

# NELSON & RDCK-E&F ANNUAL REPORT 2024

Prepared By :

Lisa Thomson



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

*City of*  
**NELSON**  
BRITISH COLUMBIA



[www.wildsafebc.com](http://www.wildsafebc.com)



[bc@wildsafebc.com](mailto:bc@wildsafebc.com)



250-828-2551 ext. 110

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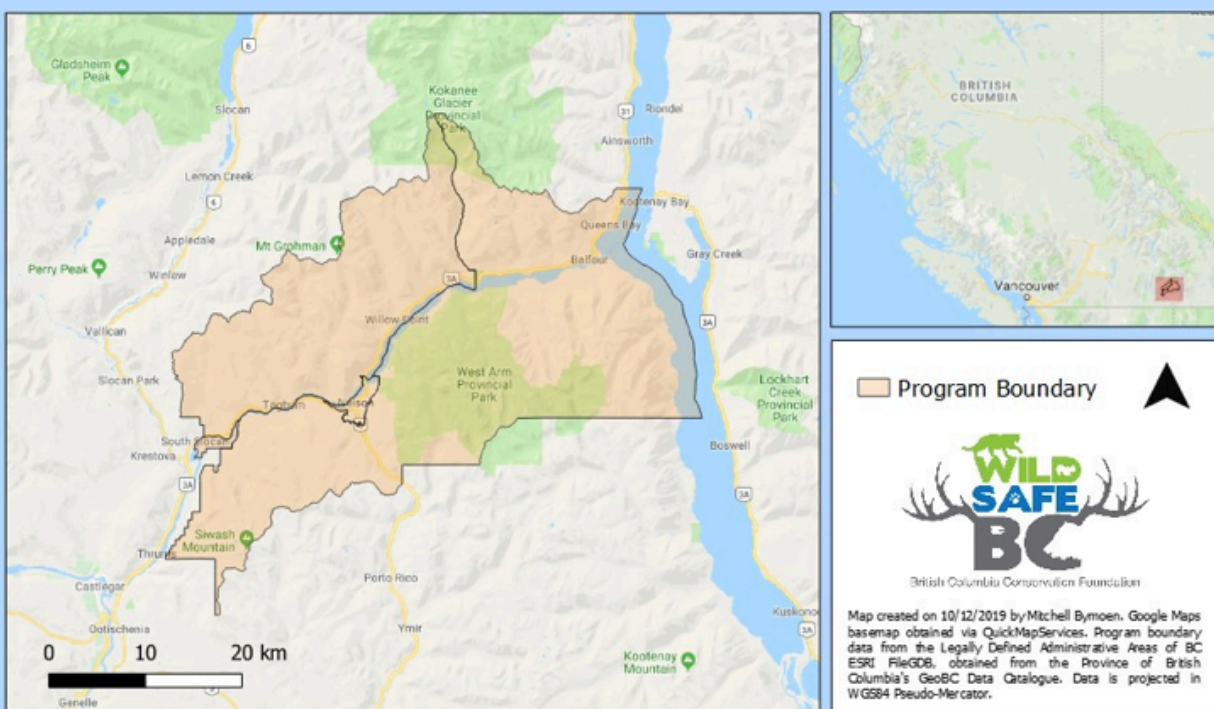
# Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Nelson program for the 2024 season between April 15th and December 6th. 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 Nelson program covers approximately 1224 square kilometers of the unceded and traditional territory of the Ktunaxa, Sinixt and Syilx Peoples. The City of Nelson and the Regional District of Central Kootenay is located in the South East region of British Columbia. The area is surrounded by the Selkirk-Purcell Mountains and the West Arm of Kootenay Lake.

### WildSafeBC Nelson Program Coverage



## 2024 Highlights

**324**

Students Educated

**1001**

Community Members Reached

**6**

Community Event Booths

**40**

Bins Tagged

**120.5K**

Facebook Users Reached



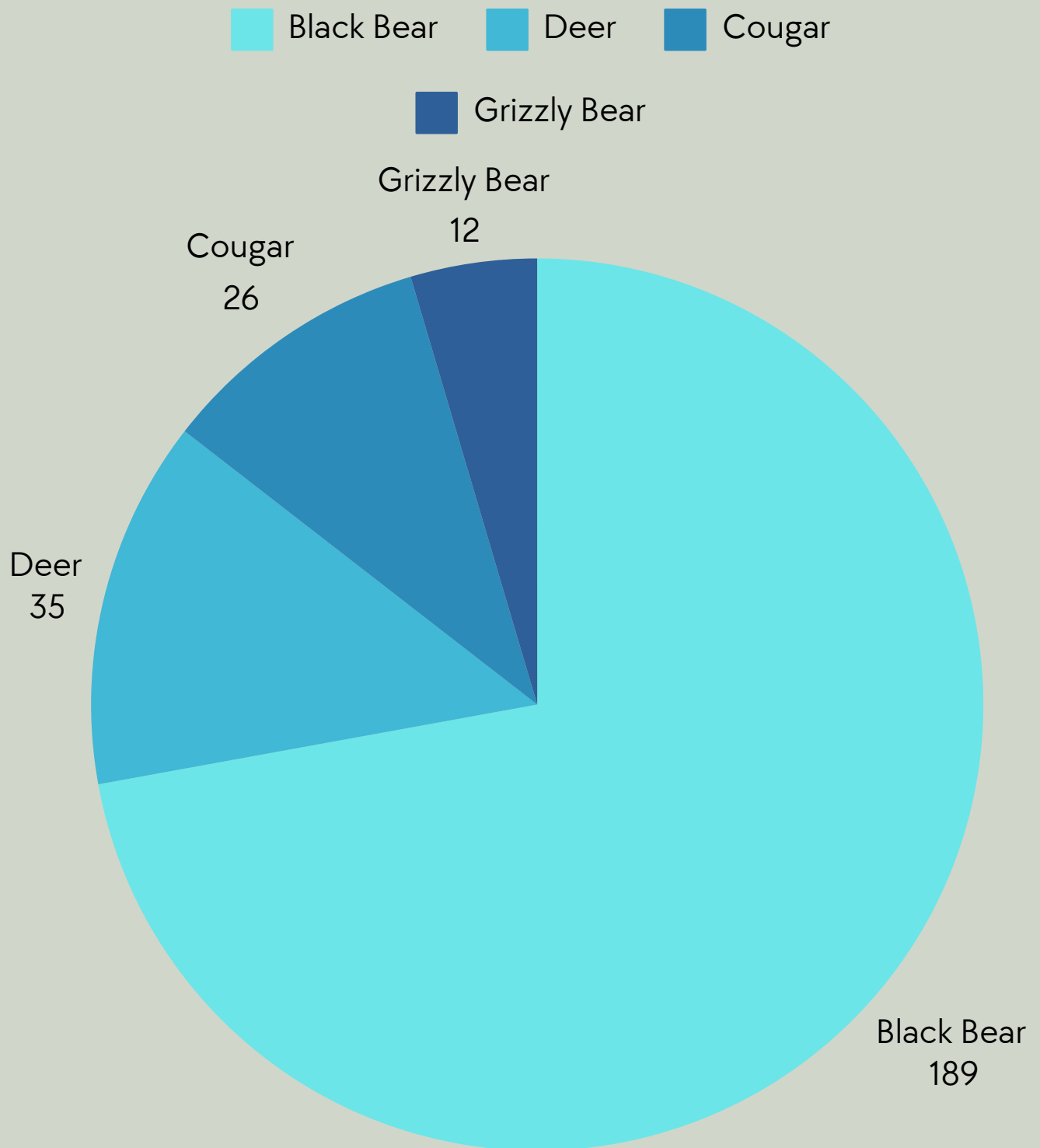
# Conservation Officer Service Reports

From January 1 to October 31st, a total of 290 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, black bears were the species most often reported to the COS in 2024, followed by deer and cougars. From January 1st 2024 to October 31st 2024, there were 189 black bear reports, which is higher than the number of reports made in 2023. Reasons for higher reports in 2024 may be associated with the presence of a sub adult black bear within City limits in January, that had not denned over winter. The community was concerned for her well being, and it was obvious that she was in poor condition. Ultimately, she was lethally removed for humane reasons after COS and biologist assessment.



# Conservation Officer Service Reports



# 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 Nelson Coordinator delivered 11 WRP presentations at local schools ranging from pre-school to middle school. A total of **324** children throughout Nelson became WildSafe Rangers and received a WildSafe Ranger kit to take away with them.

School/Group	Grade	# Reached	Date
Nelson Waldorf School	Kinders & 9	17	June & September
Silverking Childcare Centre	Kinders	8	June
Forest Path	Pre-school	18	September 19 & 20
South Nelson Elementary	3-6	71	October 4 & 11
Hume Elementary	K-1	59	October
Rosemont Elementary	K-5	129	October 19 & 20
Trafalgar Middle School	6-9	22	November

## Community Groups

WildSafeBC Nelson was invited by 8 different groups to present to members/staff, on wildlife safety, wildlife attractants, bear safety and bear spray workshops. These groups consisted of local senior groups, government departments, school teachers, newcomers to BC, and international college students. A total of **167** people attended such presentations. Species specific brochures were made available to attendee's.

Many attendee's work in the great outdoors, and shared insightful knowledge on safety and wildlife behaviour. Presentations always began with covering responsible wildlife attractant management at home.





# 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 **480** people visited the WildSafeBC Nelson display booth at 6 community events across the community.

Nelson Farmer's Markets yielded the highest number of visitors, that included locals and visitors alike. Discussions held with local residents are beneficial in identifying high conflict neighbourhoods, as well as helping residents adopt bear smart practices, and solutions to their waste management.

Display booths held at Kokanee Creek Provincial Park Nature Centre always prove to be a favourite with local, provincial and international guests. Visitors enjoy interacting with various booth props that include black bear and cougar hides, replica skulls and a moose antler.



## Bin Tagging and Door-to-Door

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of curb-side containers the evening before collection day. During 8 outings, a total of 40 bins were tagged across all garbage collection zones. The number of bins tagged this season were similar to 2023. There appeared to be less repeat offenders this season. However, this program event remains vital in reminding residents, and businesses of local wildlife attractant bylaws.

Door-to-door education reached 338 people with door hangers. The WildSafeBC Nelson Coordinator also knocked on every door and engaged residents in conversations about wildlife. The door-to-door program focuses on high conflict neighbourhoods, as reported to the Coordinator by local COS, residents, and City of Nelson departments such as bylaw and public works.

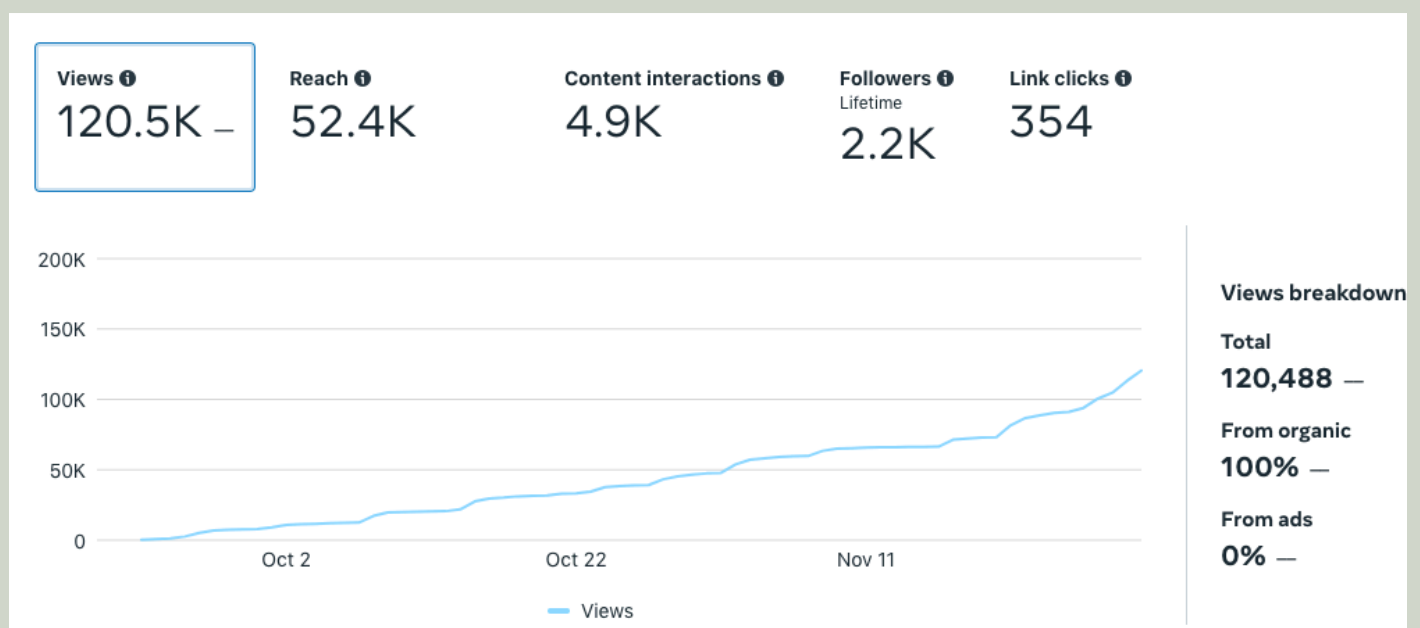


## Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Nelson Facebook page came out of hibernation on April 15 2024 with an introductory post. Over the season, the page has had **201** new Facebook followers, from 1983 followers in November 2023 to **2184** followers in November 2024. As well, the page has received **1752** Facebook Page likes during this same time period. Throughout the season, the WildSafeBC Nelson 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 Nelson Facebook page. In total, 118 Facebook posts were created that reached **120.5K** people from April 15th to November 30th. The most impactful posts included news on local bear activity, and businesses that signed the WildSafeBC Business Pledge.

Six press appearances were made by the WildSafeBC Nelson Coordinator in local newspapers, and on the radio.





## 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 Nelson held their third annual Bears & Brews Trivia night at The Adventure Hotel's sports bar, The Uptown Tavern. Prizes for the event were graciously donated by Business Pledgers The Hume Hotel, The Adventure Hotel, and The Kootenay Co-op. As well as Nelson Brewing Company, Oso Negro Coffee and Paula Wallis Photography. It is always a fun evening that is attended by a combination of locals, and visitors to the region.

Kokanee Creek Nature Centre handed out our BC Goes Wild colouring-in stencils to young campers, and local school students visiting. They were very popular, and included new choices of animals: cougar, wolf, black bear and grizzly. Winners of the colouring competition were announced in November on the provincial WildSafeBC social pages.



## Business Pledge

The WildSafeBC 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 Hume Hotel and The Kootenay Co-op both committed to re-signing with the WildSafeBC Business Pledge in 2024. For both of these prominent local businesses, it marks their second year making a commitment to keeping wildlife wild, and our community safe.

Two new businesses signed the pledge this season. Well done to The BridgeFM radio, and The Adventure Hotel for your wildlife smart practices.



## 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.

BC Parks Kokanee Creek Provincial Park have been local leaders in “bare” camping principals, and do a terrific job at co-existing with campers and local wildlife. The campground proudly displays WildSafeBC brochures at park entrance and in the Nature Centre.

The City of Nelson Campground staff received training on “bare” camping practices and bear safety, including a bear spray workshop. The campground was closed to tent camping following an incident involving a black bear sow and cub, gaining access to a food reward inside of a tent. Sadly, this resulted in the lethal removal of both bears. The campground is exploring bear proof food caches for the 2025 season. However, this is subject to available funding.





## Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

This WildSafeBC Coordinator was privileged to have spent the day with a Ktunaxa council member of the Lower Kootenay Band, in prime Grizzly Bear habitat during salmon spawning season.

This experience was of great professional and personal growth. On the day, we were witness to all of the 3 great Chiefs; the Bald Eagle - Chief of the sky, Kokanee Salmon - the Chief of the water, and the Grizzly Bear - the Chief of the land. Months later, it is still difficult for me to translate into words on how the experience has profoundly impacted me. A day I shall embrace fondly, forever.

Future seasons will see this program continue to learn about local wildlife and co-existence through the Indigenous Peoples way of life.

Below is a photo of a grizzly bear sow and cub paw prints from the day.



## Challenges and Future Goals

Improperly managed garbage, fruit trees, bird feeders, and urban livestock continue to be a source of human-wildlife conflict in Nelson and RDCK E & F. 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 Nelson Coordinator recommends the following activities for 2025:

- Continue to support the City of Nelson's organics diversion Foodcycler program. A 2025 survey is planned to evaluate resident-wildlife experiences
- Support cost-share/discounted bear resistant garbage container availability to residents
- Promote "living in wildlife country" literature to newcomers
- Continue to install bear resistant bins within the community & school districts, and decommission/repurpose outdated open concrete bins
- Aim to have roadside signage on highways notifying of wildlife crossings/corridors
- Action to remove feral fruit/nut trees along highways and right of ways
- Fruit and nut tree management through shared harvesting programs or funding to promote removal of unwanted food bearing trees
- Review wildlife bylaws to enforce bear smart practices by residents, visitors and business alike
- Complete a renewed Bear Hazard Assessment

## Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Nelson Coordinator would like to thank the City of Nelson, the Regional District of Central Kootenay, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Province of British Columbia, and the BC Conservation Foundation for funding the WildSafeBC Nelson program. Thank you to the Conservation Officer Service for their dedication, direction and unwavering support of the program, including Officers Nathan Smienk and Jason Hawkes. Thank you to the City of Nelson's Bylaw Officers, Public Works department and the Organics Waste Diversion team for your partnership and collaboration. Thank you to Anne and Rick Pigeon, and team, of Kokanee Creek Provincial Park for your support and accommodating the Nelson program events. Much gratitude to Gillian Sanders of Grizzly Bear Co-existence Solutions for continued support towards this Coordinator's professional growth and collaboration. Thanks to the Ursa Project Society for your collaboration, and advocating for local black bears. Lastly, the WildSafeBC Nelson 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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