

CENTRAL OKANAGAN ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Prepared By :
Breanna Scott



*Keeping Wildlife Wild and
Communities Safe*



www.wildsafebc.com



bc@wildsafebc.com



250-828-2551 ext. 110

Table of Contents

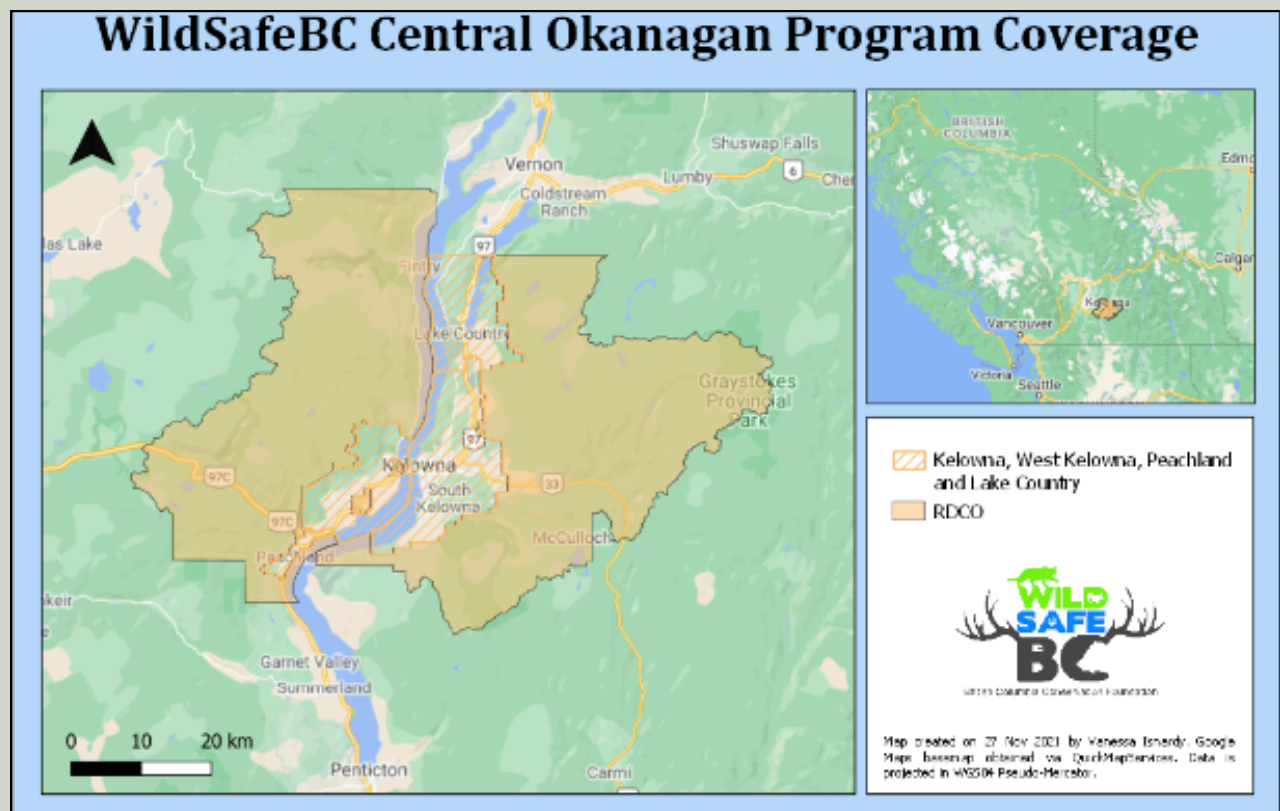
| | |
|---|------|
| Executive Summary..... | 1 |
| Program Coverage Area/Map..... | 1 |
| 2024 Highlights..... | 2 |
| Conservation Officer Service Reports..... | 3, 4 |
| WildSafe Ranger Program..... | 5 |
| Community Groups..... | 6 |
| Display Booths..... | 7 |
| Bin-Tagging and Door-To-Door..... | 8 |
| Social Media and Press..... | 9 |
| BC Goes Wild..... | 10 |
| Bare Campsite Program..... | 11 |
| Indigenous Awareness and Engagement..... | 12 |
| Other Accomplishments..... | 13 |
| Challenges and Future Goals..... | 14 |
| Acknowledgements..... | 15 |

Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Central Okanagan program for the 2024 season between May 12th 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 2025 based on coordinator, community, and sponsor needs.

Program Coverage Area

The WildSafeBC Central Okanagan program covers over 500 square kilometres. The Central Okanagan is located in the Southern Interior of BC in the Regional District of Central Okanagan, including the communities of Lake Country, Kelowna, West Kelowna, Westbank First Nation, and Peachland.



2024 Highlights

480+

Students Educated

1350+

Community Members Reached

13

Community Event Booths

2000+

Bins Tagged

9500+

Facebook Users Reached

**Bear Hazard
Assessment Adopted**

Conservation Officer Service Reports

From January 1 to November 1, a total of 1721 wildlife reports have been made to the COS through the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line (1-877-952-7277) or online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>).

Similar to previous years, deer were the species most often reported to the COS in 2024, followed by black bears and coyotes (Figure 2). From January 1st, 2024 to November 1st, 2024, there were 638 black bear reports, which is higher than the average number of reports made over the 5-year average. Black bear reports may be higher than average due to the availability of attractants found in residential areas. Deer reports remain the highest reported species likely a result of increased urban deer populations and vehicle collisions.

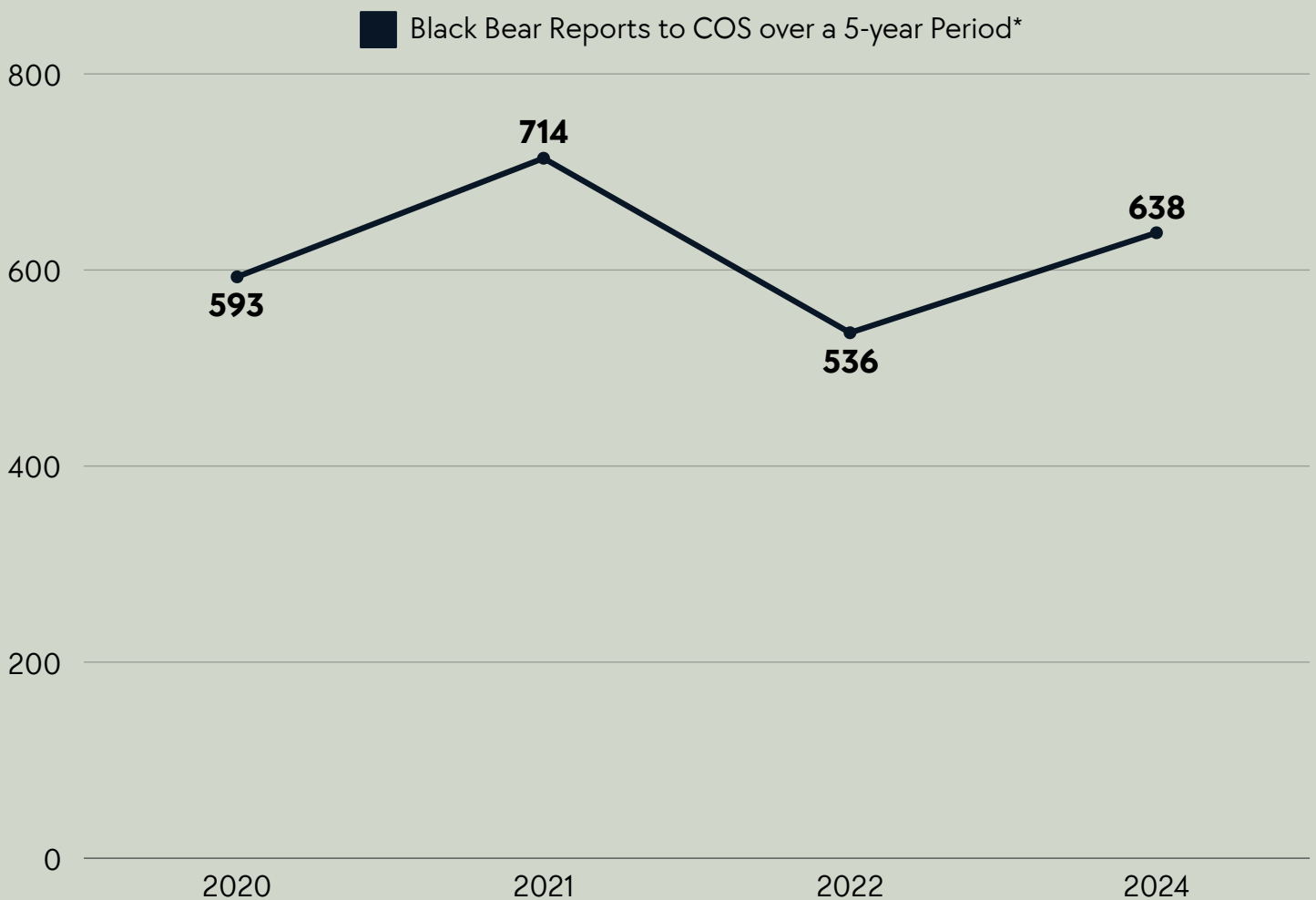


Figure 1. *Excluding 2023 data

Conservation Officer Service Reports

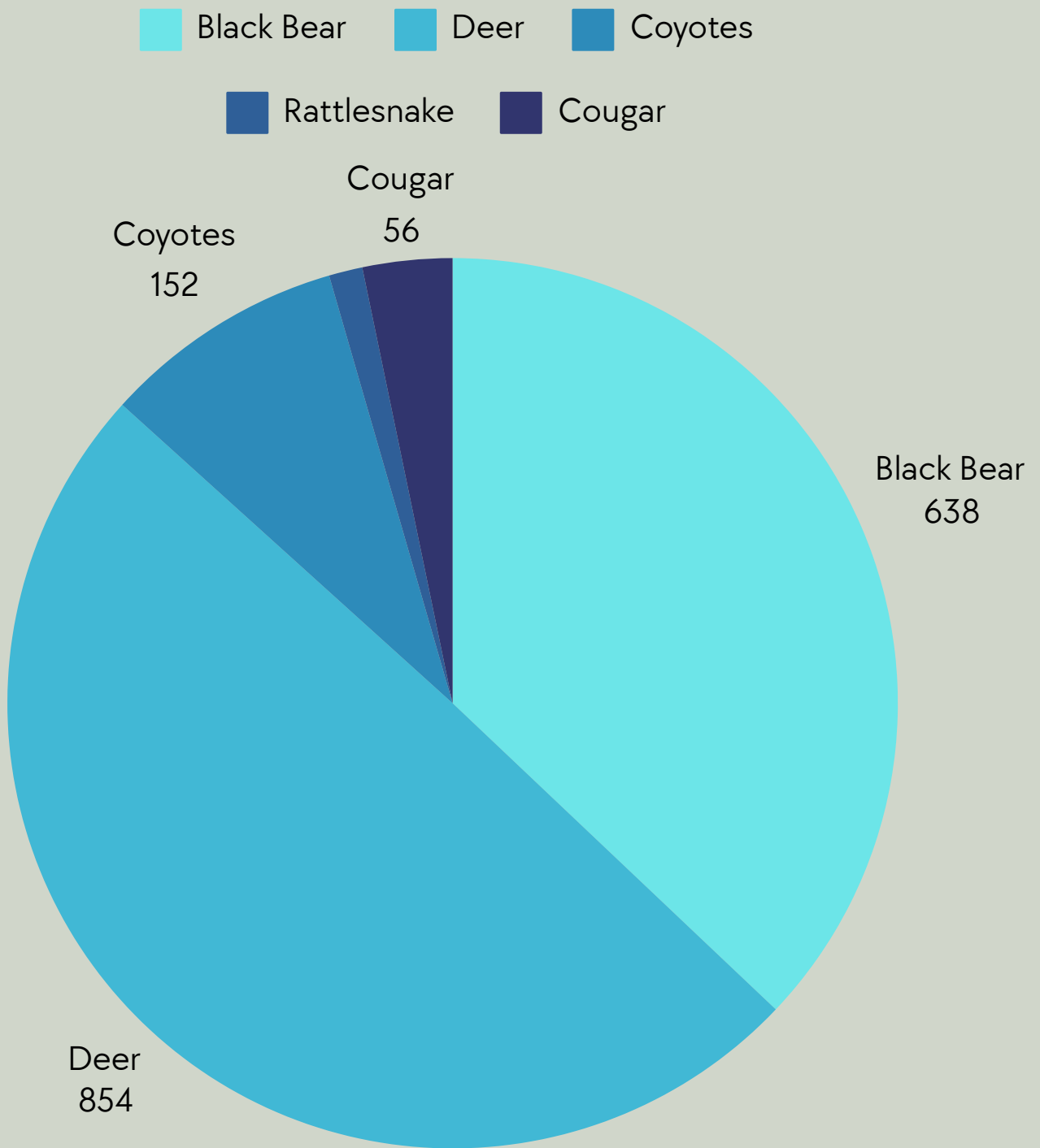


Figure 2

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 WildSafeBC Central Okanagan coordinator delivered 21 WRP presentations with 4 elementary schools, 2 summer camps, and 2 youth programs (Table 1). A total of 547 children throughout Central Okanagan became WildSafe Rangers and received a WildSafe Ranger kit to take away with them.

TABLE 1

| School/Group | Grade | # Reached | Date |
|-------------------------------|-------|-----------|---------------------|
| BCSPCA Summer Camp | 1-5 | 58 | July 17, 31, Aug 20 |
| Beacon's Furry Fundation Camp | 1-5 | 24 | July 19 |
| NatureKids BC | 1-3 | 4 | Aug 24 |
| Shannon Lake Elementary | 1-3 | 90 | Oct 9 |
| Rose Valley Elementary | 2 | 60 | Oct 10 |
| Davidson Road Elementary | 1-4 | 266 | Nov 4, 6, 7 |
| Hudson Road Elementary | K | 25 | Nov 13 |

Community Groups

WildSafeBC delivers various educational presentations to community groups to increase the public understanding of wildlife behaviour and safety to prepare for a wildlife encounter. This season a total of 5 presentations were delivered to community groups in the Central Okanagan.

The Wildlife Safety Awareness presentation was delivered to 19 community members at 2 events. This presentation covers local wildlife, their behaviour, and safety procedures for each species.

A total of 4 bear spray workshops were delivered throughout the season. These demonstrations were open to members of the community and shared via social media and word-of-mouth during events. In total, 33 people participated in the workshop and became more prepared for a bear encounter by learning safety basics and practicing handling bear spray.



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 970 people visited the WildSafeBC display booth at 13 different events across the community.

This season, WildSafeBC was able to hold a booth at the Peachland farmer's market, the Glenrosa community BBQ, Peachland community BBQ, MEC Kelowna, and RDCO events including Trail Day, Park's Alive, Park's Day, Welcome the Kokanee, and the Kikinee Festival. During these events, adults and kids alike enjoyed the biofacts such as the replica animal skulls, prints, claws, and scat. The events were very successful with engagement and helped to facilitate an accessible way for residents to express concern or ask questions about wildlife.



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 26 outings, a total of 2063 bins were tagged across 15 garbage collection zones. Neighbourhoods were visited based on reports forwarded from local Conservation Officers and resident concerns.

The efficacy of bin tagging was shown, as 69.2% of residences whose bins were tagged during an initial survey did not have bins out on the curb again during a second survey, and only 30.7% of residences whose bins were tagged during an initial survey had their bins out on the curb again during a second survey.

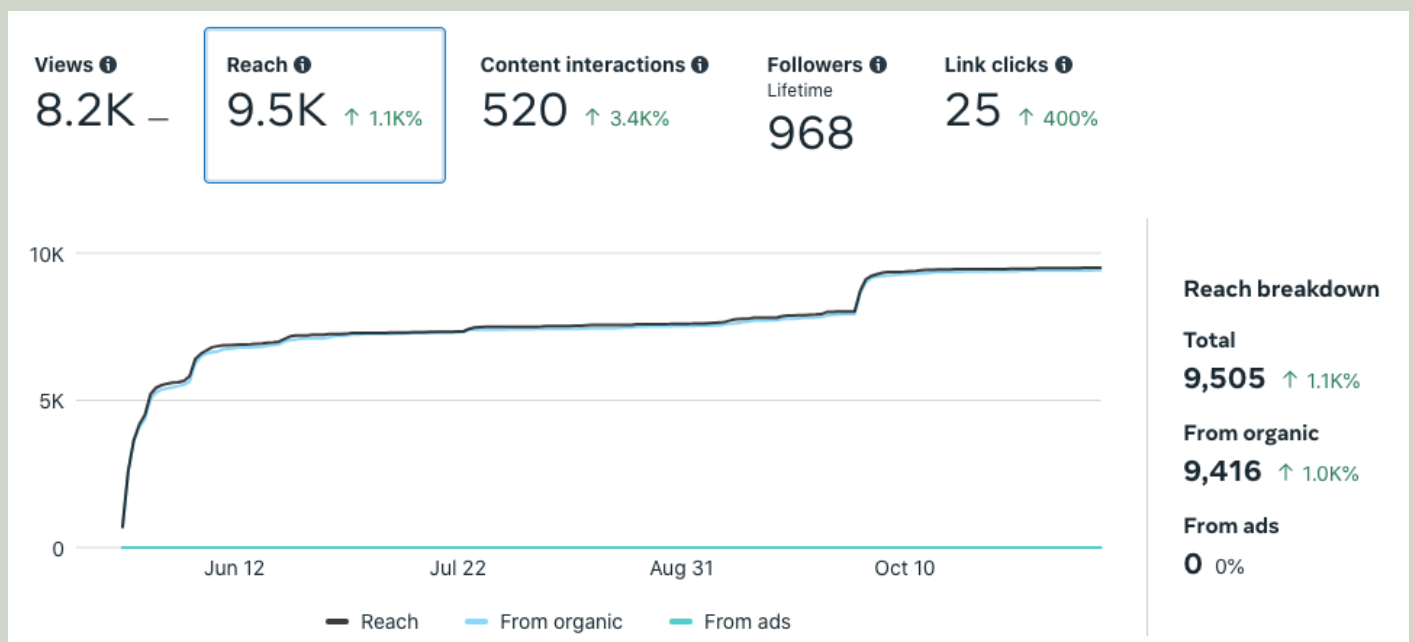
Door-to-door education reached 335 people with door hangers. The Coordinator also knocked on every door and engaged residents in conversations about wildlife. The door hangers inform residents which wildlife species have been seen in the area and include tips on how to manage attractants. Of the residents who were left door hangers, over 133 people were spoken to in person, which provided the opportunity for questions and concerns.



Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Central Okanagan Facebook page came out of hibernation on May 23rd with an introductory post. Over the season, the page has had 51 new Facebook followers, from 903 followers in November 2023 to 968 followers in November 2024. Throughout the season, the WildSafeBC 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. Facebook users also shared many Facebook posts created in other groups or on their own personal timelines, which helped promote the WildSafeBC Central Okanagan Facebook page. In total, 77 Facebook posts were created that reached 9,500 people from May 23rd to November 30th. Many posts reached over 150 Facebook users, with the most impactful post created was the season introduction post, reaching approximately 6800 people and was shared 11 times, and the second most impactful involved a bear alert that reached 1800 people.

Over the season, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator participated in over 7 press releases from local media outlets. These releases regarded local wildlife sightings, safety, and attractant management.



BC Goes Wild

Throughout September when human-bear conflicts are at their highest in BC, WildSafeBC creates a "BC Goes Wild" campaign to acknowledge the spectacular diversity of wildlife in the Province. This year WildSafeBC celebrated its 9th Annual BC Goes Wild Event.

This BC Goes Wild, Central Okanagan held 2 bear spray workshops, 1 interpretive nature walk, and 2 community booths where colouring sheets were handed out for our province-wide contest. During the month, activities such as door-to-door and bin tagging also increased as black bear activity increased.

WildSafebc Central Okanagan's Post



WildSafebc Central Okanagan

September 3 · 🌐

Who's ready to be prepared in wildlife country with our

🐻 BEAR SPRAY WORKSHOPS 🐻

WHERE: Munson Pond Park, Kelowna

WHEN: Sunday, September 8th at 3:30 pm

OR

Thursday, September 26th at 5:30 pm

COST: By donation!

- REGISTER THROUGH DM OR EMAILING:

centralok@wildsafebc.com

BC Goes Wild will kick off with 2 bear spray workshops that will prepare you to handle a wildlife encounter. Bear spray is an effective deterrent for all wildlife but can be intimidating to use, come out and become comfortable handling bear spray while learning about wildlife behaviour and motivation!



Bare Campsite Program

Through the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program, WildSafeBC is able to provide clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife. 13 locally-owned campgrounds were approached via email regarding the Bare Campsite program located throughout the Central Okanagan. The species that are typically located near the campgrounds include black bears, deer, raccoons, and coyotes. A follow-up should be conducted next season to increase awareness and promote the program further.

Camping in Wildlife Country



"BARE" CAMPSITES ARE SAFE CAMPSITES

"At Risk" Campsite



Anything that has an odour can attract wildlife. Never leave these items unattended or bring them into your sleeping area. This includes:

- Food and items used in food preparation
- Coolers whether empty or full
- Garbage and wrappings
- Pet food and bowls
- Bottles, cans and recyclables
- Deodorant, toothpaste, citronella etc.

"Bare" Campsite



Keep a "bare" campsite to keep you and your camping neighbours safe.

- Keep all attractants in your vehicle or use storage lockers if provided - NEVER in your tent.
- Dispose of grey water in designated areas or at least 50 m from sleeping area.
- Prepare food at designated sites.
- Dispose of garbage and recyclables promptly at designated sites.

Never approach or feed wildlife.

Doing so can lead to conflicts and tragic consequences where people or animals are injured or killed.



Learn more about wildlife and safety
wildsafebc.com



Report all conflicts with wildlife to the BC Conservation Officer Service:
 1.877.952.7277

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

This season, WildSafeBC worked to increase Indigenous engagement and awareness by discussing community solutions regarding attractants with officials over phone and email at Westbank First Nation, reaching out about education opportunities for booths as well as to sənisyustən house of learning for WildSafe Ranger presentations, and working with Splitsin First Nation to deliver a presentation on Wildlife Safety and Awareness on June 5th, where members of the community attended and were able to ask questions and express concerns, especially concerning aggressive bears and public safety, in a region that has no WildSafe community coordinator.

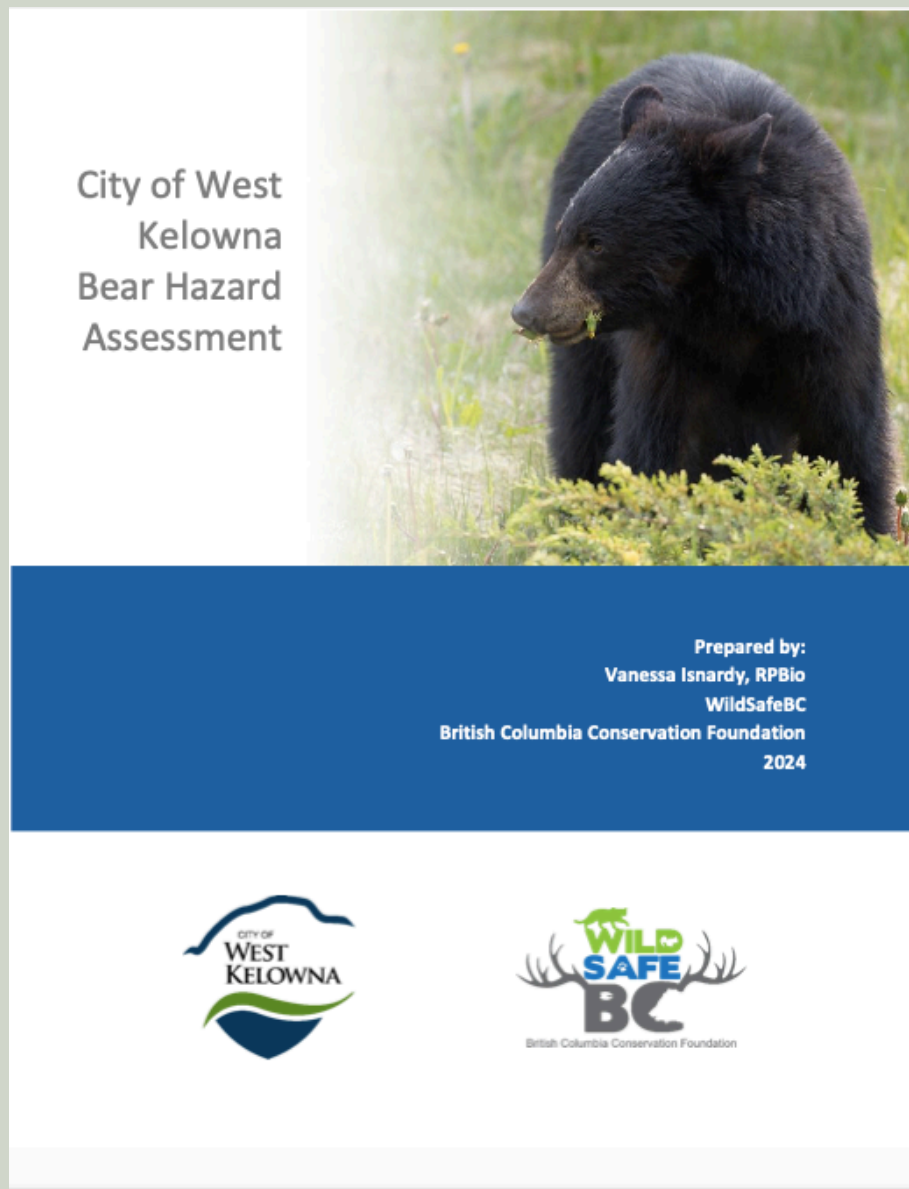
WildSafeBC is very grateful to be working on Syilx/Okanagan land and acknowledges that fundamental information about wildlife and their behaviour extends from the millennia of knowledge passed down from local Indigenous peoples. This level of understanding can be used to encourage our communities to share in the respect and care that is given to the land and its animals by Indigenous peoples.



Other Accomplishments

This season the Bear Hazard Assessment was prepared by WildSafeBC for the City of West Kelowna. This assessment marks the first step toward the city becoming a bear-smart community. The assessment was presented this fall and adopted by the mayor and council.

The assessment discusses how human-bear conflicts arise and how they can be prevented in the future through a series of recommendations that cover aspects of bylaws, solid waste services, and education that the city can follow to help achieve a bear-smart status and reduce human-bear conflict.



Challenges and Future Goals

Challenges this season involved increasing populations, with new residents unaware of how to manage attractants or respond to wildlife. This resulted in many inquiries and cases of improper attractant management. Misconceptions about non-predatory animals continue to be a struggle as interactions with wildlife such as deer are being handled incorrectly, with more conflicts reported than usual in recent years. Another challenge this year evolved with the public perception of COS after a bear is destroyed. Residents expressed not wanting to report wildlife conflicts or wildlife at risk of conflict to the COS in fear of the animal being destroyed or not knowing which interactions should be reported. The lack of WARP also posed a challenge as residents were not as aware of which wildlife may be present in their area

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

- Electric fencing workshop to be held before fruit harvest season (ref. contact list)
- Ensure the bear working group is in contact early in the season and using collaboration between bylaw, COS, community members, and community coordinator to increase awareness
- Put focus on deer-human conflicts and spread awareness early, especially around dogs
- An in-person visit to campgrounds for the Bare Campsite program
- Continue relationship with local realtors to distribute newcomer information packages
- Reach out to each community at the start of the season for event/educational opportunities
- Continued collaboration with the bylaw, COS, and volunteer group for bin-tagging and door-to-door
- Continue conversations that break misunderstandings of wildlife behaviour and with COS response to increase the number of wildlife reports to the RAPP line

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Central Okanagan Coordinator would like to thank the amazing staff on bylaw and waste services at the Regional District of Central Okanagan and the City of West Kelowna, including Rae Stewart, Cynthia Coates, Aidan Fernandes, Trish Robertson, Jason Luciw, and Will Scott, along with the District of Peachland, the Province of British Columbia, and the BC Conservation Foundation for funding the WildSafeBC Central Okanagan project. Thank you to the Conservation Officer Service for their direction and support of the program, including Ken Owens and Glen Small, and the Wildlife Safety Response Officers that worked alongside them, Ryan and Ashton. Another thanks goes out to all the amazing voices raised toward reducing human-wildlife conflict this season including Carmen Harris and her black bear awareness volunteer group. Lastly, the WildSafeBC Central Okanagan 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!



***Keeping Wildlife Wild and
Communities Safe***