

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2022

Columbia Shuswap

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Program between May 27th and November 30th, 2022. This is the second season for the program in this area. WildSafeBC appreciates the efforts of all involved in this program's return 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 and Malakwa. WildSafeBC acknowledges that the program takes place on the unceded traditional territory of the Secwépemc Peoples.

Consistent with previous years, black bears were the most reported species to the Conservation Officer Service (COS), with a total of 43 reports made from January 1 to November 26th, 2022. After black bears, deer and cougars were the next most reported species with 20 and 7 reports, respectively. Although there was a high grizzly bear presence in particular areas this season, they were underreported to the COS with no reports made during this time period.

Unsecured garbage and residential fruit trees, among other unnatural food sources, continue to draw wildlife into residential areas.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed various outreach activities with the goal of preventing human-wildlife conflict in communities. The following summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the season:

- 8 WildSafe Ranger presentations and 156 youth reached
- 8 presentations given to various community groups with a total of 145 participants
- 52 people reached through door-to-door in person conversations and 179 door hangers with letters were provided to those not present
- 6 bin tagging outings and 78 bins tagged in total, 75% of residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey were not found on the curb again during the second survey
- 14 display booths held at various community events and 1,829 people reached
- 54 Facebook posts on the WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap page and 66 new followers from May 27th, 2022 to November 30th, 2022
- 8 businesses approached and introduced to the WildSafeBC Business Pledge Program
- One campground was interested in participating in WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program in 2023 and three campgrounds were contacted and introduced to the program
- 8 signs were placed at various sites following wildlife sightings, including Bear-In-Area and Cougar-In-Area signs

In 2021, WildSafeBC was involved in the formation of the Columbia Shuswap Wildlife Working Group in partnership with the Sunnybrae Stewardship Society; this group met for the second time on September 29th, 2022. 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 BC Conservation Foundation (BCCF), the Province of British Columbia, and the CSRD 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. 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”.

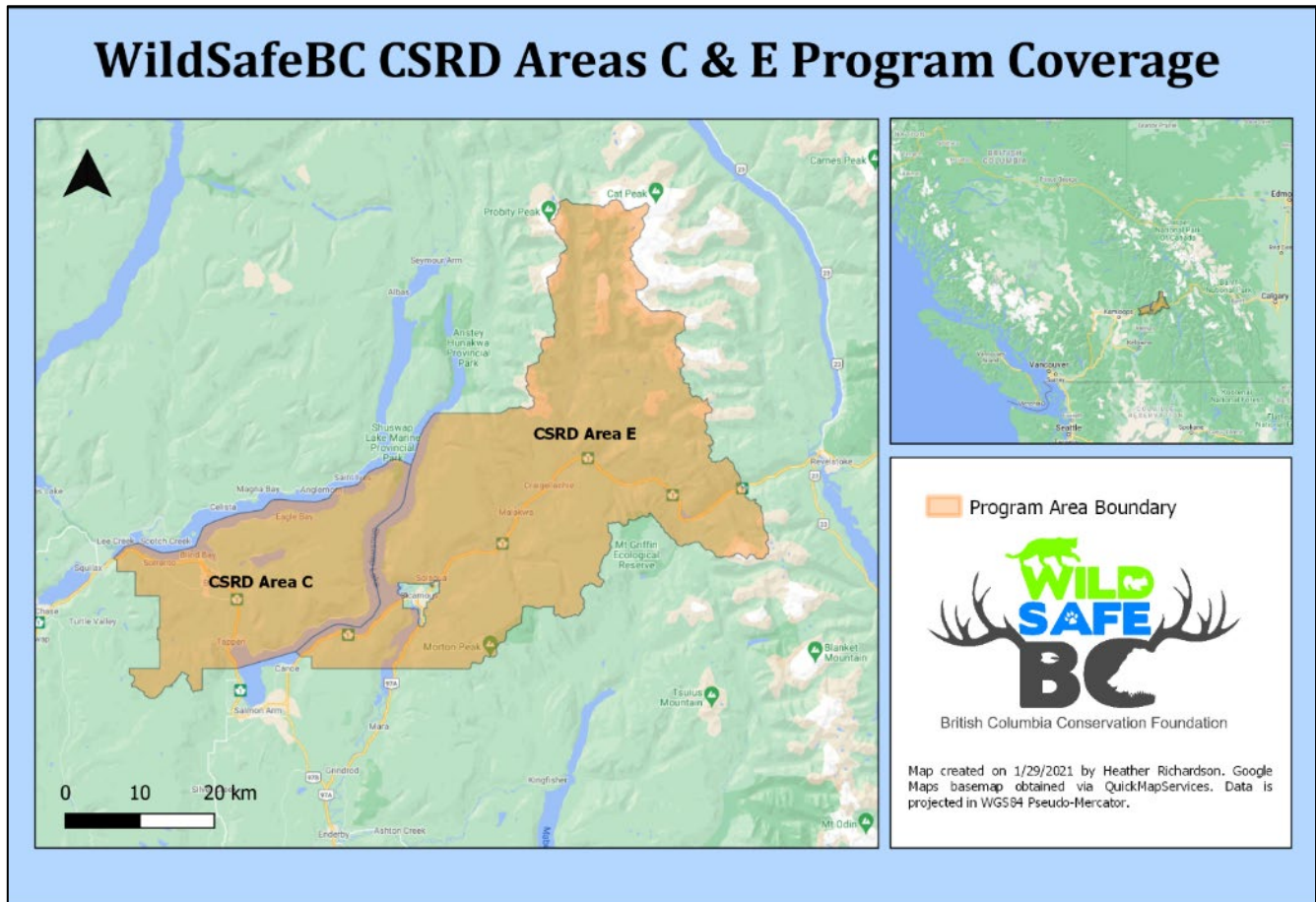


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Program coverage area in 2022 which includes Columbia Shuswap Regional District (CSRD) Areas C and E.

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Cover Photo: Black bear sow sitting on tires in an Eagle Bay resident's backyard. Photo courtesy of Reid Foreman.

Highlights from the 2022 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 1st, 2016 to November 26th, 2022.

Similar to previous years, black bears were the species most often reported to the COS, followed by deer and cougars. This year there were 43 black bear reports, which is lower than the yearly average over the past 3 years of 65 reports (Figure 2). This year, black bear reports were highest in May, June and September and lower in August (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. Likewise, the increase in reports in May and June may correspond with bears leaving their hibernation dens and searching for food in the spring. There were 20 reports of deer and 7 reports of cougars made to the RAPP line, which is comparable to past years. No reports of grizzly bears were made this year although there was a high grizzly bear presence in Area E this season which was noticed by the WCC in social media posts and through direct conversations with residents and visitors in the area. This indicates the underreporting of grizzly bears to the COS RAPP line.

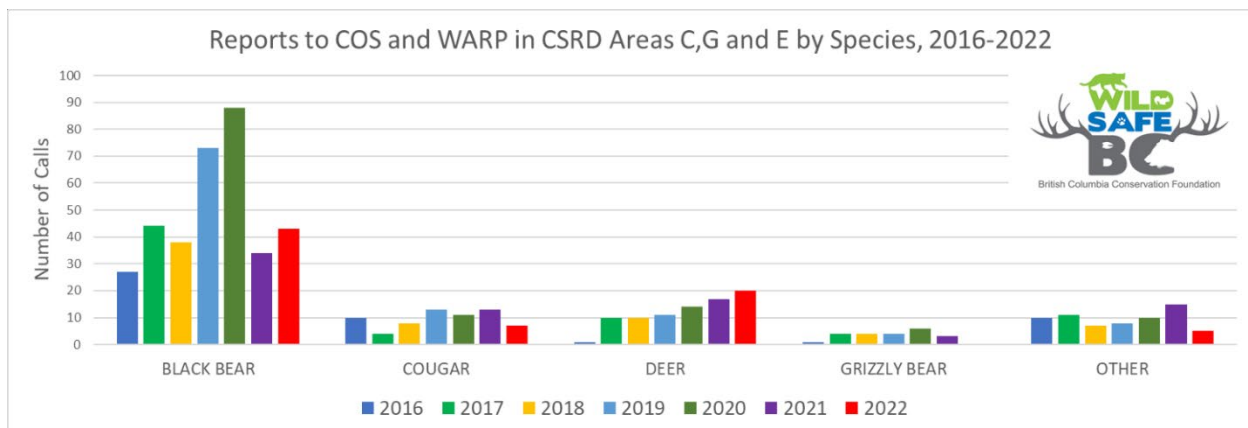


Figure 2. Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) by species from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022 in CSRD Areas C, G and E.

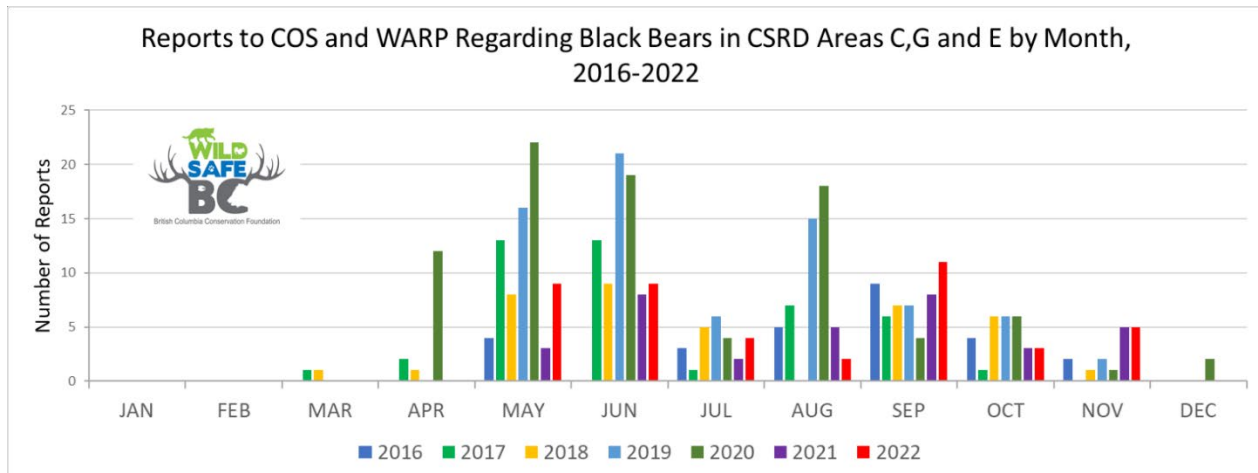


Figure 3. Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) regarding black bears by month from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022 in CSRD Areas C, G and E.

In 2022, there was a total of 379 reports of black bears made to the Conservation Officer Service and the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program in the CSRD (Figure 4). This was the second-highest year since 2016, for black bear reports in the Columbia Shuswap, following 2020. Of these 379 black bear reports, 305 reports came from regions in the Columbia Shuswap that do not currently have a WildSafeBC program, including 196 reports from the Salmon Arm, 56 came from Area F, 37 from Sicamous, and 16 from Area D.

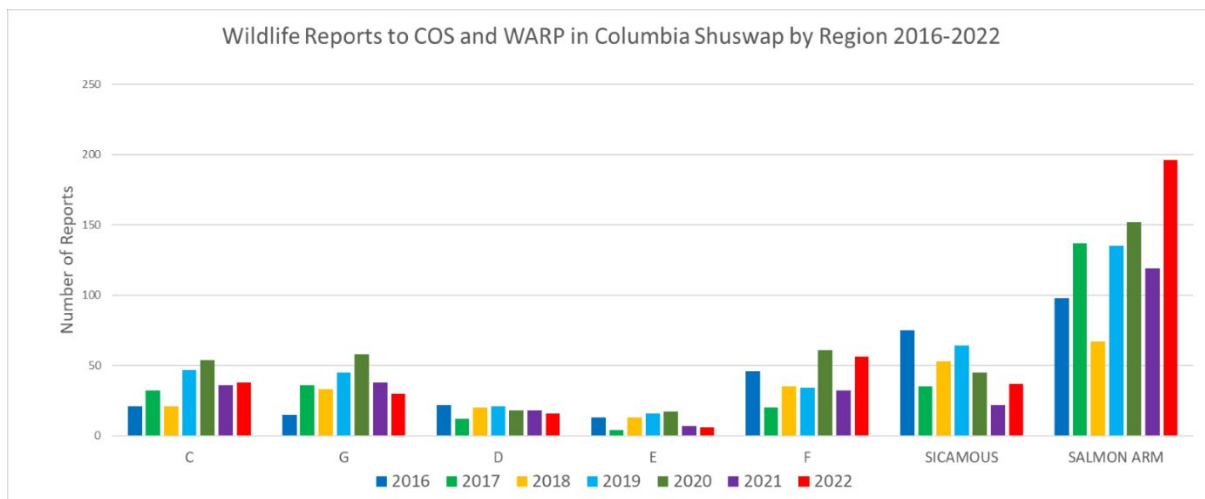


Figure 4. Report made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) regarding wildlife in Salmon Arm, Sicamous and CSRD Areas C, D, E, F and G from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.

Garbage continues to be the attractant most often associated with black bear reports as discussed with the COS and community members. The WCC also 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.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. Three community organizations and one school participated in the WildSafe Ranger Program this season (Table 1). A total of 156 children became WildSafe Rangers and received a WildSafe Ranger kit to take home with them with the intent of encouraging further discussion about wildlife awareness and attractant management with their families. One school was able to participate in the Extended Program where the WCC was able to visit the classes more than once and there was the added component of the students doing an audit of their home between sessions to see what attractants are present. The revisit to these students allowed for more practical application of WildSafeBC practices.

Table 1. Schools and community organizations that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2022.

School / Community Organization	Grade	Students	Extended
Sicamous Recreation	1 - 5	5	No
South Canoe Elementary / Outdoor Learning Program	K – 7	124	Yes
Blind Bay Junior Forest Wardens	1 - 5	25	No
Blind Bay Sparks Unit	1 - 5	2	No



Figure 3. WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, Olivia Lemke, delivering the WildSafe Ranger Program to a Kindergarten/Grade 1 class at Haldane Elementary School in Chase, BC.



Figure 4. WildSafe Rangers participating in an outdoor WildSafe Ranger Program in Sicamous, BC.

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave a total of eight presentations to 145 participants (Table 2). There were seven bear spray workshops that were offered (Figures 7 and 8). These presentations were focused on local Wildlife Awareness and Safety combined with Bear Spray use and safety. In addition, one presentation was given that summarized the WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Program and gave an overview on wildlife awareness and safety.



Figure 5. WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, Olivia Lemke, demonstrating how to properly use bear spray at a workshop in Eagle Bay. Photo courtesy of Margaret McCormick.



Figure 6. WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, Olivia Lemke, presenting at a bear spray workshop at the Sorrento Center. Photo Courtesy of Sarah Tokarek.

Table 2. Community organizations that partnered with WildSafeBC to host presentations in 2022.

Community Organization	Type of Presentation	Date	Number of Attendees
Shuswap Adventure Girl	Bear Spray Workshop	June 22, 2022	41
Shuswap Trail Alliance	Bear Spray Workshop and Field Crew Safety	July 21, 2022	4
Totem Pole Resort	Bear Spray Workshop	August 2, 2022	17
Sicamous Recreation	Bear Spray Workshop (following WRP)	August 6, 2022	6
Sunnybrae Community Association	Bear Spray Workshop	August 30, 2022	7
Eagle Bay Community Association	Bear Spray Workshop	September 10, 2022	9
Shuswap Lady Striders	Bear Spray Workshop	September 20, 2022	16
Lakeview PROBUS Club	Overview of WildSafeBC	November 4, 2021	43

Display Booths

The WCC held 14 display booths at community events in CSRD Areas C and E, reaching a total of 1,829 people (Table 3). These events provided an opportunity for the WCC to introduce both tourists and residents to WildSafeBC messaging, make connections with local businesses and community organizations, and to learn from locals about local wildlife conflicts (Figure 9, 10 and 11).



Figure 7. WildSafeBC Display Booth at the Salute to the Sockeye 2022 Event, hosted by the Adams River Salmon Society at Tsútswe'cw Provincial Park from September 30 to October 23, 2022.



Figure 8. WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, Olivia Lemke, at a display booth at the Sorrento Village Farmers' Market on September 24, 2022.



Figure 9. WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, Olivia Lemke, with residents of Swansea Point at a community BBQ event at the Swansea Point Fire Hall on July 17, 2022. Photo courtesy of Carmen Hodges.

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
Grizzly Bear Solutions Bear Spray Workshop (Malakwa)	June 14, 2022	30
Canada Day by the Bay (Blind Bay)	July 1, 2022	198
Market by the Bay (Blind Bay)	July 7, 2022	134
Skwlāx Wellness Center Safety Fair	July 7, 2022	31
Sorrento Village Farmers' Market	July 9, 2022	134
Market by the Bay (Blind Bay)	July 14, 2022	136
Swansea Point Community BBQ	July 17, 2022	58
Eagle Bay Fire Department Open House	August 13, 2022	87
Sicamous Farmers' Market	August 26, 2022	94
Sorrento Village Farmers' Market	August 27, 2022	138
Sorrento Village Farmers' Market (BCGW)*	September 24, 2022	190
The Salute to Sockeye	October 4, 2022	247
The Salute to Sockeye	October 19, 2022	347
The Salute to Sockeye	October 23, 2022	5

*BCGW: BC Goes Wild event - more discussion about this event in Special Initiatives section of report.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Through door-to-door canvassing, a total of 179 residents were reached with door hangers and an accompanying letter, and 52 people were reached with an in-person conversation. The locations of door-to-door canvassing efforts 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 12). 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 in areas with many summer seasonal residents. In total, 78 bins were tagged and there were 13 addresses that had their bins tagged in both surveys (Figure 13). 75% 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 human behaviors.

Curbside garbage collection in CSRD Areas C and E is provided by private companies. 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. Shuswap Enviro Solutions was the most commonly used solid waste management private company in Area C. In Area E, landfill and transfer stations are more commonly used.



Figure 10. Educational warning sticker placed on a residential garbage bin during the first survey in Blind Bay in June 2022.

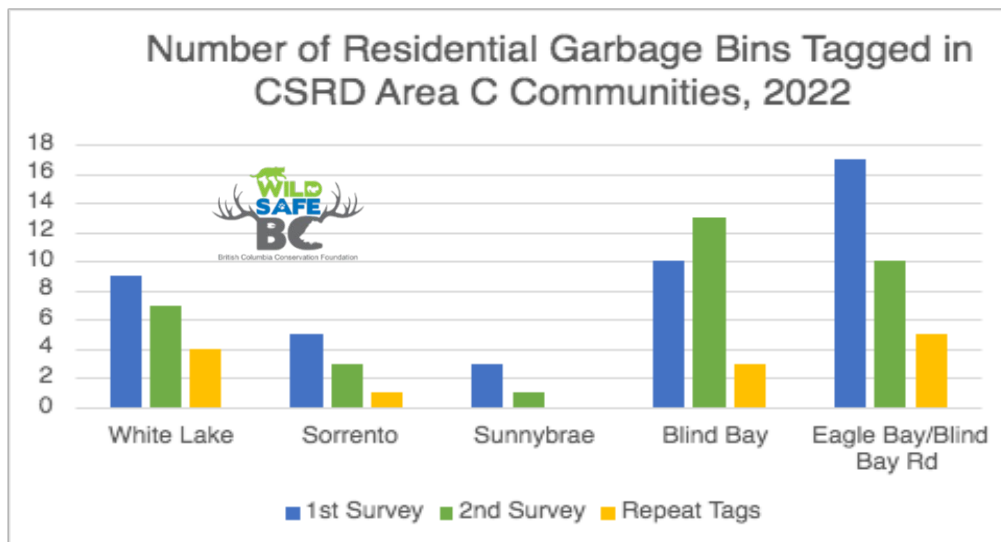


Figure 11. Number of garbage bins placed out early during the first and second survey of a community and the number of bins tagged in both surveys. Surveys took place from June to October 2022.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Facebook page came out of hibernation in May 2022 with 99 followers and has grown to 162 followers. The posts that reached the most people were weekly updates on wildlife activity from the WARP data, photos shared from bear spray workshops, and informational garbage tagging posts. One post made on cougar safety reached 3,954 people and had 12 shares. 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.

The WCC also submitted press releases and collaborated with writers at the *South Shuswap Scoop* to produce an article in each monthly issue from July to November (Table 4). A news release was submitted to the *Eagle Valley News* and resulted in the release of an article in the *Eagle Valley News* newsletter. An end-of-season summary was also released on the CSRD website and CSRD Facebook page. WildSafeBC information was also shared in newsletters from the Eagle Bay Community Association.

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
July 2022	South Shuswap Scoop	Free Wildlife Workshops for Families and Outdoor Recreators
July 2022	Eagle Valley News	Keeping your yard clean of debris can help prevent wildlife fatalities: WildSafeBC
August 2022	South Shuswap Scoop	Gardening with Bears
September 2022	South Shuswap Scoop	Keeping Wildlife Wild
November 2022	Columbia Shuswap Regional District	WildSafeBC wraps up the season
November 2022	South Shuswap Scoop	End of Season for WildSafeBC
December 2022	South Shuswap Scoop	TBA

Wildlife in Area Signs

Wildlife in Area signs were placed in areas where there were confirmed reports of wildlife, typically black or grizzly bears as well as cougars, frequenting an area. The signs were placed in high-traffic areas, including trailheads, and were used to alert people to wildlife activity in the area (Figures 14, 15). 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. Signs are removed by the WCC or volunteers after the wildlife is no longer a concern in the area. Taking the signage down in a timely manner this prevents residents from becoming used to its presence and will deliver the message on the sign more effectively when required.



Figure 14. Cougar-in-area signage placed at the Balmoral trailhead in Blind Bay by the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator.



Figure 15. Bear-in-area signage placed at the Eagle Bay Mercantile by the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator.

Collaborations

WildSafeBC received support from many community organizations that assisted the WCC in spreading information about human-wildlife conflict as well as hosted and/or facilitated a WildSafeBC presentation or workshop (Table 2). The relationships established during the first year of the WildSafeBC Community Program in this region were further built upon and expanded during the 2022 season. Those community organizations included: Shuswap Adventure Girl, Shuswap Trail Alliance, Totem Pole Resort, Sicamous Recreation, Sunnybrae Community Association, Eagle Bay Community Association, Swansea Point Community Association, Shuswap Lady Striders, Lakeview PROBUS Club, Grizzly Bear Solutions, Sorrento Village Farmers' Market and Market by the Bay. 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.

WildSafeBC Business Pledge

The WildSafeBC Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses to become good examples of how to safely co-exist with wildlife in the community. To take the pledge, a business is required to follow best practices in solid waste management, provide adequate training to staff and support WildSafeBC 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 eight businesses were introduced to the Business Pledge Program in 2022, with one business interested in participating in 2023.

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 campgrounds about the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program. Of these three, one has committed to participate in the program in 2023.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The WCC made initial connections with and offered information about the WildSafeBC program to nearby First Nations bands. WildSafeBC was fortunate enough to attend and set up a display booth at the Skwłāx Safety Fair at the Skwłāx Wellness Centre. Through this event, the WCC provided support to the Health and Social Development Programs and Services at the Skwłāx Wellness Center and the Little Shuswap Lake Band. The WCC educated members on safely responding to a wildlife encounter, specifically cougars after a cougar sighting in the spring.

Special Initiatives

In 2021, WildSafeBC collaborated with the Sunnybrae Stewardship Society to create a Wildlife Working Group for the Columbia Shuswap region. The second Wildlife Working Group meeting took place in September, 2022, and included the WCC and WildSafeBC Program Manager, the President of the Sunnybrae Stewardship Society, members of the COS, staff from the CSRD, directors of CSRD Areas C, E, F, and a member of the Invasive Species Council of BC. The Wildlife Working Group was formed to help create a space for local issues pertaining to human-wildlife conflict to be discussed and addressed.

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 Seventh Annual BC Goes Wild celebration by hosting a booth at the Sorrento Village Farmers' Market with games, coloring contest, and a prize draw.

Challenges and Opportunities

The absence of CSRD Bylaws regarding feeding wildlife or nuisance animals in communities of Areas C and E created challenges for WildSafeBC and the COS in handling situations where wildlife was accessing unnatural food sources. Likewise, some communities within the WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Program coverage do not have distinct community associations, including Tappen. This presents a challenge for delivery of the WildSafeBC message to these communities, including workshops or presentations and display booths specific for addressing key conflict issues within these communities.

Unsecured garbage continues to draw bears and other wildlife into residential areas. Waste management practices are 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 local human-wildlife conflict and best practices for 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 are strategically used to reach different cohorts in the community. Continued efforts to educate the public about locally specific attractant management solutions 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 can lead to wildlife becoming food-conditioning and habituated to people which in turn can lead to future conflicts that require 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 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 2023 season to continue “keeping wildlife wild and communities safe”:

- Continue promoting the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program to local campgrounds and assist already interested campgrounds in implementing the program in the spring
- Increase door-to-door campaigns in hotspots and recruit volunteers to assist in canvassing more neighborhoods, more often
- Continue to promote WildSafe Ranger Programming in schools and to youth organizations to increase the number of youth reached

- Continue to promote the WildSafeBC Business Pledge Program and re-visit businesses that were approached in 2021 and 2022
- 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 2023
- 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 promotions during 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 for the WildSafeBC Columbia Shuswap Program provided by the Columbia Shuswap Regional District, the Province of British Columbia, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF).

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 to the BCCF team for their ongoing guidance and assistance throughout the season. Finally, thank you to the many community members, organizations, and teachers throughout CSRD Areas C and E that took part in the WildSafeBC Community Program in some way and helped in the successful second year of the program.