

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2021

New Denver, Nakusp, Silverton and RDCK Areas H and K

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) Areas H and K region between April 13th and November 30th, 2021 (Figure 1). This region is on the traditional and unceded territory of many First Nations groups, namely the Sinixt Peoples, but also the Syilx, Ktunaxa, and Secwépemc Peoples. Reports of conflict with wildlife were overall low in 2021 compared to previous years, with the most reports in May and late summer. The most common reported attractant was livestock (including chickens), followed by garbage; however, it was common for bears to visit fruit and nut trees in late summer and early fall with not all incidents being reported to the Conservation Office Service (COS).

The New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and RDCK Areas H and K WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activities in a variety of forms 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. The following summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the season:

- 18 WildSafe Rangers (WRP) presentations and 259 youth reached
- 10 presentations given to community groups, reaching 81 participants
- 77 people reached through DTD in person and 266 door hangers left
- 12 bin tagging outings and 27 bins tagged; 96% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey were not found on the curb again during the second survey
- 22 display booths and 901 people reached
- >150 Facebook posts and 61 new Facebook page followers from January 1, 2021 to October 30, 2021
- 2 businesses who signed the WildSafeBC Business Pledge
- Five campgrounds participating in parts of the Bare Campsite Program and nine that were contacted

The WCC collaborated with several organizations, including Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions, Harvest Share, Valhalla Wilderness Society Slocan Valley Bear Smart Program, and The Healthy Community Society. Collaborations included education on electric fencing and participation in shared events (e.g., pruning workshop with Harvest Share). One such collaboration was for BC Goes Wild in which the WCC collaborated with the Valhalla Wilderness Society Slocan Valley Bear Smart Program to present a bear biology walk and safety presentation at the Retallack Old Growth Forest Loop, followed by a bear spray workshop. The WCC also hosted a month-long online art exhibit to celebrate the biodiversity of wildlife in BC, with three submissions.

WildSafeBC New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and RDCK Areas H and K is grateful for the generous support the program receives from its funders including the Villages of New Denver, Silverton and Nakusp, Regional District of Central Kootenay, Columbia Basin Trust, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation and the province of British Columbia. The program also thanks the volunteers who assisted in events. Key challenges this year were cases in which residents were opposed to managing their attractants, and next year the WCC should promote all the local options for electric fencing cost sharing opportunities and use through a larger variety of channels. Another key opportunity for 2022 would be to emphasize the Bare Campsite Program and training

WildSafeBC New Denver, Nakusp, Silverton and RDCK Areas H and K Annual Report **2021**

staff at municipal campgrounds, as well as other local campgrounds, in the spring. Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help “keep wildlife wild and our community safe”.



Figure 1. WildSafeBC New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and Area H and K coverage area.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Highlights from the 2021 Season	5
Wildlife Activity	5
WildSafe Ranger Program	7
Presentations to Community Groups	9
Display Booths	11
Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging	12
Social Media and Press	14
Wildlife in Area Signs	14
Collaborations	14
WildSafeBC Business Pledge	15
WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program	16
Special Initiatives	16
Challenges and Opportunities	17
Acknowledgements	17

Table of Figures and Tables

Figure 1. WildSafeBC New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and Area K coverage area.	2
Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP by species from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.	5
Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.	6
Figure 4. Reports to the COS and WARP by attractant from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.	6
Table 1. Schools and programs that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2021	7
Figure 5. The storyboard version of the WRP program, delivered to Strong Start (left) and the Goat Mountain Kids Centre in New Denver (left). Photo credit: Charlene Alexander (left) and Cheryl Skaen (right).	8
Table 2. Dates and number of participants for each of the presentation types in the New Denver – Nakusp region in 2021: Wilderness Awareness and Safety presentations, Electric Fencing workshops and Bear Spray workshops.	9
Figure 6. The WCC testing the voltage of the demonstration electric fence at the Nakusp electric fence workshop. Photo credit: Gillian Sanders.	10

WildSafeBC New Denver, Nakusp, Silverton and RDCK Areas H and K Annual Report

2021

Figure 7. Inert bear spray demo after the Burton Farmers' Market. Photo credit: Barbara Ross.	10
Table 3. Dates and number of attendees at display booths in the region in 2021.	11
Figure 8. Typical display booth setup. This booth was hosted at the New Denver Farmers' Market. Photo credit: Gabrielle Spaulding.	12
Figure 9. Number of garbage bins placed out early for collection over three visits in New Denver from May to August.	13
Figure 10. Number of garbage bins placed out early for collection over nine visits and three zones in Nakusp from May to October.	13
Figure 11. Bear in Area and Cougar in Area signs put up throughout the region at trailheads, beaches and along walking trails.	14
Figure 12. Local business that joined the business pledge in 2021: Camp Café in Silverton and Inspirations by Sanderella in New Denver.	16

Cover Photo: The WCC providing the story-board version of the WildSafe Rangers presentation to the New Denver preschool. Photo credit: Sara Wearmouth.

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 and this report for New Denver, Nakusp, Silverton and RDCK Areas H and K includes data from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021 (Figure 2).

Black bears remained the most reported species (Figure 2). There were 59 black bear reports made to the COS in 2021 which is lower than the 6-year average of 94 (2016-2021) and 5-year average of 66 (2017-2021). Reports of black bears were highest in May and October 2021 (Figure 3), with many reports in October being associated with orphaned cubs. For a second year in a row, livestock (including chickens) was the most reported attractant in this region, with garbage and "other" being the second most reported attractants in 2021 (Figure 4). "Other" includes sightings, aggressive behaviour, orphaned cubs and other categories not listed. Although fruit trees were not often reported to the COS as a major attractant in 2021, community reports and residents contacting WildSafeBC suggest that fruit and nut trees remained a major attractant in the late summer and early fall. This may be due to low natural food availability as a result of a very dry summer, rife with forest fires. Reports of conflict with other species were also lower than average (Figure 2).

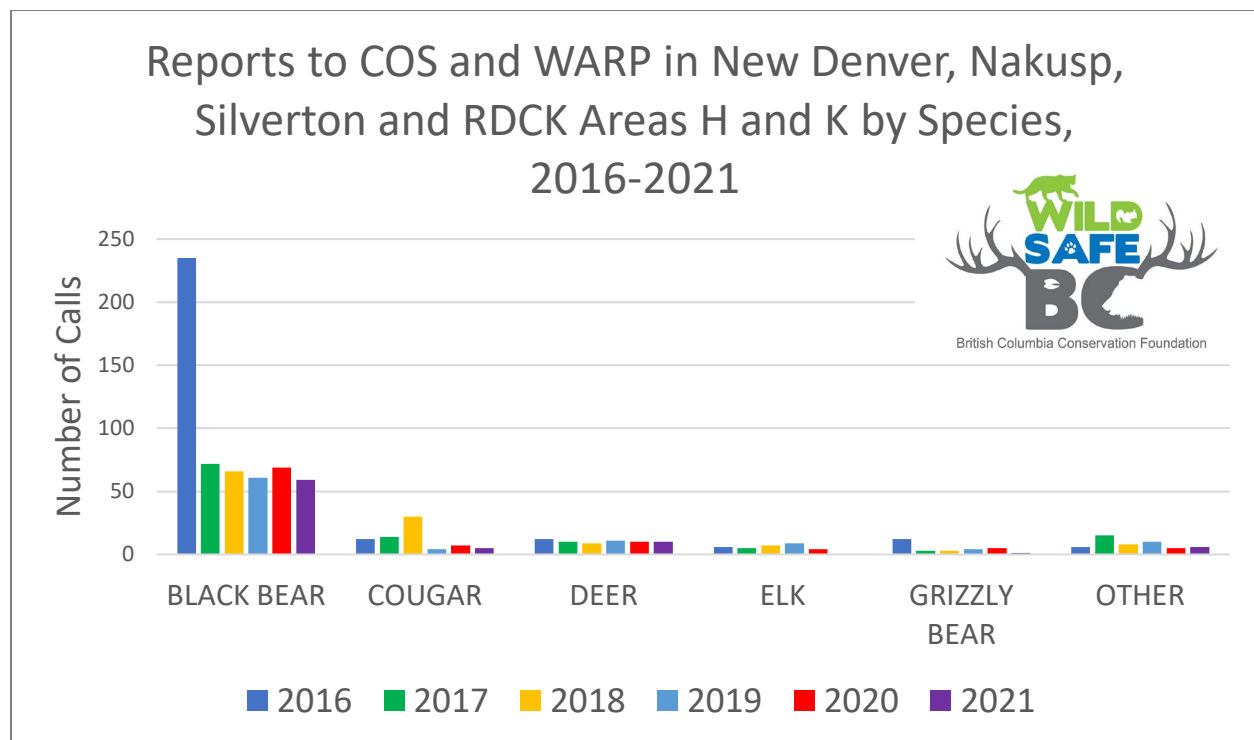


Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP by species from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

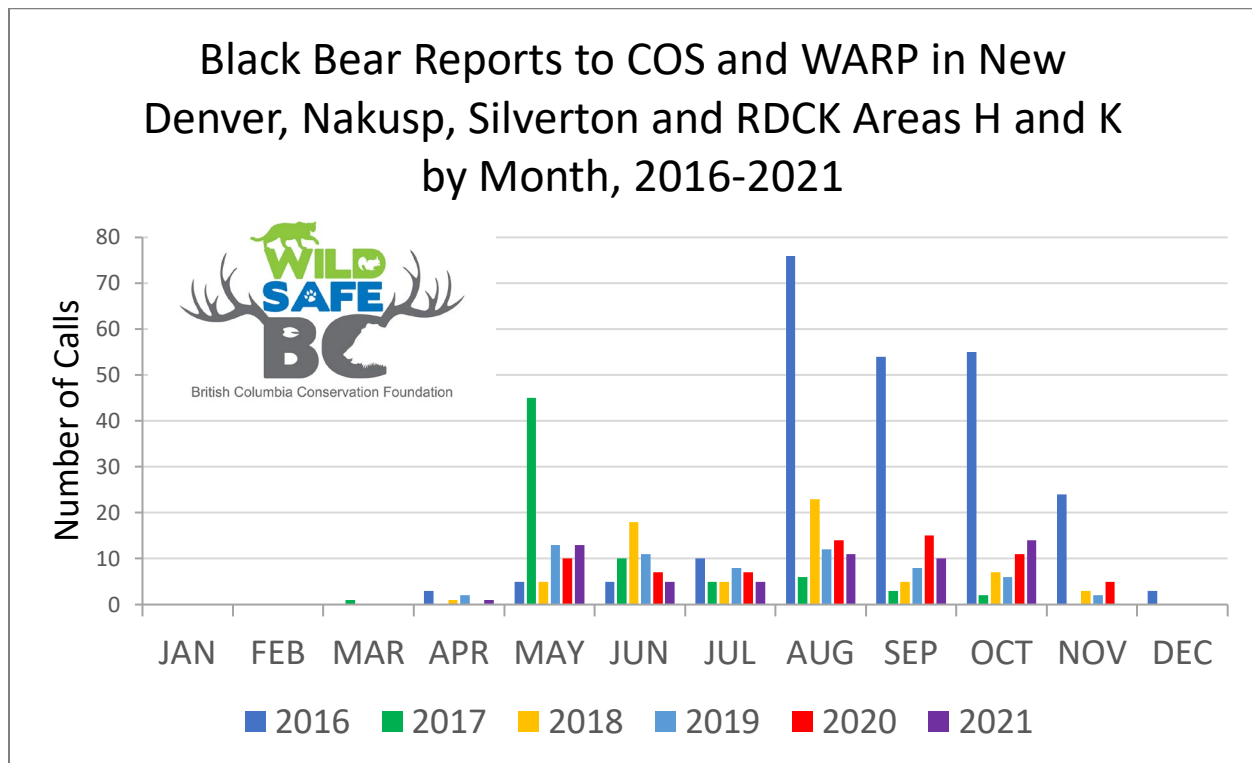


Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

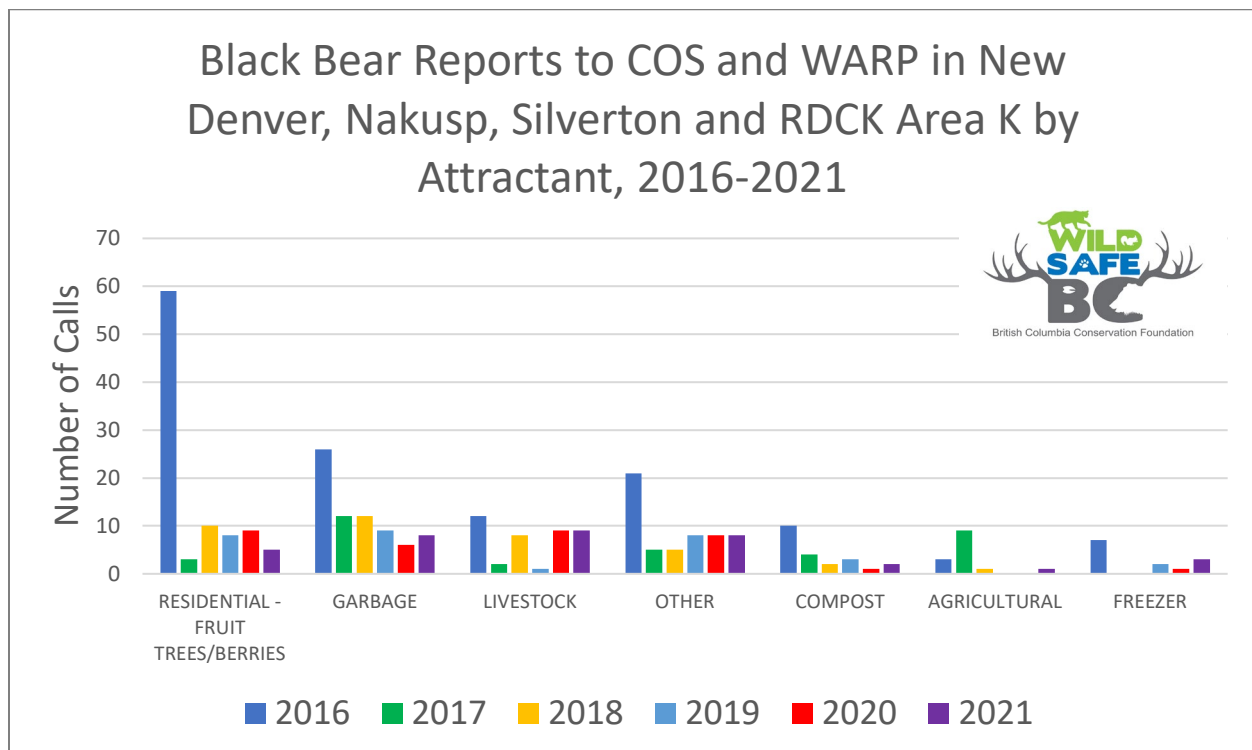


Figure 4. Reports to the COS and WARP by attractant from January 1, 2016 to October 31, 2021.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. All four elementary schools within the coverage zone north of Silverton participated in the WRP through outdoor presentations that allowed for physical distancing. The WRP program was also presented to New Denver's new childcare centre (Goat Mountain Kids Centre), Strong Start and preschool. Combined, 259 youth became WildSafe Rangers and received kits (Table 1). Of these, 87 students received an extended version in which, following the WRP presentation, the group was introduced to identifying animal tracks in a nearby area. The grade 7 class in Nakusp received all information in a field trip format near the elementary school. WildSafeBC is continually evolving and adopting new strategies to improve outreach. The interactive storyboard, which was presented to youth in grade 3 and younger, assisted coordinators in more effectively communicating concepts to young children (Figure 5).

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

School/Program	Grade/Age	Students/Children	Extended
Strong Start New Denver	< 5 years age	4	Yes
New Denver Daycare (Goat Mountain Kids Centre)	< 5 years age	5	Yes
New Denver Preschool			
June Cohort	< 5 years age	7	Yes
September Cohort	< 5 years age	9	Yes
Lucerne Elementary School	Grades K/1, 2/3	32	No
Nakusp Elementary School	Grades K, K/1, 1/2, 2, 3/4, 5/6	133	No
	Grade 7	25	Yes
Burton Elementary School	Grades K-3, 4-7	37	No
Edgewood Elementary School	K-3	7	No



Figure 5. The storyboard version of the WRP program, delivered to Strong Start (left) and the Goat Mountain Kids Centre in New Denver (left). Photo credit: Charlene Alexander (left) and Cheryl Skaien (right).

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave a total of 11 presentations through indoor and outdoor presentations to over 80 participants including: Wildlife Awareness and Safety presentations, bear spray workshops and electric fencing workshops (Table 2; Figure 6, Figure 7). Electric fencing workshops were held in collaboration with Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions.

Table 2. Dates and number of participants for each of the presentation types in the New Denver – Nakusp region in 2021: Wilderness Awareness and Safety presentations, Electric Fencing workshops and Bear Spray workshops.

Event	Date	Number of Attendees
Wilderness Awareness and Safety		
Camp Valhalla Campground	August 21, 2021	18
Valhalla Wilderness Society Slocan		
Valley Bear Smart program	September 5, 2021	9
Collaboration Nature Walk		
Electric Fencing Workshops		
New Denver	June 29, 2021	10
Nakusp	August 17, 2021	3
Bear Spray Workshops		
Nakusp High School Outdoor Ed Class	May 17, 2021	11
Burton Farmers' Market	July 4, 2021	10
Girl in the Wild Camp	July 10, 2021	8
Shon's Bike Shop	August 7, 2021	4
Valhalla Pure New Denver	August 20, 2021	5
BC Goes Wild: Retallack Old Growth Loop	September 5, 2021	3



Figure 6. The WCC testing the voltage of the demonstration electric fence at the Nakusp electric fence workshop. Photo credit: Gillian Sanders.



Figure 7. Inert bear spray demo after the Burton Farmers' Market. Photo credit: Barbara Ross.

Display Booths

The WCC hosted 22 booths at farmers' markets, trailheads, recycling depots, and local events in 2021 (Table 3; Figure 8). Combined, display booths reached approximately 900 people, accounting for approximately 45% of the individuals reached through the program in 2021. Each location offered different benefits; for example, display booths at recycling depots and local cafes allowed residents to easily share information about wildlife sightings and concerns. Farmers' markets often reached a large number of individuals, many of which were visitors from areas with lower rates of human-wildlife conflict and benefited from WildSafeBC messaging. This year, many display booths were hosted with local businesses, often immediately prior to a bear spray workshop.

Table 3. Dates and number of attendees at display booths in the region in 2021.

Event	Date	Number of Attendees
New Denver Recycling Depot	April 27, 2021	9
Burton Farmers' Market	May 2, 2021	17
Bigelow Bay Display Booth	May 12, 2021	4
Nakusp Farmers' Market	June 12, 2021	110
Nakusp Hot Springs Trailhead	June 19, 2021	30
Silverton Camp Café	June 20, 2021	25
Mount Abriel Parking Lot (Mountain Biking Area)	June 27, 2021	11
Camp Valhalla Campground	July 3, 2021	51
Burton Farmers' Market	July 4, 2021	25
Nakusp Farmers' Market	July 10, 2021	100
Silverton Boat Launch	July 11, 2021	12
New Denver Farmers' Market	July 16, 2021	95
Nakusp Hot Springs Trailhead	July 24, 2021	10
Shon's Bike Shop	August 7, 2021	35
New Denver Recycling Depot	August 14, 2021	9
Valhalla Pure New Denver	August 20, 2021	17
Nakusp Farmers' Market	August 21, 2021	117
Camp Valhalla Campground	August 21, 2021	10
New Denver Farmers' Market	August 27, 2021	56
New Denver Farmers' Market	September 10, 2021	38
Nakusp Farmers' Market	September 18, 2021	59
Harvest Fest @ Lucerne School	October 1, 2021	61



Figure 8. Typical display booth setup. This booth was hosted at the New Denver Farmers' Market. Photo credit: Gabrielle Spaulding.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Door-to-door education was modified this year to consist of leaving door hangers; the WCC did not knock on doors as has been done in the past. However, if individuals were outside of their home, or saw the WCC approaching, then the WCC communicated with the resident directly. This was a modification as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through door-to-door education, a total of 77 people were reached during in-person conversations and 266 door hangers were left at homes. Areas were prioritized when there were recent wildlife issues, or if a relatively large number of garbage bins were tagged in a region.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection. In this region, garbage bins being left out is not common overall. During three outings in New Denver, a total of five bins were tagged, accounting for 1.6% of houses surveyed (5 of 312), and zero were repeat offenders (Figure 9). During nine outings in Nakusp (three outings for each of the three zones), a total of 22 bins were tagged,

WildSafeBC New Denver, Nakusp, Silverton and RDCK Areas H and K Annual Report 2021

accounting for a total of 2.0% of households (22 of 1084), and only one was a repeat offender (Figure 10). The effectiveness of garbage tagging for changing behaviour is suggested by the 96% of the residences whose bins were tagged during an initial survey and then were not found on the curb again during subsequent surveys (Figures 9-10).

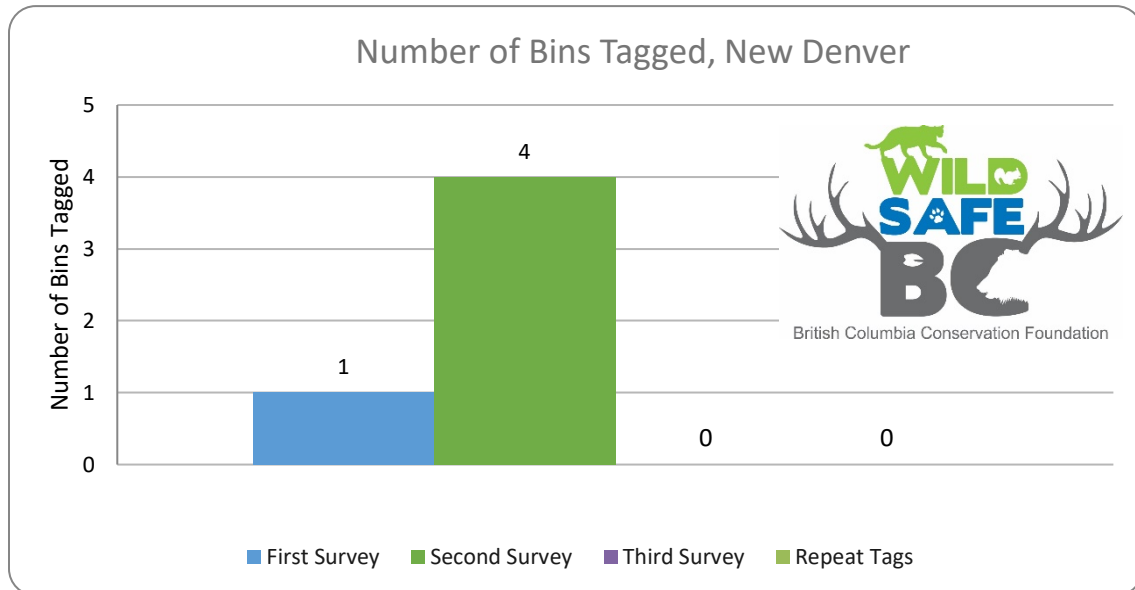


Figure 9. Number of garbage bins placed out early for collection over three visits in New Denver from May to August.

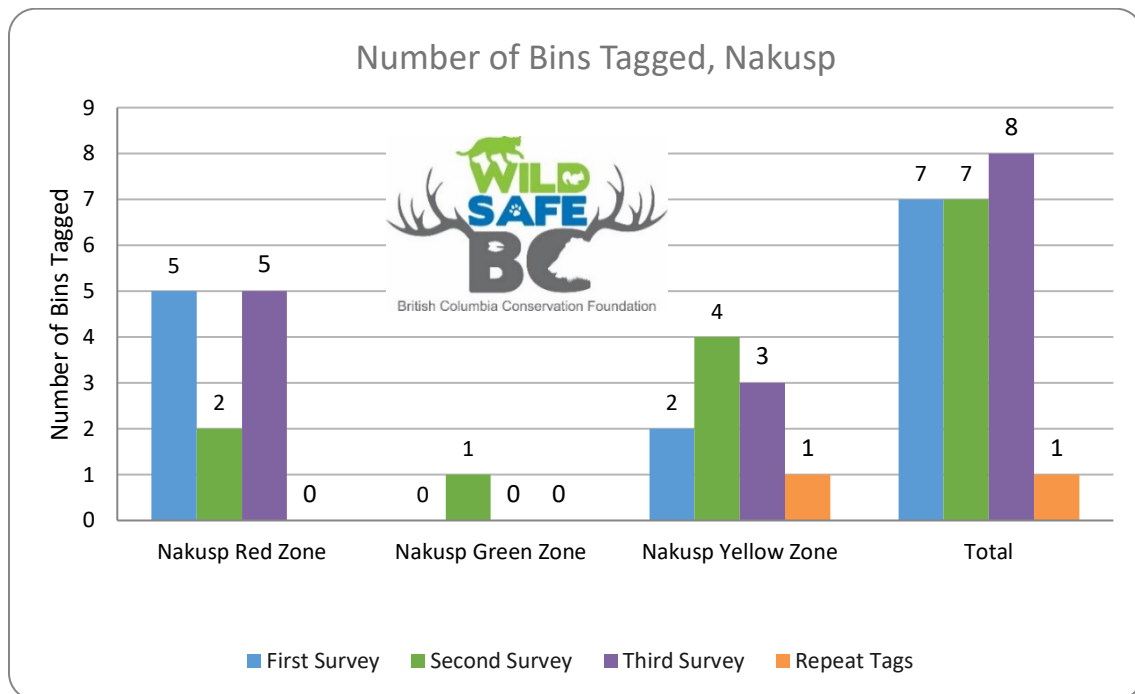


Figure 10. Number of garbage bins placed out early for collection over nine visits and three zones in Nakusp from May to October.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC New Denver- Nakusp Facebook page grew 14% from 444 to 505 followers from January to November 2021. Over 150 posts were made to Facebook from April 12, 2021 to November 15, 2021, with posts having a cumulative reach of greater than 45,000. The WCC submitted five news articles that were published in the Valley Voice in 2021, including articles about bear biology, fruit tree management, and BC Goes Wild events.

Wildlife in Area Signs

Wildlife in Area signs were established in New Denver (e.g., campground, along river and trailheads), Silverton, Hill and, Summit Lake between May and October when reports of potentially dangerous black bear and cougar activity were reported to the WCC by residents or the Conservation Office Service (Figure 11). While putting up signs, the WCC had the opportunity to talk to many residents in the area to warn them of current bear or cougar activity. Signs were established at trail entrances or in areas where users would be most likely to see the warning. They were kept up for 10 to 14 days and then removed once no further reports of the wildlife species were made. This was done so as to keep the warnings relevant and updated. If reports continued, signs were left up for longer. “BC is Wildlife Country” posters were also provided to local trail organizations to put along trails with reports of high bear activity.



Figure 11. Bear in Area and Cougar in Area signs put up throughout the region at trailheads, beaches and along walking trails.

Collaborations

WildSafeBC New Denver, Nakusp Silverton, and RDCK Areas H and K continues to collaborate with Harvest Share for fruit gleanings referrals in New Denver and Silverton. The two programs together oversee five loaner electric fences within New Denver and Silverton that can be established on private property to secure fruit trees before harvesting.

WildSafeBC New Denver, Nakusp, Silverton and RDCK Areas H and K Annual Report **2021**

WildSafeBC New Denver, Nakusp Silverton, and RDCK Areas H and K also collaborated with Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions to co-host two electric fencing workshops in 2021. The WCC referred residents to Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions to discuss cost-sharing options for residents and general advice for electric fencing considerations. The WCC also referred residents to the Bear Smart program with the Valhalla Wilderness Society to discuss cost-share options on energizers for electric fencing within RDCK Area H.

WildSafeBC developed a video featuring Julia Greenlaw and the work the Healthy Community Society has done towards providing bear-resistant community composting in New Denver and Silverton. This video is featured on the provincial website at <https://wildsafebc.com/learn/grow/>. The success of this program is being shared with other communities province-wide.

Events were co-hosted with many organizations. Firstly, the WCC collaborated with the Bear Smart Program in Area H with the Valhalla Wilderness Society to host a joint bear biology walk and bear spray workshop for BC Goes Wild. The WCC also collaborated with the Healthy Community Society at the Lucerne School's annual Harvest Fest, hosting a booth with WildSafeBC activity sheets. Finally, the WCC collaborated with Harvest Share to organize a pruning workshop, in which a professional arborist was scheduled to provide training and advice to residents regarding pruning. Unfortunately, the pruning workshop had to be cancelled due to low enrollment and will be attempted again next year.

WildSafeBC Business Pledge

The WildSafeBC 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 two businesses signed the pledge this year, including Silverton's Camp Café and Inspirations by Sanderella in New Denver (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Local business that joined the business pledge in 2021: Camp Café in Silvertown and Inspirations by Sanderella in New Denver.

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. Although no campgrounds signed up for the full program this year, nine campsites were approached by this program and five accepted and used WildSafeBC materials related to the program (e.g., brochures, bare camping posters, etc.). Many sponsor municipalities have expressed interest in bare campsite training in the spring for the municipal campgrounds.

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. This year, the WCC collaborated with the Valhalla Wilderness Society Bear Smart Program in Area H to host a bear biology nature walk plus bear spray workshop. A total of nine participants joined for this event. The WCC also hosted an online art exhibit encouraging locals of all ages to submit photographs of their art (e.g., drawings, painting, poems, sculptures, etc.) to be showcased online; there were three submissions.

On October 1, 2021, WildSafeBC joined Harvest Fest at Lucerne Elementary School, an event organized by The Healthy Community Society. At this event, WildSafeBC hosted a booth and had many WildSafe Rangers activities available for students, including biodiversity bingo, word searches and math sheets. Approximately 55 kids completed at least one document and were able to choose a WildSafeBC temporary tattoo.

Challenges and Opportunities

Fruit trees continue to be a source of attractants in the community that draw wildlife into residential areas. Bears have been reported remaining in people's yards which impacts the safety of the neighbourhood. There has also been a strong opposition this year from some residents to invest in managing their attractants, particularly in regards to fruit trees. To address the abundance of fruit in the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2022:

- Continued electric fence demonstrations and workshops
- Education campaign focusing on the hazards and solutions through social media, news articles, workshops, flyer in municipal tax information
- Connect residents with Harvest Share, the local fruit-gleaning organization in New Denver and Silverton, or Root and Branch, the fruit-gleaning organization in Nakusp
- Increased door-to-door campaigns in hotspots
- Consider removing fruit and nut trees that exist on public property that are not managed and not utilized by the communities

Considerations and opportunities for 2022:

- Emphasizing the Bare Campsite program in municipal campgrounds, and implementing it into staff training in the spring
- Prioritizing areas that have not received a WRP in the past such as area south of Slocan in Area H.

Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC New Denver, Nakusp, Silverton and RDCK Areas H and K is grateful for the generous support the program receives from its funders including the Villages of New Denver, Nakusp and Silverton, the Regional District of Central Kootenay (Areas H and K), Columbia Basin Trust, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF) and the Province of British Columbia. The WCC also thanks the BCCF team and the local Conservation Office Service team for communication and shared knowledge of wildlife activity and advice. The WCC also wants to thank this year's volunteers, Nick Robinson and Penelope Stuart. Lastly, thanks to all the individuals and organizations the WCC collaborated with, including Bree Lillies and Audray Wright with Harvest Share, Gillian Sanders with Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions, Kim Frederiksen with the Valhalla Wilderness Society Bear Smart Program for Area H, and Julia Greenlaw with the Healthy Community Society.