

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2022

Kamloops

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Kamloops program for the 2022 season. The program coverage area includes the City of Kamloops and is located in the traditional territory of the Secwépemc People (Figure 1). There were 366 black bear reports to the Conservation Officer Service from January 1, 2022 to November 26, 2022, which is higher than the five-year average of 307.

This year, with fewer COVID-19 restrictions, WildSafeBC programming could resume to pre-pandemic activities. Precautions were taken in order to keep everyone safe while continuing to deliver the program effectively. The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) focused attention and efforts this season on public outreach such as display booths, school programming, workshops and presentations within the community, and door-to-door canvassing in neighbourhoods showing high conflict trends as recommended by the BC Conservation Officer Service (COS). Activities this season included:

- Placing of 8 Wildlife-in-Area signs in hot spot locations
- 6 presentations with a total of 90 participants that focused on wildlife safety and awareness, as well as bear spray use
- 752 residents were reached through door-to-door outreach and provided information on attractant management and wildlife safety and awareness
- 359 garbage bins were tagged throughout the City of Kamloops
- 10 public events where 857 people were engaged in learning about local wildlife, safety in wildlife country, and attractant management
- Facebook followers on the 'WildSafeBC Kamloops' page increased from 1,019 followers in 2021 to 1,115 in 2022
- 3 media interviews for *CFJC Kamloops* and *CBC Kamloops*
- 2,961 students were reached through the WildSafe Rangers Program
- Ongoing participation in the City of Kamloops' Bear Working Group

Improperly managed garbage and fruit trees continue to be a source of wildlife conflict in Kamloops. Some residents are familiar with human-wildlife conflict and how to prevent it whereas others are not aware of the risks and solutions associated with human-wildlife conflict. Continued outreach is needed to provide education on how to manage wildlife attractants and how to stay safe when in wildlife country.

The WCC was unable to provide bin-tagging education throughout the entire City. In 2023, bin tagging is recommended for areas that were not a focus in 2022. Additionally, the WCC should continue to grow the number of followers of the 'WildSafeBC Kamloops' Facebook page. The future work of the WCC could also include supporting the City of Kamloops during the city-wide organics collection program rollout. Promotion of electric fencing as an effective tool for protecting small livestock can be explored in 2023. These efforts would be most effective if supported by bylaws.

Urban deer are a growing concern in many neighborhoods within the community. Primary concerns with respect to deer include the risk of wildlife-vehicle collisions and browsing pressure on landscaping and gardens. Kamloops and the surrounding areas provide suitable habitat for cougars and coyotes for which conflict with pets and livestock remain a concern.

The delivery of this program was made possible with the generous support of the Province of British Columbia, the City of Kamloops, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF). To foster collaborations between the COS, WildSafeBC, the City of Kamloops, and other stakeholders, continued participation in the Bear Working Group will be beneficial. It is recommended to follow up with the City of Kamloops and their work to create a Wildlife Management plan. Moving forward, these initiatives will continue to help 'keep wildlife wild and communities safe'.

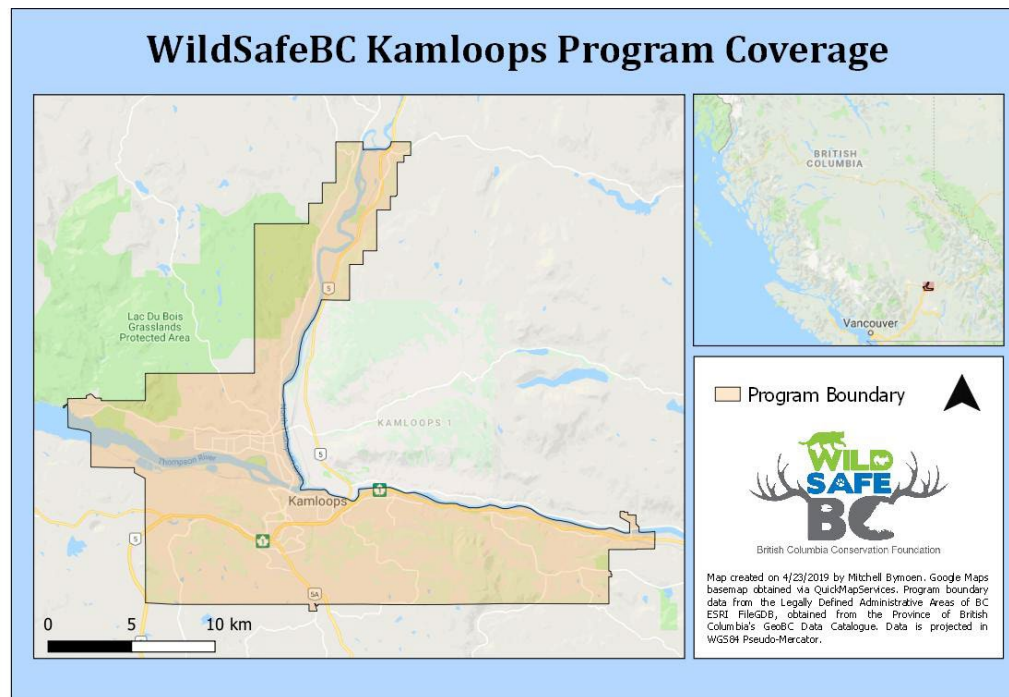


Figure 1. The WildSafeBC Kamloops program coverage area.

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Cover Photo: The WildSafeBC display booth at the Kamloops Saturday Farmer's Market located at on St. Paul Street.

Highlights from the 2022 Season

Wildlife Activity

Reports made to the BC Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) and online (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>) are available to the public through WildSafeBC's Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). Data is updated daily and this report for the Kamloops WildSafeBC Program includes data from January 1, 2017 to November 26, 2022. From January 1, 2022 to November 26, 2022, 713 sightings of wildlife were reported, with black bears being the most reported species (366). This season saw less black bear reports than in 2021 but remains above the five-year average of 307.

In 2022, we had a wet spring that likely resulted in early season availability for natural foods, however this delayed the ripening of many berries and may have forced bears into valley bottoms. As the season progressed, berry-production picked up.

Black bear activity occurred throughout all Kamloops neighbourhoods this year (Figure 2). Much like past years, black bear activity was most prevalent in Aberdeen, Sahali, Barnhartvale and Juniper. However, there was also black bear activity in neighbourhoods that do not typically receive as many visits from black bears, such as Batchelor Heights and the North Shore.

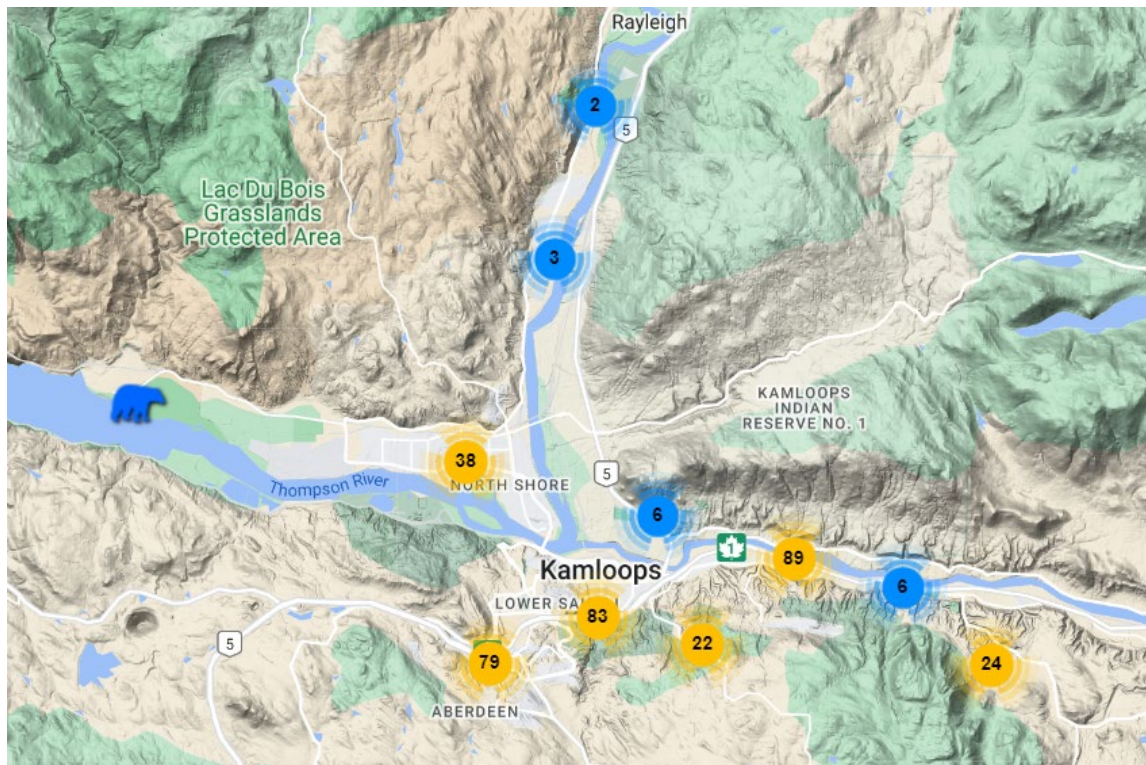


Figure 2. Black bear activity throughout all of Kamloops in 2022, illustrated using a screen shot of the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP).

Deer (220) were the second most reported species. Cougars (35) received more reports than previous years where as coyotes (13) received less reports than past years (Figure 3). As reports of deer occur throughout all of Kamloops, it is important to always be cautious when driving as deer are often injured by vehicles in town. It is also important not to allow attractants such as bird feeders be accessible to deer as this will only exacerbate human-deer conflicts.

There were 35 reports of cougars in Kamloops in 2022 and most of these were sightings. However there were some unfortunate incidents with pets. Primarily the sightings of cougars occurred in the Westsyde neighbourhood but there were also sightings in Batchelor Heights, Lower Sahali, and Aberdeen. Reports of coyotes (13) occurred primarily in Batchelor Heights, the North Shore, Westsyde, Pineview, Aberdeen, Lower Sahali, and Barnhartvale.

Other wildlife included reports of lynx early in the season (6) and bocat (8). However in both cases, the number of reports were less than the previous year. Rattlesnake reports (2) were substantially lower this year than in 2021 and occurred in Bachelor Heights and in Dallas.

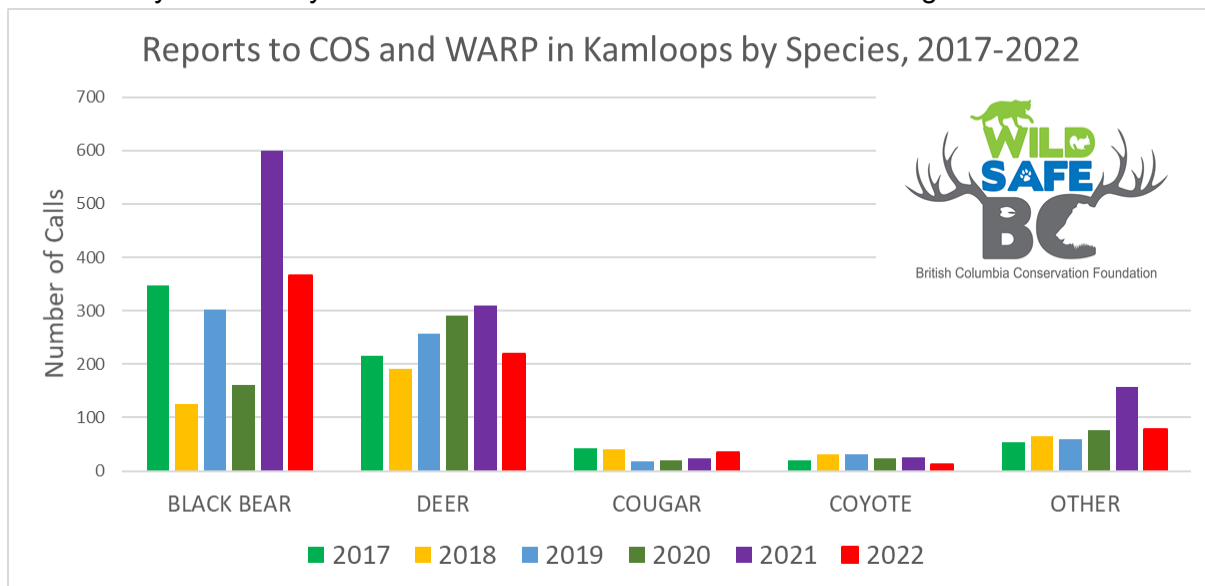


Figure 3. Wildlife reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) from January 1, 2017 to November 26, 2022.

There are many natural and anthropogenic bear attractants throughout Kamloops that increase the potential for human-wildlife conflict as well as wildlife travel corridors. Garbage remains the most reported bear attractant. Attractant data is not available at this time. However, looking at the number of reports to the COS regarding black bears from January 2014 to November 2022, we can see the increasing trend in reports over the years, suggesting that securing attractants is still an ongoing issue (Figure 4).

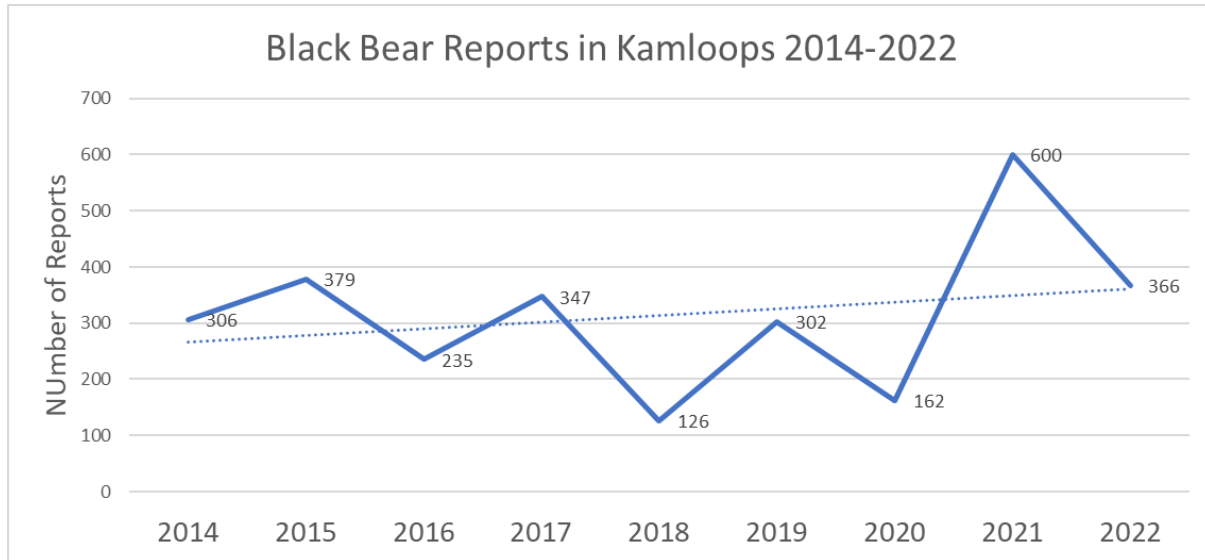


Figure 4. Black bear reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) from January 1, 2014 to November 26, 2022. Trendline shows increasing numbers of reports.

In Kamloops, black bear activity followed a standard pattern of frequency throughout the months, beginning in March and April, with peaks occurring in September and October, which was later than the previous year. October was a month with increased sightings as bears entered hyperphagia and became extremely food-motivated to prepare for winter denning (Figure 5).

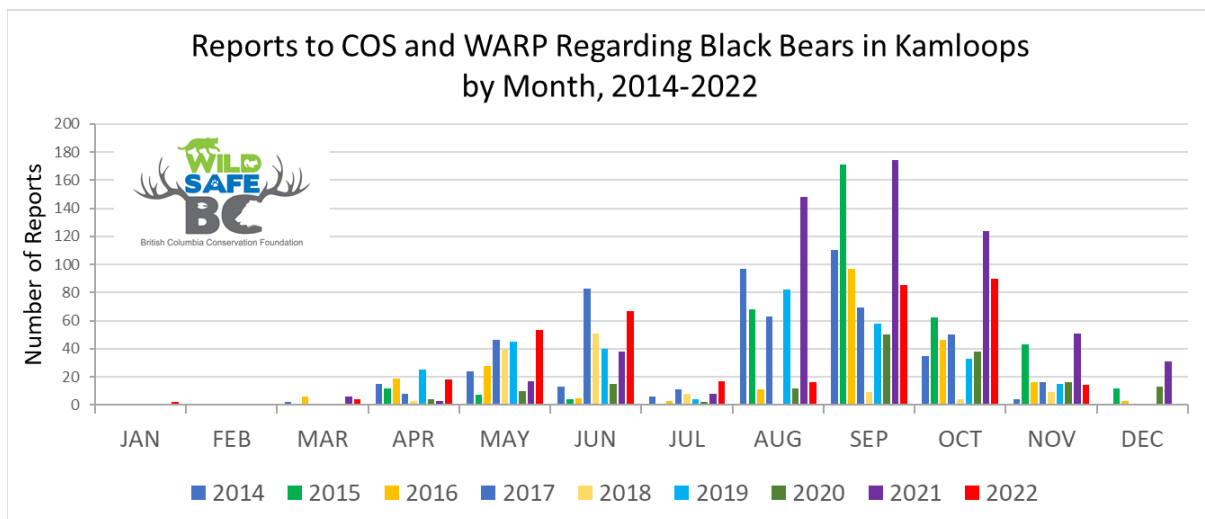


Figure 5. Black bear reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) by month from January 1, 2014 to November 26, 2022.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict and encourages them to take an active role in their communities and at home to help reduce such conflict. Students are also exposed to the idea of attractant management. In 2022, the Program was delivered to a daycare centre, a summer camp, a Sparks and Brownies group, and 16 elementary schools around Kamloops (Table 1). Overall, the WildSafe Ranger Program reached 2,961 children throughout Kamloops. All children in attendance received WildSafe Ranger kits to take away with them.

Table 1. Schools and groups that received the WildSafe Ranger program in 2022.

| School or group | Grade/Age Group | Number of children | Date |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------|
| David Thompson Elem | Grades 1,2,3,6 | 108 | June 16 |
| Bert Edwards Elem | Grades K-6 | 165 | June 20 |
| Heffley Creek Elem | Grades K-3 | 15 | June 23 |
| Kiddies Korner Day Care | Grades K-5 | 25 | July 4 |
| SPCA Summer Camp | Grades 2-6 | 46 | July 6, 13, August 17 and 24 |
| Arthur Hatton Elem | Strong start, Pre-School, K-4 | 186 | September 21, |
| Summit Elem | Grades K-7 | 245 | September 26-27 |
| Kay Bingham Elem | Grades K-6 | 210 | September 28-29 |
| Westsyde Elem | Grades K-6 | 214 | October 5-7 |
| Westmount Elem | Grades K-4 | 89 | October 11 |
| Marion Schilling Elem | Grades K-7 | 211 | October 17-18 |
| Bert Edwards Elem | Grades 3- 6 | 114 | October 20 |
| Valley View Sparks and Brownies | Ages 5-8 | 28 | October 20 |
| Dallas Elem | Grades K-7 | 156 | October 25 |
| Parkcrest Elem | Grades K-7 | 359 | October 26-28 |
| Dufferin Elem | Grades K-6 | 197 | November 3-4 |
| RLC Elem | Grades K-7 | 398 | November 8-9 |
| AE Perry Elem | Grades K-3 | 127 | November 16 |
| Our Lady of Perpetual Health School | Grades 3-7 | 68 | November 21 |

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC delivered six presentations this year. On June 3, a bear spray training workshop was delivered to a class of 26 students at Valleyview Secondary School. During this training workshop, students first learned about bear spray safety and theory and other helpful information such as animal behaviors and strategies to avoid conflict. Then students were shown a demonstration on how to use bear spray. Following the demonstration, the WCC watched as participating students displayed proper techniques for best use. The exercises were repeated with different scenarios such as one handed (in the case that you are holding a dog's leash).

On August 18 a virtual presentation focusing on Wildlife Awareness and Safety was delivered to a class of 20 participants at Kamloops Immigrant Services. During this presentation, new comers to Canada and Kamloops were able to learn more about local wildlife and information for safety and best practices such as avoiding wildlife collisions, attractant management, and safety for recreation. There was also a question period at the end to address any concerns or inquiries.

A bear spray workshop was provided to 8 staff members at the BC Wildlife Park on August 23. During this workshop a similar format to the earlier presentation at Valley View Secondary School was followed.

On September 15, a special presentation was held for the 11 members of the McDonald Park Neighborhood association that focused on urban deer and conflict reduction. We discussed challenges in the neighbourhood such as attractants and what to do to minimize conflicts. We also spoke about wildlife collisions and using caution on the roads when wildlife may be nearby.

On September 22, a Wildlife Awareness and Safety Presentation was delivered to 2 members of the Heffley Creek Neighborhood association, this followed a similar format to the presentation for Kamloops Immigrant Services (Figure 6).

On October 23, a Wildlife Awareness and Safety Presentation and bear spray demonstration was delivered to 23 members of the TRU / KIS Hiking group. This presentation followed a similar format to the other wildlife awareness and safety presentations however this was out in the field during a hike so there were points to stop and talk about a foot print or a potential sign for wildlife presence. At the end the WCC did a bear spray demonstration and participants held the empty canister to see how the mechanism works.

Overall, there were 90 participants who received training on wildlife safety or bear spray use this season (Table 2).

Table 2. Presentations to community groups for the Kamloops 2022 season

| Group | Topic | Participants | Date |
|--|--|--------------|--------------------|
| Valleyview Secondary School | Bear Spray Training | 26 | June 3, 2022 |
| Kamloops Immigrant Services | Wildlife Awareness and Safety | 20 | August 18, 2022 |
| BC Wildlife Park - Staff | Bear Spray Training | 8 | August 23, 2022 |
| McDonald Park Neighbourhood Association | Wildlife Awareness and Safety – Focusing on urban deer | 11 | September 15, 2022 |
| Heffley Creek Neighbourhood Association | Wildlife Awareness and Safety | 2 | September 22, 2022 |
| TRU / KIS Hiking Group | Wildlife Awareness and Safety and Bear Spray demo | 23 | October 23, 2022 |

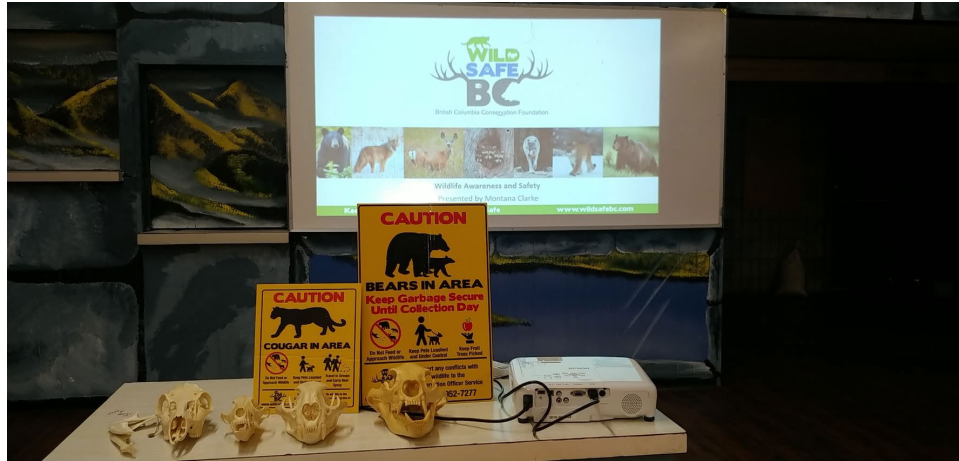


Figure 6. Set up for the Wildlife Awareness and Safety Presentation for the Heffley Creek Neighborhood Association on September 22, 2022.

Public Displays and Events

Throughout the 2022 season, the WCC attended nine events, all in the form of educational display booths. In June, a booth was set up along the rivers trail to meet members of the public cycling as part 'go by bike week' and to discuss wildlife safety and recreation. A booth was set up at three of the Kamloops Farmers' Market sessions, reaching 259 people. In August, a booth was set up at McDonald Park as part of the Kamloops Immigrant Services Potluck to share information about wildlife with new residents to Kamloops, reaching 60 people. The Thompson Rivers University Back to School BBQ event was attended by the WCC and reached 273 students and faculty.

The WCC attended the Valleyview block party in September to discuss the recent influx of bear activity in that particular neighborhood and reached 89 people (Figure 7). The Kweseltken Farmer's and Artisan Market was attended in September, where 78 people visited the booth to find out more. In November, the WCC attended Nature Canada's cross country bus tour event to raise awareness for biodiversity and conservation. This event was organized locally in partnership with the Kamloops's naturalist club and 38 people visited the booth and engaged in conversation about local wildlife species and how we can do our best to reduce negative impacts on these species.

During these events, a total of 857 people of various ages and backgrounds were engaged in conversation surrounding wildlife biology, human-wildlife conflict, wildlife safety, and attractant management.



Figure 7. The WildSafeBC Kamloops Community Coordinator at the Valleyview block party on September 10, 2022.

BC Goes Wild

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 providing colouring sheets and a colouring station at their booth at the Kamloops Farmers' Market. The main BC Goes Wild event was a bear-themed paint night and talk! The 10 attendees painted the Northern Lights with a black bear silhouette and were provided a talk on bears during the painting session (Figure 8).

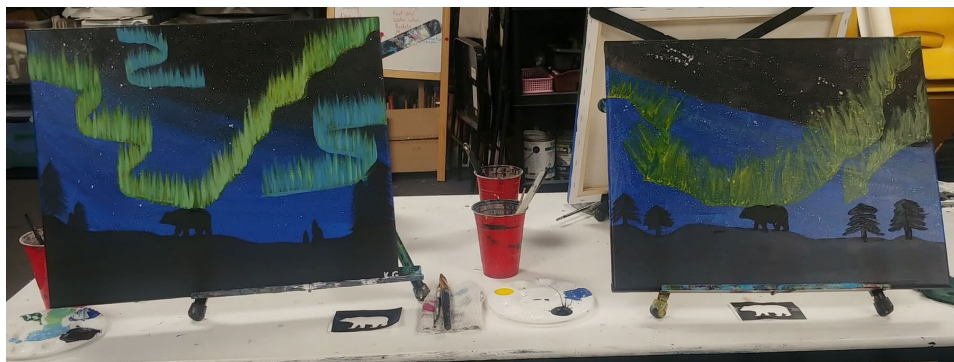


Figure 8. Participants paintings of the Northern Lights with a black bear at a paint night as part of the 7th Annual BC Goes Wild provincial celebration.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Door-to-door canvassing focused on areas that were of high concern and requested by the Conservation Officer Service. Specific messaging on managing attractants and wildlife activity was delivered to the neighborhoods of Juniper Ridge, Rose Hill, Aberdeen, and Sahali regarding black bear activity. Neighborhoods in Westsyde were canvassed regarding cougar activity and the feeding of deer. In some cases, residents were left letters outlining the wildlife concerns occurring in their neighborhood. Residents that were not reached face-to-face were provided information on how to avoid human-wildlife conflict. A total of 752 homes received wildlife safety and awareness messaging through door-to-door canvassing.

The garbage bin-tagging program consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers that are set out on the curbside the day before collection (Figure 9). Several neighborhoods in Kamloops were a focus for bin-tagging this year. The City of Kamloops “Bear Smart Bylaw” is in effect from April 1 to November 30, which states that carts should not be placed on the curb prior to 4:00 am on collection day. A total of 359 bins were tagged in the following neighborhoods this year (Table 3).

Table 3. Neighbourhoods and number of bins tagged throughout the 2022 season

| Neighbourhood | Number of Bins Tagged |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Aberdeen | 91 |
| Pineview | 16 |
| Upper Sahali | 46 |
| Valleyview | 53 |
| Juniper Ridge and Rose Hill | 18 |
| North Shore | 61 |
| Westsyde | 51 |
| Barnhartvale | 23 |



Figure 9. Materials ready for a Bin Tagging outing this season.

Social Media and Press

The WCC participated in four media releases and interviews in the 2022 season:

- Interview with *CFJC Kamloops* about bear and wildlife safety as program starts and wildlife activity increases - May
- Interview with *CBC Kamloops* about human-bear conflicts and how to stay safe in wildlife country - June
- Interview with *CBC Kamloops* about managing attractants and providing information about bin tagging efforts – June
- Public Service Announcement about wildlife safety and attractant management on *CFBX Campus Radio* - October

The WCC increased the WildSafeBC Kamloops Facebook page followers from 1,019 in 2021 to 1,115 in 2022. Throughout the season, requests to join local community groups for neighborhoods around Kamloops were sent. If accepted, the WCC engaged with posts relating to wildlife activity and provided education and information to residents. This approach was an effective method to bring people in to explore our page and our content while continuing to provide engaging education. In total, the WCC created 20 Facebook posts with a reach of 21,112. A post regarding our public outreach and community education initiatives was the most impactful, reaching 252 people.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The WCC completed set the WildSafeBC booth at the Kweseltken Farmers' and Artisan Market. At the event, the WCC exchanged knowledge with many members of Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc (TteS) with respect to wildlife.

Special Initiatives

The 2022 season saw a heightened amount of black bear activity within the City of Kamloops. Black bears were active throughout all neighbourhoods. Bear-in-area signs were displayed to warn people of black bear presence. Additional wildlife-in-area signs (e.g. coyote) were placed at the request of the COS or in response to influx of activity in a particular area. The signs reminded people to not feed wildlife, to keep dogs on a leash, and to travel in groups. The signs, 8 in total, were distributed throughout the city in popular recreation areas with black bear activity such as Kenna Cartwright Park, the Rivers Trail, and the gas line trail in Juniper and Rose Hill (Figure 11). A best practice to place some tape with the last reported sighting, helped let users know that the timeliness of the sign.



Figure 11. A coyote in area signs at the entrance of Kenna Cartwright Park warning residents of animal activity and reminding them to travel in groups, keep pets on a leash, and to not feed or approach wildlife.

Challenges and Opportunities

Improperly managed garbage, fruit trees, and urban livestock continue to be a source of human-wildlife conflict in Kamloops. While some residents are familiar with conflict and how to prevent it, others are less aware of the risks of human-wildlife conflict. Continued outreach is needed to provide people with knowledge and skills on how to manage wildlife attractants and how to stay safe when in wildlife country. The WCC recommends the following activities for 2023:

- Continued participation in the Bear Working Group.
- Focus bin tagging in areas that did not receive bin tagging education this season.
- Continue to note streets that have bins outside but not on the curb and follow up during the day for door-to-door canvassing to speak with residents about storing garbage securely.
- Continue to support the City of Kamloops as they explore further ways to help residents secure their solid waste and with the roll out of their city-wide organics collection program.
- Continue to work with the COS and strengthen working relationships with community service officers.
- Continue to increase the followers of the WildSafeBC Kamloops Facebook page and share more posts on community neighborhood pages.
- Continue to promote the use and importance of bear spray when recreating. This could be done by reaching out to recreation / hiking clubs again next year to train new members.
- Continue to promote greater use and awareness of the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program.
- Continue to develop relationships with Indigenous groups and other Kamloops community and neighborhood association groups.

- Continue to promote the Gleaning Abundance Program.
- Support the City of Kamloops, when possible, in the development of the wildlife management plan.
- Utilize the WildSafe Business Pledge to increase awareness in the business community.
- Host electric fencing workshops in more rural areas of the community where there may be need or interest (e.g., Barnhartvale).

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Kamloops Coordinator (WCC) would like to thank the City of Kamloops, the Province of British Columbia, and the BC Conservation Foundation (BCCF) for funding this project. A special thanks goes out to City of Kamloops representatives for their assistance and support throughout the season. Thank you to the Conservation Officer Service for their direction and support of the program. Thank you to the residents of Kamloops, Facebook followers and media outlets for their stories, comments, and broadcasts, that helped spread important wildlife safety and awareness messaging in Kamloops.

The WildSafeBC Kamloops Program is grateful for the help of some amazing volunteers who helped to deliver the garbage-tagging program this season and helped to assemble WildSafe Ranger kits, particularly Thompson Community Services.

Lastly, the WCC would like to send an enormous thank you to all the Kamloops BCCF staff and fellow provincial WildSafeBC Community Coordinators for their encouragement and support. The success of this program is accredited to all your support.