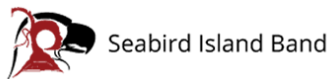


WildSafeBC Annual Report 2023

Fraser Valley

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC (WSBC) Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) Program between May 1st and November 30th, 2023. 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 (Appendix I). 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 during the 2023 season resulted in 1,506 wildlife reports made to the British Columbia Conservation Officer Service's (COS). The top three species reported during this season were black bear, deer, and coyote. Unsecured garbage was the most reported attractant for black bears in the FVRD during the 2023 season.

Two WildSafeBC Community Coordinators (WCC), Jocelyn Buchart and Gabriela De Romeri, 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 2023 season:

- 14 WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) presentations reached 1,085 youth
- 6 community group presentations reached 204 participants
- 585 homes visited during door-to-door activities.
- 83 bins tagged over five patrol visits
- 5 WildSafeBC display booths at different community events reaching over 2,700 people.
- 65 posts on the WSBC Fraser Valley Facebook page reached 13,256 people, 583 page visits were recorded, and 34 new followers were gained.

In 2023, WildSafeBC proudly expanded its outreach initiatives through a dynamic partnership with Seabird Island Band. This collaboration has already seen the implementation of key activities such as Bear Smart community planning, engaging WRP presentations, informative public WildSafeBC presentations, and interactive display booths. As we cultivate this partnership, we look forward to further developing connections that support the distinctive goals of Seabird Island Band and other First Nations communities, as well as strengthen the fabric of wildlife conservation in British Columbia.

Thank you to the numerous sponsors of the WildSafeBC FVRD program, including the City of Abbotsford, City of Chilliwack, City of Mission, FVRD, Seabird Island First Nations, the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF), and the Province of British Columbia. Further thanks to the volunteers who helped make the WildSafeBC Fraser Valley 2023 season possible. A key challenge for the season included the size of the program coverage area with important community events occurring concurrently in different communities. The WRP presentations in elementary schools across the Fraser Valley were highly successful this season. Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help keep wildlife wild and our communities safe.

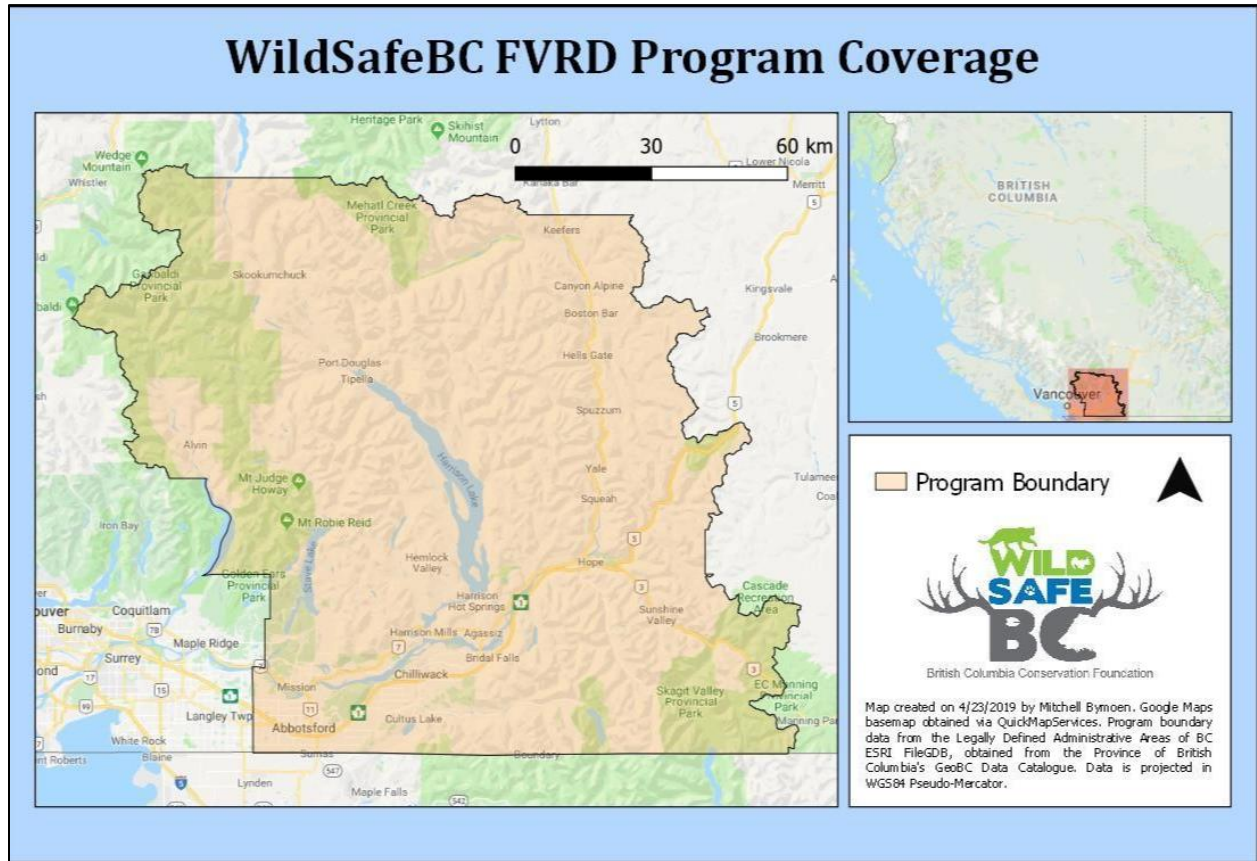


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Regional District program coverage area.

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Cover Photo: A WildSafeBC display booth at the Annual Fire Safety Grand Tour in Mission, BC.

Highlights from the 2023 Season

Wildlife Activity

From January 1 to November 30, a total of 1,506 wildlife reports have been 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/>). This data includes reports from all the communities in the WildSafeBC Fraser Valley program coverage area (Figure 1; Appendix I). Chilliwack (591 reports), Abbotsford (560 reports), and Mission (322 reports) accounted for the most wildlife reports made within the FVRD this season (Figure 2).

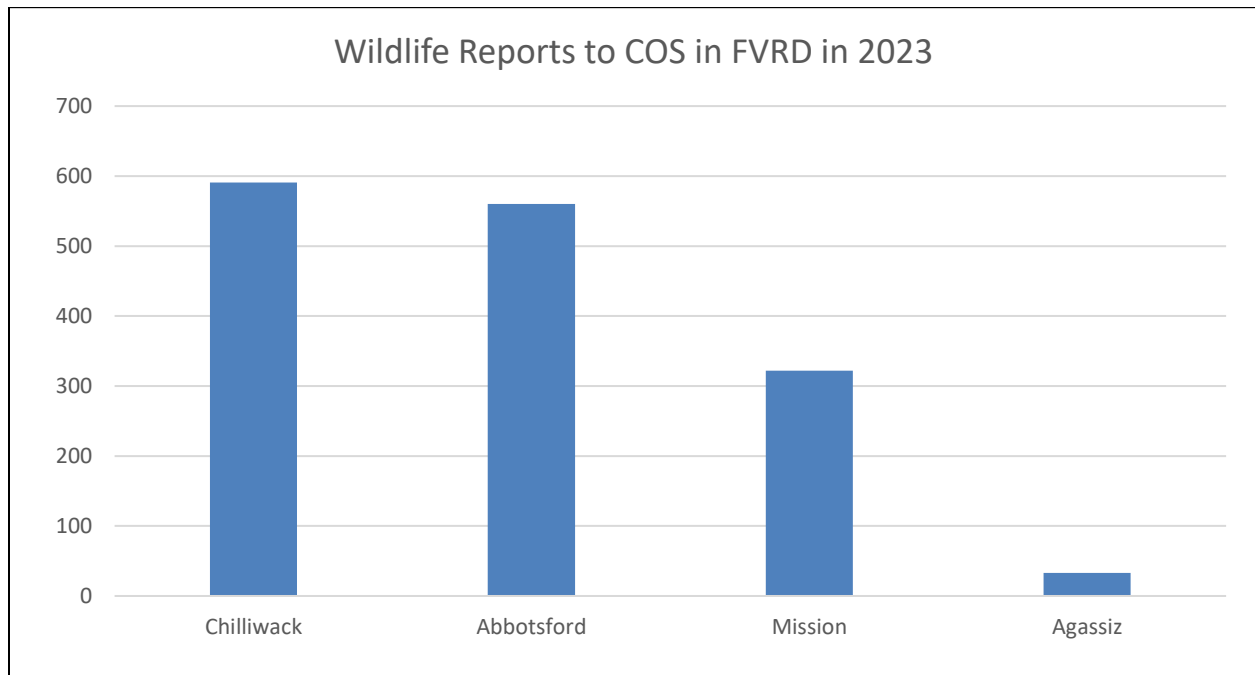


Figure 2. Wildlife reports made to the British Columbia Conservation Office Service (COS) RAPP Service by community in the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) in 2023.

The most reported species to the COS include black bear (1,209), deer (118), and coyote (58). Different species were prevalent in each area, but black bears were highest reported in each community (Figure 3). The highest number of black bears reports came from Abbotsford, the highest number of deer reports were in Chilliwack, and the highest number of coyote reports were in Mission. Unsecured garbage, typically accessed by black bears, was the most reported attractant in the FVRD during the 2023 season.

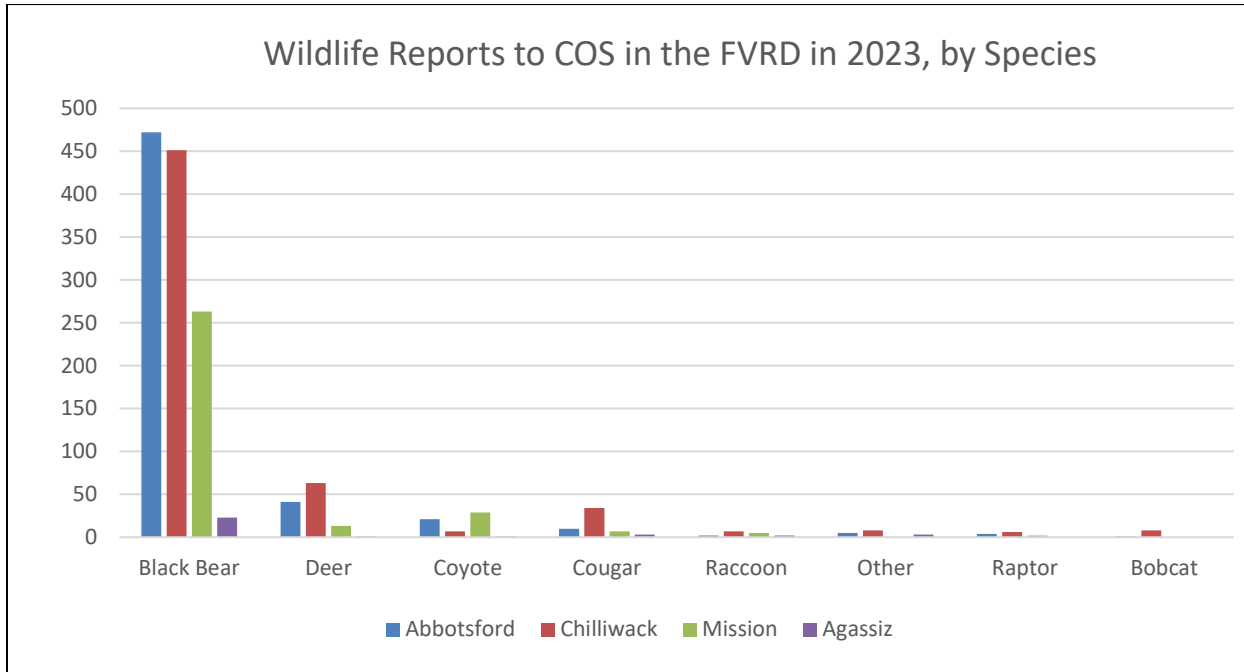


Figure 3. Wildlife reports made to the Conservation Office Service (COS) RAPP Service by species in the Fraser Valley Regional District (FVRD) in 2023.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict while also teaching them about wildlife attractants and how to stay safe in wildlife country. A total of 14 schools and other organizations participated in the WRP and a total of 1,085 students became WildSafe Rangers (Figure 4; Table 1). Other organizations included summer camps and childcare centers.



Figure 4. The WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Community Coordinators (WCC) delivering WildSafe Ranger Programs for the students at Promontory Heights Elementary School in Chilliwack (left), the students at Prince Charles Elementary School in Abbotsford (middle), and WCC Jocelyn Buchart ready to present a WRP (right).

Table 1. Schools that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2023.

School	Community	Grade	Students
Prince Charles Elementary School	Abbotsford	3 and 4	40
Agassiz Christian Elementary School	Agassiz	K - 7	122
Dr Roberta Bondar Elementary School	Abbotsford	K, 1, 2	45
Abbotsford Christian Elementary School	Abbotsford	2	55
Harry Sayers Elementary School	Abbotsford	4	62
Abbotsford Christian Elementary School	Abbotsford	2	46
City of Chilliwack/Chilliwack Library	Chilliwack	Ages 1-10	55
Great Outdoors Adventure Camp (Abby Community School Society)	Abbotsford	Ages 5-10	49
Hand in Hand Early Learning Center	Abbotsford	Ages 2-5	15
Mountain Elementary School	Abbotsford	2 and 3	44
Promontory Heights Elementary School	Chilliwack	K - 5	200
Bernard Elementary School	Chilliwack	K and 1	54
Harrison Hot Springs Elementary School	Harrison	K - 6	124
Seabird Island Community School	Seabird Island	Pre K - 12	225
Total:			1,085

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave a total of six presentations to community groups, reaching 204 participants (Table 2). Presentation topics varied from public information sessions, wildlife awareness and safety workshops, as well as bear spray demonstrations. The WCC provided additional educational resources, including brochures, for participants to take home (Figure 5).

Table 2. Organizations that received a WildSafeBC presentation in 2023.

Organization	Type	Participants (#)
BC Hydro	Wildlife Awareness & Safety Presentation	28
City of Abbotsford	Wildlife & Waste Public Information Session	100
City of Chilliwack	Wildlife & Waste Public Information Session	28
Hope Rod and Gun Club	Bear Spray Workshop	14
Mission Environmental Stewardship Society	Wildlife Awareness & Safety Presentation	22
Seabird Island Band Elders	Wildlife Awareness and Safety Presentation	12
Total:		204



Figure 5. Free WildSafeBC resources (brochures, magnets, activity booklets) provided by the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator for the Wildlife and Waste Public Information Session.

Display Booths

Display booths allow the public to view and interact with our educational materials, learn about wildlife safety, discuss wildlife attractant management, and network our program offerings to various groups of residents (Figure 6). In 2023, more than 2,700 people visited the WildSafeBC display booth at five community events across the FVRD (Table 3). The WCC also setup display booths while delivering community presentations when appropriate.



Figure 6. WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, Gabriela De Romeri, hosting a display booth at the Chilliwack School District's 'Our Journey to Truth and Reconciliation' instructional event (left) and during a Wildlife Awareness and Safety presentation (right).

Table 3. WildSafeBC Public display booths in the FVRD in 2023.

Event	Community	Date	People Reached (#)
Sq'ewqel Day	Seabird Island	July 19	75
Twilight Treasures Market	Mission	September 7	304
Chilliwack School District's 'Our Journey to Truth and Reconciliation'	Chilliwack	October 6	2200

Fire Safety Grand Tour	Mission	October 15	142
Seabird Island Band Elders WildSafeBC Presentation and Breakfast	Seabird Island	October 25	12
Total reach:			2,733

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Door-to-door education reached 585 people with door hangers. The WCC also knocked on every door and engaged residents in conversations about wildlife. The Eastern Hillside and Promontory neighborhoods in Chilliwack were a priority for this activity due to high levels of wildlife activity reports as noted by the COS and City of Chilliwack staff.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of curbside containers the evening before collection day. During four outings, a total of 83 bins were tagged across three garbage collection zones in Mission as this was identified as a priority. Garbage bin tagging has proven effective (Figure 7). The efficacy of bin tagging was shown, as 83% of residences within the 'Yellow Zone A' whose bins were tagged during an initial survey did not have bins out on the curb again during a second survey.

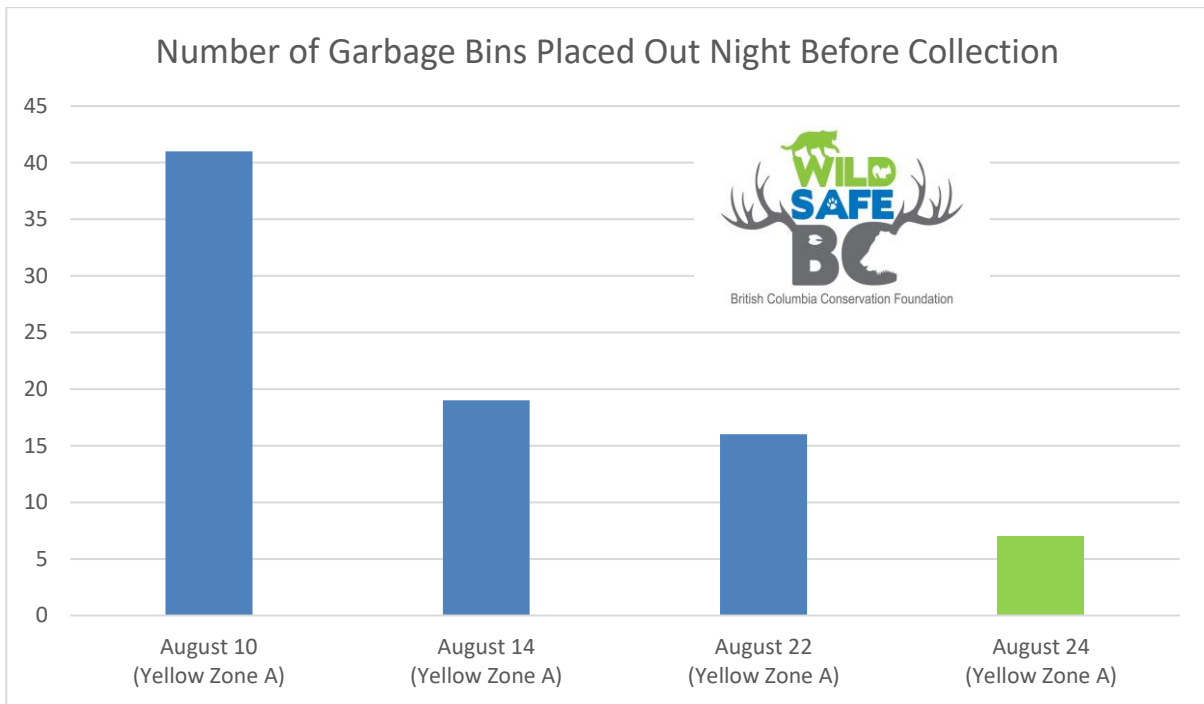


Figure 7. Number of bin tags placed on garbage bins put out early (the evening before) for collection in Mission, BC. The green data on August 24 indicates a second survey done in a particular zone.

Social Media

From January 1 to November 30, The WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Facebook page gained 60 new followers and 36 new page likes, recorded 696 page visits, and reached 13,352 people. In preparation for display booths and events, the WCC posted notices in advance and shared posts from collaborating bodies resulting in a total of 68 posts.

Wildlife in Area Signs

The 'Wildlife in Area' signs are a useful tool to passively alert a community of wildlife that frequents the area and serve as a reminder to all residents to manage wildlife attractants on their property to help reduce human-wildlife conflicts. The WCC did not place any signs in 2023 due to the large geographic program area. However, plans have been put in motion with the City of Chilliwack to place permanent signs in high priority areas, such as Eastern Hillside and Promontory neighborhoods. It is recommended that future WCC's work with other local organizations to setup signs in high conflict areas following reports to the COS.

Collaborations

The WCC partnered with other groups including the City of Abbotsford Solid Waste and Management Department, City of Chilliwack Environmental Services Department, the COS, and Mission Environmental Stewardship Society (MESS).

Conservation Officer Service

The WCC and the COS, (Primary contact: Alicia Buchanan) communicated throughout the 2023 season. The Conservation Officers (COs) would inform the WCC of areas of concern and the WCC would implement door-to-door canvassing in that area. COs Alicia Buchanan, Mallory Blake, and Cole Ryley attended the City of Chilliwack Waste and Wildlife information session in Chilliwack on September 28, 2023 to assist in answering questions from residents. Alicia Buchanan also provided COS RAPP data to the WCC for the purposes of substantiating the following WildSafeBC annual report.

City of Abbotsford

Sharon Subido, with the Solid Waste and Management Department (City of Abbotsford), hosted a Wildlife and Waste public information session on August 10, 2023, in partnership with the WCC and the Conservation Officer Service. A total of 100 participants attended.

City of Chilliwack

Sara Hoang and Cathy Shu, with the Environmental Services Department (City of Chilliwack), hosted a Wildlife and Waste public information session on September 28, 2023, in partnership with the WCC and the Conservation Officer Service. A total of 28 participants attended.

Mission Environmental Stewardship Society (MESS)

Brynn Doeleman, with the Mission Environmental Stewardship Society (City of Mission), hosted an Annual General Meeting (AGM) on October 21, 2023, where the WCC was invited as a guest speaker to educate about BC wildlife, recent wildlife reports and statistics, reducing human-wildlife conflicts, and managing wildlife attractants. A total of 22 participants attended.

WildSafe Business Pledge

The WildSafe Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses to set 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. The WCC did not conduct business pledge activities this season and instead focused on providing direct education through WRP presentations.

WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

Through the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program (BCP), WildSafeBC is able to provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife. No campsites were approached this season for the Bare Campsite Program, as the WCC focused on direct education in urban areas.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

In the spirit of our commitment to community-driven wildlife conservation, 2023 marks a significant milestone, as WildSafeBC's Fraser Valley Program welcomes Seabird Island Band, located on the traditional and ancestral territories of the Sto:lo First Nation peoples. Our initial outreach activities have been met with enthusiasm and engagement, setting the stage for a collaborative journey toward harmonious coexistence.

The implementation of Bear Smart community planning lays the foundation for a comprehensive approach to wildlife management tailored to the unique landscape and needs of Seabird Island Band. WildSafe Ranger Presentations (WRP) have proven to be impactful, providing an interactive platform for community members to enhance their understanding of local wildlife and fostering a sense of shared responsibility for their conservation.

Public WildSafeBC presentations have brought vital information to a wider audience, promoting awareness and understanding of the delicate balance between human communities and wildlife. Concurrently, our display booths have provided interactive spaces for residents of all ages to delve deeper into wildlife conservation concepts, creating a bridge between knowledge and action.

Looking forward, our commitment extends beyond these initial activities. Our aim is to refine and expand our engagement based on the specific goals and aspirations of Seabird Island Band. Through ongoing collaboration, we envision a future where the principles of wildlife conservation are seamlessly integrated into the fabric of daily life, enriching both the natural environment and the communities we are privileged to serve.

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. The season started with two part-time coordinators, but one had limited availability for a majority of the season before leaving for other career endeavours. 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 the WCC with public outreach and education.

Garbage, livestock, and fruit trees continue to be the top attractants in the community that draw wildlife into residential areas. Bears have been reported damaging property and remaining in people's yards which impacts the safety of the neighborhood. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community 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 2024:

- Bear spray demonstrations to groups of interest.
- Display booths at community events.
- Continuing school presentations and inspiring extended school workshops.
- Continue collaboration with Seabird Island Band and increase engagement with Indigenous communities across the FVRD.
- Approach businesses about the Business Pledge Program.
- Approach campgrounds about Bare Campsite initiatives.
- Collaboration with municipal non-profit organizations.
- Collaboration with educational institutions in the FVRD.
- Continued collaboration with the COS.
- Increased social media activity and engagement.
- Increased door-to-door campaigns in hotspots.

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Fraser Valley Program is made possible through funding support from the City of Abbotsford, City of Chilliwack, City of Mission, FVRD, Seabird Island First Nations, BCCF, and the Province of British Columbia. The 2023 season was successful due to many supporters and collaborators. The WCC is grateful for the support of local government and their summer students and volunteers. This includes Lance Lilley and Carolyn Lane at the FVRD office; Sharon Subido at the City of Chilliwack; Kyle D'Appolonia at the City of Mission, Mission Summer Students:

Giovanna Peirano Campbell and Lena Taylor; Sara Hoang, Thomas Fabian, and Cathy Shu at the City of Chilliwack, Chilliwack Volunteers: Lori Roberts and Jo-Anna Welch; and to each FVRD municipality that hosted WildSafeBC activities in the 2023 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 the WildSafeBC program:

- 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