

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2023

Kimberley - Cranbrook

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Executive Summary

The purpose of the report is to present the activities of the WildSafeBC Kimberley – Cranbrook Program between April 12th, 2023 and November 30, 2023. The WildSafeBC Kimberley - Cranbrook Program is located within the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa Nation and includes Regional District of East Kootenay (RDEK) management zone C & E including the City of Cranbrook, Kimberley and the surrounding communities from Wycliffe, Wasa, Moyie to Wardner, (Figure 1).

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed education outreach activities with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community. Outreach activities performed in 2023 included the following:

- 5 WildSafe Ranger Program presentations and 95 youth reached.
- 21 presentations were given to community groups with over 445 participants.
- 170 people reached through door-to-door conversations and 849 door hangers/brochures delivered.
- 11 bin tagging outings and 61 bins tagged in Kimberley, 91% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey and then were not found on the curb again during the second survey.
- 37 aggressive deer reports from the public in Cranbrook between April and September.
- 7 display booths and 232 people reached.
- Facebook Page grew to 1.6K followers with 87 posts this season.
- 1 business started the initial steps to sign up for the WildSafeBC Business Pledge.
- EK Parks took steps towards participating in Bare Campsite Program in 2024.

Additional activities conducted include putting up wildlife signage in high conflict areas, collaborations with Conservation Officers and Discover Parks, the annual BC Goes Wild event, incorporating Ktunaxa information into WildSafeBC presentations by using the QR coding created in 2021, Bear Smart Community Program support by creating Bear Working Group in Kimberley, and supporting WildSight's Apple Capture gleaning program.

WildSafeBC is grateful for the consistent support of its sponsors including the Province of BC, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Regional District of East Kootenay, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation. Thank you to the community members for participating in the WildSafeBC Kimberley – Cranbrook Program throughout the 2023 season. Moving forward, WildSafeBC's initiatives and collaborations continue to help “keep wildlife wild and communities safe”.

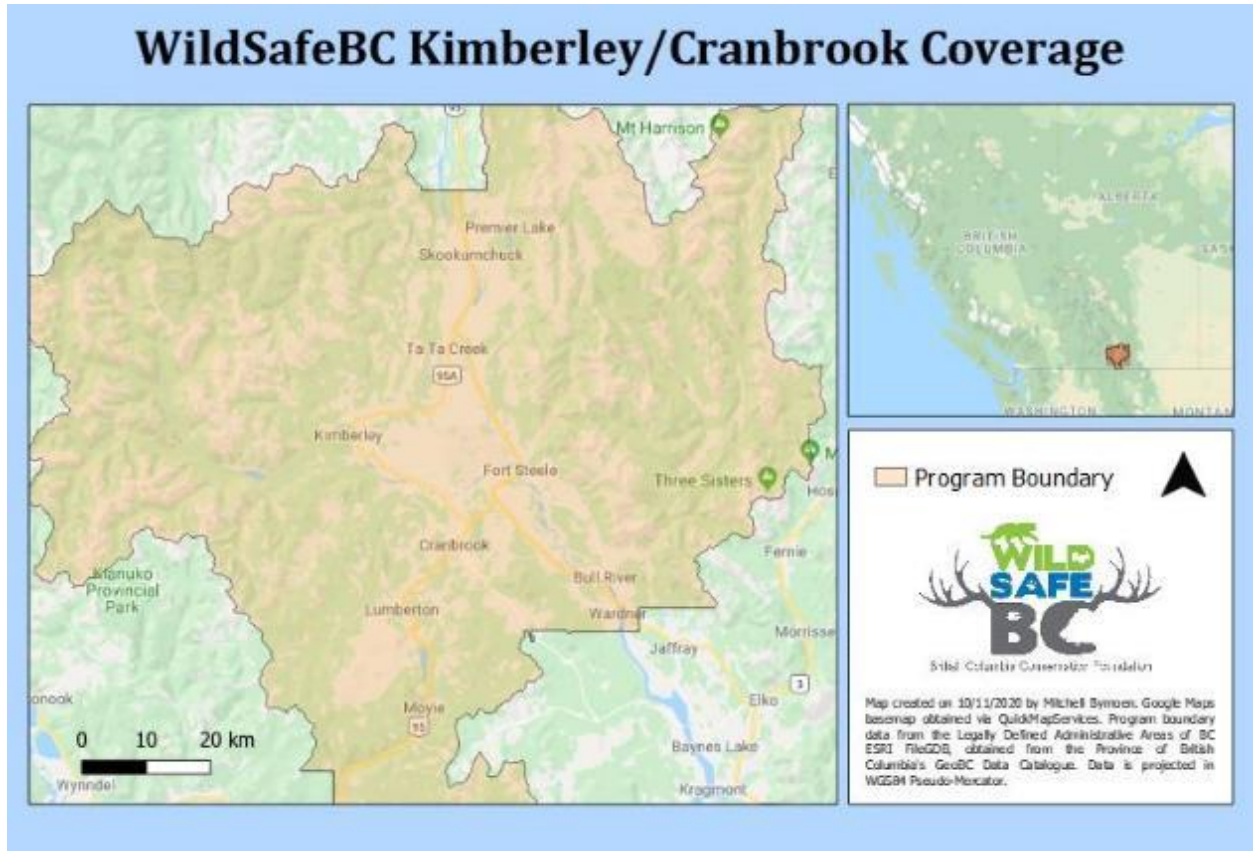


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Kimberley - Cranbrook program coverage area.

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Cover Photo: Collaboration with Discover Parks at Moyie Provincial Park - Bear Behaviour and Identification Presentation - July 22nd, 2023.

Highlights from the 2023 Season

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. The WRP continues to be a great success this season and the constant demand for presentations is always increasing. This season there were 5 WRP presentations, reaching 95 students (Table 1). Some of these activities included playing wildlife identification bingo, outdoor wildlife habitat games, and walking through the community forests looking for signs of wildlife activity (Figure 2).

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

Youth organization or school	Grade	Participants (#)
College of the Rockies	International Students	9
Momentum	Pre-K	13
Moyie Provincial Park - Discover Parks	All Ages 0-10	11
Moyie Provincial Park - Discover Parks	All Ages 0-10	19
Wasa Campground with Discover Parks	All Ages 0-10	43
Total		95



Figure 2. Students from Discover Parks Programming at Moyie Provincial Campground participating in the WildSafe Rangers Program

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC offered 21 wildlife safety presentations to groups and organizations with 445 participants (Table 2). Deer safety education was a big focus again this year. Most of the wildlife

safety presentations focused on deer and bears. Presentation topics included general wildlife safety, bear behaviour, aggressive deer safety, general backcountry safety, and bear spray demonstrations (Figure 3).

Table 2. Presentations provided throughout the 2023 season.

Organization or Location	Participants (#)	Type of Presentation
StrongStart Cranbrook	31	Know your animals
Marysville Ball Field	27	Bear Spray Demo
Beavers - Spring	16	Wildlife Presentation + Scavenger Hunt
Idlewild Park	19	Bear Spray Demo
International Students	9	Wildlife Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Idlewild Park	9	Bear Spray Demo
Marysville Ball Field	12	Bear Spray Demo
Bayer CropScience Inc.	16	Presentation + Bear Spray Demo
Moyie Provincial Park - Discover Parks	21	Presentation - Bears and Deer
Moyie Provincial Park - Discover Parks	27	Presentation - Bears and Deer
CBAL Golf Club	6	Bears and Games
Kimberley Camp - Lindsay Park	13	Bears and Games
Idlewild Park	28	Bear Spray Demo
Idlewild Park	12	Bear Spray Demo
Wasa Campground with Discover Parks	43	Presentation - Bears
Rotary Park Kimberley	25	Bear Spray Demo
Open Gate Garden	12	Bear Behaviour Presentation
Idlewild Park	24	Bear Spray Demo
International Students	66	Wildlife Presentation, Deer Safety Presentation and Bear Spray Demo
Momentum	13	Know your animals
Beavers - Fall	16	Wildlife Presentation + outdoor walk
Total Participants	445	



Figure 3. Bear Spray Demonstration participants in Cranbrook, May 2023.

Display Booths

Display booths are used to spread WildSafeBC’s educational messaging to large audiences within the community. The WCC attended several large events this year and found opportunities to set up booths at trailheads of Nature Parks, Provincial Parks, etc. Additionally, display booths were held at popular trailheads on crown land. The WCC participated in 7 public displays and reached a total of 232 people (Table 3) educating them about wildlife activity in the area, bear spray use and transport, best practices for staying safe in wildlife country, and answering questions. Taking part in these events contributed greatly to developing community recognition of the WildSafeBC Program.

Table 3. Display booths provided throughout the 2023 season.

Location	Attendees (#)	Date
Children’s Festival	41	13-May-23
Spirit of the Rockies	67	17-Jun-23
Father's Day Fishing Derby	22	18-Jun-23
Canada Day Market	39	01-Jul-2023
Wildsight's Harvest Party	25	16-Sep-2023
Trail Head – Isadore Canyon	17	23-Sep-2023
Kimberley Nature Park	21	30-Sep-2023
Total Participants	232	

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Through door-to-door education, a total of 170 people were reached during in-person conversations and 849 people were reached with door hangers. In Cranbrook, 14th Avenue South, Victoria Avenue South, King Street & the Gold Creek area were the neighborhoods were prioritized for this activity due to high level of wildlife activity. In Kimberley, Church Avenue area, Kimbrook Crescent area and Townsite were the neighborhoods that were prioritized for this activity due to high level of wildlife activity.

Bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of solid waste containers set curbside the day before collection. In Kimberley, the WCC went out over 3 weeks for a total of 11 different evenings. During those outings, 61 bins were tagged in total and 5 were received stickers more than once (Figure 4). The effectiveness of garbage tagging for changing behaviour is demonstrated by the 91% of the residents whose bins were tagged during the initial survey and then were not found on the curb again during the second survey.

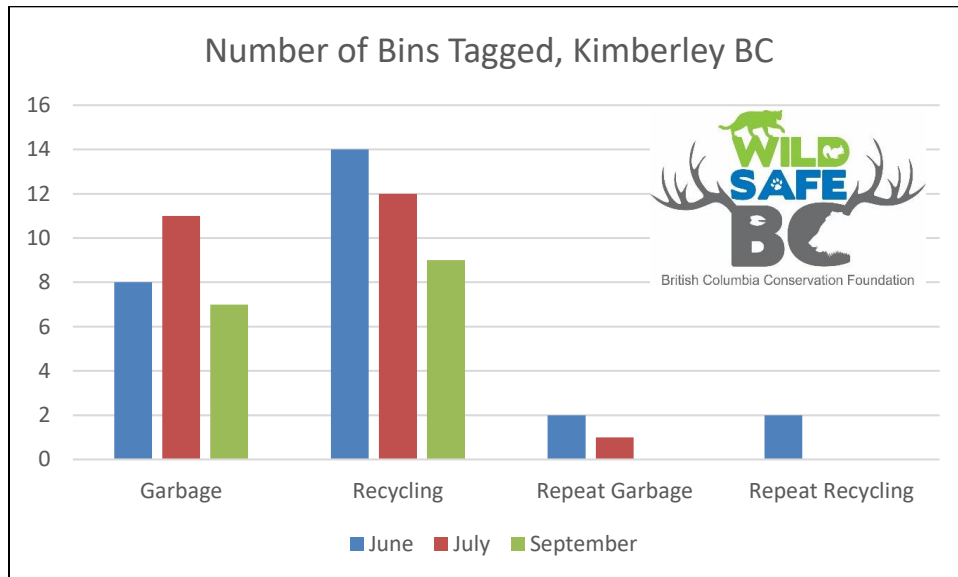


Figure 4. Number of garbage bins placed out early for collection before education activities and those tagged more than once in Kimberley.

No bin tagging was conducted in Cranbrook for 2023. However, deer remains a high priority for the City of Cranbrook; therefore, the WCC kept track of the aggressive deer reports throughout the 2023 season. There were 37 aggressive deer calls made by the public directly to the WCC. Calls received were categorized by garbage collection zones (Figure 5). Most reports are from zone 3 (14) and zone 4 (14) with most of the reports occurring in June (14) and July (13). Many calls from the public expressed the need for deer in area signs and education on how to prevent deer from jumping fences and resting in their yard. However, most of the concerns regarded deer defending their fawns and attacking dogs.

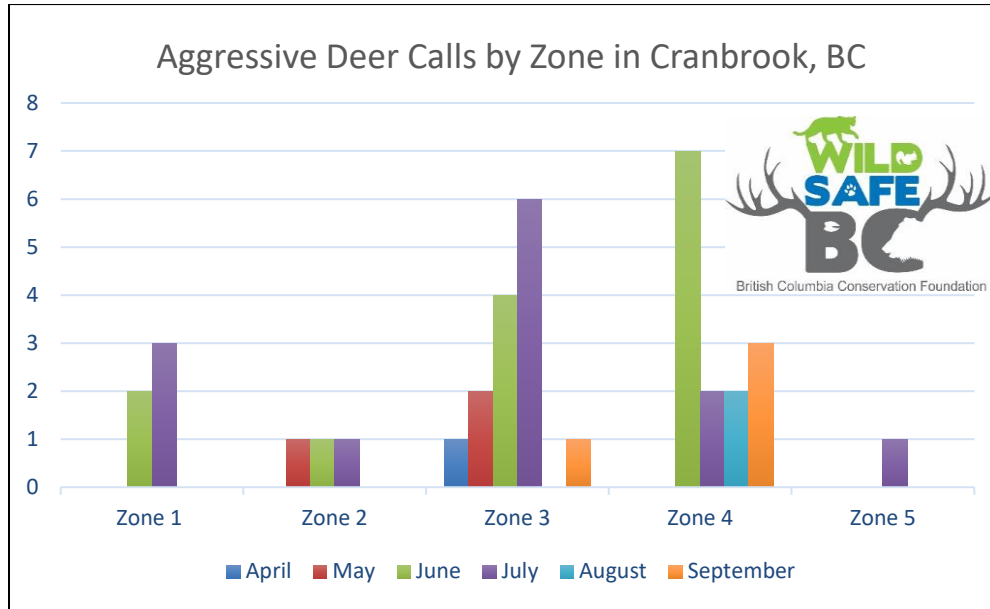


Figure 5. Aggressive Deer Calls received by WildSafeBC categorized by Zone in Cranbrook in 2023.

Social Media and Press

The use of social media and press releases continued this season in order to distribute WildSafeBC messaging and wildlife information. In 2023, the WildSafeBC Kimberley – Cranbrook’s Facebook page had 1.6K followers with over 87 posts created. The WCC connected with radio and newsprint media 11 times over the season to share WildSafeBC messaging. This included local radio stations such as The Drive, 102.9 Rewind Radio, and Summit 107. Newspapers articles were published in local newspapers such as The Kimberley Bulletin, E-Know, and the Cranbrook Townsman.

WildSafeBC would like to thank the media outlets for advertising important events such as BC Goes Wild, the 2023 photo contest, reminding community members of local bylaws, attractant management tips and reiterating the importance of calling the COS RAPP line. WildSafeBC would also like to thank partners and sponsors for sharing WildSafeBC’s messaging on their websites.

Wildlife in Area Signs

The WCC deployed wildlife in area signs in high conflict areas again this season. Areas with high levels of wildlife activity were identified by responding to calls from the public, viewing Facebook posts, and using WildSafeBC’s online Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). These areas included active trailheads, nature parks, the community forest, in town, golf courses, and in campgrounds (Figure 6). Black bear signs were deployed most often in Kimberley, whereas deer signs are most used in Cranbrook. A challenge with the use of wildlife in area signs is that they can go missing after being deployed.



Figure 6. Wildlife in Area signs in Kimberley’s Nurses Trail and at Cranbrook’s Dog Park.

Collaborations

The success of the WildSafeBC Program lies with our many community collaborations. As with previous years, wildlife clubs and organizations assisted in the promotion of WildSafeBC events, as well as shared information about WildSafeBC with the public. Collaborations with the British Columbia Conservation Officers Services (COS) continued this year and consisted of directing calls for aggressive deer, electric fencing referrals, and joint attendance at a WildSafeBC community presentation by the WCC and a local Conservation Officer (**Error! Reference source not found.**), which was well received!



Figure 7. WildSafeBC Coordinator Danica Lisk and Conservation Officer Jesse Risto Presenting together on Bear Safety at Wasa Lake Provincial Park.

The City of Kimberley started a Bear Working Group to begin to work towards Bear Smart Community Status. Three meetings have taken place this season with the focus on creating a Bear Hazard Assessment. The objective is to identify the key issues that influence existing or potential human-bear conflict in Kimberley, BC. While conducting the Bear Hazard Assessment,

risk areas for human-bear conflict have been identified as areas where bear habitat, corridors, and attractants overlap with human-use areas. Risk ratings were determined based on an analysis of the previous criteria (evidence of past bear activity, presence of attractants, and proximity to quality bear habitat) and discussions with the City of Kimberley, Kimberley Bear Working Group and other local experts in determining areas where there are human safety concerns and use by children. Risk area ratings (low, medium, high) represent the likelihood and severity of potential for a negative human-bear encounter.

Next season the Bear Hazard Assessment will be completed once a social science survey called the Community Bear Interaction Survey is completed. Community Bear Interaction Surveys with the general public and interviews with experts will be used, along with WARP and COS data, to provide a more robust picture of human-bear conflict in the community. Information will be collected through this survey about perceptions of bears, the number of bears in the community, the types of human-bear conflict that occurs in the community and on the respondents' property, and barriers and solutions for reducing bear attractants. The Community Bear Interaction Survey was developed by WildSafeBC in 2020 with consultation from social scientist Dr. Beatrice Frank and modified for use in the community.

WildSafe Business Pledge

The WildSafe Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses 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 Larix Hotel in Kimberley is leading the way this year with participation in the WildSafeBC Business Pledge, pledging to monitor their dumpster, adding a pad lock, training staff and distributing our bear brochures (Figure 8).



Figure 8. The Larix Hotel in Kimberley participating in WildSafe Business Pledge

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. This season, Discover Parks and EK Parks Ltd. expressed interest in participating in the program. However, they decided to wait until 2024 in order to better understand the initiative as there are new owners. The WCC did provide EK Parks Ltd. With brochures, signage and presentations to the public on several occasions.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

In 2023, WildSafeBC incorporated Ktunaxa Language into general wildlife presentations delivered within the school system as well as general wildlife presentations for the public for all ages. QR Codes were made up for words found within the messaging WildSafeBC delivers to bring Ktunaxa Presence into WildSafeBC's programming. Participants used their phone camera to read each QR Code and the word was pronounced in Ktunaxa Language for the participant. The St. Mary's Band also reached out to the Conservation Officers for black bear advice and the WCC assisted in providing signage and brochures.

Special Initiatives

BC Goes Wild is an annual 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 BC. Throughout the third weekend of September, the WCC attended and hosted many events to promote BC's wildlife, reaching a total of 67 people:

- The WCC attended Wildsight's 10th Annual Harvest Party on September 16th, 2023.
- The local fruit gleaning group, Apple Capture, collaborated with WildSafeBC again this year to provide a fruit pressing event.
- On the September 17th, 2023 there was a bear Spray Demonstration at Idlewild Park in Cranbrook, which was well attended.
- The WCC hosted a wildlife safety presentation and bear spray demonstration at the College of the Rockies on September 22nd, 2023, focusing on deer safety and featuring a wildlife prop guessing game event September 22nd.
- StrongStart at Steeples School joined in on BC Goes Wild Celebrations with a presentation from the WCC (Figure 9).



Figure 9. WildSafeBC BC Goes Wild Event at StrongStart, Cranbrook.

Challenges and Opportunities

Garbage and proper waste management is always a challenge in RDEK area C. Often it is a result of tourists, campers, new developments, or new residents who are unaware of the serious risk that garbage poses as an attractant for wildlife. To address the abundance of garbage, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2023:

- Communicate the importance of building a secure structure to store garbage outside of the house at the landlord's cost if bear conflict rises.
- Fines should be reviewed, and increases considered in the Recycling and Solid Waste Bylaw. This issue was discussed at the first 2 Bear Working Groups and supported by the Bylaw Enforcement Officer.

Additionally, the new organics program in Kimberley is seen as a challenge, as there are lots of people who are not educated in managing compost and have addressed concern about human-wildlife conflict along with the pickup schedule. To address the concerns for organics, the following initiatives should be addressed in 2023:

- Communicate the importance of organics education via an organics ambassador or provide extra funding to WildSafeBC to increase capacity for the WildSafeBC Coordinator to provide education.
- Options for securing attractants should be provided on the City website.

- Continuing to work with WildSafeBC regarding looking into funding to provide a cost share program for a means of assisting with securing attractants within City limits.

Lastly, deer are a challenge in both communities. Unmanaged fruit trees continue to be an attractant bringing bears and deer into the community. Despite several education efforts, some community members continue to feed animals directly and indirectly. In these cases, it has been helpful to collaborate with bylaw and COS who can provide a financial incentive. To address the abundance of unmanaged fruit in the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2023:

- Education campaign focusing on the hazards and solutions through social media and news articles.
- Continue to work with Wildlife Biologists and Conservation Officers on permanent signage for high conflict zones regarding aggressive deer and pets.
- Increased deer safety presentations.
- Continued tracking of Aggressive Deer (i.e. by Zone in Cranbrook) and then further analysis as to what is drawing in the deer to the area/causing the aggression (if not fawns).

Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC is grateful for the consistent support of its sponsors: the Province of BC, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Regional District of East Kootenay, the City of Cranbrook, the City of Kimberley, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation.

As always, the WCC would like to give a big thank you to the Conservation Officer Service and their staff, in particular Jim Melenka, Jesse Risto and Reiker Krenz for the great communication and participation in promoting WildSafeBC awareness. These partnerships are vital for the effectiveness and consistency of WildSafeBC's messaging and our goal to "keep wildlife wild and communities safe".

Another big thank you goes out to the operations, communications and planning staff of the City of Cranbrook, in particular Chris Zettel. As well as Nikolaas Morissette, Ryan Reynolds, Scott Sommerville, Pam Walsh, Maryse Leroux, Sean Levert, from the City of Kimberley have been proactive in collaborating with WildSafeBC to find lasting solutions to human-wildlife conflict.

Thank you to the community members, clubs, organizations, businesses, schools and other members of the public that participated in WildSafeBC's events this season. It is such an incredible opportunity to watch community members become more invested in keeping wildlife wild and their communities safe! Thank you for being proactive and taking responsibility in managing attractants in order to minimize the potential for wildlife conflict.