

# WildSafeBC Annual Report 2023

## Town of Princeton

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WildSafeBC Princeton Community Coordinator



## Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) for the WildSafeBC Princeton program between April 10<sup>th</sup> and November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2023. The program covers the Town of Princeton and the RDOS Area H (Figure 1) and is managed by the British Columbia Conservation Foundation (BCCF). WildSafeBC respectfully acknowledges that activities conducted in the program area took place on the historic territories of the Upper Similkameen Indian Band.

During 2023, the WCC, Carolyn Blank, attended many community events with educational booths, presented to youth, hosted educational presentations and workshops for the community, went door to door for education and bin tagging, created content for the WildSafeBC Princeton Facebook page, and collaborated with the Town of Princeton on public education. At every opportunity, information was provided about how to live, work, play and grow safely in wildlife country with a focus on wildlife behavior and how people can improve their safety by managing unnatural wildlife attractants.

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

- 10 WildSafe Ranger Program presentations reached 352 families.
- 6 Bear Spray Workshops included 59 participants.
- 1 Wildlife Safety and Attractant Management Presentation with 10 participants.
- 280 homes were informed through door-to-door education.
- 22 garbage tagging evenings provided education and 187 tagged bins.
- 23 educational booths provided an opportunity to speak with 1320 people.
- 118 WildSafeBC Princeton Facebook posts grew followers from 465 to 515.
- One business signed the WildSafeBC Business Pledge and three more businesses are working towards eligibility.
- One campground continued with the Bare Campsite Program in 2023.

It was a typical year of conflict reports to the British Columbia Conservation Officer Service (COS) with 99 incidents and 67 of those being for injured, distressed, orphaned or dead wildlife. In general, the residents of Princeton are unconcerned with bears until property is destroyed, and are more concerned with rats, cougars and injured or aggressive deer.

It is wonderful to work in an area where so many people care about the wildlife and want to manage their behaviors to be able to live safely in wildlife country. Most conversations have a positive outcome of people learning about how unnatural foods change wildlife behavior and subsequently changing their own behavior to better manage potential wildlife attractants. Education, while very effective for many, is just the first piece. Wildlife-resistant infrastructure is needed to make it possible for people to manage their attractants and enforcement is needed for the small number of people who refuse to make the effort.

The WCC is appreciative of the help the Town of Princeton, Bylaw, COS, BCCF, Province of BC and community groups provide that make this program possible. Thank you for helping to keep wildlife wild and the community safe.

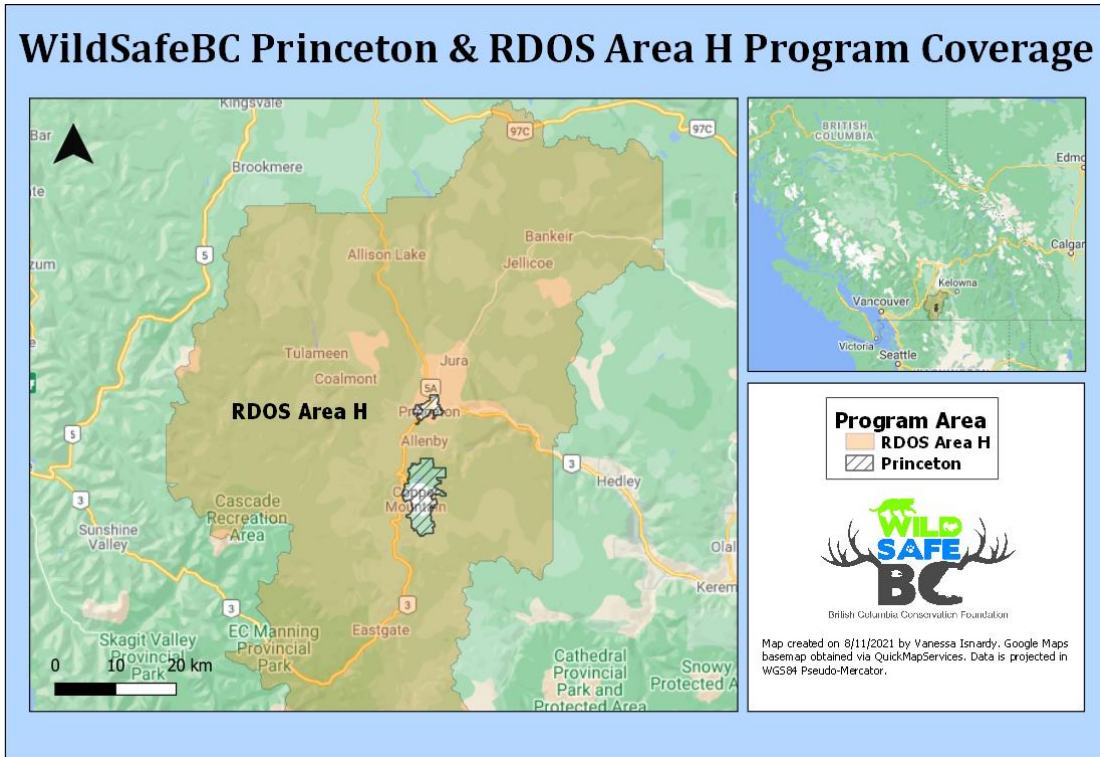


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Town of Princeton Program and Area H coverage.

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**Cover Photo:** The WCC presenting to students at Vermilion Forks Elementary, 2023.

## Highlights from the 2023 Season

### Wildlife Activity

The local COS provided wildlife reporting data directly to the WCC that showed 99 recorded events between January 1 and November 15, 2023. Deer and bears continue to be the most reported wildlife in the Town of Princeton with 58 and 31 reports respectively (Figure 2). The COS received 10 reports for other wildlife, including Cougar, Coyote, Moose, Raptor, and Elk. There were no COS reports of Bobcat, Mountain Goat or Rattle Snake however they were regularly reported to the WCC as being seen out on the Old Hedly Road.

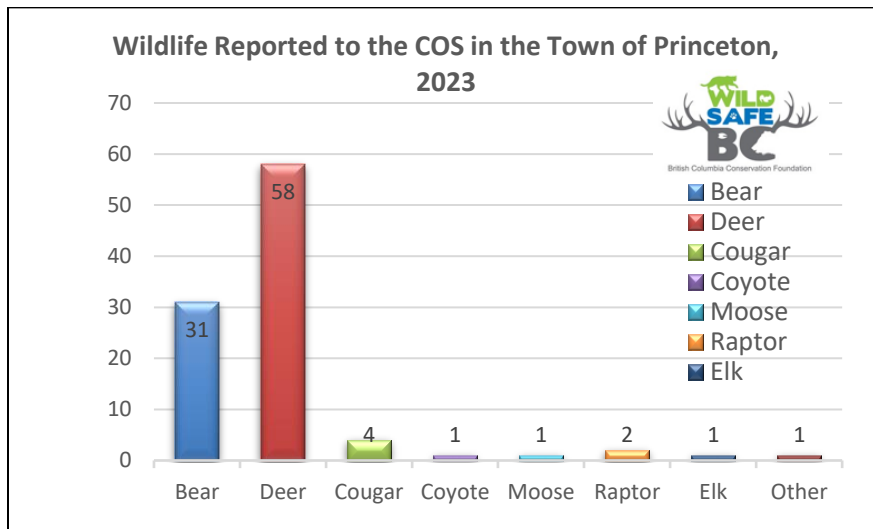


Figure 2. Reports regarding wildlife to COS in the Town of Princeton, 2023.

Consistent with prior years, Injured or Distressed wildlife were the most reported to the COS in 2023 with 48 requests for help for deer, bear, moose, and elk (Figure 3). Orphaned deer and bear were reported eight times. There were anecdotal reports to the WCC this summer about a dog being killed by a deer, however the only reported incidents to the COS were three reports of chickens preyed upon by a black bear in May. Similarly, multiple occasions of deer aggression towards dogs was mentioned to the WCC, however only four aggressive incidents were reported to COS with two in January, one in July, and one in October. Two reports of Black Bear aggression were reported in the autumn for a total of six occasions where people were at risk. There were no reports of damage to property this year. Cougars were spotted within Town limits four times with sightings in October causing much concern as they were on the hill behind John Allison Elementary. All eight food conditioned reports involved black bears in the autumn. The eight dead wildlife were deer, bear and raptor. Nine combined sightings of deer, bear, cougar and coyote round out the reports to COS.

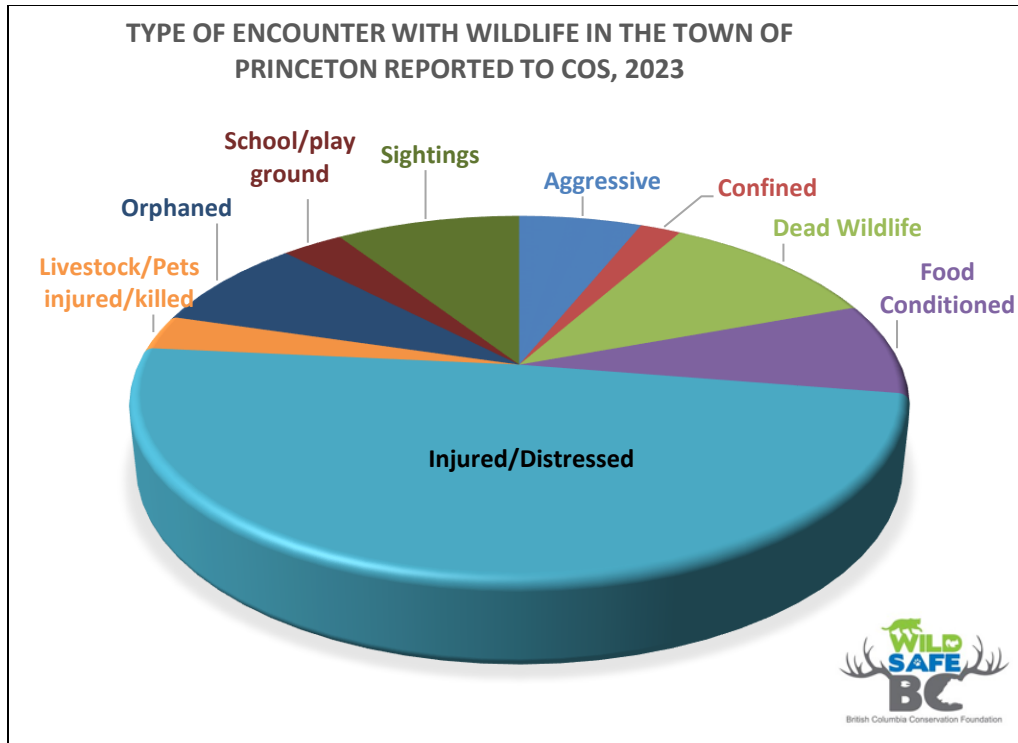


Figure 3. Type of encounter with wildlife reported to COS.

In the spring, bear(s) had become attracted to chicken coops in the Airport Rd. area and deer were protective of their fawns with frequent interactions in the bushy area near the off-leash dog park. All year, rats and coyotes showed up in large numbers in areas with unmanaged bird feeders and some deer that continue to see dogs as a threat charged people while they were out for a walk or putting their dogs outside. In the fall, bears made themselves known by tearing into multiple garbage cans and outdoor freezers and deer congregated in areas with fallen fruit and dumped pumpkins (Figure 4 and Figure 5). While visiting different neighborhoods it became apparent that a bear will ignore fruit on the ground when garbage is available.



Figure 4. Outdoor freezer destroyed by black bear.



Figure 5. Garbage can that is not bear or wildlife resistant.

## WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) shapes the future of our community by teaching youth wildlife knowledge and awareness (Figure 6). It builds an understanding about what attracts wildlife close to our homes and how to walk safely to the bus in wildlife country. The WCC delivered 10 WRP presentations this year to 352 people (Table 1). Teachers new to the community exclaimed they had learned helpful info. The WCC found that youth who had attended a ranger presentation before demonstrated greater knowledge about living safely in wildlife country. Also, a whole new demographic of young families were reached with a Teddy Bear Picnic Event. One example of stewardship resulting from WRP is a local grandma being impressed by her grandson who attended a WRP presentation in 2022 and now reminds the neighbours to pick up their apples.



Figure 6. WildSafe Ranger Program pictures in Princeton, 2023.

Table 1. WildSafe Ranger presentations provided by the WildSafeBC Princeton program in 2023.

Event	Presentations (#)	Grade/Age	Participants (#)
<b>Tour of Princeton</b>	1	1,2,3	60
<b>Vermilion Forks Elem.(spring)</b>	1	4	23
<b>Summer Park Play</b>	1	Age: 6 - 12	25
<b>Vermilion Forks Elem. (fall)</b>	6	Grade: 4 - 7	164
<b>Teddy Bear Picnic</b>	1	All Ages	80
<b>Totals</b>	<b>10</b>		<b>352</b>

## Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC delivered seven Wildlife Safety and Bear Spray Workshops to community groups and to the public, in indoor and outdoor settings to 69 participants (Table 2; Figure 7). The workshops covered wildlife behavior in wild and urban settings, managing wildlife attractants, factors that contribute to a wildlife attack and how to avoid one, what to do in a variety of wildlife encounters, and when and when not to use bear spray. Bear spray workshops additionally covered bear spray laws, safe transportation, first aid, and wildlife encounter training with inert bear spray. Participants were very appreciative of the workshops as they now felt prepared for a wildlife encounter and more knowledgeable about how to avoid one. Every presentation included a component about how to reduce human-wildlife conflict by managing unnatural food sources



provided by people. Community members who previously avoided walking out around Princeton for fear of the urban deer reported that they are out walking again following the workshop.

**Table 2. Community presentations delivered by the WildSafeBC Princeton Community Coordinator in 2023.**

Organization or Location	Topic	Participants (#)	Date
<b>Princeton Ground Search and Rescue</b>	Bear Spray Workshop	14	June 1, 2023
<b>Interior Health Authority</b>	Wildlife Safety	10	Jun. 29, 2023
<b>Copper Mountain Mine</b>	Bear Spray Workshop	8	July 12, 2023
<b>Copper Mountain Mine</b>	Bear Spray Workshop	9	July 26, 2023
<b>Vermilion Forks Field Naturalists</b>	Bear Spray Workshop	21	Sept.12, 2023
<b>Town of Princeton</b>	Bear Spray Workshop	4	Sept.16, 2023
<b>Town of Princeton</b>	Bear Spray Workshop	3	Sept.23, 2023
<b>Total</b>		<b>69</b>	



**Figure 7. WildSafeBC Princeton bear spray workshops and community presentations delivered in 2023.**

## Display Booths

The WCC hosted 23 outdoor educational booths this season and reached 1320 people (Table 3; Figure 8). The WCC recorded the number of conversations held with attendees. Conversations at the booth helped educate the public to manage their garbage, apple trees, and outdoor freezers appropriately in wildlife country and understand the connection between rats and birdfeeders. Many members of the community also approached the WCC while she was off work and mentioned how much their children and grandchildren had liked the WildSafeBC booth and now talked about wildlife all the time. The WCC built valuable connections with owners of recreational rental cabins in the area, local community groups, and residents experiencing human-wildlife conflict.

**Table 3. WildSafeBC display booths held at various locations in Princeton and Area H, 2023.**

Location	Date	Participants (#)
<b>Veterans Square</b>	June 5, 2023	30
<b>Princeton Rodeo</b>	June 10, 2023	100
<b>Princeton Rodeo</b>	June 11, 2023	50
<b>Canada Day</b>	July 1, 2023	100
<b>BC Parks Day</b>	July 15, 2023	70



Community Market	July 29, 2023	40
Tulameen Family Days	August 5, 2023	100
Community Market	August 12, 2023	40
Copper Valley Music Fest	August 19, 2023	100
Copper Valley Music Fest	August 20, 2023	35
Community Market	August 26, 2023	40
Show n Shine Car Event	September 2, 2023	100
Community Market	September 9, 2023	30
Teddy Bear Picnic	September 14, 2023	80
Market & Bear Spray Workshop	September 16, 2023	30
POP UP Market	September 21, 2023	40
Market & Bear Spray Workshop	September 23, 2023	45
POP UP Market	September 28, 2023	25
Community Market	September 30, 2023	25
Posse Opening Game Tailgate Party	September 30, 2023	75
Haunted Market	October 14, 2023	60
Whistling Kettle Disc Golf Tournament	October 21, 2023	55
Halloween Family Fun Night	October 28, 2023	50
<b>Total Reach</b>		<b>1320</b>



Figure 8. WildSafeBC Princeton education and outreach booths at different community events in 2023.

## Garbage Bin Tagging

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection (Figure 9). During 22 outings, a total of 187 bins were tagged in the Town of Princeton (Figure 10). Bin tagging data shown corresponds with the different collection zones in Princeton (Figure 11). In addition to the numbers of bins tagged, the WCC engaged in impactful conversations with residents who had questions about bin tagging and these residents were observed taking their back inside and other new garbage management behaviors. Many of these conversations were with newcomers to the community, who were thankful to learn about bear activity in the area and how to reduce their risk of conflict by securing unnatural food sources such as garbage. They were also informed that keeping garbage close to the side of their house, behind a fence or up on their porch will not deter a bear. These conversations were effective, as most people did not want to be identified as attracting a bear to the area or having a follow up visit by law enforcement. The WCC did notice that a small number of residents have learned the limitations of the bin tagging program and continue to place their garbage in the outdoor bin but keep it on private property at night rather than the curb. Improper storage of waste bins in-between collection days remains a challenge.



Figure 9. Garbage Bin Tagging in Town of Princeton.

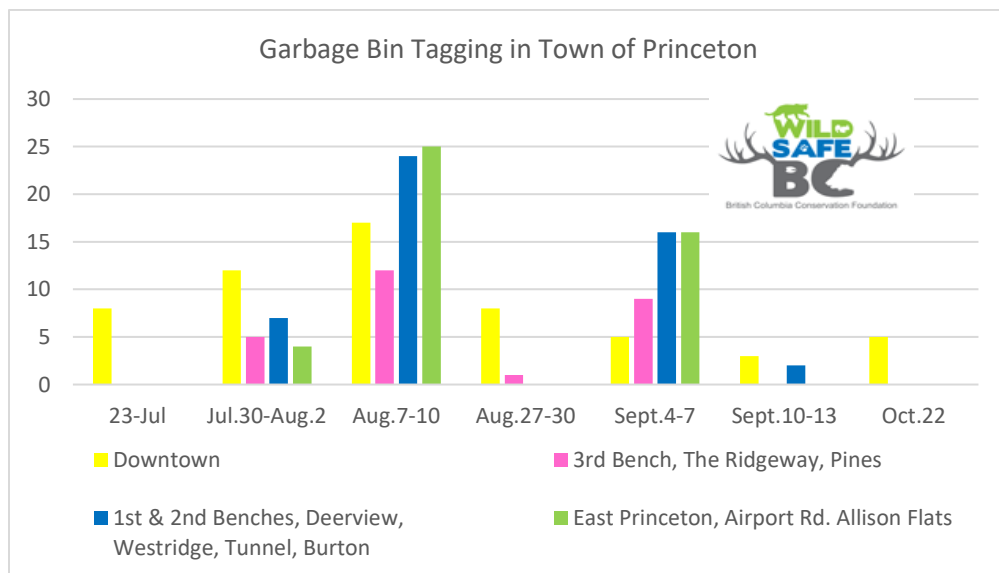


Figure 10. The number of bins tagged (n=187) over 22 outings in different collection zones in Princeton, 2023.

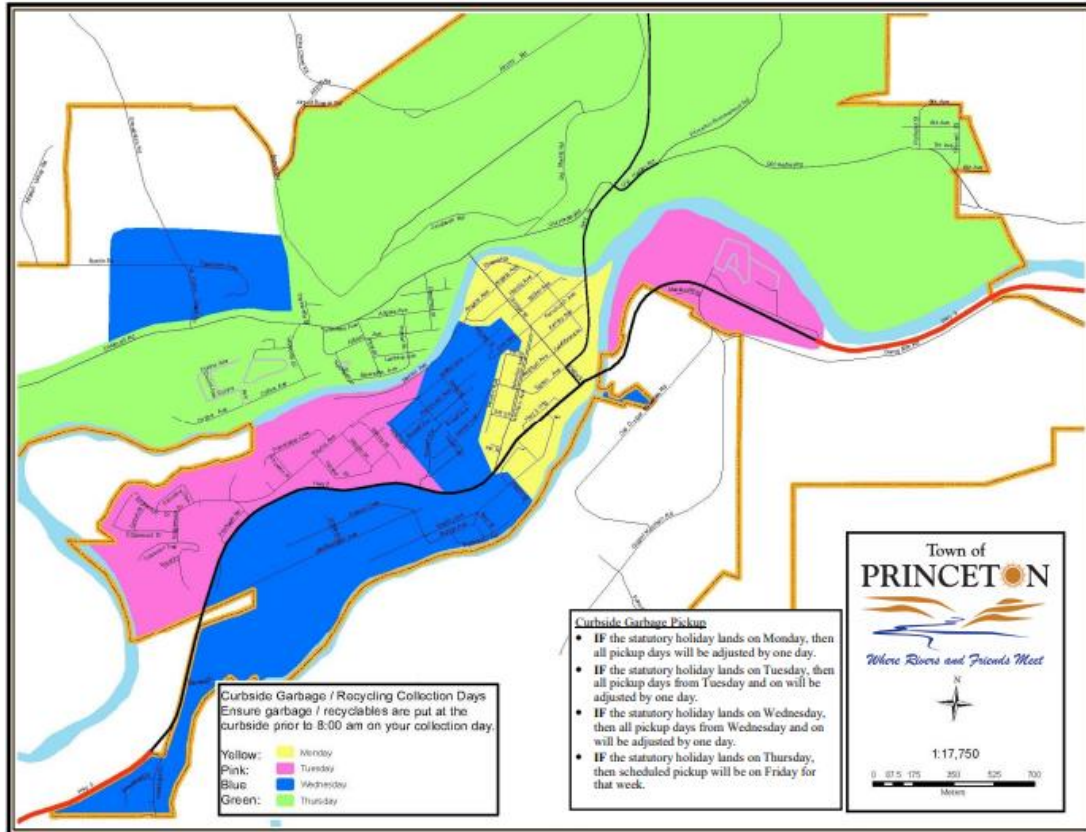


Figure 11. Princeton municipal solid waste collection zones and collection days WildSafeBC Princeton followed for bin tagging.

## Door to Door Education

Door-to-door education provides residents with wildlife activity updates, wildlife safety tips, and solutions to reduce human-wildlife conflict by managing attractants. Wildlife safety tips included looking outside and observing for wildlife before going outside or letting their dog out. Attractant management tips included storing garbage indoors, feeding and storing pet food indoors, managing bird feeders, picking fruit and cleaning the grease trap on their BBQ. The WCC had conversations with 113 people and hung 167 informative door hangers for people who were not available. The locations of door-to-door canvassing efforts were determined based on reports from the public and as recommendations from the COS. Door-to-door education reached every home in the area, including those unwilling to take the initiative to manage their wildlife attractants and would benefit from a follow up plan developed with bylaw and COS.

## Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Princeton Facebook page came out of hibernation in April 2023 with 465 followers and has grown by 10% to 515 followers during the 2023 season. The WCC created 118 new posts and the posts that generated the most interest pertained to education about wildlife in BC, wildlife safety, photos shared from WCC program activities, and wildlife activity in the area. Overall, the WildSafeBC Princeton Facebook page saw an increase in public engagement with



on deer behavior during rut reaching 2,563 people with 11 shares from the public and secondary engagement on the pages it was shared to.

By monitoring local community Facebook pages, the WCC gathered valuable information about wildlife sightings and conflicts that occurred in the region that were not reported to the COS. The WCC also collaborated with Town of Princeton staff to create posts regarding changes in the curbside garbage pickup schedule.

The WCC also submitted one print article about safety during fawning season to The Similkameen Spotlight.

## Wildlife in Area Signs

Bright yellow “Deer in Area” and “Bear in Area” signs were placed around the community following reported wildlife activity to remind people to be aware of their surroundings, be prepared to encounter wildlife and keep dogs on leash (Figure 12). The signs are very popular and often moved to new locations in front of peoples’ homes by members of the community. Signage to increase wildlife awareness and knowledge at the new Whistling Kettle Disc Golf is being developed with WildSafeBC, as the course adjoins protected wildlife habitats of Swan Lake Bird Sanctuary and Princeton Grasslands Maple Cross Meadow (Figure 13).



Figure 12. Wildlife in Area sign at KVR near Dog Off Leash Park.



Figure 13. Area to install custom wildlife in areas signs for Whistling Kettle Disc Golf that adjoins protected wildlife habitats.



## Collaborations

WildSafeBC received support from many community organizations that assisted the WCC in spreading information about human-wildlife conflict this season. These fabulous community groups included: Princeton Ground Search and Rescue, Vermilion Forks Field Naturalists, Princeton Recreation, Princeton and District Community Market, Upper Similkameen Indian Band, Princeton and District Chamber of Commerce, Vermilion Forks Elementary, Martins Lake Campground, Martins Lake MHP, Halloween Family Fun Night, and Whistling Kettle Disc Golf.

The WCC collaborated with residents that were interested in removing fruit trees on their property because they were attracting wildlife and put them in contact with FireSmart Princeton.

The WCC responded to requests made directly from the COS to educate residents about reported deer and bear activity. The WCC visited locations indicated by the COS and chatted with multiple residents to provide positive, actionable attraction management information and alerted residents with no knowledge of wildlife activity in the area to steps they can take to increase their safety.

## WildSafeBC Business Pledge

The WildSafeBC Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses to become good examples of how to safely co-exist with wildlife in the community. To take the pledge, a business is required to follow best practices in solid waste management, provide adequate training to staff and support WildSafeBC 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. Copper Mountain Mine/Hudbay Minerals participated in the Business Pledge Program in 2023 (Figure 14). Many other businesses were interested in participating, but due to capacity constraints the WCC focused her time and energy on businesses in the Downtown Core that were not in compliance with managing their wildlife attractants. Many businesses the WCC spoke with showed great improvements, such as training staff to close and lock garbage bins and replacing wooden bins with stronger metal ones (Figure 15).



Figure 14. Copper Mountain Mine/Hudbay Minerals staff training.



Figure 15. Business that upgraded their infrastructure to better manage their garbage.

## 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. Martin Lake Recreation Site continued with the program in 2023 (Figure 16).

Figure 16. Park Operator at Martin Lake Recreation Site posing with a new WildSafeBC poster.

## Indigenous Engagement & Awareness

The WCC collaborated with the Upper Similkameen Indian Band to provide wildlife props and WildSafeBC Educational Brochures for their kids' programs and community dinner for "Wildlife Week" (Figure 17). WildSafeBC would like to acknowledge the bear-resistant infrastructure being installed in the community.





Figure 17. WildSafeBC Facebook post on National Day for Truth and Reconciliation

The WCC supported Area H with a popular educational booth in Tulameen, Door to Door Education and Garbage Tagging in Martin Lake Mobile Home Park and surrounding homes and signage and brochures for the Martin Lake Recreation Site.

## Challenges and Opportunities

Improperly managed garbage, chicken coops, and bird feeders continue to be the main sources of human wildlife conflict in the Town of Princeton. Injured wildlife were the most reported cause of conflict in the community. The WCC noticed through conversations with locals and monitoring local social media that some conflicts go unreported to the COS. To address these challenges, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2023:

- Maintain and further develop relationships with the COS and local bylaw officers.
- Replace Town of Princeton garbage bins with bear-resistant ones.
- Continue Wildlife Encounter and Bear Spray Workshops with a focus on Urban Deer
- Continue to increase the followers of the WildSafeBC Princeton Facebook page.
- Continue education on attractant management through door-to-door canvassing, presentations for general public, community groups, schools, and booths.
- Reduce the amount of garbage carts that are placed out early through continued bin tagging activities.
- Engage businesses using the WildSafeBC Business Pledge.
- Support campgrounds with implementing the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program.
- Continue to foster and build relationships with local community groups.
- Educate residents in the proper management of Chicken Coops.

- Work towards Provincial Bear Smart Certification
- Continue to connect residents with unmanaged or unwanted fruit trees with FireSmart Princeton.

## Acknowledgements

The WCC would like to thank the Town of Princeton, the Province of British Columbia, and the British Columbia Conservation Foundation for funding this project. Special thank you to the COS for their open communication and assistance on current wildlife conflicts. Thank you to the many community members, organizations, and teachers that took part in the WildSafeBC Community Program and helped share the knowledge of how to keep the wildlife wild and community safe.