

ALBERNI VALLEY ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Prepared By :

Paul Grand



*Keeping Wildlife Wild and
Communities Safe*



ALBERNI-CLAYOQUOT
REGIONAL DISTRICT



www.wildsafebc.com



bc@wildsafebc.com



250-828-2551 ext. 110

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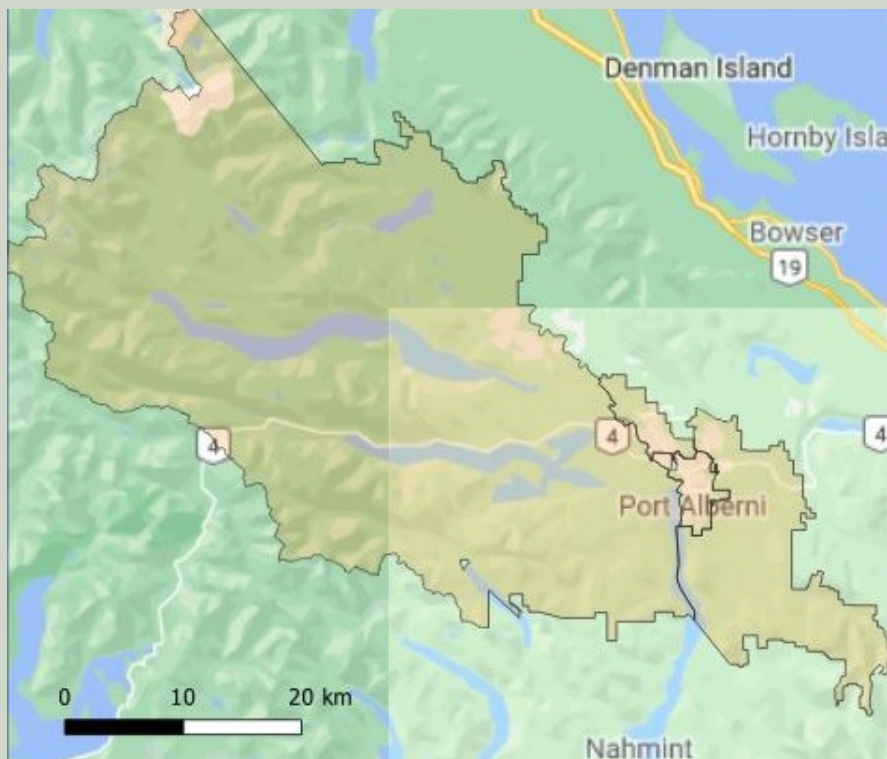
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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Alberni Valley program for the 2024 season between May 15 and November 30th. The main goal of the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator is to assist communities in preventing human-wildlife conflicts through educational programs, collaboration, and community solutions. The following report summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the 2024 season, and will help shape the delivery of the program for the 2025 based on coordinator, community, and sponsor needs.

Program Coverage Area

The WildSafeBC Alberni Valley program covers approximately 800 square kilometers. Alberni Valley is located in the interior of Vancouver Island, surrounded by the Beaufort Range, Strathcona Park, and Clayoquot Plateau. The program covers the City of Port Alberni and the surrounding Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District electoral areas of Sproat Lake, Cherry Creek, Beaver Creek and Beaufort which reside on the traditional territory of the Hupačasath and Tseshaht First Nations.



2024 Highlights

92

Students Educated

800+

Community Members Reached

8

Community Event Booths

5

Bins Tagged

4200

Facebook Users Reached

Conservation Officer Service Reports

From January 1 to November 30, a total of 12 wildlife reports have been made to the the Conservation Officer Service. Please note that the Conservation Officers are based in Nanaimo.

Black bears were the species most often reported to in 2024, however the number of reports (seven) were much lower than expected. More and more private citizens are posting reports to community Facebook pages instead of contacting authorities. Many people are concerned that the bears will be immediately destroyed if they are reported.

Additionally, there were three reports of cougars in the region, one call about a wounded deer and one inquiry about racoons. Cougars tend to make people nervous; most residents are willing to report them to COS.

VIDEO: Best practices reminder issued after cougar caught by Island camera

The big cat was in the Belmont Park area in the early hours of Wednesday, Oct. 2



[Ben Fenlon](#)
Oct 3, 2024 11:12 AM



A cougar was caught on camera in the Belmont Park area of Colwood on Wednesday, Oct. 2. | (Supplied by Toni Turner)



WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program 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. In addition, students learn how to have a safe and respectful relationship with wildlife. The program complements the BC Science K-9 Curriculum. The WildSafe Alberni Valley coordinator delivered WRP presentations to 1 summer camp and 2 youth programs. A total of 65 children throughout Alberni Valley became WildSafe Rangers and received a WildSafe Ranger kit to take away with them. Ranger packages arrived too late for the Summer camp, and the school district has not yet agreed to allow presentations in schools.

School/Group	Grade	# Reached	Date
Summer Camp	4-5	27	July 23
Beaver Scouts	1-3	32	October 3
Cub Scouts	4-6	33	November 21



Community Groups

One formal presentation on wildlife habitat and safety was given to a community daycare organization. At least half a dozen informal presentations or promotions were given at community trails, campsites, and to the Sunshine club and hospital employees. These informal talks focused on avoiding conflicts, keeping dogs leashed and the use of bear spray when outdoors.



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. In 2024, more than 412 people visited the WildSafeBC display booth at 7 events across the community. These events included the Lions Dog Walk, the Spirit Square Farmers market (twice), the PA Farmers market, the Salmon Festival, the Fall Fair and the annual Rivers Day celebration.

Most interactions with the booth were from individuals that were already interested and knowledgeable regarding wildlife. Trying to appeal to those that may not have an interest in wildlife (but therefore would benefit the most from education) is more challenging. Prizes such as a free course or an interactive game may generate more excitement among those with less initial interest about learning more.



Bin Tagging and Door-to-Door

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of curbside containers the evening before collection day. During 6 outings, a total of 5 bins were tagged across 4 garbage collection zones. The main areas of concern were the Dry Creek and Rogers creek regions.

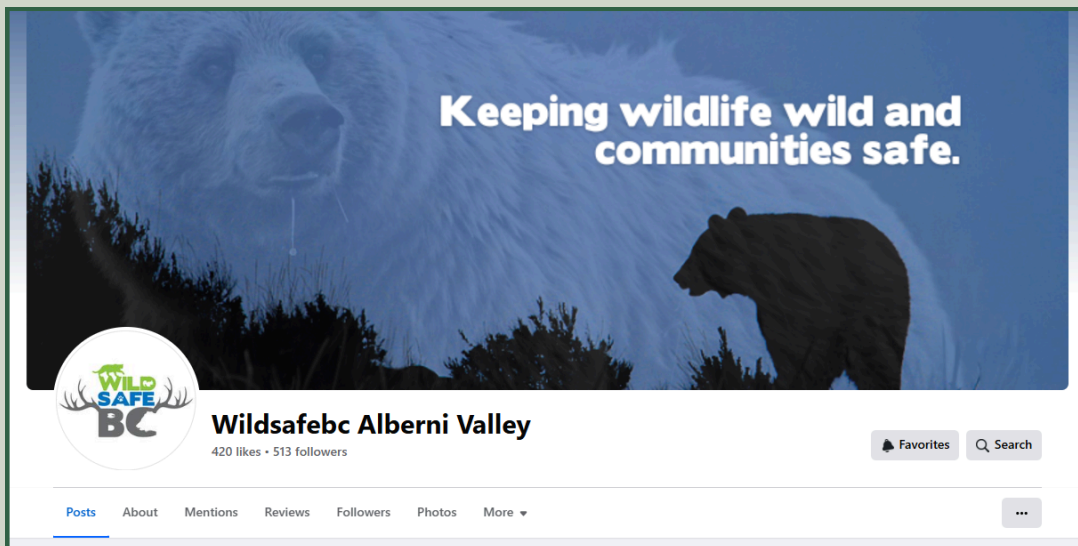
The community has done exceptionally well in securing their garbage cans and (generally) keeping their fruit trees picked. Although hundreds of residences were inspected, only a handful of warnings were issued.

Door-to-door education reached 166 people with in-person conversations or door hangers. The areas chosen for outreach were in response to incidents such as bears in garbage cans or cougars displaying unusually aggressive behavior.

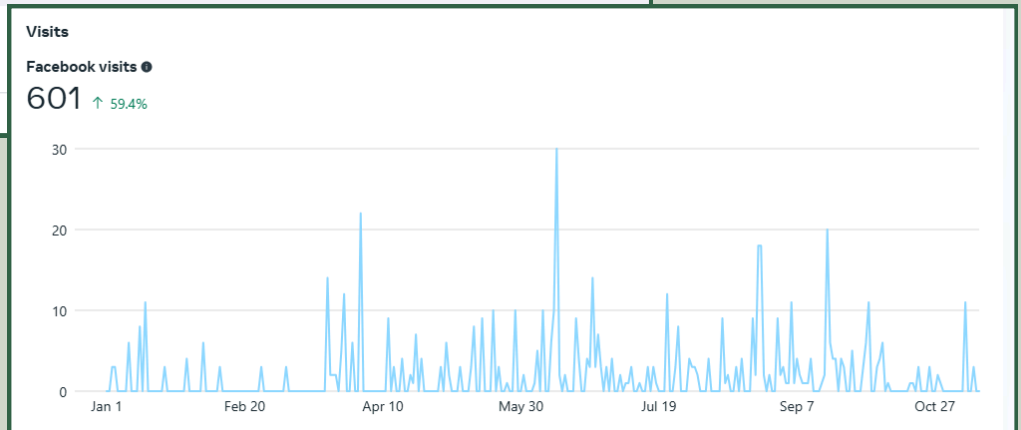


Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Alberni Valley Facebook page came out of hibernation on May 28 with an introductory post. Over the season, the page has had 28 new Facebook followers, a 66% increase in reach and a 60% increase in visits. Throughout the season, the WildSafe coordinator 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. In total, 28 Facebook posts were created that reached 4200 people from January 1 to November 30th. Many posts reached over 100 Facebook users, with the most impactful post created describing what to do in case of a cougar encounter. That post reached approximately 794 people and was shared 5 times.



Intro
Managed and delivered by the British Columbia Conservation Foundation.
Page · Nonprofit organization





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 Mclean Mill campsite took the WildSafeBC business pledge this year. Three other local campsites showed interest but have not filed paperwork.

Additionally, the Bare Campsite program was discussed with Provincial Parks officers as well as private campgrounds.

WildSafeBC Business Pledge Program Registration

Contact Information

Name of Business: Mclean Mill National Historic Site (Alberni Valley Chamber of Commerce)

Address: 5633 Smith Rd, Port Alberni, BC, V9Y 8Z1

Contact Person (Name and Title): _____

Contact Email: _____

Contact Phone Number: _____

WildSafeBC Business Pledge Commitments

As part of the pledge, our business commits to having our business reviewed by a WildSafeBC Community Coordinator and commit to the following actions (initial all that apply):

- Keep our garbage, recycling and organics secure at all times including: rinsing out recyclables, locking garbage and grease bins overnight and working with other businesses that may share the same waste management facilities.
- Keep the exterior of our building free of attractants such as spilled grease, garbage, recyclables and food.
- Have our staff trained to follow WildSafe practices.
- Provide customers with accurate advice or direct them to reliable resources such as WildSafeBC's website.
- Report conflicts with wildlife to the Conservation Officer Service at 1-877-952-7277.
- Provide WildSafeBC with the permission to share our business name and pledge on WildSafeBC's website and through other media channels.

There is no cost to participate in this program and businesses will receive a WildSafe Business Pledge poster to thank them for their commitment to reducing conflict with wildlife. In addition, businesses may be listed on our website or featured on our social media channels. Businesses are required to meet annually with a local WildSafeBC Community Coordinator to review and renew their pledge.

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. This year WildSafeBC celebrated it's 9th Annual BC Goes Wild Event.

WildSafeBC participated in the Rivers Day celebration, running an information booth and an electric fencing display. These were featured briefly in a local online news site, "The Scoop on Port Alberni".



Challenges and Future Goals

Improperly managed garbage, fruit trees, bird feeders, and urban livestock continue to be a source of human-wildlife conflict in the Alberni Valley. 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 WildSafeBC Alberni Valley Coordinator recommends the following activities for 2025:

- Community outreach targeting less involved community members. This includes preemptive door to door information sessions as well as more engaging displays at the Salmon Festival and Fall Fairs. Residents need to be made aware that the community will provide latches for garbage bins on request
- Working with School District 70 to bring the WildSafeBC Rangers program into schools. It appears there is a new policy requiring guests presenters to be vetted by the school board before going into the classrooms
- Continue to promote the Gleaning program and eFencing cost share options
- Consider running the program 10 months per year. Schools are more likely to accommodate presentations in the spring or early summer, so February through June are good times to offer the WildSafe Ranger program.



The Gleaning Project

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Alberni Valley Community Coordinator would like to thank the Alberni Clayoquot Regional District, the Province of British Columbia, and the BC Conservation Foundation for funding the WildSafeBC Alberni Valley project. Thank you to the Conservation Officer Service and Bylaw enforcement officers for their direction and support of the program, including Chris Miller, Andrew Riddell and Andrea Alexander. Lastly, the WildSafeBC Alberni Valley Community Coordinator would like to send an enormous thank you to all the British Columbia Conservation Foundation staff and fellow provincial WildSafeBC Community Coordinators for their encouragement and support. This program would not be able to succeed without the collaboration of all those mentioned.

Thank You!



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