

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2021

Kimberley - Cranbrook

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the report is to present the activities of the WildSafeBC Kimberley – Cranbrook Program between April 12th, 2021 and Oct. 23rd, 2021. The WildSafeBC Kimberley - Cranbrook Program is located within the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation and includes Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) management zone C & E including the City of Cranbrook, Kimberley and the surrounding communities from Wycliffe, Wasa, Moyie to Wardner, (Figure 1).

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed education outreach activities with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community. Following COVID-19 safety precautions, several of the standard WildSafeBC Program activities were modified to ensure proper sanitization and physical distancing measures were in place. Outreach activities included the following:

- 25 Wildlife Ranger Program presentations and 250 youth reached
- 21 presentations given to community groups with over 300 participants
- 24 people reached through DTD in person and 1,664 of door hangers/brochures delivered
- 44 bin tagging outings and 40 bins tagged in Kimberley, 67% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey and then were not found on the curb again during the second survey
- 8 bin tagging outings and 30 bins tagged in Cranbrook, 77% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey and then were not found on the curb again during the second survey
- 7 display booths and 241 people reached
- 154 Facebook posts (excluding posts shared from Provincial page), 515 new Facebook page followers and January 1, 2021 to date (growth of 51%)
- 34 businesses who re-signed or signed up for the WildSafeBC Business Pledge
- 1 campground participated in Bare Campsite Program and interested from day use sites managed by the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, Recreation and Trails Branch

Additional activities conducted include putting up wildlife signage in high conflict areas, collaborations with Conservation Officers and Provincial wildlife biologist on mapping aggressive deer, developing a wild turkey brochure and bear spray brochure which is currently under review, the annual BC Goes Wild event, incorporating Ktunaxa information into WildSafeBC presentations by creating QR coding, Bear Smart Community Program support by beginning the process of a bear working group in Kimberley, and supporting WildSight's Apple Capture gleaning program.

WildSafeBC is grateful for the consistent support of its sponsors including the Province of BC, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Regional District of East Kootenay, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation. Thank you to the community members for participating in the WildSafeBC Kimberley – Cranbrook Program throughout the 2021 season. Moving forward, WildSafeBC's initiatives and collaborations continue to help "keep wildlife wild and communities safe".

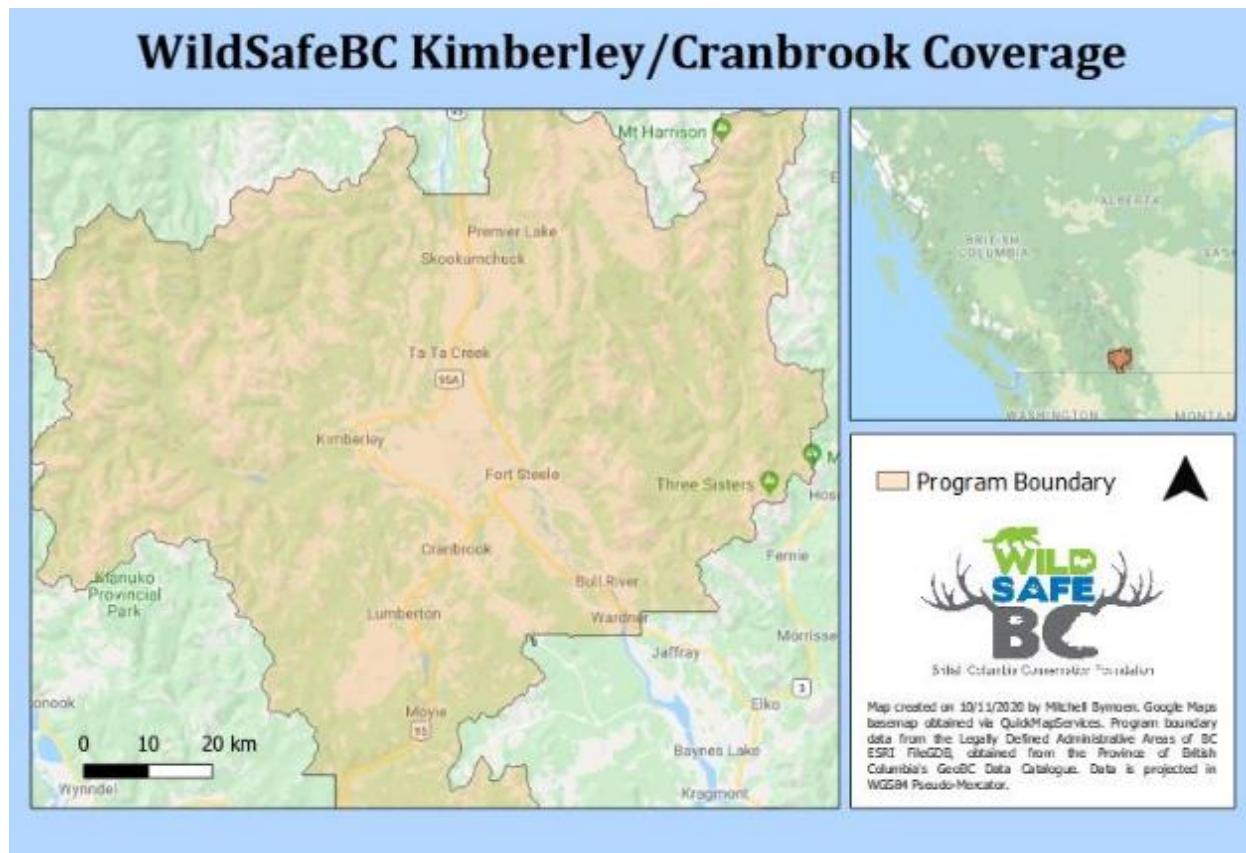


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Kimberley - Cranbrook program coverage area.

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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). This data is updated daily. This data does not represent all wildlife activity, only those that are reported. As Cranbrook and Kimberley experience different wildlife conflicts, the data has been broken out by community. Please note when comparing year over year numbers that the data for 2021 does not include October through December 2021.

Cranbrook

From January 1st to September 30th, there were 317 reports regarding wildlife. Deer remain the most reported species with a close to average 218 deer reports compared to the 252 reports from 2020 (Figure 2). Many deer conflicts involved does and fawns and mainly involved dogs from May to September. September and October reports mostly involved male deer (bucks) during the lead up to breeding season. Many of the callers were concerned citizens while out walking on city streets and were approached by aggressive does. Several of the reports came from the area around the Quad Ball Fields/Willowbrook Drive, 11th St. S area as well as along 14th – 16th Avenue South. There was considerable deer activity reported near the East Kootenay Regional Hospital. Many of the complaints were about aggressive does protecting their fawn(s) and dogs on leash.

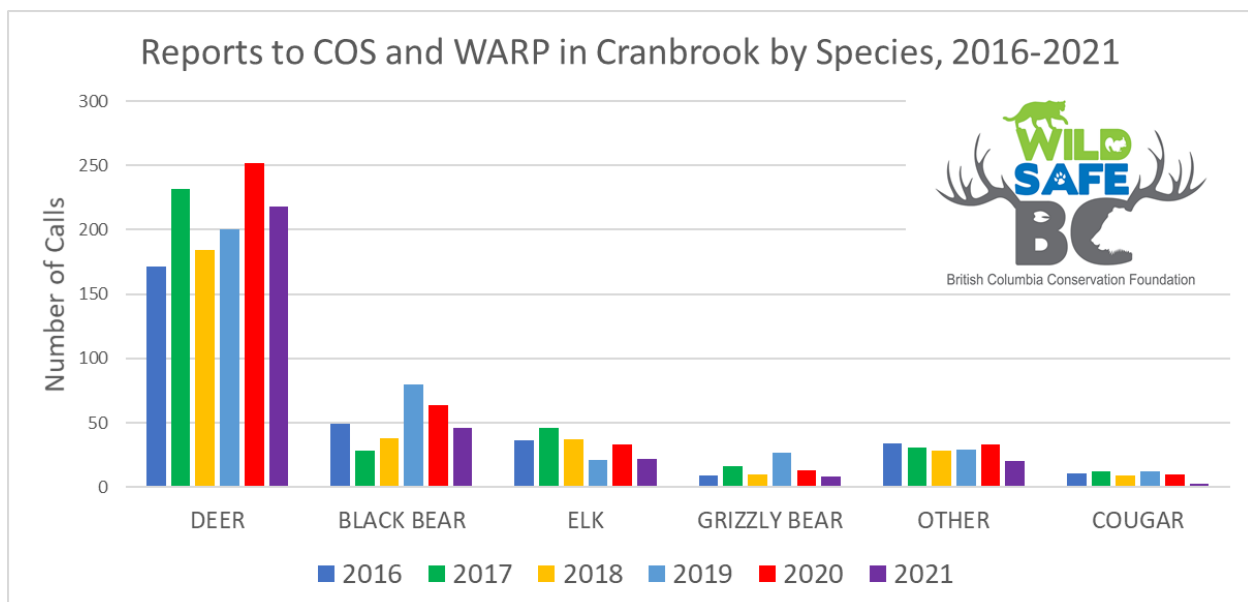


Figure 2. Wildlife reports to the COS and WARP in Cranbrook from January 1, 2016 to September 30, 2021.

So far this year, there were 46 black bear reports which is on track to be lower than the 64 reports in 2020. Black bear activity was high in the Cranbrook Community Forest and

surrounding neighborhood as well as in the Jim Smith Area. Grizzly bear activity dropped to 8 compared to the 13 in 2020 and were reported outside of city limits in Gold Creek as well as near King St. and Wycliffe. There were 3 cougar reports in 2021 compared to 10 in 2020. There were 22 elk reports in 2020 compared to 33 in 2020. Other wildlife includes, but is not limited to, skunk, raptors and coyotes.

August and September had the highest number of black bear reports in Cranbrook with 9 and 19 respectively (Figure 3). Livestock was the most reported attractant followed by garbage which was consistent with last year's top two attractants. (Figure 4).

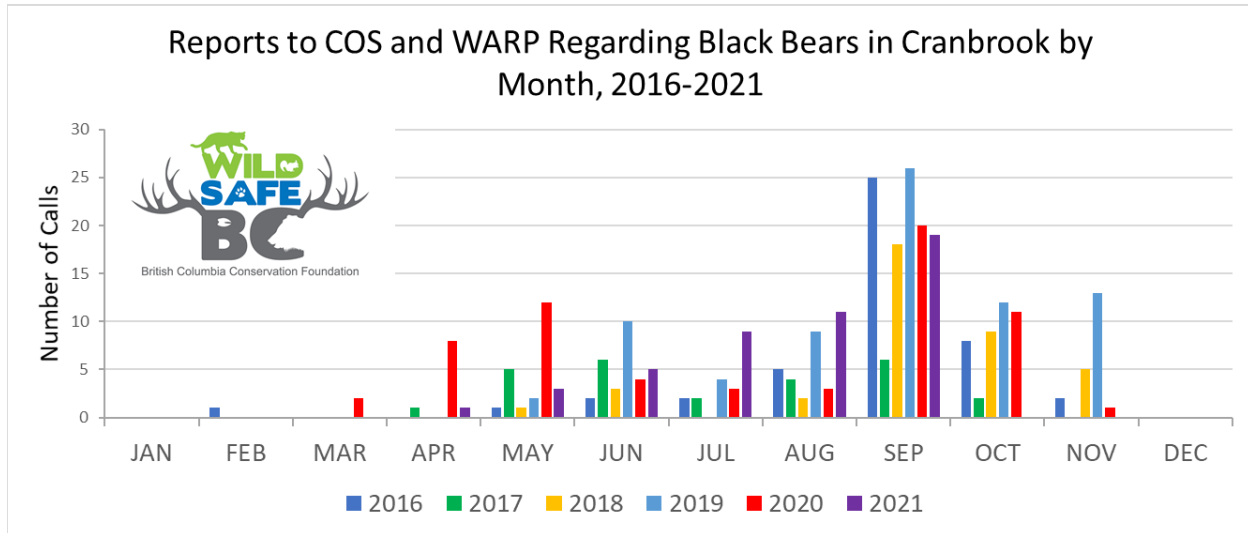


Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears in Cranbrook from January 1, 2016 to September 30, 2021.

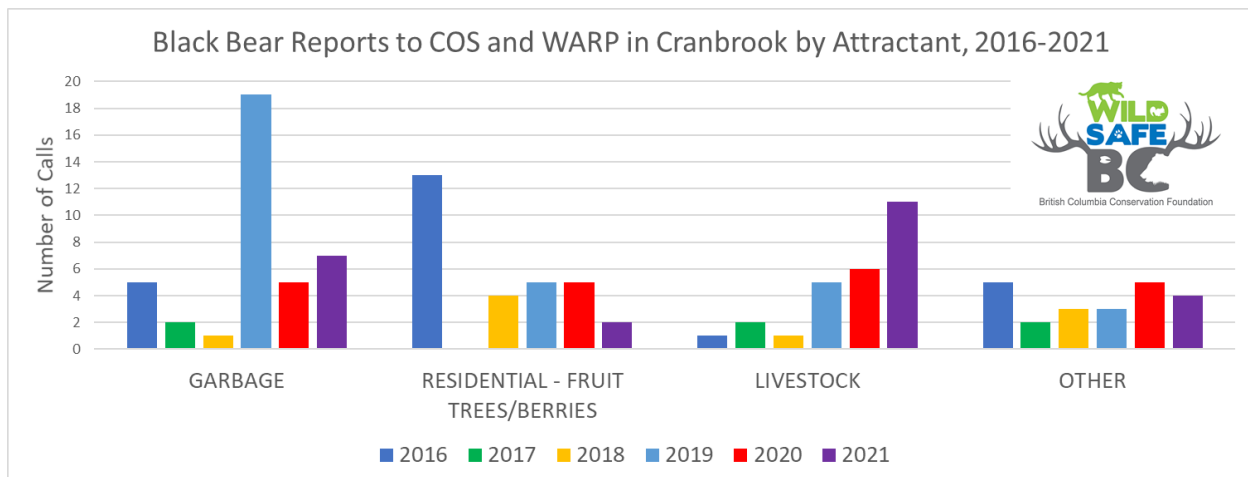


Figure 4. Black bear reports to COS and WARP regarding types of attractants in Cranbrook from January 1, 2016 to September 30, 2021.

Kimberley and Surrounding Areas

This data includes Kimberley and the surrounding rural areas of Meadowbrook, Wycliffe, Moyie, Wasa, Fort Steele, Wardner and Bull River. During 2021, there were 279 wildlife reports with deer and black bear being the most reported species (Figure 5). There were 141 deer reports compared to the 118 reports from 2020. Aggressive does protecting their fawns from dogs was the majority of the conflicts in the spring and summer months. So far this year, there were 103 black bear reports compared to 2020 which was 118. There have been 11 grizzly bear reports which is lowest it has been since 2016. There was 1 cougar report and 10 elk reports which were both lower than 2020. There remaining reports are classified as other and are not limited to, but mainly include fox and coyote.

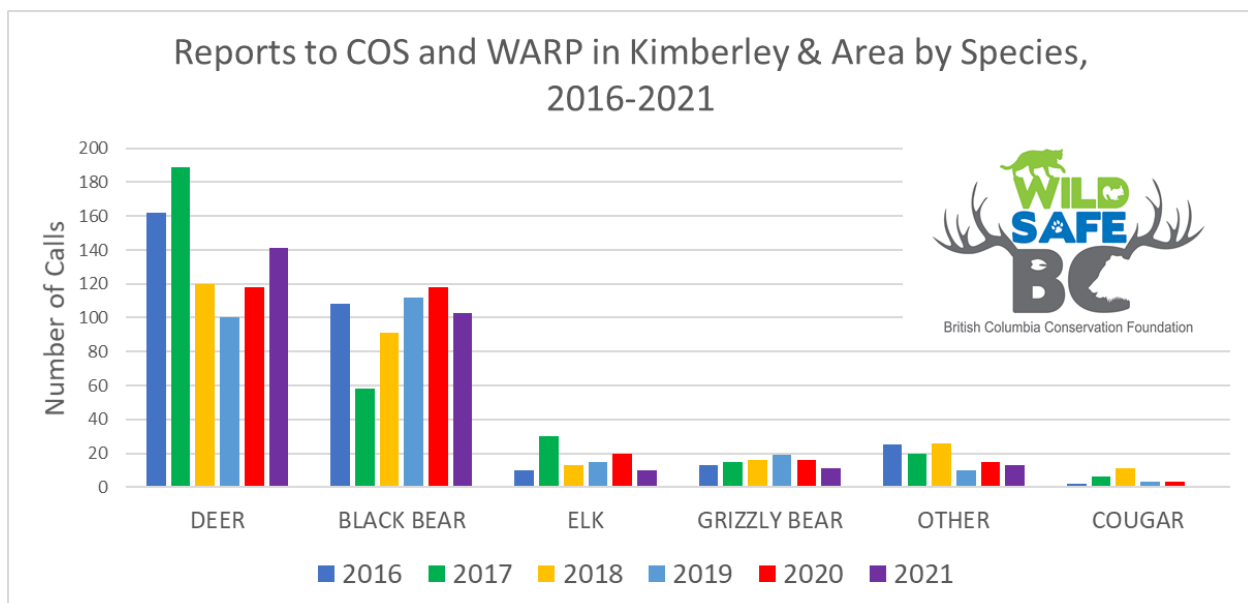


Figure 5. Wildlife reports to the COS and WARP in Kimberley from January 1, 2016 to September 30, 2021.

May, June and September had the highest amount black bear reports in 2021 with 36 in May, 27 in June, and 20 in September (Figure 6). Garbage remained the most reported attractant followed by other (freezers, pets/pet food, compost) then residential fruit trees/berries (Figure 7).

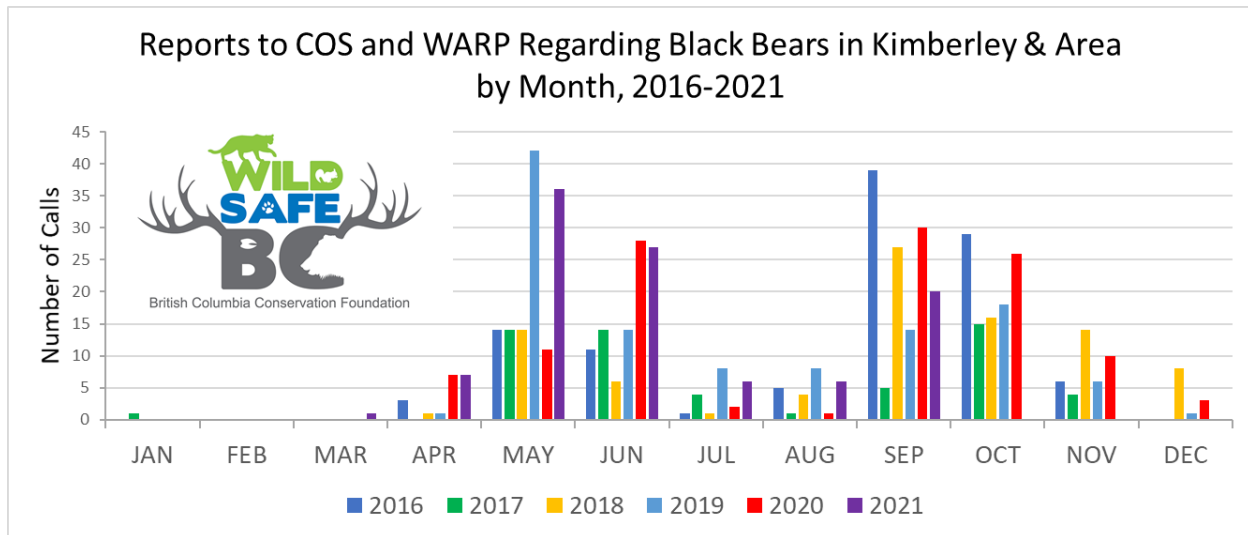


Figure 6. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears in Kimberley from January 1, 2016 to September 30, 2021.

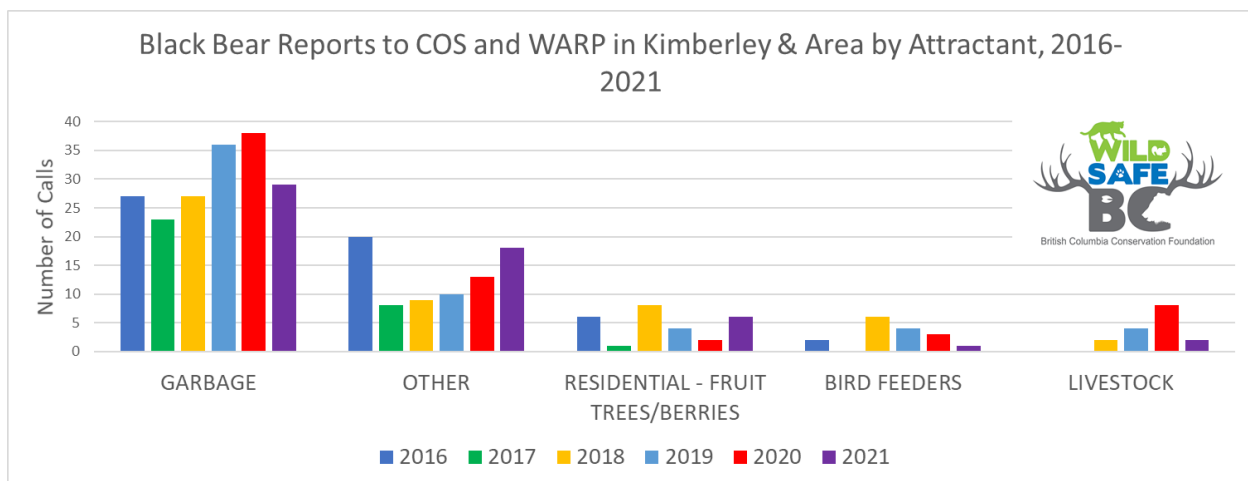


Figure 7. Black bear reports to the COS and WARP regarding attractant type in Kimberley from January 1, 2016 to September 30, 2021.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. The WRP continues to be a great success and the constant demand for presentations is always increasing. This season there were 25 WRP presentations, reaching 250 students (Table 1). Of the 25 in-person presentations, 6 included the extended program which provides an opportunity for a follow up visit and more hands-on activities. Some of these activities included playing wildlife identification bingo, outdoor wildlife habitat games, and walking through the community forests looking for signs of wildlife activity (Figure 8).

Table 1. Schools/Clubs that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2021.

School/Club	Grade/Age	# of Students	Extended WRP
Kimberley Independent School	Entire School	107	Yes – 2 presentations per classroom (16 in total)
Wildsight - Kimberley	Age 5-11	11	No
Camp Odyssey - Kimberley	Age 5-12	16	Yes
Youth Wise	Ages 6-12	21	Yes
B & G Club Cranbrook	8-12	17	Yes
Camp Odyssey Cranbrook	Age 5 - 11	14	Yes
Wildsight - Cranbrook	Age 5-9	18	No
Cranbrook Playground	Age 5 & 6	13	Yes
Parkland Middle School	Grade 3	17	No
Prime Time	Ages 5-9	16	No



Figure 8. Students from Camp Odyssey in Marysville participating in the WildSafe Rangers Program.

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC offered 21 wildlife safety presentations to groups and organizations (Table 2). Topics included general wildlife safety, bear behaviour, aggressive deer safety, general backcountry safety, and bear spray demonstrations (Figure 9). A total of 300 people were reached during these presentations.

Table 2. Presentations provided throughout the 2021 season

Club/Organization	# of Participants	Type of Presentation
FLNRORD JOHS Committee	10	Bear Spray, Bear Behaviour & Cougar Safety
Women Who Wander	30	Instagram Q & A – Bear Safety
Iboston Family - Zoom	7	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Public/Moyie	15	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Public/Centennial Hall	19	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Ministry of Energy & Mines	13	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Public/City of Cranbrook	12	Bear Spray Demo
Public/City of Kimberley	16	Bear Spray Demo
Garden View	9	Aggressive Deer Safety
Public/City of Kimberley	17	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Public/City of Cranbrook	8	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Public/City of Cranbrook	11	Bear Spray Demo
WildSafeBC Zoom Call	12	Wildlife Safety Presentation – Focus on Deer
Public/City of Cranbrook	7	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
WildSafeBC Zoom Call	18	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
KIS Staff	21	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Wasa Bikers Club	11	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Meadowbrook Purcell Staff	8	Bear Behaviour + Bear Spray Demo
Public/City of Cranbrook	7	Wildlife Safety Presentation - Deer
WildSight Kim/Cran	30	Wildlife Safety Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Wycliffe Park	19	General Backcountry Mindfulness – Wildlife Safety



Figure 9. Bear Spray Demonstration participants in Kimberley, July 2021.

Display Booths

Though several large events were cancelled this year due to COVID-19, there were opportunities to set up booths at trailheads of Nature Parks, Provincial Parks, etc. Additionally, display booths were held at popular trailheads on crown land. The WCC would inform the public about wildlife activity in the area, provide advice on bear spray use and transport, provide best practices for staying safe in wildlife country, and answer questions. Taking part in these events contributed greatly to developing community recognition of the WSBC Program. The WCC participated in 7 public displays and reached a total of 241 people (Table 3).

Table 3. Display booths provided throughout the 2021 season.

Date	# of People Reached	Event
2021-06-05	36	The Bute – Stirton Rd entrance – Bears and Bear Spray
2021-06-27	24	Kimberley, Lois Creek Trail Head – 8 th Avenue entrance* Bear Safety + Checking for Bear Spray
2021-07-08	71	Moyie Provincial Park – Wildlife Booth
2021-08-18	29	Cranbrook, Eager Hill Trail Head – Grizzly Bears + Checking for Bear Spray
2021-08-22	32	Jim Smith Lake Trailhead past boat launch – Bears & Bear Spray
2021-09-26	30	Wildsight Harvest Party Booth - Kimberley
2021-10-16	19	Wycliffe Regional Park – wildlife safety

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Through door-to-door education, a total of 24 people were reached during in-person conversations and 1,664 people were reached with door hangers. In Cranbrook, Willowbrook Dr/The Quad Ball Fields along with King Street & area were the neighborhoods were prioritized for this activity due to high level of wildlife activity. In Kimberley, Norton Avenue area, Kimbrook Crescent area and Townsite were the neighborhoods were prioritized for this activity due to high level of wildlife activity.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection. In Kimberley the WWC went out for 11 weeks this season for a total of 44 different evenings. During those outings, 40 bins were tagged in the 12 were received stickers more than once. Compared to the 25 outings in 2020, where 67 bins were tagged (19 being receiving stickers more than once) this shows great improvement as there were more outings but less bins tagged. The effectiveness of garbage tagging for changing behaviours is demonstrated by the 67% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey and then were not found on the curb again during the second survey (Figure 10).

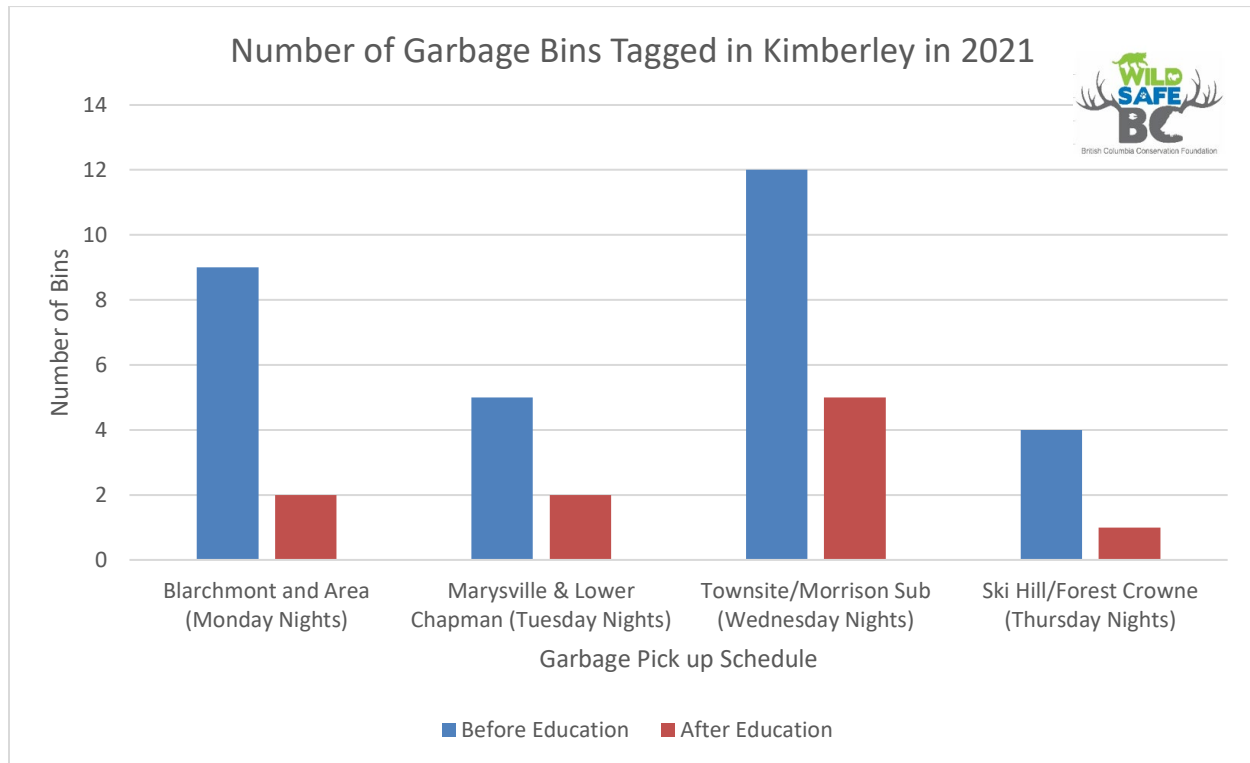


Figure 10. Number of garbage bins placed out early for collection before education activities and those tagged more than once in Kimberley.

In Cranbrook, the WCC went out garbage tagging 8 times. During the 8 outings, a total of 30 bins were tagged within the City and 7 were tagged more than once. This is the second year the WCC actively garbage tagged in Cranbrook and the focus was on Zone 4. Compared to the 33 bins tagged during the 10 outings last year, 12 being tagged more than once, this shows the program was 64% effective at changing behaviours and continues to show promise. The effectiveness of garbage tagging for changing behaviours in 2021 was demonstrated by the 77% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey and then were not found on the curb again during the second survey (Figure 11).

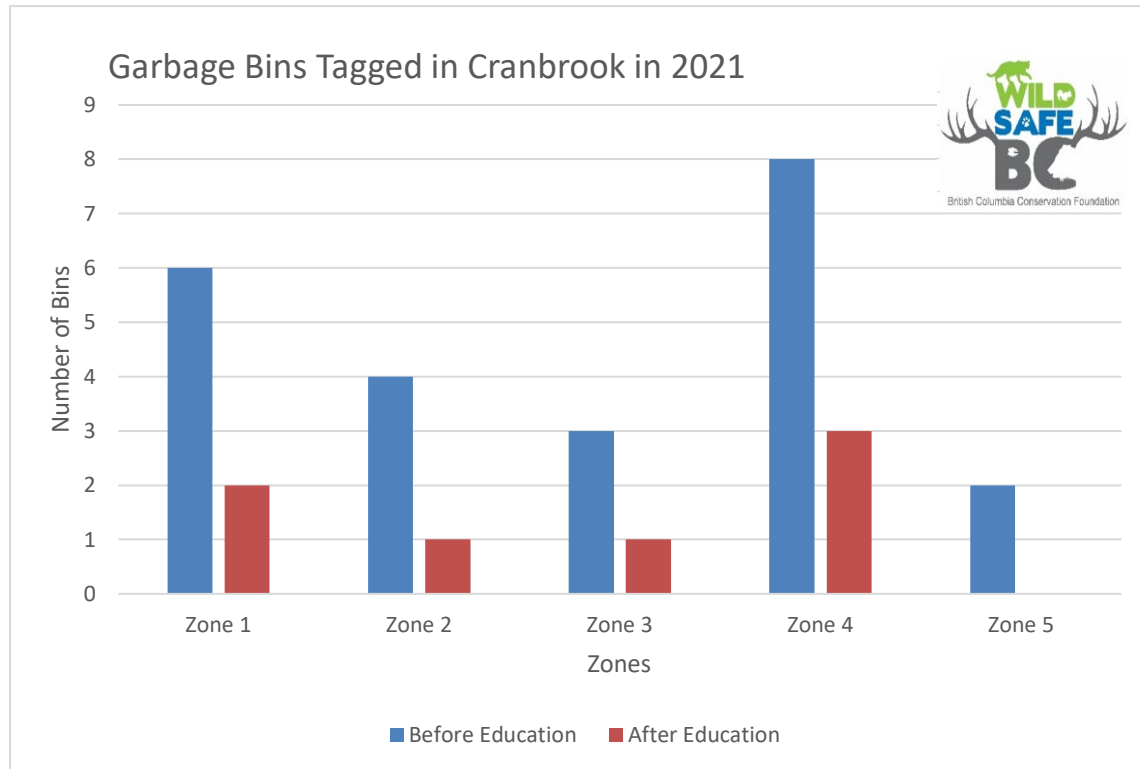


Figure 11. Number of bins placed out early for collection before education activities and those tagged more than once in Cranbrook.

Social Media and Press

The use of social media and press releases continued this season in order to distribute WildSafeBC messaging and wildlife information. In 2020, the WildSafeBC Kimberley – Cranbrook’s Facebook page had 1,056 followers and 959 likes. Whereas throughout the 2021 season there was a total of 154 Facebook posts which resulted in growing the page to 1,520 followers and 1,378 likes. This is a 30.5% increase in page followers and 30% increase in likes. Biweekly updates were made either through radio stations such as The Drive, B104 & Summit, and newspapers such as The Kimberley Bulletin, E-Know, and the Cranbrook Townsman. The WCC connected with radio and newsprint media 48 times over the season. The increased media attention attracted interest from Tom Popyk (CBC Radio - Kelowna) who reached out to do a live interview on aggressive deer in the East Kootenays and about the aggressive deer encounter in Kimberley in June. <https://www.kimberleybulletin.com/news/kimberley-resident-in-hospital-after-deer-attack/>

WildSafeBC would like to thank the media outlets for advertising important events such as BC Goes Wild, the photo contest of 2021, reminding community members of local bylaws, attractant management tips and reiterating the importance of calling the COS RAPP line. WildSafeBC would also like to thank partners and sponsors for sharing WildSafeBC’s messaging on their websites.

Wildlife in Area Signs

This year WSBC Kimberley – Cranbrook put up wildlife in area signs in high conflict areas again this season. By responding to calls from the public, viewing Facebook posts and using WARP, areas with high levels of wildlife activity were identified as locations for signs. These areas included active trailheads, nature parks, the community forest, in town, and on golf courses and in campgrounds (Figure 13).

A challenge with the use of wildlife in area signs is that they sometimes go missing. Black bear signs are deployed most often in Kimberley whereas in Cranbrook, the deer signs are most used. This season, there were a couple of volunteers who offered to put the wildlife in area signs on their property and keep an eye on them. They would take the signs in when wildlife activity was quiet and put them back out when wildlife was in the area. WildSafeBC would like to thank those volunteers in both Kimberley and Cranbrook.



Figure 12. Wildlife in Area signs in Cranbrook BC. Some located along sidewalks where high wildlife conflict was reported, and others were on resident's property that volunteered to keep an eye on the signs.

Collaborations

The success of the WildSafeBC Program lies with our many collaborations. As always, wildlife clubs and organizations which assist in the promotion of WildSafeBC events as well as share our information with the public. This year, there were a few more that jumped on board, including the Friends of Lois Creek Trails in Kimberley, the Friends of Munroe Lake, the Cranbrook Community Forest Society and, the new Meadowbrook Purcell Outdoor Forest School system.

Deer safety education was a big focus again this year. Most of the wildlife safety presentations focused on deer and bears. There were many efforts made by the WCC and community members to keep their neighbourhood safe. Many calls from the public were about expressing the need for deer in area signs and education on how to prevent deer from jumping fences and resting in their yard. However, the majority of the concerns with regards deer defending their fawns and attacking dogs. This led to larger conversations with the Conservation Officers and City staff. For example, the WCC took some time to map out aggressive deer reports made to the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program that works in conjunction with the Conservation Officer Services RAPP line from 2016 -2021 to review any patterns/high conflict areas that stood out in July 2021. The WCC also helped out FLNRORD wildlife biologists in mapping out aggressive deer reports over the last 5 years which focused on the “attractant pets/pet food” category as well as “injured and distressed deer” for both Kimberley and Cranbrook in the beginning of October. These maps were sent to both Kimberley and Cranbrook staff, Conservation Officers and Wildlife Biologists. The hope is that from the high conflict zones mapped the cities and Province could think about putting permanent signage up in those areas for aggressive deer in area.

The WCC worked on creating a wild turkey brochure for the area as wild turkey numbers and conflicts are rising in Kimberley. Wildlife biologists assisted on the project and the brochure is currently under review before publication.

The WCC also made a bear spray brochure with suggestions from the public on what type of information would be useful or important.

The WCC and a Masters student/staff from the College of the Rockies will be working together on a bear hazard assessment and mitigation measures/suggestions for the upcoming bear working group in 2022.

WildSafe Business Pledge

The WildSafe Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses 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 28 businesses re-signed the pledge this year and 6 new businesses signed on for a total of 34 businesses in the Kimberley and Cranbrook area.

WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

Through the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program, WildSafeBC is able to provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife. This season, Kimberley Riverside Campground participated in the Bare Campsite program. The WCC is also working with the Ministry of Forests, Lands, Natural Resource Operations and Rural Development, Recreation Sites and Trails Branch on piloting the program in day use areas for 2022.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

During 2021, the WCC worked with Aboriginal Education Coordinator Faye O'Neil on incorporating the Ktunaxa Language into WildSafe Ranger Program presentations, WildSafeBC general wildlife presentations within the school system as well as general wildlife presentations for the public for all ages. QR Codes were made up for words found within the messaging WildSafeBC delivers to bring Ktunaxa Presence into WildSafeBC's programming. When you put your phone over the QR Code, the word is pronounced in Ktunaxa Language for the participant. Below are a few examples (Figure 14).

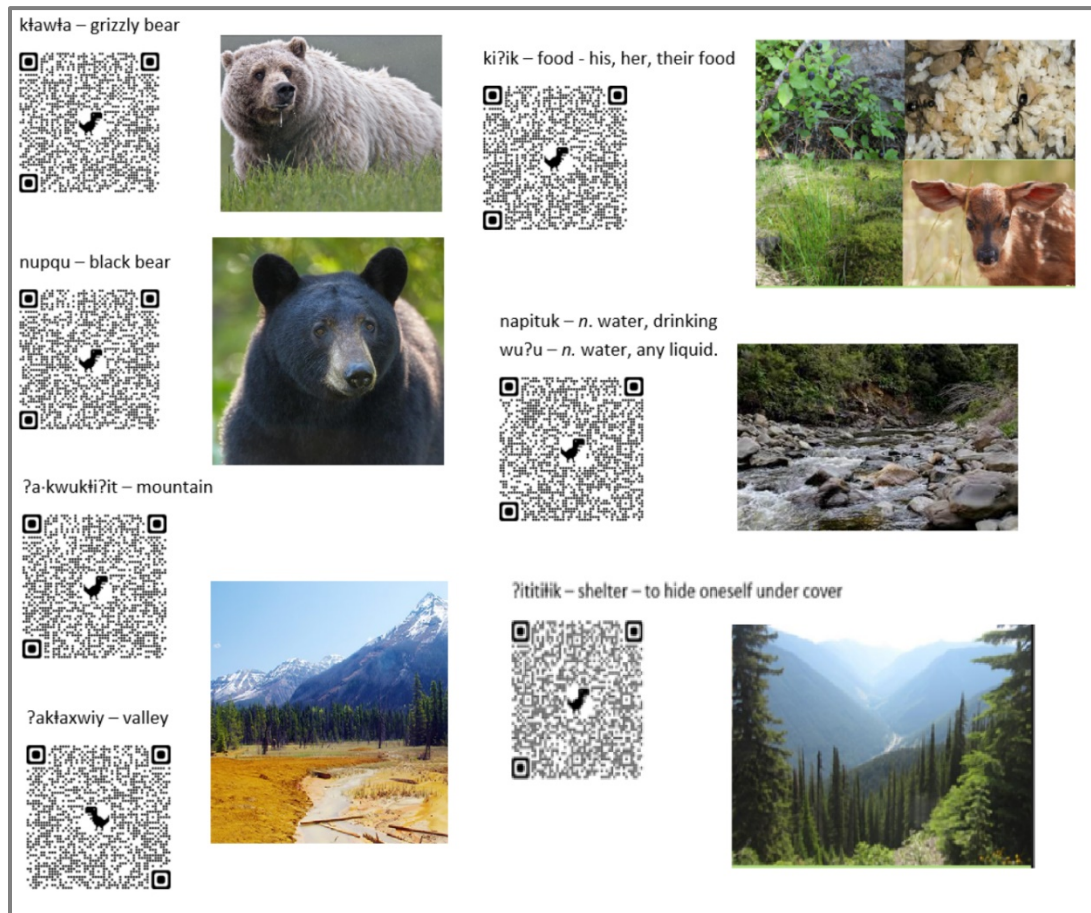


Figure 13. Image of QR Codes that, when used with a smartphone, will pronounce the word in the Ktunaxa Language.

Special Initiatives

BC Goes Wild is a campaign to celebrate wildlife in BC and it occurs in September which is typically the month when human-bear conflicts are at their highest in BC. Throughout the fourth weekend of September, the WCC hosted two combined wildlife safety presentations and bear spray demonstrations, one being on Saturday, September 25th at the College of the Rockies (Figure 14), and the other on September 26th during Wildsight's 8th Annual Harvest Party. The local gleaning group, Apple Capture, also collaborated with WildSafeBC once again this year and provided a fruit pressing event as well. There was a total of 63 participants throughout the entire weekend.



Figure 13. WildSafeBC BC Goes Wild Event at the College of the Rockies in Cranbrook.

Challenges and Opportunities

Garbage is always a challenge in RDEK area C. Often it is a result of tourists, campers, new developments, or new residents who are unaware of the serious risk that garbage poses for wildlife. There were a few incidents where black bears were getting into freezers and sheds in Kimberley as well as chicken coops in Cranbrook. There was also garbage that was left out at vacation rentals (AirBnB) once the tourist had finished their stay. It is a challenge that there are many absentee landlords and communicating with these landlords is quite difficult unless bylaw contacts them directly. Fortunately, the WCC can work with the bylaw officers so that the owners can be contacted, and attractant management strategies can be discussed.

To address the abundance of garbage, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2022:

- Communicate the importance of building a secure structure to store garbage outside of the house at the landlord's cost if bear conflict rises.

- Another solution could be to offer high conflict areas certified bear-resistant bins in Kimberley.
- Fines should be reviewed and increases considered in the Recycling and Solid Waste Bylaw. WildSafeBC has recently discussed the possibility of the development of a Wildlife Attractant Bylaw to complement the Recycling and Solid Waste Bylaw which was amended in Kimberley.

To address the abundance of bears getting into livestock, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2022:

- An option for Cranbrook and conflict with livestock would be to consider removing restrictions on electric fencing within city limits and consider requiring electric fences for small livestock.
- WildSafeBC plans to promote further information on chicken coops in 2022 for the area as well to increase awareness in proper management of livestock.

Fruit trees continue to draw wildlife into residential areas. Bears have been reported damaging fences and remaining in people's yards which impacts the safety of the neighbourhood. This concern peaks in September when school is back in session, bears enter hyperphagia and are strongly food-motivated, and fruit is abundant on trees. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community and would benefit to increased education and fruit tracking activities.

To address the abundance of fruit trees, namely apple trees, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2022:

- To address the abundance of fruit in the community, it is recommended that the City perform an audit of fruit trees on municipal property and develop plans to address them.
- The WCC will team up with a Masters student from College of the Rockies to look at possible ways to mitigate and further resolve conflict with fruit trees. This information will be shared with the Bear Working Group in 2022.

Deer are a challenge in both communities. Despite several education efforts, some community members continue to feed animals directly and indirectly. In these cases, it has been helpful to collaborate with bylaw and COS who can provide a financial incentive. It is not only the bears causing conflict with apple trees, but deer as well. There was an increase of calls to the WCC this fall regarding fruit trees in Kimberley associated with the gathering on deer on Rotary drive, which according to callers as well as the WARP map that went to Wildlife Biologists and Conservation Officers, that there was an increased in injured/distressed deer in that particular area.

To address the abundance of unmanaged fruit in the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2022:

- Education campaign focusing on the hazards and solutions through social media and news articles.

- Continue to work with Wildlife Biologists and Conservation Officers on permanent signage for high conflict zones in regard to aggressive deer and pets.
- Increased deer safety presentations.

Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC is grateful for the consistent support of its sponsors: the Province of BC, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Regional District of East Kootenay, the City of Cranbrook, the City of Kimberley, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation.

As always, the WCC would like to give a big thank you to the Conservation Officer Service and their staff, in particular Denny Chretien, Jeffrey Scott, Jim Melenka and Reiker Krenz for the great communication and participation in promoting WildSafeBC awareness. These partnerships are vital for the effectiveness and consistency of our messaging and our goal to “keep wildlife wild and communities safe”. Another big thank you goes out to the operations, communications and planning staff of the City of Cranbrook, in particular Chris Zettel. As well as Chris Mummery, Scott Sommerville, Pam Walsh, Maryse Leroux, Kim Tuff and, Chris Sellars, from the City of Kimberley have been proactive in collaborating with WildSafeBC to find lasting solutions to human-wildlife conflict.

Thank you to the community members, clubs, organizations, businesses, schools and other members of the public that participated in WSBC’s events. It is such an incredible opportunity to watch community members become more invested in keeping wildlife wild and their communities safe! Thank you for being proactive and taking responsibility in managing attractants in order to minimize the potential for wildlife conflict.