas that were not fully surveyed (or surveyed multiple times) in 2021 such as Westsyde and the North Shore
- Continue to support the City of Kamloops as they explore further ways to secure their solid waste and their ongoing organics diversion pilot
- Continue to work with the COS and strengthen working relationships with bylaw officers

- Continue to increase the followers of the WildSafeBC Kamloops Facebook page and sharing posts on community neighbourhood pages
- Promote the use and importance of bear spray when recreating
- Promote greater use and awareness of the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program
- Continue to develop relationships with Indigenous groups and other Kamloops community association groups
- Reach out to local fruit-gleaning groups and promote the Gleaning Abundance Program
- Support the update and execution of the Kamloops Human-Bear Conflict Management Plan
- Utilize the WildSafe Business Pledge to increase awareness in the business community
- Host electric fencing workshops in more rural areas of the community (e.g., Barnhartvale)

Acknowledgements

The Kamloops WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) would like to thank the City of Kamloops, Province of British Columbia, and the BC Conservation Foundation (BCCF) for funding this project. A special thanks goes out to City of Kamloops representatives for their assistance and support throughout the season. A huge thank you to the Provincial WildSafeBC Coordinator, Vanessa Isnardy, and the WildSafeBC Program Coordinator, Heather Richardson, for all their guidance, knowledge and endless support. Thank you to the BC Conservation Officer Service for their direction and support of the program. Thank you to the residents of Kamloops, Facebook followers and media outlets for their stories, comments and broadcasts that helped spread important wildlife safety and awareness messaging in Kamloops. The Kamloops Community Program is grateful for the help of some amazing volunteers that helped to deliver the garbage-tagging program this season and helped to assemble WildSafe Ranger kits, particularly Thompson Community Services. Lastly, the WCC would like to send an enormous thank you to all the Kamloops BCCF staff and fellow provincial WildSafeBC Community Coordinators for their encouragement and support. The success of this program is accredited to all your support.