

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2022

## Kootenay Boundary Region

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## Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Boundary Program between May 11<sup>th</sup> and November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The program covers a region of 8,083 square kilometers and includes the communities of Grand Forks, Christina Lake, Greenwood, Midway, Rock Creek and Regional District of Kootenay Boundary Electoral (RDKB) Areas C, D and E (Figure 1). The Program takes place on the traditional territories of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, Ktunaxa, Sinixt, and Syilx peoples.

Wildlife is abundant with black bears being the most reported species in the area, followed by deer and cougar. Black bear reports have been slowly increasing in recent years. The delivery of WildSafeBC programming will allow us to keep wildlife wild and communities safe by minimizing human-wildlife conflicts.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activities with the goal of preventing and reducing human-wildlife conflicts in the community. The following activities took place:

- 75 people reached through door-to-door in person and 238 door hangers left
- six bin tagging outings and 30 bins tagged
- 30 people reached through three display booths
- WildSafeBC Boundary Facebook page, started just this season, has over 500 followers
- The Bare Campsite Program was introduced to 15 campgrounds and seasonal resorts

In addition, there was an effective and successful collaboration with the Conservation Officer Service (COS). Throughout the season, local Conservation Officers contacted the WCC with requests for education and outreach in particular problem areas.

Overall, the WildSafeBC Boundary Program has been well received in all communities. The WCC would like to thank its sponsors: The Christina Lake Stewardship Society, Grand Forks Wildlife Association, RDKB Areas C, D, and E, the City of Grand Forks, the City of Greenwood, the City of Midway, the BC Conservation Foundation, and the Province of British Columbia.

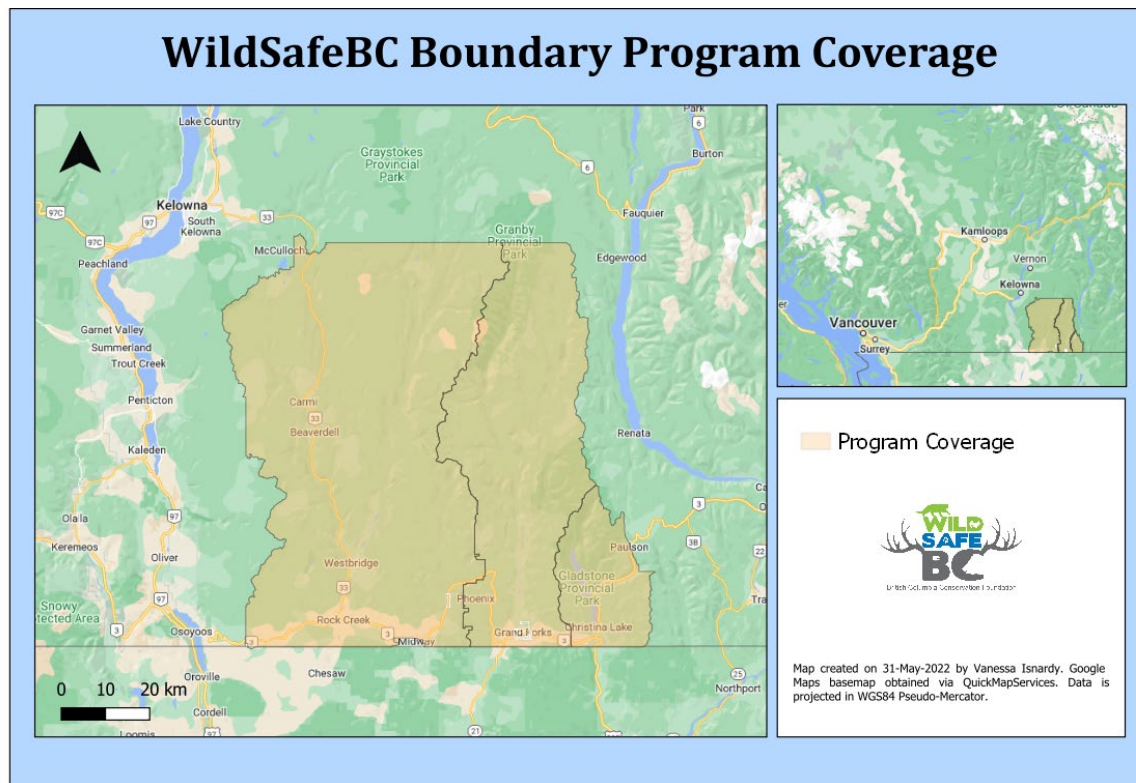


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Boundary Program coverage area.

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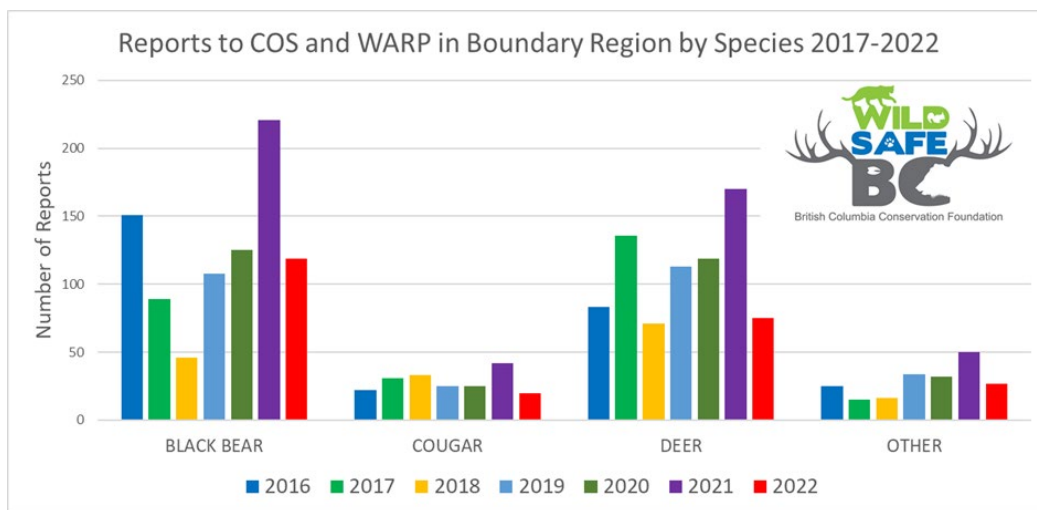
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**Cover Photo:** Black Bear on hiking trail, August 2022. Photo credit: Sarah Fleming.

## Highlights from the 2022 Season

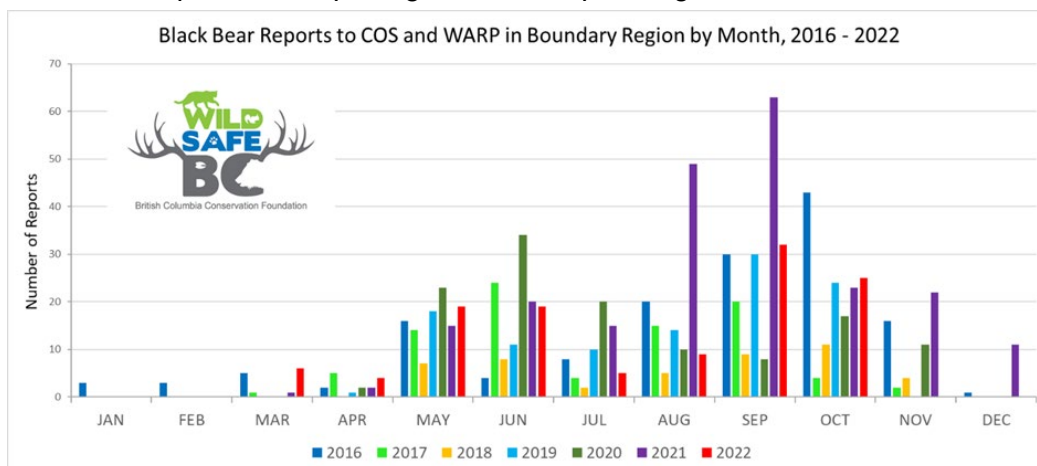
### Wildlife Activity

Calls made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) are available to the public through the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). This data is updated daily and this report for the Boundary Region includes data from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022 (Figure 2). In 2022, there were 119 black bear reports which is a 46% decrease compared to 2021 with 221. Reports of other species were also down from 2021.



**Figure 2. Reports to COS and WARP in Boundary region by species from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.**

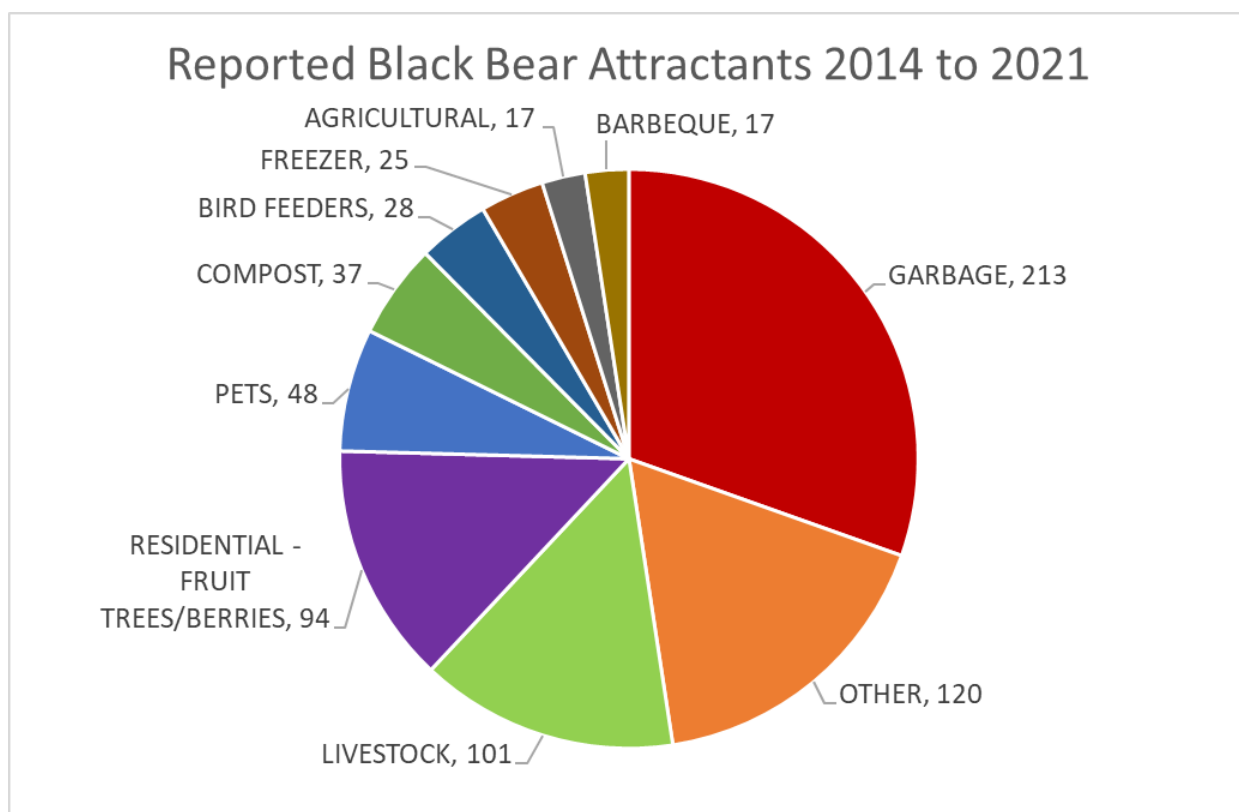
September saw the highest number of black bear reports for 2022, with 32 reports (Figure 3). This aligns with past records, as September tends to have higher numbers. This is likely related to cooler temperatures, ripening fruits, and spawning kokanee.



**Figure 3. Reports to COS and WARP in Boundary region regarding black bears by month from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.**



Unfortunately WARP was unable to track the wildlife attractants as it has in previous years, however, it is strongly suspected that garbage continues to be the leading attractant for black bears in Castlegar, followed by fruit and nut trees. Anecdotally the WCC observed that garbage and fruit trees were commonly mentioned by residents when discussing wildlife attractants in the community. The data from WARP for 2014 to 2021 in this area also displays this same trend with garbage, livestock, and residential fruit trees and berries, as the most commonly reported attractants for black bears (Figure 4).



**Figure 4. Reported black bear attractants in Boundary from 2014-2021.**

## WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. Youth are encouraged to take an active role in reducing human-wildlife conflict at home by helping their families identify backyard wildlife attractants. Children also learn how to have a safe and respectful relationship with wildlife. Boundary School District 51 has 10 schools with students K-12. School District 51 schools are on track to receive the WRP in the coming WildSafeBC season (Table 1).

Table 1. School District 51 schools that are eligible for WildSafe Ranger Program.

School	Grades
Christina Lake Elementary	K-7
Dr. D.A. Perley Elementary	K-7
John A. Hutton Elementary	K-7
Grand Forks Secondary School	8-12
Walker Development Centre	8-12
Greenwood Elementary	4-7
Boundary Central Secondary School	8-12
West Boundary Elementary	K-7
Beaverdell Elementary	K-3
Big White Community School	K-9

## Display Booths

The WildSafeBC booth display was a popular feature at several trailheads. The WCC set up a display booth at three local trailheads over the course of the season (Table 2). This allowed the WCC to interact with locals and visitors who have an interest in outdoor recreation. A total of 30 people were reached with these booths with conversations focused around safe practices while recreating in wildlife country (Figure 5).

Table 2. Display Booth locations and interactions with the public.

Location	Number of People Reached
Paulson Connector Trans Canada Trail Access	5
Dewdney Mountain Biking Trail	5
Santa Rosa Trans Canada Trail Access	20



Figure 5. WildSafeBC Boundary Coordinator at Santa Rosa Trans Canada Trail Access.

## Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Through door-to-door education, a total of 75 people were reached during in-person conversations and 238 door hangers were left for people who were not at home during the canvassing time (Figure 6). The south end of Christina Lake, Ruckle area of Grand Forks, City of Grand Forks, and upper Chase Road in Christina Lake were prioritized for this activity due to high levels of wildlife activity. These areas see increased wildlife activity as they are located closer to wildlife corridors and also have increased levels of attractants. Some of these neighbourhoods have more residents, which results in more accessible garbage and compost. When speaking with members of these communities, they were reminded to secure all of their attractants and to refrain from feeding wildlife (including bird feeders).

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection (Figure 6). During six outings, a total of 30 bins were tagged. Garbage tagging took place throughout all of Christina Lake (Area C) twice, Grand Forks Rural Area D twice, and The City of Grand Forks twice. Three residences received stickers more than once. The effectiveness of garbage tagging for changing human behaviours is demonstrated by the 90% 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 7).





Figure 6. WildSafeBC door hanger (left) and bin tag left on a green compost bin (right).

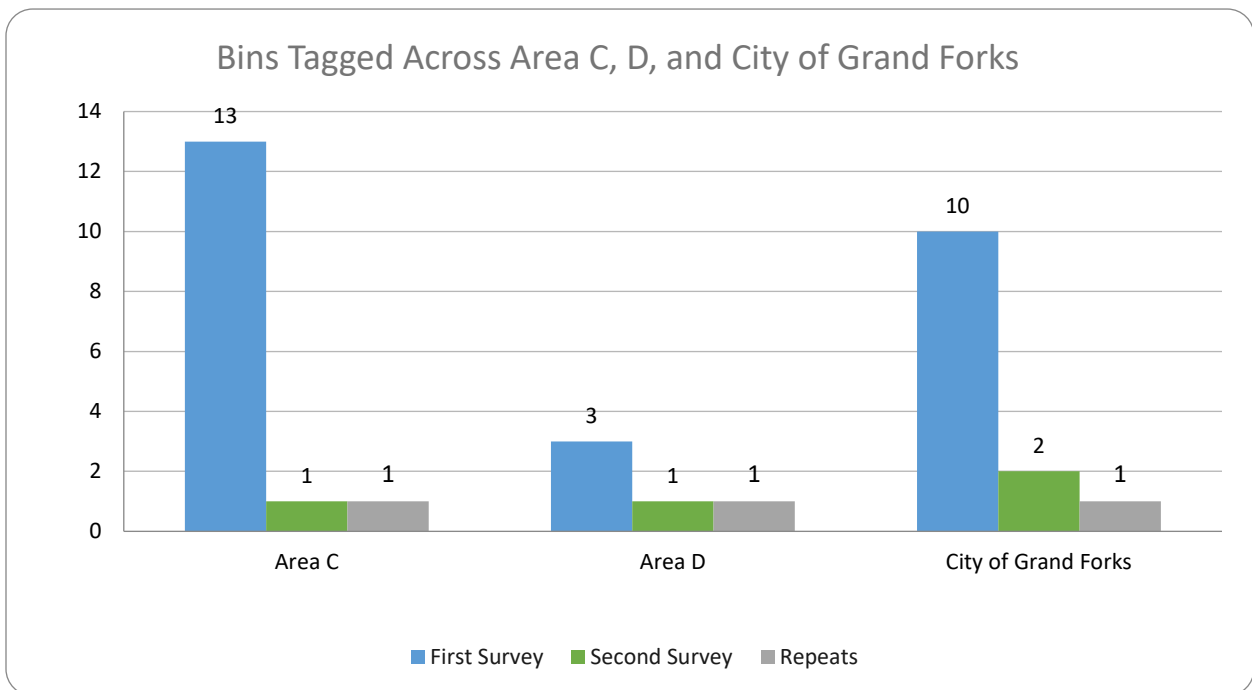


Figure 7. Number of bins tagged in communities and number of bins tagged more than once on repeat survey efforts.

## Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Boundary program was well supported by local media platforms including the WildSafeBC Boundary Facebook page and the *Christina Lake E-Blast*. Topics covered included everything from introducing the new Boundary Coordinator to the BC Goes Wild Photo Contest and attractant management strategies as they changed through the season. The WildSafeBC Boundary Facebook page has over 500 followers from this season's information posts. These posts are reaching over 2,000 viewers in several different community groups.

## Wildlife in Area Signs

Signs were installed in several neighbourhoods in the Christina Lake and Grand Forks areas throughout the season (Figure 9). Signs posted were predominantly residential bear in area signs with the “last seen” date updated as regularly as possible. Signs serve as a dual reminder for people to give wildlife space (when seen) and to keep garbage and other attractants secure.



Figure 8. Residential Bear in Area sign with “last seen” date.

## WildSafe Business Pledge

The WildSafe Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses to adopt practices that will reduce conflict with wildlife to keep their staff and patrons safe and wildlife wild. Through these actions, businesses are setting 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. There were 13 businesses contacted across the Boundary Region, with one business, Kool Treat, expressing interest in signing a Business Pledge for the 2023 season. Following seasons may be more successful as several of the contacted businesses are brand new to the area, or have new owners.

## 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. While no campgrounds are currently participating in the Bare Campsite program in the Boundary Region, 15 campgrounds and resorts were approached and informed about the program. Follow up early on next season is recommended to see if some of these campgrounds will be able to participate.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Some challenges faced in 2022 included the size of the region. Opportunities to collaborate with other organizations with closer access to some of these communities were considered as a possible solution. One effective solution was collaborating with the Conservation Officer Service as they have a dedicated staff member who is available and aware of many human-wildlife conflicts in the area. This allowed the WCC to focus on specific areas with increased wildlife activity.

Fruit trees continue to be a source of attractants in the community that draw wildlife into residential areas. Bears have been reported damaging fences and accessing backyard chickens and other domestic livestock, which affects the safety of neighbourhoods. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community and would benefit from increased education and fruit gleaning activities.

To address the abundance of fruit in the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2023:

- electric fencing demonstrations

- education campaign focusing on hazards of not properly managing attractants and solutions for managing attractants
- engaging food banks and other non-profits for use of excess fruit
- connecting residents through a food sharing group
- increasing door-to-door campaigns and bin tagging in hot spots and key neighbourhoods

Moving forward into future seasons, attractant management with a seasonal focus should continue to remain a priority in terms of education efforts. This can be most effectively accomplished via in person discussions and education and will be particularly helpful given the increase in new residents to the area. The Boundary Region is seeing a rise in young families seeking rural lifestyles, and it is important that all residents are aware of their potential attractants and concerns around human-wildlife conflict.

## Acknowledgements

The WCC wishes to thank: the BC Conservation Foundation (BCCF) team for their continued support and expertise as well as all of the program sponsors: The Christina Lake Stewardship Society, Grand Forks Wildlife Association, RDKB (Area C, D, and E), the City of Grand Forks, the City of Greenwood, and the City of Midway. A special thanks to Conservation Officers Kyle Bueckert and Brock VanDamme for their continued support throughout the WildSafeBC 2022 season.