

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2023

Kamloops

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Kamloops program for the 2023 season between June 2nd and November 30th. The program coverage area includes the City of Kamloops (Figure 1). WildSafeBC acknowledges that the program takes place on the unceded traditional territory of the Secwépemc People.

Consistent with previous years, black bears were the most reported species to the British Columbia Conservation Officer Service (COS). The main goal of the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) is to assist communities in preventing human-wildlife conflicts through educational programs and collaborations with the City of Kamloops and the COS. Efforts this season were focused on WildSafe Ranger school programming, bin tagging in all city solid waste collection zones, display booths at community events, wildlife awareness presentations and bear spray workshops and door-to-door canvassing in high conflict neighborhoods.

The following summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the 2023 season:

- 11 elementary schools and children's groups received multiple WildSafe Ranger Program presentations, with a total of 2,566 youth reached.
- 11 bin tagging outings and 597 bins tagged in total in all City Solid Waste Collection Zones
- 6 display booths held at various community events, where 992 people were engaged in learning about local wildlife, safety in wildlife country, and attractant management
- 827 residents reached through door-to-door education and provided information on attractant management and wildlife safety
- 1 presentation with 12 participants that focused on bear spray safety and training; 19 other community associations and groups introduced to WildSafeBC wildlife awareness and bear safety presentations
- 37 Facebook posts on the WildSafeBC Kamloops page; 48 new page followers from November 30th, 2022 to November 30th, 2023
- 6 signs were placed at various sites following wildlife sightings, including Bear-In-Area and Aggressive-Deer-In-Area signs
- 6 media interviews and article press releases were conducted for various media outlets in Kamloops and Vancouver
- Ongoing participation in the City of Kamloops Human-Bear Conflict Management Committee

The biggest highlight of the season was the number of WildSafe Ranger presentations and solid waste bins that were tagged. It's hopeful that the information provided to residents in these activities will result in positive changes throughout the community. The WCC provided a consistent message that managing garbage, compost, bird feeders and other common attractants will not only help with keeping bears out of the community but that all wildlife will find more suitable options outside the community if attractants are reduced.

Improperly managed wildlife attractants, including solid waste, fruit trees, and bird feeders,

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.

Thank you to the BC Conservation Foundation (BCCF), the Province of British Columbia, and the City of Kamloops for funding and supporting the WildSafeBC Kamloops Program. A special thanks to the guidance and support provided by the BCCF staff members, in particular Lisa Lopez and Ainslie McCleod, as well as the City of Kamloops staff members, Danielle Sparks and Krista Morden. The WCC is grateful for the support and collaborative efforts of many community organizations that were instrumental to the success of the program.

To foster collaborations between the COS, WildSafeBC, the City of Kamloops, and other stakeholders, continued participation in the Human-Bear Conflict Management Committee 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'.

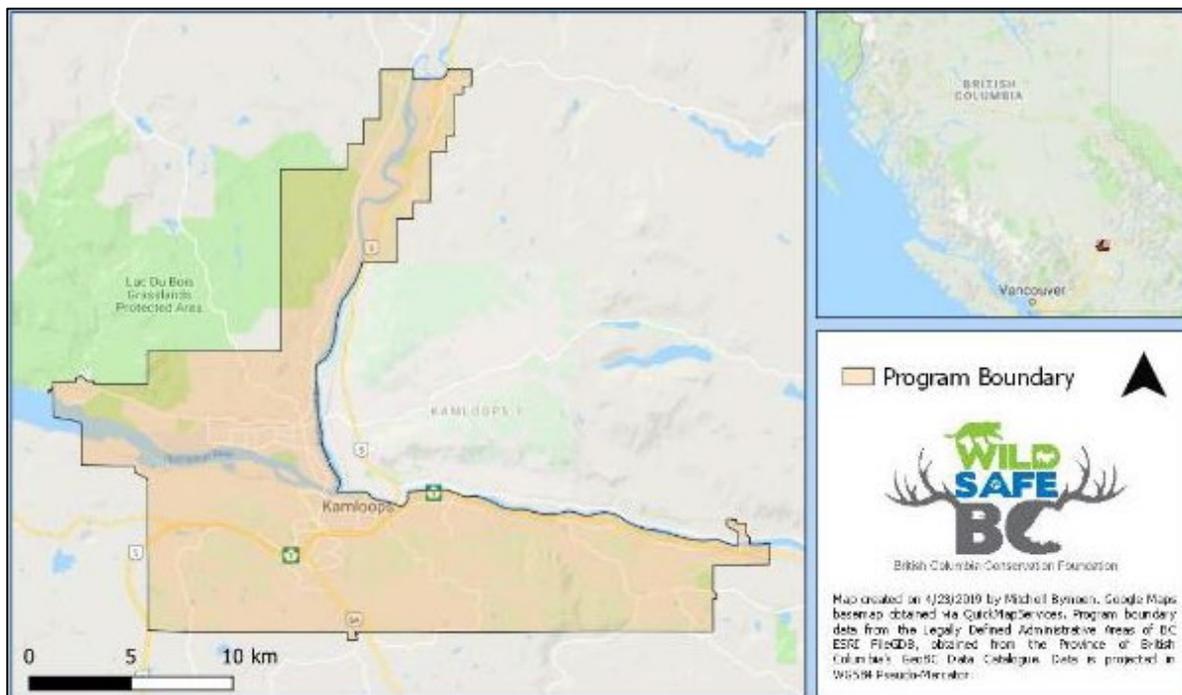


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Kamloops program coverage area, which covers the entirety of the City of Kamloops.

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Highlights from the 2023 Season

Wildlife Activity

Reports made to the COS through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) and online form (<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 1st, 2016 to November 14th, 2023. Due to technical difficulties with the WARP, data used in this report regarding wildlife reports made in 2022 and 2023 were obtained directly from the COS.

Similar to previous years, black bears were the species most often reported to the COS in 2023, followed by deer and cougars (Figure 2). From January 1st, 2023 to November 14th, 2023, there were 579 black bear reports, which is higher than the number of reports made in 2022. This increase in reports may be contributed to the droughts, heat, and wildfires experienced across the Province this year, resulting in an increased number of human-black bear conflicts. This season, the number of black bear reports were the second highest since 2018, with the highest number of reports occurring in 2021 (Figure 3). Environmental conditions this season were similar to that of 2021, with drought and reduced natural food availability later in the year, which may contribute to the increased number of human-black bear conflicts in both these years. Black bear activity was most prevalent in Aberdeen, Sahali, Barnhartvale and Juniper Ridge throughout the season. Other areas of Kamloops experienced increased black bear activity periodically this season, including areas of Westsyde by the Thompson River; an active area for bears during the fall salmon run. This season, there were 418 reports of deer made, which is the highest number of reports in the last 6 years. Cougars accounted for 28 reports made to the COS, which is lower than the previous year. There were 20 reports made regarding coyotes in Kamloops, which increased from last year. As well, there were 22 reports of rattlesnakes made this season, which is the highest number of reports this species has seen in the last 6 years.

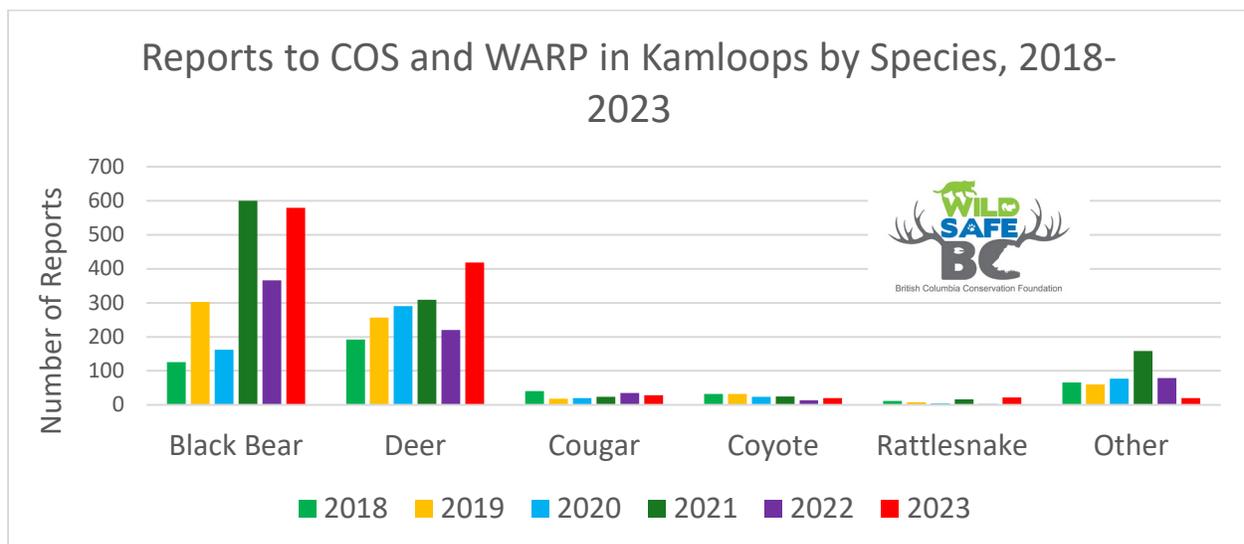


Figure 2. Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program

(WARP) by species from January 1, 2018 to November 14, 2023 in Kamloops.

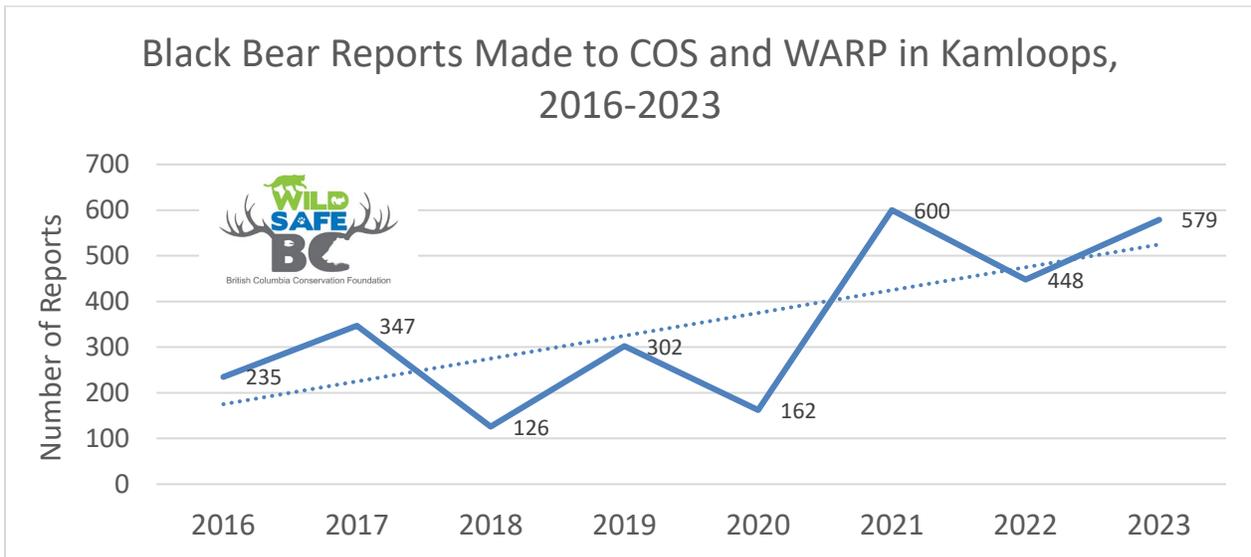


Figure 3. Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) regarding black bears in Kamloops, from January 1, 2016 to November 14, 2023.

As deer are the second most commonly reported species to the COS, they also contribute to human-wildlife conflicts in Kamloops. Deer are abundant throughout the entire area and urbanized deer can contribute to an increase in wildlife collisions or become aggressive towards people and pets. Drivers should always use caution, especially at dawn, dusk and early evening when deer may be crossing roads. Cougar reports were most commonly sightings in residential areas or conflict with livestock or pets. House pets should be kept indoors, especially at night, and chickens or livestock should be protected by an electric fence. Reports of coyotes occurred primarily in Batchelor Heights, North Shore, Westsyde, Pineview, Aberdeen, Lower Sahali, and Barnhartvale. Dog owners using trails in these areas should always keep dogs on leash and under control and avoid using extension leashes, especially with small dogs. Rattlesnakes were often reported in Batchelor Heights, nearest to the Lac du Bois Grasslands. Residents in these areas should install or properly maintain existing snake fencing to prevent snakes from entering their yard.

There are many natural and anthropogenic bear attractants throughout Kamloops that increase the potential for human-wildlife conflict as well as wildlife travel corridors. Solid waste, including organics and garbage, is the most commonly reported bear attractant in Kamloops and in the Province. Solid waste should be kept secure at all times, preferably indoors or in a secure structure, and not set out to the curb the night before collection day, as per the City of Kamloops' *Solid Waste and Recyclables Bylaw No. 40-67*. Other commonly reported attractants this season included bird feeders and fruit trees. Bird feeders should only be used in the winter when bears are hibernating and fruits trees should be kept well-managed, ensuring fallen fruit and seed is cleaned, to prevent the food-conditioning of wildlife. Historically, the highest number of human-bear conflicts in BC occur during the fall months when bears goes through hyperphagia (“extreme eating”) and eat an average of 20,000 calories a day. This season, like previous years, black bear activity began in March and peaked in August through to October (Figure 4).

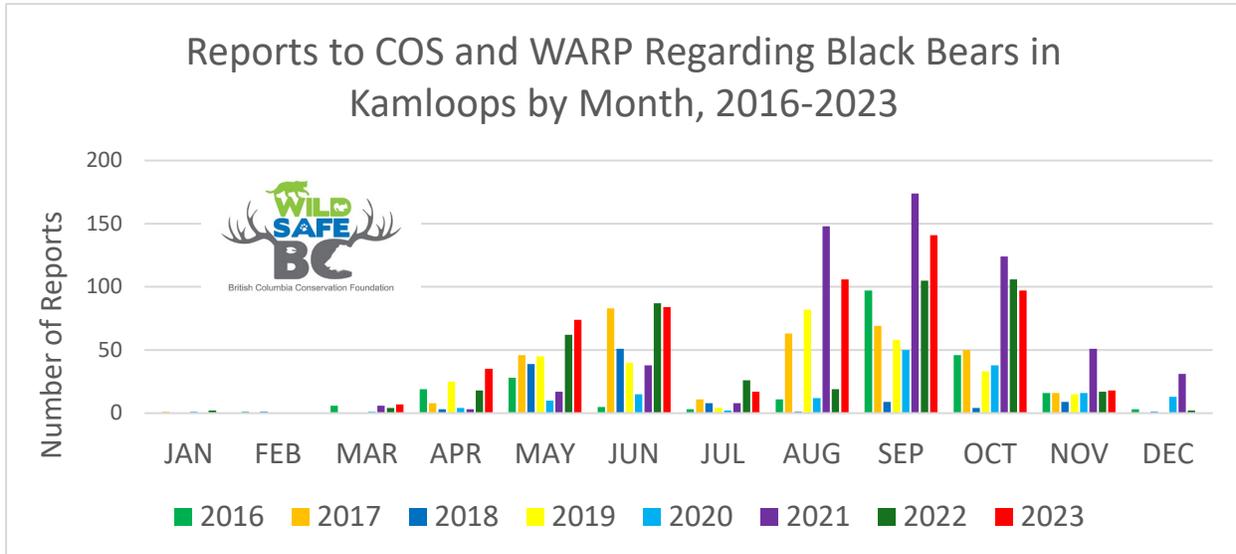


Figure 4. Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) and the Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) regarding black bears by month from January 1, 2016 to November 14, 2023 in Kamloops.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces students to the concept of human-wildlife conflict and encourages them to take an active role in reducing human-wildlife conflict at home by helping their families identify backyard wildlife attractants. Students are also educated on safety basics when encountering local wildlife species. The WCC delivered 105 WRP presentations with 8 elementary schools within the SD73 and 3 youth groups participating this season (Table 1). A total of 2,566 children throughout Kamloops became WildSafe Rangers and received a WildSafe Ranger kit to take away with them (Figures 5 and 6).

Table 1. Elementary schools and children’s groups in Kamloops that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2023.

School / Community Organization	Grade	Youth	Date
Eureka! Science Camps	1 – 7	351	July 4 and 18, August 4 and 15
BCSPCA Summer Camps	3 – 5	40	August 2, 8 and 16
Kiddies’ Korner Daycare	K – 6	22	July 12
Aberdeen Elementary School	K – 7	452	October 3, 4 and 6
South Sa-Hali Elementary School	K – 3	105	September 28
Rayleigh Elementary School	K – 6	202	November 3 and 9
Juniper Ridge Elementary School	K – 7	386	October 24 and 25
David Thompson Elementary School	K – 6	290	September 22 and 29, October 13

Pacific Way Elementary School	K – 7	360	October 18, 19 and 30
Kay Bingham Elementary School	K – 6	297	November 15 and 16
Our Lady of Perpetual Help (OLPH) Elementary School	K – 5	61	November 7
Total Participants		2,566	



Figure 5. The WildSafeBC Kamloops Coordinator delivering the WildSafe Ranger Program to the BC SPCA Summer Camp on August 8th, 2023.



Figure 6. The WildSafeBC Kamloops Coordinator delivering the WildSafe Ranger Program to Juniper Ridge Elementary School on October 24th, 2023.

Presentations to Community Groups

The demand for WildSafeBC’s Wildlife Awareness and Bear Spray Workshops was much lower this season than the previous year, with one workshop taking place on August 24th. This Bear Spray Training Workshop was provided to 12 staff members of the BC Wildlife Park, where participants learned the theory and safety with using bear spray on the job. A bear spray demonstration was conducted after the presentation and participants practiced using inert training bear spray.

Public Displays and Events

Throughout the 2023 season, the WCC set up an educational WildSafeBC display booth at seven events. In June, a booth was set up at the BC Wildlife Park’s National Black Bear Day alongside the City of Kamloops Environmental Services team, where 117 park visitors learned information about black bears in Kamloops, including how to reduce conflict with them in the community (Figure 7). In July, the WildSafeBC booth was set up at the Interior Savings’ Overlanders Day event, reaching 120 people. Throughout the season, the WCC attended two of the Kamloops Regional Farmers’ Markets, setting up the WildSafeBC booth to provide general awareness on wildlife and answer questions from market visitors; common discussions included the effects of the summer wildfire season on the wildlife populations around Kamloops (Figure 8). The 8th Annual BC Goes Wild event was held at the September 16th farmers’ market to celebrate the spectacular diversity of wildlife in BC (see [BC Goes Wild](#)). At these two market events, the WCC engaged with 375 people. In August, the WildSafeBC booth was set up at the Kamloops Immigrant Services office as part of the Kamloops Immigrant Services Potluck to share information about wildlife with new residents to Kamloops, reaching 55 attendees (Figure 9). The Thompson Rivers University Back-to-School BBQ event was attended by the WCC and reached 211 students and faculty (Figure 10). In November, the WildSafeBC booth was set up at the Pumpkin Smash event, hosted by the City of Kamloops, and educated 114 participants on the importance of proper attractant management when bears are in fall hyperphagia, including how to manage their pumpkin decorations. During these events, a total of 992 people of various ages and backgrounds were engaged in conversation surrounding wildlife biology, human-wildlife conflict, wildlife safety, and attractant management.

Table 2. Community events that the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator attended in Kamloops with the WildSafeBC display booth and the number of people reached in 2023.

Community Event	Date	People Reached (#)
BC Wildlife Park National Black Bear Day	June 3, 2023	117
Interior Savings’ Overlanders Day	July 23, 2023	120
Kamloops Regional Farmers’ Market	July 22, 2023	169
Kamloops Regional Farmers’ Market (BCGW)*	September 16, 2023	206
Kamloops Immigrant Services Potluck Event	August 31, 2023	55

TRU Back-to-School BBQ Event	September 8, 2023	211
City of Kamloops Pumpkin Smash	November 4, 2023	114
Total Participants		992

*BCGW: BC Goes Wild Event – more discussion about this in the BC Goes Wild section of report.



Figure 7. The WildSafeBC Kamloops Coordinator, Olivia Lemke, at the WildSafeBC Display Booth at the Kamloops Regional Farmers' Market on July 22, 2023.



Figure 8. WildSafeBC Display Booth at the BC Wildlife Park's National Black Bear Day on June 3, 2023.



Figure 9. WildSafeBC Display Booth at the Kamloops Immigrant Services Potluck event on August 31, 2023.



Figure 10. WildSafeBC Display Booth at the Thompson Rivers' University Back-to-School BBQ event on September 8, 2023.

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 spectacular diversity of wildlife in the Province. For the 8th Annual BC Goes Wild Event, the WCC hosted an interactive display booth at the Kamloops Regional Farmers' Market where 206 people engaged in the event (Figure 11). The interactive display booth included a Spin-the-Wildlife-Wheel game with various prizes, including two \$50 gift cards to the BC Wildlife Park and complimentary day passes generously donated by the park, as well as WildSafeBC hats, fridge magnets, activity books, tattoos and stickers (Figure 12). A coloring station was also set up to promote the WildSafe Rangers Coloring Contest that ran from September 1st to November 30th, with printed coloring pages that could be entered to win the contest (Figure 13). Participants were engaged in celebrating the incredible diversity of wildlife BC as well as discussing human-wildlife conflict and attractant management in the community.



Figure 11. The WildSafeBC Kamloops Coordinator, Olivia Lemke, hosting the 8th Annual BC Goes Wild Event at the Kamloops Regional Farmers' Market, September 16, 2023.



Figure 12. Spin-the-Wildlife-Wheel game and prizes for the 8th Annual BC Goes Wild Event.



Figure 13. The WildSafe Ranger coloring contest table at the 8th Annual BC Goes Wild Event at the Kamloops Regional Farmers' Market, September 16, 2023

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Door-to-door canvassing was conducted in areas that were experiencing high human-wildlife conflicts and requested by the COS or the City of Kamloops (Figure 14). Discussions regarding attractant management and wildlife activity, along with educational materials such as door hangers, brochures, and written letters specific to each neighborhood, were delivered to these high conflict areas. This messaging pertained specifically to black bears in areas of Juniper Ridge, Sahali, Westsyde and Valleyview. In Batchelor Heights, residents with a snake fence installed on their property were provided materials on how to maintain the snake fence, as well as the importance of proper maintenance. In a neighborhood in Aberdeen, residents were educated on the importance of managing deer attractants in the area to prevent wildlife collisions. Residents that were not reached face-to-face were left with informational handouts on how to avoid human-wildlife conflict in their neighborhood. A total of 827 homes received WildSafeBC's wildlife safety and awareness messaging through door-to-door canvassing.



Figure 14. The WildSafeBC Kamloops Coordinator, Olivia Lemke, delivering door-to-door education regarding black bear activity in Juniper Ridge, June 26, 2023.

WildSafeBC's solid waste 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 night before collection day (Figure 15 and Figure 16). All five of the waste collection zones in the City of Kamloops boundaries were surveyed, with Zones 1, 3, 4, and 5 receiving a second survey along the same route initially taken by the WCC (Figure 17). A second survey was conducted to see if the residents who received a warning in the first survey had changed their behaviour in the second survey. In total, 597 bins were tagged throughout Kamloops and 35 residents had their bins tagged in both surveys. On average, 90% of residents that had their bin tagged during the first survey did not have their bin placed out during the second survey. The neighborhoods of Campbell Creek and Dallas, as well as Westsyde, received the greatest number of bin tags this season, with 157 and 136 bins tagged, respectively. The neighborhoods of Juniper Ridge, Valleyview and Rosehill received the fewest number of bin tags, collectively accounting for 48 bin

tags this season. Of all the bins that were tagged this season, only 10% of residents still placed their bin out again after receiving a warning sticker. This demonstrates the efficacy of bin tagging education for changing residents' behaviour in managing wildlife attractants.

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.



Figure 15. The WildSafeBC Kamloops Coordinator, Olivia Lemke, placing an educational warning sticker on a residential solid waste bin during a bin-tagging survey, July 16, 2023.



Figure 16. Highly visible and educational warning stickers that are placed on solid waste bins set out to the curb the night before collection day by the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator.

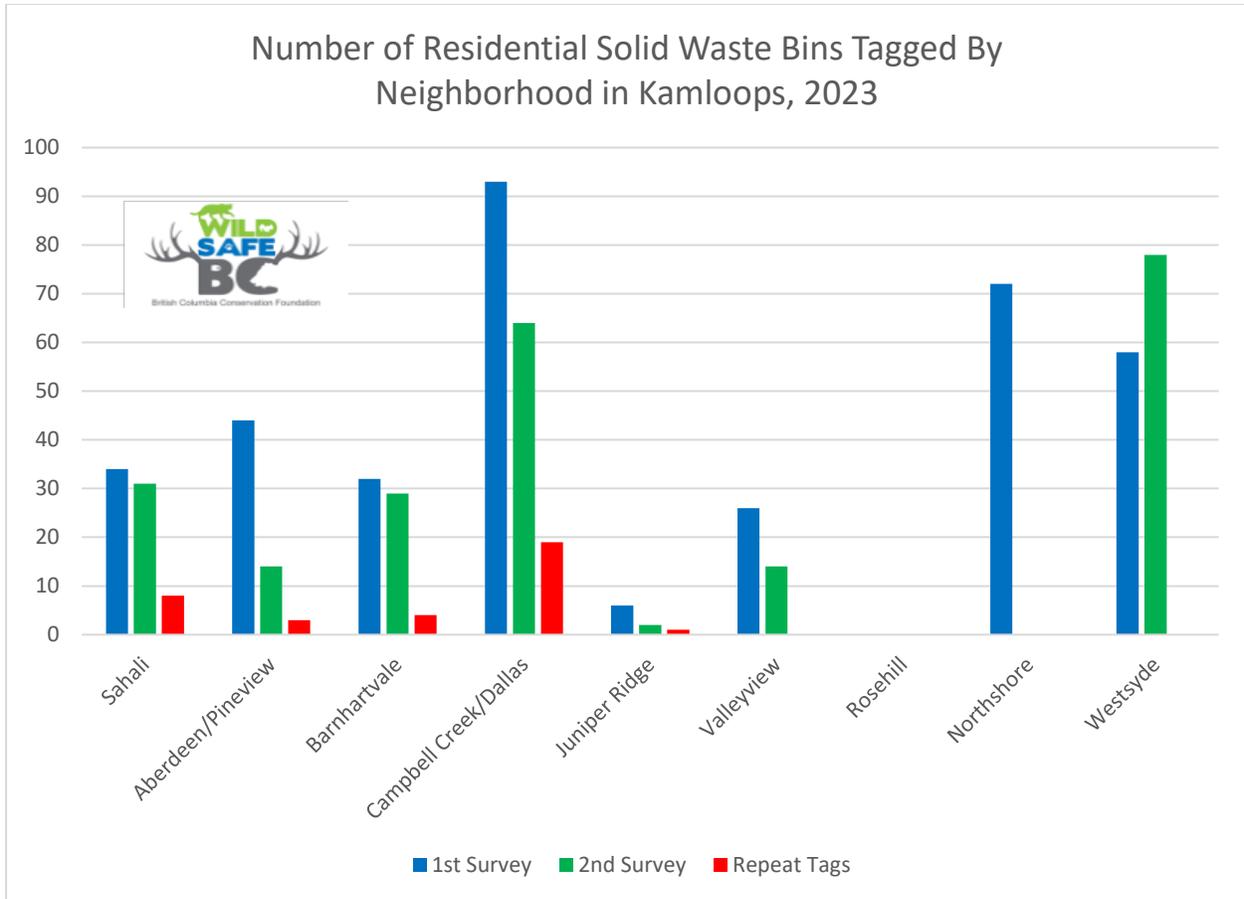


Figure 17. The number of solid-waste residential bins that were tagged by the WildSafeBC Kamloops Coordinator during bin-tagging surveys, by neighborhood, 2023.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Kamloops Facebook page came out of hibernation on June 9th with an introductory post from the WCC. Over the season, the page has had 48 new Facebook followers, from 1,115 followers in December 2022 to 1,163 followers in November 2023. As well, the page has received 40 Facebook Page likes during this same time period. Throughout the season, the WCC engaged with posts relating to wildlife activity and provided education and information to residents in community Facebook Page groups. This approach was an effective method to bring people in to explore our page and our content while continuing to provide engaging education. Many Facebook posts created were also shared by Facebook users into other groups or on their own personal timeline, which helped promote the WildSafeBC Kamloops Facebook page. In total, the WCC created 37 Facebook posts that reached 15,309 people from June 9th to November 30th. Many posts reached over 2,000 Facebook users, with the most impactful post created to bring awareness to the human-bear conflicts that can occur during hyperphagia reaching approximately 5,200 people and was shared 29 times (Figure 18).

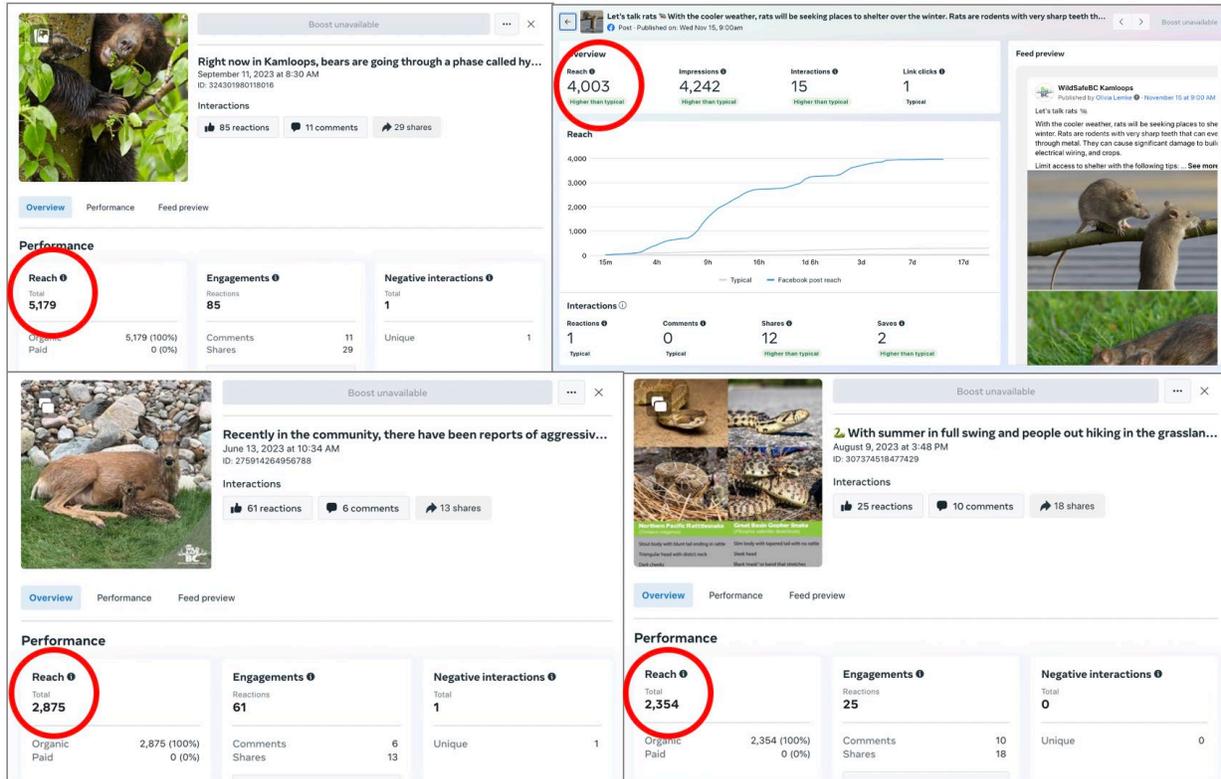


Figure 18. Facebook posts made on the WildSafeBC Kamloops Facebook page that had the highest reach to Facebook users, June to November 2023.

The WCC participated in six media releases, including a TV news story, in the 2023 season (Table 4):

- Press release news article with *Kamloops This Week* about being bear aware during the fall season while bears are in hyperphagia and bear activity increases
- Press release article with *Barriere Star Journal* about being bear aware during the fall season while bears are in hyperphagia and bear activity increases
- Press release article and interview with *The Omega News* about bear safety and safely recreating outdoors in wildlife country following the sighting of a bear on the Thompson Rivers University Campus
- TV news story with *CBC News* regarding black bear and human conflicts in BC, where the WCC was job shadowed and interviewed during a door-to-door canvassing session
- Radio interview with *CBC Kamloops* regarding black bears, deer, rats, and raccoons in Kamloops and having a WildSafe Yard
- Radio interview with *Radio NL* in Kamloops regarding the WildSafeBC 2023 season summary

Table 3. List of media stories that included information provided by the Kamloops WildSafeBC Community Coordinator in 2023.

Release Date	Media Outlet	Article Title
August 22, 2023	<i>Kamloops This Week</i>	Be Bear Aware as Summer Turns to Fall in Kamloops
August, 2023	<i>Barriere Star Journal</i>	Be Bear Aware This Fall
September, 2023	<i>The Omega News</i>	Bear Safety on TRU's Campus
November 14, 2023	<i>CBC Vancouver</i>	Why Bears are Feeling More at Home Near People
November 20, 2023	<i>CBC Kamloops</i>	CBC Kamloops Daybreak at 1:01:00
November 24, 2023	<i>Radio NL Kamloops</i>	NL Mornings with Jeff & Bill

Wildlife in Area Signs

The WCC worked with the COS team to deploy wildlife in area signage, particularly in relation to bears. When bears were confirmed (usually through multiple sightings) to be frequenting a particular area, the COS requested that the WCC place signage in the area to alert residents of a bear in the area and remind them to secure garbage. Signage was also placed this season for aggressive deer, which alerted users of popular walking trails that deer were exhibiting aggressive behaviour during fawning season (Figure 19).



Figure 19. Aggressive-deer-in-area signage that was posted at a popular trail head in Kamloops following frequent sightings, June 20, 2023.

Collaborations

The WCC continued to support community associations and businesses who were interested in taking steps to address and prevent human-wildlife conflicts. This season, the WCC collaborated with a local business to create signs about bear safety, human-bear conflict and attractant management information. 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. The WCC also worked with the City of Kamloops Community Services team to provide residents with education regarding proper solid waste management during the “Bear Smart Bylaw” through combined bin-tagging.

Special Initiatives

The WCC continued to identify and communicate opportunities and recommendations for Bear Smart initiatives to program sponsors through active participation in the City of Kamloops Human-Bear Conflict Management Committee. The WCC also provided active updates on the 2023 WildSafeBC program throughout the season at these meetings. Utilizing the framework of the Bear Smart Community Program criteria can result in a reduction of human-bear conflicts in the community, by addressing the root causes of these conflicts. In 2023, the City of Kamloops finalized the Bear Hazard Assessment and Bear Management Plan, which identifies hazards that contribute to human-bear conflict, identifies natural and non-natural features that increase the likelihood of human-bear conflict, and highlights practices that mitigate conflict.

Challenges and Opportunities

Improperly managed garbage, fruit trees, bird feeders, 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 2024:

- Continued participation in the Human-Bear Conflict Management Committee.
- Continue educating residents on the City of Kamloops *Solid Waste “Bear Smart” Bylaw* through the WildSafeBC bin-tagging program.
- Note the neighborhoods in Kamloops that have solid waste bins outside but not on the curb and follow up during the day for door-to-door canvassing to speak with residents about storing waste securely.
- Continue to education children in Kamloops on human-wildlife conflict and wildlife safety through delivery of the WildSafe Ranger program.
- Continue to support the City of Kamloops as they explore further ways to help residents secure their solid waste and with the recent introduction of their city-wide organics collection program.
- Continue to work with the COS and strengthen working relationships with Community Service team.

- 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.
- 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 would like to thank the City of Kamloops, the Province of British Columbia, and the BC Conservation Foundation for funding the WildSafeBC Kamloops project. A special thanks goes out to City of Kamloops representatives for their assistance and support throughout the season, including Danielle Sparks and Krista Morden, as well as the EcoSmart team for their efforts in the bin-tagging program. A huge thank you to the WildSafeBC Program Manager, Lisa Lopez, and the WildSafeBC Program Coordinator, Ainslie McLeod, for their guidance, knowledge and endless support. Thank you to the Conservation Officer Service for their direction and support of the program, including Mike Sanderson and Ethan Porrier. 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. As well, the WildSafeBC Kamloops program is grateful for the amazing volunteers who helped to deliver the bin-tagging program this season, helped to assemble WildSafe Ranger kits, and helped at community events. Thank you to the BC Wildlife Park for their ongoing support of the WildSafeBC program and for their generous donation of complimentary day passes during the BC Goes Wild Event. 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.