

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2022

Fraser Valley

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) Program between April 11, 2022 and December 16, 2022. The program covers a multi-jurisdictional region of southwest British Columbia (Figure 1). The FVRD includes the municipalities of Abbotsford, Chilliwack, Harrison Hot Springs, Hope, Kent, and Mission as well as eight unincorporated Electoral Areas. The traditional territories of the Coast Salish and Stó:lō Indigenous Peoples are located within the FVRD and extend well beyond FVRD boundaries; the FVRD contains reserve land belonging to 33 unique Bands.

Wildlife activity in the FVRD from January 1, 2022 to November 26, 2022, resulted in 1,067 wildlife reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). Abbotsford, Mission, and Chilliwack accounted for most wildlife reports made within the FVRD this season. The top three species reported were black bear (793 reports), coyote (89 reports), and cougar (73 reports). Included in this data are COS/WARP report data from 32 FVRD communities (Appendix I).

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activities with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community. The following summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the season, up until December 15, 2022:

- There were 63 WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) presentations and 1,392 youth reached
- A total of 3 presentations given to community groups with 111 participants
- A total of 3,749 door hangers left through door to door activities
- There were 4 display booths with 533 people reached
- A total of 102 Facebook posts and 151 new Facebook page followers from January 1 to November 15.

Additional activities conducted by the WCC included the 7th Annual BC Goes Wild event. The WCC had a display booth at the Sunset in the Park Market which took place at Fraser River Heritage Park in the City of Mission on September 13, 2022. Over 200 members of the community showed interest or stopped to talk.

Thank you to the numerous sponsors and volunteers who made the WildSafeBC Fraser Valley 2022 season possible. The key challenge for the season included the size of the program coverage area. The WRP presentations in elementary schools across the Fraser Valley were highly successful from May to December. Relationships between the WCC and sponsors were strengthened over the season by constant communication. Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help keep 'wildlife wild and our communities safe'.

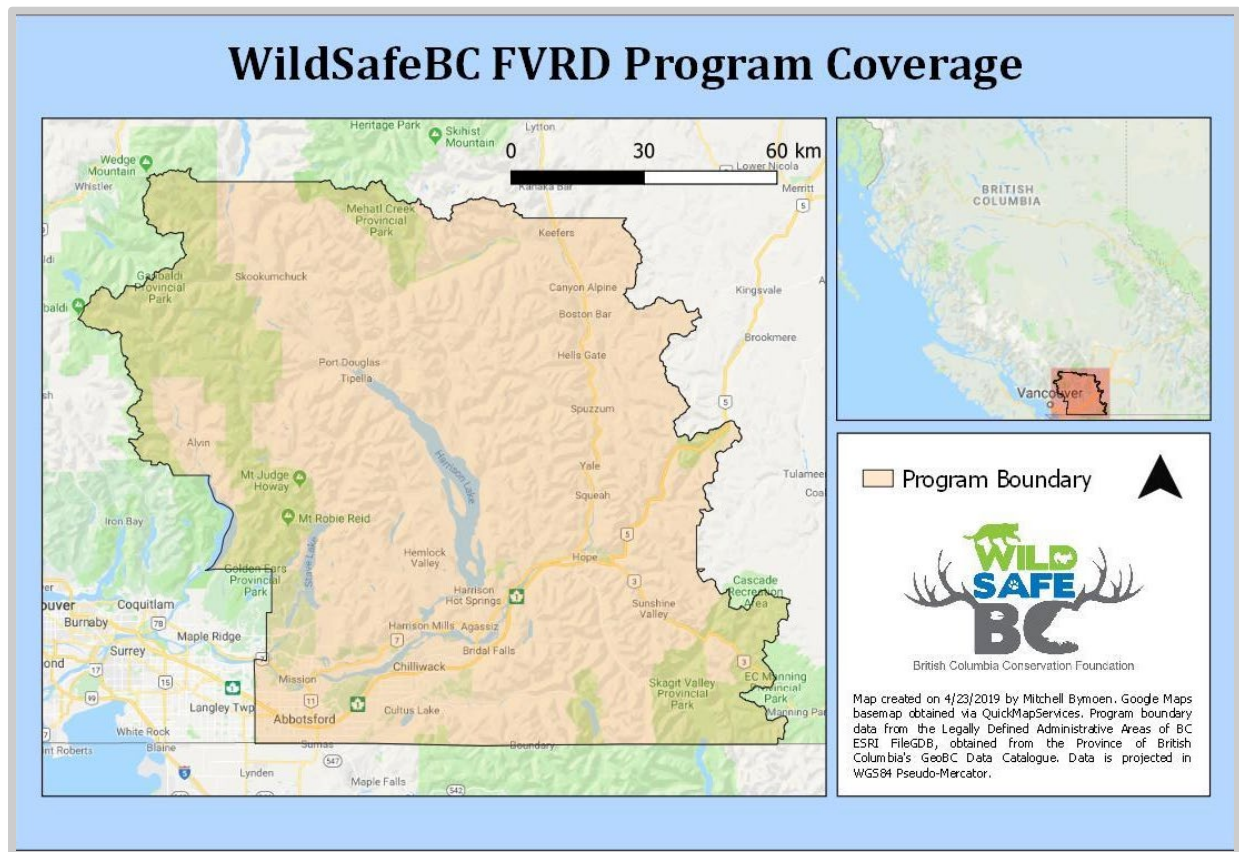


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Regional District program coverage area.

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Highlights from the 2022 Season

Wildlife Activity

Reports made to the COS through the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line (1-877-952-7277) or online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>) are available to the public through the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). This data is updated daily and this report for the FVRD includes data from January 1, 2017, to November 26, 2022 (Figure 2). As of November 26, 2022, there were 793 black bear reports, which is above average for the last six years (Figure 3). Black bear reports in May, June, and July spiked within the FVRD, which is comparable to other areas of the province. However, what is notable is that June reports tended to be much higher than September which is unusual compared to the overall Provincial averages. Other species reports were also average for the last five years (Figure 2).

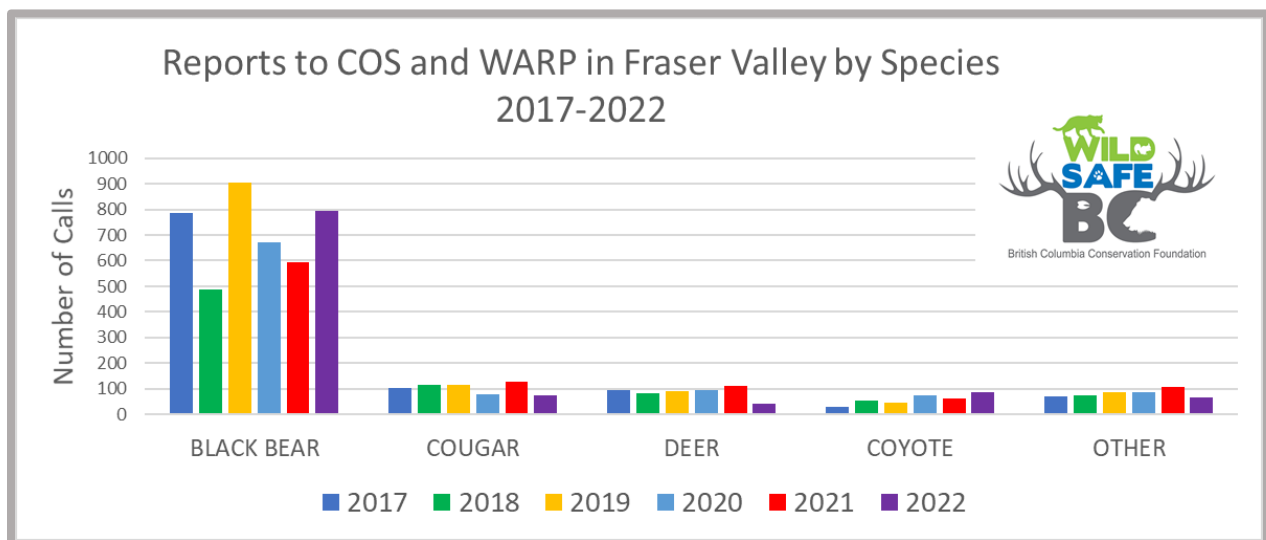


Figure 2. Species reported to the COS and WARP in the FVRD from January 1, 2017, to November 26, 2022.

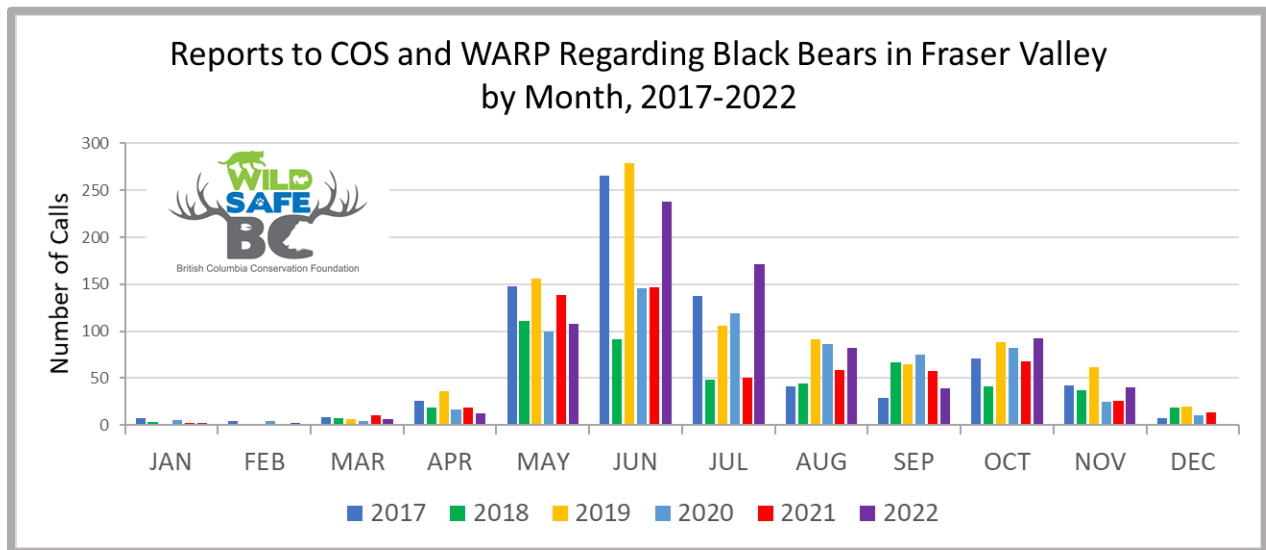


Figure 3. Black bear reports to the COS and WARP in the FVRD from January 1, 2017, to November 26, 2022.

Examining total call volume for 2022 by municipality indicated that most wildlife reports made to the COS were regarding wildlife activity in Abbotsford, Mission, and Chilliwack (Figure 4). Total call volume for 2022 was comparable to 2021, aside from Abbotsford where call volume was much higher in 2022 compared to 2021.

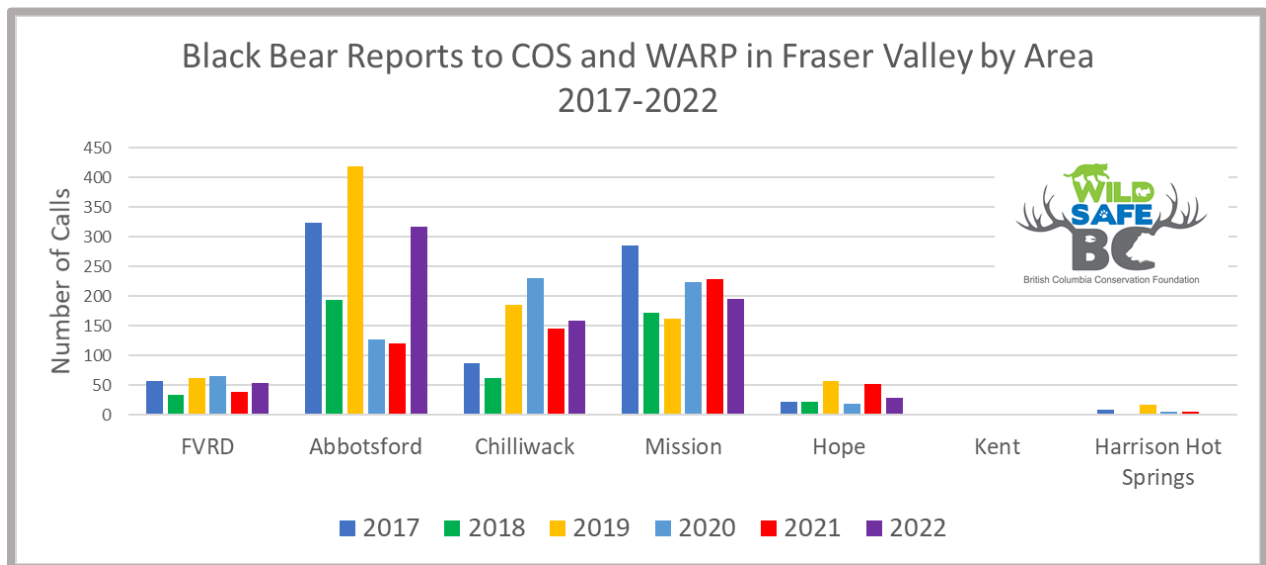


Figure 4. Year-over-year reports for black bears from January 1, 2017, to November 26, 2022, in the FVRD communities.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict while also teaching them about wildlife attractants and how to stay safe in wildlife country. From May 3 to December 15, a total of 63 schools and other education entities participated in the WildSafe Ranger Program (Table 1). Other organizations included summer camps and childcare centers. Over 1,390 students became WildSafe Rangers (Figure 5).



Figure 5. a) The WCC and kids at the Heritage Park Childcare Center during a WRP presentation. b) The WCC and Evans Elementary school students during a WRP presentation.

Table 1. Schools/organizations that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in the FVRD in 2022.

| School/Organization | Grade/Age Group | # Of Presentations | Students |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|----------|
| Dewdney Elementary School | Grades K-3 | 3 | 66 |
| Matsqui Elementary School | Grades 1-3 | 3 | 68 |
| Harry Sayers Elementary School | Grades 4-5 | 4 | 90 |
| Yarrow Community School | Grades K-5 | 2 | 60 |
| Deroche Elementary School | Grades K-3 | 4 | 84 |
| Great Blue Heron Nature Reserve | Ages 5-13 | 1 | 25 |
| Stave Falls Elementary | Grades K-5 | 5 | 109 |
| Bradner Elementary School | Grades K-3 | 3 | 65 |
| Ridge Wilderness Adventures Summer Camp | Ages 5-12 | 4 | 104 |
| Heritage Park Childcare | Ages 4-5 | 1 | 10 |
| Outdoor Club – Abby Community School Society | Ages 5-10 | 2 | 57 |
| Hand-in-Hand Childcare Society | Ages 5-12 | 2 | 62 |
| Mountain Elementary School | Grades 3-4 | 3 | 68 |

| | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|-----------|--------------|
| Chilliwack Central Elementary School | Grades 3-4 | 3 | 66 |
| Evans Elementary School | Grades 1-3 | 3 | 62 |
| Promontory Heights Elementary School | Kindergarten | 3 | 57 |
| Tyson Elementary School | Grades 2-3 | 3 | 56 |
| Promontory Heights Elementary School | Kindergarten | 2 | 38 |
| Irene Kelleher Elementary School | Grades 2-3 | 2 | 39 |
| Chilliwack Central Elementary School | Grades 1-2 | 3 | 58 |
| Sardis Girl Guides & Brownies | Ages 6-11 | 2 | 51 |
| Mountain Elementary School | Kindergarten | 2 | 37 |
| Deroche Elementary School | Grades 1-3 | 3 | 60 |
| Total | | 63 | 1,392 |

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave three presentations focused on local Wildlife Awareness and Safety skills. A total of 111 participants attended these sessions from the following organizations: Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada/Government of Canada, Canada Post Mission location, and Eagle Mountain Community in Abbotsford.

Display Booths

The WCC held four display booths over the season within areas ranging from Mission to Abbotsford (Figure 6). These outreach opportunities were successful in reaching 533 people (Table 2).



Figure 6. a) The WCC at a display booth at Abbotsford event Go Play Outside. b) Display booth at Sunset Market in the Park in Mission.

Table 2. Public display booths in the FVRD in 2022.

| Event | Date | # of People Reached |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Public Works Week Open House, Mission | May 14, 2022 | 118 |
| Sunset Market in the Park, Mission | August 9, 2022 | 162 |
| Go Play Outside, Abbotsford | August 26, 2022 | 47 |
| Sunset Market in the Park, Mission | September 13, 2022 | 206 |
| Total | | 533 |

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Through door-to-door education, a total of 3,749 people were provided with informative door hangers (Figure 7). In Abbotsford, 427 door hangers were left by the WCC and 2,895 were left by Abbotsford summer students Ehsan Behpour, Hayley Katan, and Maisie Liu. The Eagle Mountain and Sumas Mountain neighborhoods in Abbotsford were prioritized for this outreach due to high levels of wildlife activity. In Mission, 189 door hangers were distributed, and the Hatzic/Stave Lake neighborhoods were prioritized for this activity due to high levels of wildlife activity. In Chilliwack, 238 door hangers were distributed, and the Chilliwack Mountain, Marble Hill, and Eastern Hillside neighborhoods were prioritized for this activity due to high levels of wildlife activity.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of curbside containers the evening before collection day. Due to the large area of coverage and limited work hours, the WCC did not conduct bin tagging activities this season, instead focusing on door-to-door canvassing.



Figure 7. a) The WCC door-to-door canvassing in Chilliwack, BC. b) A volunteer door-to-door canvassing in Chilliwack, BC.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Facebook page grew 20% from January 1 to November 15, from 771 to 922 page followers and reached over 27,263 people. In preparation for display booths and events, the WCC posted notices in numerous community groups on Facebook. Posts were also shared on many of the local municipalities' Facebook pages.

The WCC submitted a news article to *Abby News*, *The Mission City Record* and *The Chilliwack Progress* about the WildSafe Ranger Program presentations. Notices were well received and generated dozens of email requests from teachers and leaders.

Collaborations

The WCC partnered with other groups including the City of Abbotsford Solid Waste and Management Department, City of Abbotsford Natural Areas and Trails Department, and the Conservation Officer Service.

Conservation Officer Service

The WCC and numerous Conservation Officers (COs) (Marc Plamondon, Eric Tyukodi, Don Stahl, Todd Hunter, Alicia Stark, and Jolene Bull) communicated throughout the 2022 season. The COs would inform the WCC of areas of concern and the WCC would implement door-to-door canvassing in that area. CO Jolene Bull presented with the WCC at the Eagle Mountain Waste and Wildlife information session in Abbotsford on June 29, 2022.

City of Abbotsford

Nicole MacDonald, with the Solid Waste and Management Department (City of Abbotsford), hosted a Wildlife and Waste information session on June 29, 2022, in partnership with the WCC and the Conservation Officer Service. A total of 33 participants attended. The WCC also helped Natural Areas and Trails Coordinator, Alex Hyde, design wildlife awareness signs for parks in Abbotsford.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The WCC responded to a few inquiries and questions from local First Nations which included Soowahlie First Nation and Leq'a:mel First Nation.

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 the second week of September, the WCC had a display booth at the Sunset in the Park Market which took place at Fraser River Heritage Park in the City of Mission (Figure 8). Over 200 members from the community connected with the WCC at this event.



Figure 8. a) Display booth at the Sunset Market in the Park event in Mission, BC. b) Community members exploring props on the display booth at the Sunset Market in the Park event in Mission, BC.

Challenges and Opportunities

The Fraser Valley encompasses a vast area with a large population and many human-wildlife interactions with a potential for conflict. It is challenging to meet all the requests as a part-time coordinator within a seasonal timeframe. Partnerships with local government summer students are invaluable by assisting with covering more ground and reaching more people. The WCC is grateful for volunteers who played an integral role in helping with public outreach and education.

Garbage, livestock, and fruit trees continue to be the top attractants that draw wildlife into residential areas. Bears have been reported damaging property and remaining in people's yards which impacts the safety of the neighbourhood. Several areas have been identified as hotspots and would benefit from increased education. To address the abundance of garbage, livestock and fruit trees in the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2023:

- Bear spray demonstrations
- Bin tagging
- Display booths
- School presentations
- Indigenous engagement
- Business pledge
- Increased door-to-door campaigns in hotspots.

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Program is made possible through funding support from the Province of British Columbia, the BC Conservation Foundation, and the Fraser Valley Regional District. Additional funding support was provided by the City of Abbotsford in 2022 for additional hours and delivery continuing into January and February of 2023.

The 2022 season was successful due to the many supporters and collaborators who the WCC was able to work with. The WCC is grateful for the support of local governments that made the program successful including sharing their summer students and volunteers. This includes Christina Vugteveen, David Urban and Meghan Jackson at the FVRD office; Kyle D'Appolonia at the City of Mission, Mission Summer Students; Stefan Halas and Giovanna Peirano Campbell; Nicole MacDonald, Julie Kanya, Alex Hyde, and Shawn Gurney with the City of Abbotsford, Abbotsford Summer Students; Ehsan Behpour, Hayley Katan, and Maisie Liu; Marc Sole and Kira Richardson with the City of Chilliwack; and to each FVRD municipality that hosted WildSafeBC activities in the 2022 season. Thanks to BC Conservation Foundation staff for their support and guidance. Special thanks to Lydia Koot of the Hope Mountain Black Bear Committee for delivering bear awareness/safety and attractant management messaging and activities in Hope, BC.

Appendix I

32 FVRD communities included in COS reports and WARP database

- Abbotsford
- Boston Bar
- Bridal Falls
- Canyon Alpine
- Chilliwack
- Choate
- Cultus Lake
- Deroche
- Dewdney
- Dogwood Valley
- Emory Creek
- Harrison Hot Springs
- Harrison Mills
- Hatzic Prairie
- Hatzic Island
- Hemlock Valley
- Hope
- Kent
- Laidlaw
- Lake Errock
- Lindell Beach
- McConnel Lake
- Mission
- Nicomen Island
- North Bend
- Othello
- Popkum
- Ruby Creek
- Spuzzum
- Sunshine Valley
- Weaver Creek
- Yale