

COLUMBIA VALLEY ANNUAL REPORT 2024



Prepared By :

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



VILLAGE OF **radium**
hot springs



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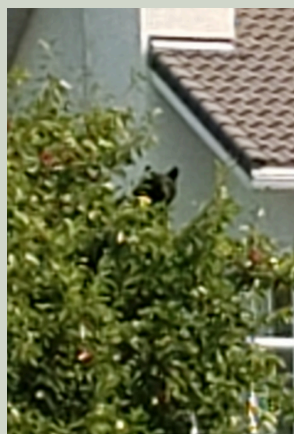
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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Columbia Valley program for the 2024 season between July 22 and November 1. 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.

Even though this program only ran for half of the usual season, the Coordinator is proud of the accomplishments that were achieved. Some highlights of this year include:

- Running the WildSafeBC Jr Ranger & Ranger Programs in four schools in the Valley after a three-year hiatus
- The creation of a BearSmart Community Committee in Fairmont Hot Springs
- Thanksgiving Weekend door-to-door campaign to 385+ homes in Fairmont Hot Springs
- Working with Westside Park in Invermere to prevent bears from accessing garbage
- Incorporating a Bear Spray demonstration to Wednesday's Agri-Farmers Market
- Having a prominent presence on Columbia Valley social media pages



Program Coverage Area

The WildSafeBC Columbia Valley program covers 4 main communities: **Radium Hot Springs, Invermere on the Lake, Windermere and Fairmont Hot Springs.** The program is also available to the communities of Wilmer, Edgewater and Canal Flats as needed. Columbia Valley is located in the East Kootenays and sits between Golden and Cranbrook.



2024 Highlights

430

Students Educated

735

Community Members Reached

6

Community Event Booths

33 & 20

Bins Tagged

16.5K

Facebook Users Reached

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 Columbia Valley Coordinator delivered **14** WRP presentations with **4** elementary schools. A total of **430** children in Edgewater, Invermere and Windermere became WildSafe Rangers and received a WildSafe Ranger kit to take away with them.

School/Group	Grade	# Reached	Date
Eileen Madson Primary School	1-3	152	October 17
JA Laird Elementary School	4/5	105	October 11
Windermere Elementary School	1-3	38	October 18
Edgewater Elementary School	K-7	135	October 24



Community Groups

WildSafeBC Columbia Valley Coordinator gave **5 community presentations** at: College of the Rockies, Fairmont Hot Springs community presentation, Invermere Public Library, Radium Hot Springs Public Library, and Fairmont Community Association AGM. In total, **87 people participated**.

The College of the Rockies presentation was directed to International Students who were newcomers to Canada. They were from countries such as India, the Philippines and Nigeria.

The Fairmont Hot Springs community presentation resulted in the creation of a BearSmart Community group. This group will work throughout the hibernation season to develop a community strategy to target the unique needs of the community's residents (i.e., homeowners, second homeowners, short-term rental owners, and visitors). In addition, this group will explore becoming a BearSmart Community.

WildSafeBC Columbia Valley Coordinator gave **13 Bear Spray workshops**. One workshop hosted by Invermere Hiking Club was a stand-alone 1-hour presentation. The remaining 12 workshops were 30-minute demonstrations as part of bigger community events. These demonstrations were part of Bear Day, Agri-Farmers Market, Picnic Palooza. In total, **130 people participated** in the bear spray workshops.



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 **465 people** visited the WildSafeBC display booth at **6 community events** across the community.

Community Event	# Reached	Date	Purpose
Toby Creek Dog Park (Invermere)	10	August 10	Promote dog safety around bears
Wildsight Bear Day (Invermere)	180	August 17	Bear education + Bear Spray demonstrations
Agri-Farmers Market (Invermere)	30	August 28 September 4	Wildlife education + Bear Spray demos
Garlic Festival (Windermere)	200	September 1	Wildlife education
Picnic Palooza (Fairmont Hot Springs)	45	September 20	Wildlife education

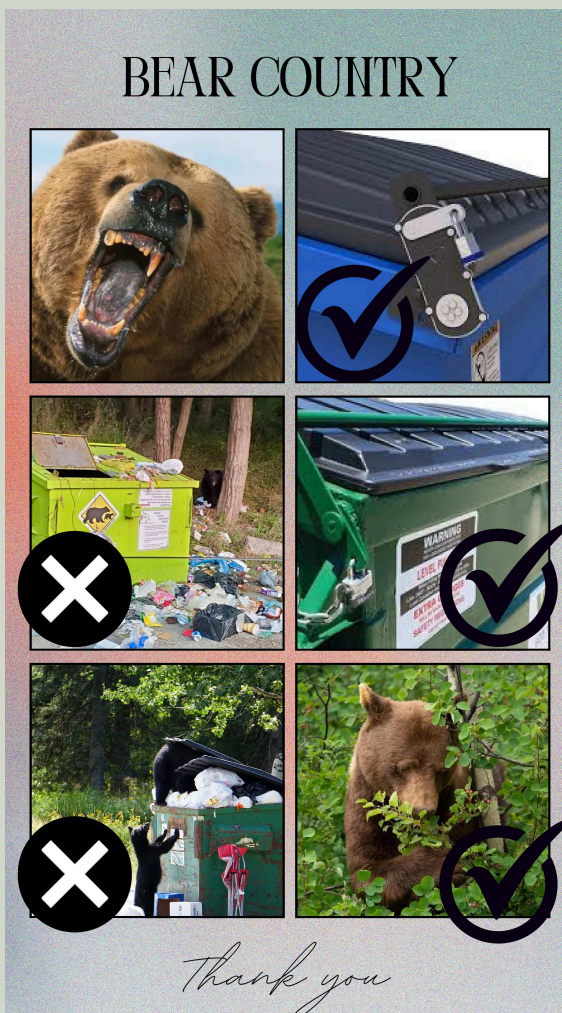


Bin Tagging

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of curbside containers the evening before collection day. During **4** outings in **Invermere**, a total of **33 bins** were tagged. No bin was tagged twice.

In **Fairmont Hot Springs**, stickers were made for the commercial garbage/ recycle bins. Here, we adhered these stickers to **20** garbage/ recycling bins. As FHS is a tourist community and many visitors do not read English, a rack card was created which will be printed, laminated and posted on the bins.

The Invermere Bin Tagging practice, the Door-to-Door campaigns and the movable electronic sign (in front of Sobeys) that reads "Bears in Area - Keep Garbage Inside" were effective tools in educating people on how to prevent bears from accessing garbage.



Door-to-Door Campaigns

Door-to-door education reached **565 people with door hangers**. The WildSafeBC Coordinator also knocked on every door and engaged **108 residents** in conversations about wildlife. The Conservation Officer Service requested that the Coordinator carry out door-to-door education in communities facing a higher percentage of bear issues.

Communities engaged were:

- **Westside Park and Wilder** (Invermere)
- **Swansea, Kootenay and Timber Ridge** (Windermere)
- **Eagle Court and Wilder Loop** (Fairmont Hot Springs)
- **Mountainside and Riverside** (Fairmont Hot Springs)
- **Dutch Creek**
- **Columbia Ridge**

In **Westside Park**, the first door-to-door campaign, the standard WildSafe door knocker was utilized. After speaking to several residents, it became apparent that keeping garbage inside was a novel concept and that they needed more education and direction. In response, a specialized infographic was created specifically for that community.

At the request of the BearSmart Community Committee in **Fairmont Hot Springs**, a specialized infographic was created for their door-to-door campaign. On the Thursday and Friday before Thanksgiving Weekend (when the majority of the second homeowners would be around) volunteers and the WildSafeBC Columbia Valley Coordinator placed these specialized door knockers on more than **385** households.



Door-to-Door Infographics

Westside Park Infographic

✧ ✧ GARBAGE IN BEAR COUNTRY

- IS IT ORGANIC?**

NO SMELL, NO PERFUME
FEEL FREE TO THROW IN
OUTDOOR GARBAGE BIN


- 

IS IT ORGANIC?

YES

FOOD PREP & TABLE
SCRAPS GO INTO A
PLASTIC CONTAINER
AND KEEP IN FREEZER
UNTIL COLLECTION DAY
- DIRTY DIAPERS**

KEEP IN ODOR
ABSORBING DIAPER PAIL
AND BRING TO TRANSFER
STATION WHEN PAIL IS
FULL


- 

RECYCLING

CLEAN FOOD AND DRINK
CONTAINERS
FEEL FREE TO THROW IN
OUTDOOR RECYCLE BIN
- COLLECTION DAY**

PUT GARBAGE OUT AFTER
7 A.M. ON COLLECTION DAY
OR
BRING TO INVERMERE
TRANSFER STATION
8:30 A.M. TO 5:30 P.M.
7 DAYS A WEEK


- 

**NEIGHBOURHOOD
THANKS YOU!**

LET'S ALL WORK
TOGETHER TO KEEP
WILDLIFE WILD AND
WESTSIDE PARK SAFE!



Fairmont Hot Springs Infographic

✧ ✧ LIVING IN BEAR COUNTRY

- GARBAGE**

KEEP GARBAGE
INSIDE GARAGE,
SMELLY GARBAGE
DIRECTLY TO
TRANSFER STATION


- 

NO GARAGE?

FREEZE FOOD PREP &
TABLE SCRAPS IN
PLASTIC BAGGIE UNTIL
YOU CAN TAKE TO
TRANSFER STATION
- FRUIT TREES**

HARVEST TREE BEFORE
BEARS CAN
USE ELECTRIC FENCE
CALL FCA FOR HELP
OR HOSE OFF BLOSSOMS IN
SPRING


- 

RECYCLING

CLEAN ALL FOOD AND
DRINK CONTAINERS

NEVER THROW
GARBAGE IN BIN
- CLEAN BARBEQUE**

BURN OFF GRISTLE
FROM GRILL

CLEAN AND BLEACH
GREASE TRAY


- 

BIRD FEEDERS

PUT AWAY UNTIL WINTER

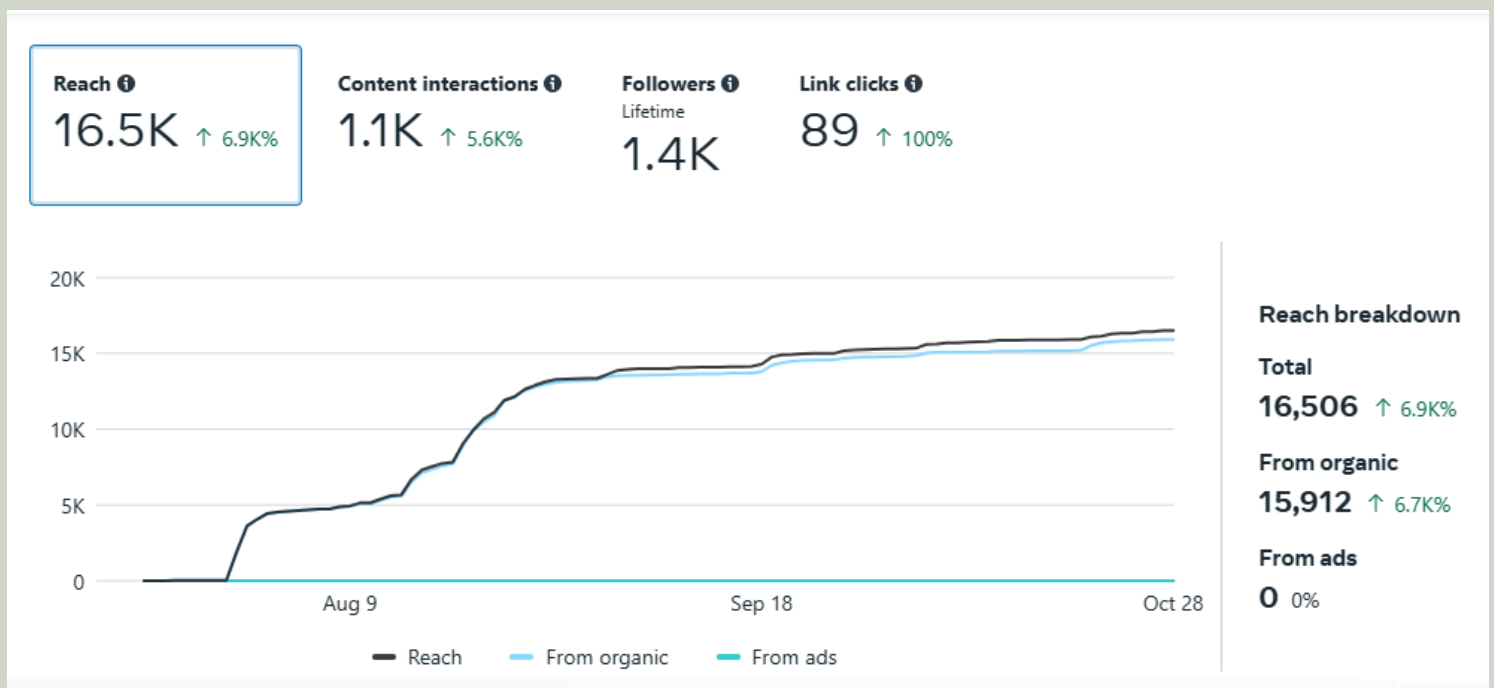
>800 CALORIES PER KG
GREAT SOURCE OF
CALORIES FOR BEARS IN
HYPERPHAGIA



FAIRMONT **FAIRMONT CITIZENS IN ACTION**

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Columbia Valley Facebook page came out of hibernation on July 29th with an introductory post. Over the season, the page has had **71** new Facebook followers, for a total of **1.4K**. As well, the page has received **1,213** Facebook Page likes during this same time period. Throughout the season, the WildSafeBC Columbia Valley 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, which helped promote the WildSafeBC Columbia Valley Facebook page. In total, **88 Facebook posts** were created that **reached 16.5K people** from July 29 to November 1. Many posts reached over **1,140 Facebook users**, with the most impactful post created was a post on garbage: "Invermere Collection and Rural Transfer Stations" reaching approximately **6,128 people and was shared 10 times**.



Challenges and Future Goals

Improperly managed garbage, fruit trees, bird feeders, and off-leashed dogs continue to be a source of human-wildlife conflict in the Columbia 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 managing wildlife attractants and staying safe when in a wildlife country. The WildSafeBC Columbia Valley Coordinator recommends the following activities for 2025:

- **Columbia Valley**

- Acquire wildlife statistics from COS for 2025 Annual Report
- Develop a working relationship with Groundswell Greenhouse & Community Garden's Apple Rescue program, the DOI and the COS to gain permission to harvest fruit trees of absentee homeowners
- Develop a working relationship with WildSight Invermere to cross-promote messaging and programs
- Work with Panorama, FHS Resort and Cooper Point to train their staff on how to host bear spray workshops for their guests + have their employees certified in WildSafeBC's Wildlife Awareness & Safety Course – Level 1 Certification

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Challenges and Future Goals

- **Radium Hot Springs**

- Participate in the Radium Hot Springs Friday Night Market to develop local connections and be aware of what is happening locally
- Work with the motels and restaurants around wildlife awareness and safety (as many of their employees are from out of province/ country)
- Work with businesses so that they all sign on to the Business Pledge

- **Invermere**

- Work with DOI to increase communications about the hindrance of planting fruit trees in the community (i.e. \$ available to remove fruit trees, bylaw re. electric fence/ netting)
- Work with Groundswell Greenhouse & Community Garden to install an electric fence around their property
- Work with Westside Park to mitigate future concerns
- Work with volunteers to start a BearSmart Community Committee

- **Windermere**

- Work with local stratas to put bylaws in place preventing the future planting of fruit trees or to encourage the use of electric fencing
- Work with the Windermere Community Association and Lions Club

- **Fairmont Hot Springs**

- Continue to work with BearSmart Community Committee
- Continue to work with Fairmont Community Association

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Columbia Valley Coordinator would like to thank the **Village of Radium Hot Springs**, the **District of Invermere**, the **Regional District of East Kootenay**, the **Province of British Columbia**, and the **BC Conservation Foundation** for funding the WildSafeBC Columbia Valley project. Thank you to the Conservation Officer Service for their direction and support of the program, including **Greg Kruger, Matthew Hall** and **Michael Boudreau**. Additional thanks to the Fairmont Community Association and the Fairmont Hot Springs community, in-particular **Linda Pfeiffer** for all her support. Lastly, the WildSafeBC Columbia Valley Coordinator would like to send an enormous thank you to all the British Columbia Conservation Foundation staff, WildSafeBC Provincial Support Staff, **Kathy Murray**, 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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Communities Safe*