

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2023

Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, BC

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Executive Summary

This report contains a detailed outline of the WildSafe BC Nanaimo Program between June 12th and November 30th, 2023. The program area covers the City of Nanaimo and a few neighboring areas including Protection Island and Snuneymuxw First Nations (Figure 1). These communities reside on the traditional unceded territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation.

In recent years, the most reported animals to the British Columbia Conservation Officer Service (COS) were black bears, cougars, and black-tailed deer. The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed various outreach activities, with the purpose of education to prevent human-wildlife conflicts within the community. The following list summarizes key program activities over the course of the 2023 season:

- 6 WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) presentations reaching 120 youth.
- 5 Wildlife Awareness and Safety presentations given with a total of 147 participants.
- 58 people were reached during door-to-door in-person conversations and 34 households reached with door hangers.
- 11 information and display booths at predominant farmers markets connecting with 779 community members.
- 7 display booths held at various community events reaching 817 people.
- 10 information booths at Trails and Parks across the City of Nanaimo reaching more than 300 community members.
- 2 Facebooks posts were shared and 20 new followers joined the community Facebook page.
- Over 2300 face-to-face conversations with the public in 2023.

Challenges faced in the 2023 season included a new geographic and demographic urban setup for the WCC, as well as a new program setup. This resulted in time being invested in researching, creating, and navigating different processes to deliver programming or effectively reach concerned members of the public.

As a new program, there were multiple opportunities to collaborate this season. The WCC collaborated with the COS, Vancouver Island University, and Vancouver Island Regional Library. There is a huge opportunity in the City of Nanaimo with regards to collaboration and continuing work to reduce human-wildlife conflicts through education, collaboration, and developing community solutions.

WildSafeBC would like to thank its generous sponsors at the City of Nanaimo, the Province of British Columbia, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation for making the program possible as well as the local staff, organizations, and community residents for their support.

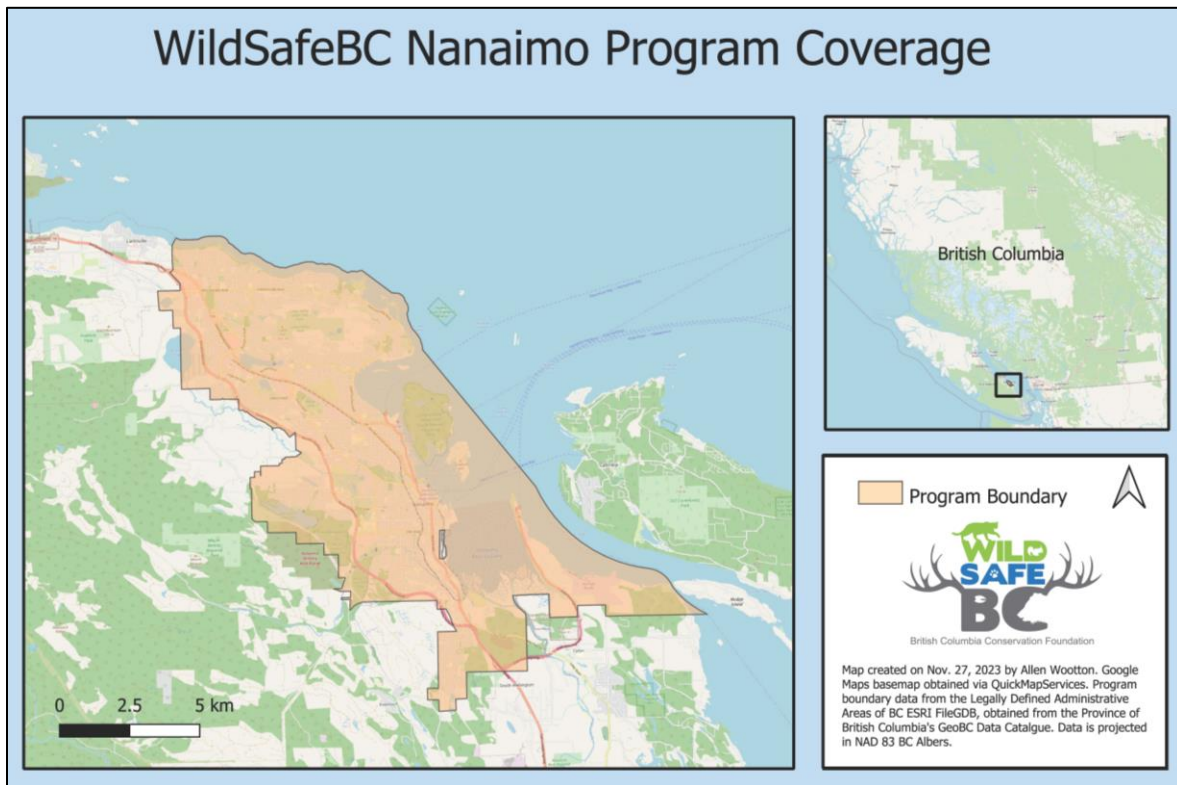


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Nanaimo program coverage area.

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Cover Photo: Wildlife Awareness and Safety Presentation done by the WCC in the community of Protection Island, Nanaimo. Photo Credit: Pam Murray, Protection Island Community Member

Highlights from the 2023 Season

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. Ten schools and multiple teachers were contacted for opportunity to connect with their school for the WRP, as well as Wildlife Awareness and Safety Presentation. Out of those contacted, two schools participated in the WRP reaching 120 students from various grades through 5 presentations. Each student became WildSafe Rangers and received WRP kits (Table 1).

Table 1. Schools that received the WildSafe Ranger Program.

School	Grade	Students
Chase River Elementary School	1,2 and 4/5	65
Mountain View Elementary School	5 and 6	55
Total Participants		120

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave five presentations to various community groups and connected with a total of 164 participants (Table 2). Each presentation delivered by the WCC focused on wildlife safety and awareness education.

Table 2. Community Groups that received the Wildlife Awareness & Safety Presentation.

Community Groups	Date of Presentation	Participants (#)
Protection Island, Nanaimo	Sept 23, 2023	46
Girls Guide Group Presentation	Oct 2, 2023	32
WSBC Talk with Rockwell School @ Morrell Nature Sanctuary	Oct 3, 2023	30
Scouts Canada @ Cedar Elementary School	Nov 1, 2023	39
1st Harewood Sparks Group	Nov 9, 2023	17
Total participants		164

Display Booths

Community Events

The WCC setup information booth at different events and locations across the city of Nanaimo, including Thursday’s Night Market, FROSH Event at Vancouver Island University, and the Vancouver Island Regional Library. During these events, the coordinator connected with more than 800 community members and shared the key messaging of WildSafeBC (Table 3). As a new program this year, display booths were an effective way to promote the WildSafeBC Nanaimo program and share our educational messaging.

Table 2. Community Events Display Booths.

Community Events	Date	Participants (#)
Thursday Night Market	Aug 3, 2023	104
Thursday Night Market	Aug 10, 2023	90
Thursday Night Market	Aug 17, 2023	89
Thursday Night Market	Aug 24, 2023	67
Vancouver Island University FROSH Event	Sept 6, 2023	350
Vancouver Island Regional Library Event @ Harbour-front	Sept 9, 2023	45
RONA Cinnabar Valley	Sept 30, 2023	24
Vancouver Island Regional Library Event @ Harbour-front	Oct 28, 2023	48
Total		817

Farmer’s Market

The City of Nanaimo has predominantly two main farmer’s markets, the Island Roots and Cedar Farmer’s Market. The WCC attended and covered both farmers markets on multiple occasions, leading to direct interactions with 779 community members (Table 4).

Table 3. Farmer’s Market attendance and community interactions.

Farmer’s Market	Date of Event/Booth	Public Interactions (#)
Island Roots	July 26, 2023	31
	Aug 2, 2023	32
	Aug 16, 2023	34
	Aug 29, 2023	57
	Sept 20, 2023	39
	Oct 18, 2023	42
Cedar Farmer’s Market	Aug 6, 2023	143
	Aug 20, 2023	127
	Sept 17, 2023	102
	Oct 1, 2023	94

	Oct 22, 2023	78
Total		779

Trailheads and Parks Booths

The City of Nanaimo has various trails across the geographical area and many people use these trails for recreation. To reach recreational users of the area and diversify WildSafeBC’s audience, the WCC setup information booths at many trail heads to promote wildlife safety. This effort resulted in great success and the WCC was able to connect with more than 300 community members (Table 4).

Table 4. Display Booths help at Trailheads and Parks.

Trailhead or Park	Date of Event/Booth	No of People
Cable Bay Trailhead	July 18, 2023	17
Parkway Trailhead	Aug 11, 2023	28
Westwood Lake Trailhead	Aug 21, 2023	35
Hemer Provincial Park – Parking Lot	Aug 23, 2023	28
Briggs Park and Jack Point - Trailhead	Aug 28, 2023	35
Collier Dam Park – Parking / Trailhead	Sept 15, 2023	42
Petroglyph Provincial Park Trailhead	Sept 30, 2023	22
Piper’s Lagoon Park Trailhead	Oct 6, 2023	32
Linley Valley Cottle Lake Trailhead	Oct 11, 2023	39
ButterTubs Marsh Park Trailhead	Oct 16, 2023	28
Total		306

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Through door-to-door education, a total of 58 people were reached during in-person conversations and 34 households were reached with door hangers. Areas were prioritized for this activity due to high levels of wildlife activity reported by the public or the COS, including Chase River/Cinnabar Valley, Cable Bay/ Dodds Narrows Area, and Parkway Trail Area neighborhoods. The WCC discussed wildlife awareness and safety with residents and provided community solutions.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection. As it was the first and initial year of the WildSafeBC Nanaimo program, bin tagging was not performed. The WCC focused efforts on information sharing with community members through engagement activities.

Social Media and Press

As WildSafeBC Nanaimo community Facebook page is new, there were not many posts that were made this season. The WCC created 2 posts and the page grew to 20 followers. The WCC focused on trying to generate offline reach and building connections throughout the community. It is recommended that the WCC dedicate more effort and time to building WildSafeBC’s online presence and reach in the community.

With regards to the press, the WCC performed a phone interview in October 2023 with CBC to discuss wildlife safety with regards to multiple cougar and bear sightings and reports around Mount Benson.

Wildlife in Area Signs

“Wildlife in Area” signs were placed in wildlife hotspots around the key hotspots and trails throughout the season. In residential areas, specific residential “Bear in Area” signs were posted to encourage residents to take extra care when it comes to securing their garbage and compost before collection day.

In addition to signage, the WCC strategically placed “BC is a Wildlife Country” poster (Figure 2) and many wildlife signs around key hotspots such as Cable Bay Trail, Hemer Provincial Park, Chase River Elementary School Area, Mountain View Elementary School Area, Vancouver Island Regional Library, Vancouver Island University, Downtown Nanaimo, Petroglyph Mobile Home Park, Westwood Lake trail, Linley Valley Trailhead, Morrel Nature Sanctuary, and other key locations for people to be aware of the wildlife in the area.



Figure 2. WildSafeBC's "BC is Wildlife Country" poster.

Collaborations

This season, the WCC started to build relationships and collaborate with many stakeholders. Many such attempts yield good dividends, such as the collaboration with Vancouver Island University Student Union to attend its event FROSH 2023 event. The WCC also collaborated with local COS to determine priority areas for door-to-door educational efforts and other programming needs. Furthermore, the WCC collaborated with other significant community stakeholders, such as Vancouver Island Regional Library, Morrell Nature Sanctuary, and others to spread and share the messaging of WildSafeBC.

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. A total of 5 businesses were approached about the program, but no businesses signed on in 2023.

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. The WCC attempted to connect with 3 private campsites about the program and shared information booklets with them to reduce human-wildlife conflicts. This program should be prioritized in future seasons due to the volume of recreational camping and tourism on Vancouver Island.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The WCC made efforts to engage with the Snuneymuxw First Nations regarding spreading awareness and education about human-wildlife conflict and Wildsafe BC messaging. These efforts should be continued in future seasons. Further, the WCC completed an Indigenous Corporate Training course as a part of learning and development. This training provided important lessons and understanding of Truth and Reconciliation efforts and working with First Nations.

Challenges and Opportunities

Challenges

As 2023 was the introductory season for WildSafe BC in the City of Nanaimo, the WCC faced unique challenges.

First, the WCC spent time and effort navigating the area to gain an understanding of a new geographical and demographic urban setup. Further, the WCC had to establish channels to reach the appropriate people to set up presentations, events, and other outreach activities.

Secondly, there was a considerable area to cover as city of Nanaimo is a large city with a population of more than 95,000 people. The WCC did not reach a large percentage of the population due to funding limitations with regards to the number of hours and mileage available.

Lastly, the lack of public knowledge of the WildSafeBC program messaging, as well as City bylaws regarding attractant management, was also noticed as a challenge by the WCC.

To conclude, the WCC used this first season to establish a foundation for WildSafeBC in the area through various public engagement strategies, such as booths at Farmer's Markets or trailheads, WRP, Wildlife Awareness and Safety Presentations, as well as door-to-door canvassing.

Opportunities

During this season of 2023, the WCC was able to reach more than 2300 community members to share education regarding human-wildlife conflicts and discuss community solutions towards reducing those conflicts. This new program areas offers the opportunity for the WildSafeBC program and the City of Nanaimo to implement community solutions. A considerable reduction in human-wildlife conflicts can be achieved through continued and sustained effort by the WCC. Recommended actions for the 2024 program are as follows:

- Continue efforts to increase the overall reach of the program and bring awareness to WildSafeBC and its' messaging. More than 95% of the population in the program area need to be connected and educated about the program and WildSafeBC messaging.
- Increase presence on Social Media to reach a larger audience remotely.
- Continue to deliver WRP and reach out to more schools that did not participate this season.
- Continue to offer Wildlife Awareness & Safety presentations to diverse audiences, including schools and community groups.
- Provide education through bin tagging and door-to-door efforts with a focus on educating residents to store their bins in secured shed or a solid structure between collection days.
- Conduct Bear Spray Demonstrations for various community members.
- Increase efforts for uptake of the Bare Campsite Program. A lot of human-wildlife conflicts can be avoided if all the regional and private campsites could be brought under the ambit of the program.
- Encourage businesses in the area to sign on to the WildSafeBC Business Pledge Program.
- Continue efforts to engage with the Snuneymuxw First Nations regarding sharing resources to bring awareness and education regarding human-wildlife conflict.

In conclusion, the WildSafeBC Nanaimo Program offers a significant opportunity for the city of Nanaimo to adopt the messaging of WildSafeBC and work towards reducing human-wildlife conflicts.

Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC would like to thank its generous sponsors, the Province of British Columbia, the City of Nanaimo, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation for making the program possible. The WCC would also like to thank the local COS, as well as the local staff, organizations, and community members for their support. Lastly the WCC would like to thank Vancouver Island University for participation in their FROSH Event.

Overall, the response and willingness of the community to reduce human-wildlife conflicts has been phenomenal. There were many instances when community members were appreciative of the City of Nanaimo's support for WildsafeBC in making their neighborhood and community safe. The WCC appreciates the trust and support provided by the City of Nanaimo Officials, the COS Team and many other significant collaborators and partners.