

BOUNDARY ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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*Keeping Wildlife Wild and
Communities Safe*



Regional District of
Kootenay Boundary



Christina Lake Stewardship Society



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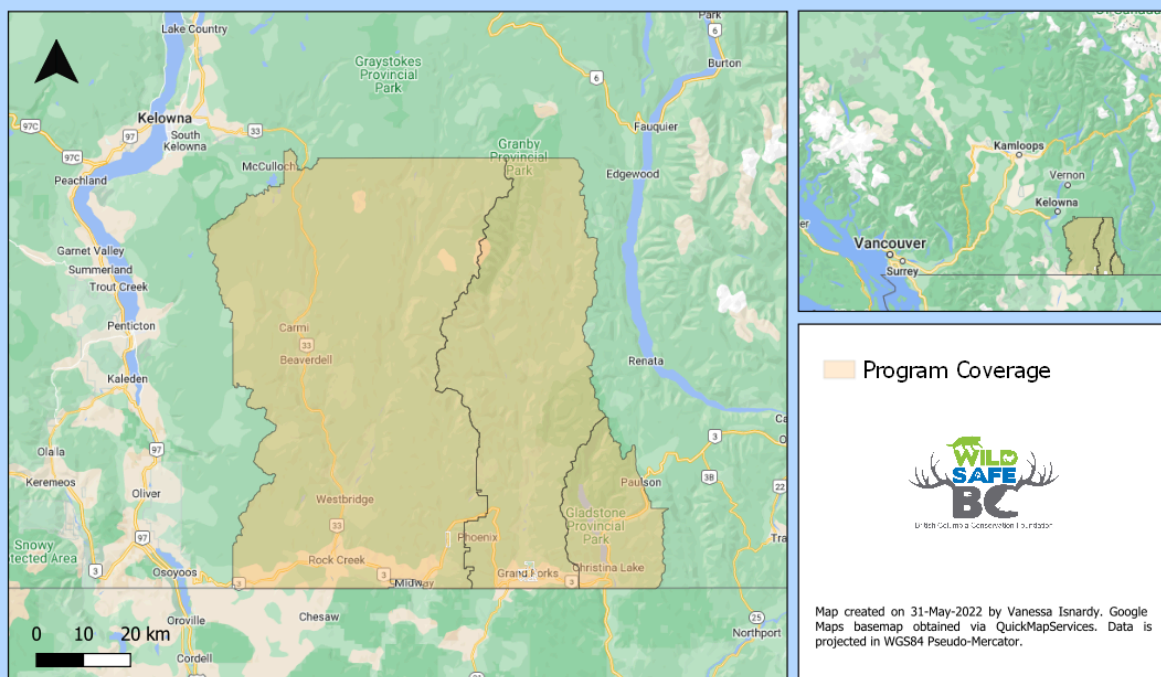
Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Boundary program for the 2024 season between April 10th and December 11th. 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 Kootenay Boundary covers approximately 8,200 square kilometers. The Boundary is located between the Okanagan and Kootenay Regions, the WildSafeBC Boundary program coverage area includes Electoral Areas E, D, and C of the Regional District of the Kootenay Boundary (RDKB) and the municipalities within, such as Christina Lake, Grand Forks, Greenwood, Midway, and Rock Creek.

WildSafeBC Boundary Program Coverage



2024 Highlights

620

Students Educated

1847

Community Members Reached

9

Community Event Booths

6

Bins Tagged

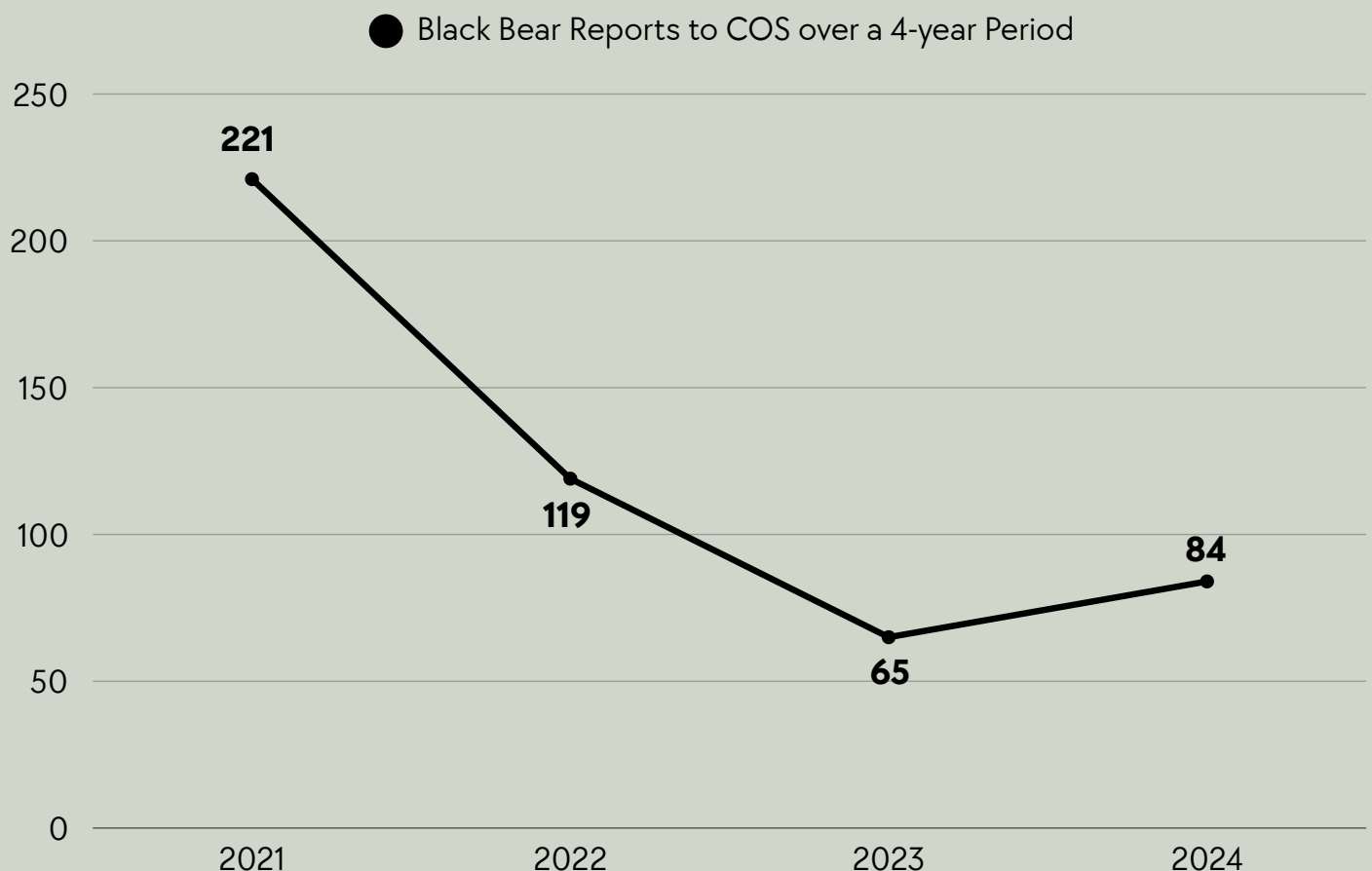
14.2k

Facebook Users Reached

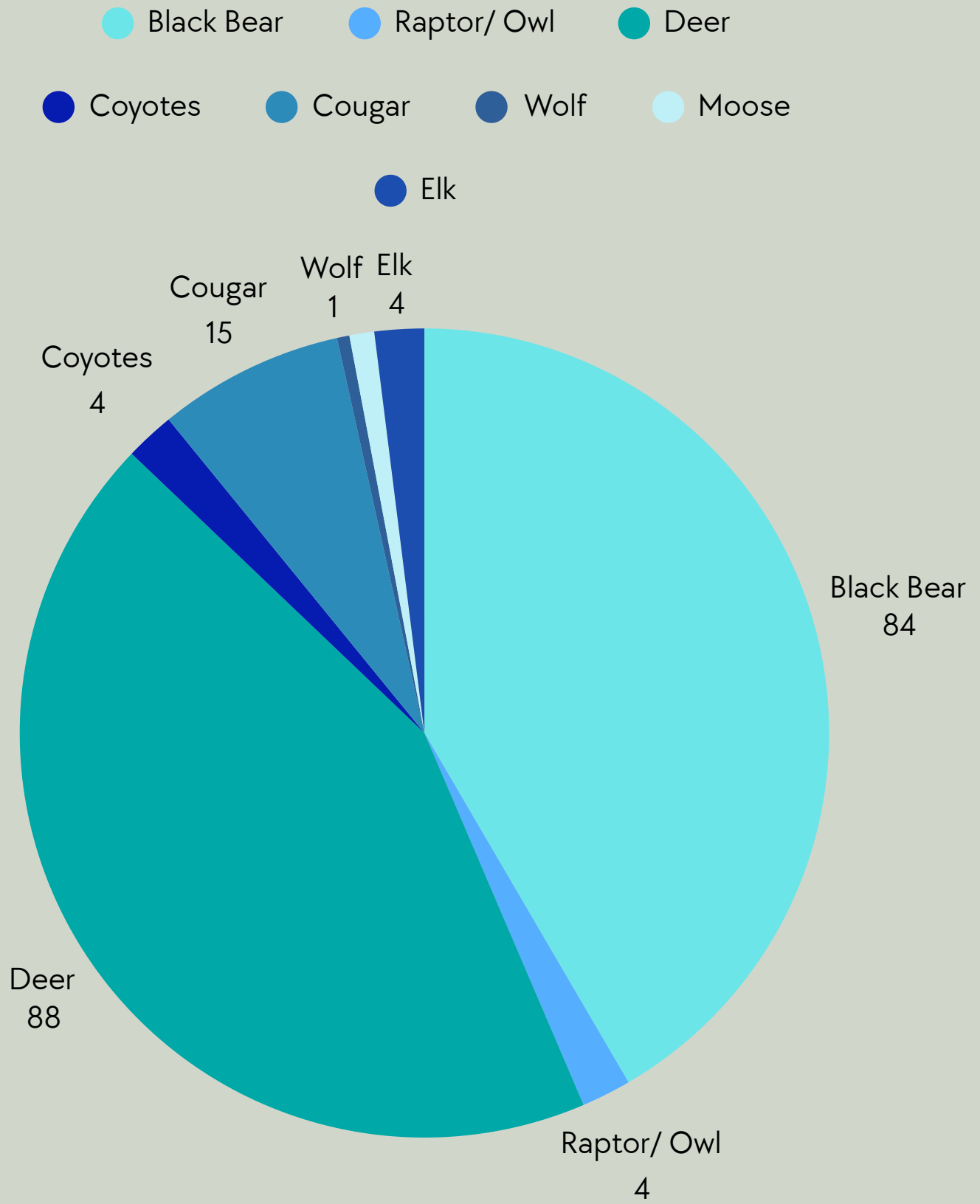
Conservation Officer Service Reports

From January 1 to November 30, a total of 209 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/>) within the Boundary.

Similar to previous years, deer were the species most often reported to the COS in 2024, followed by black bears and cougars. From January 1st, 2024 to November 30th, 2024, there were 84 black bear reports, which is higher than the number of reports made in 2023. The slight increase from last year could be related to bear activity continuing into late November as well as an abundance of fruit accessible in September. The number of deer reports has decreased marginally from 90 reports to 88 in 2024, many as a result of injury or vehicle collisions. Urban deer conflicts continue to be a concern in our communities. While cougar numbers are much lower than deer or black bear, sightings frequently generate a report.



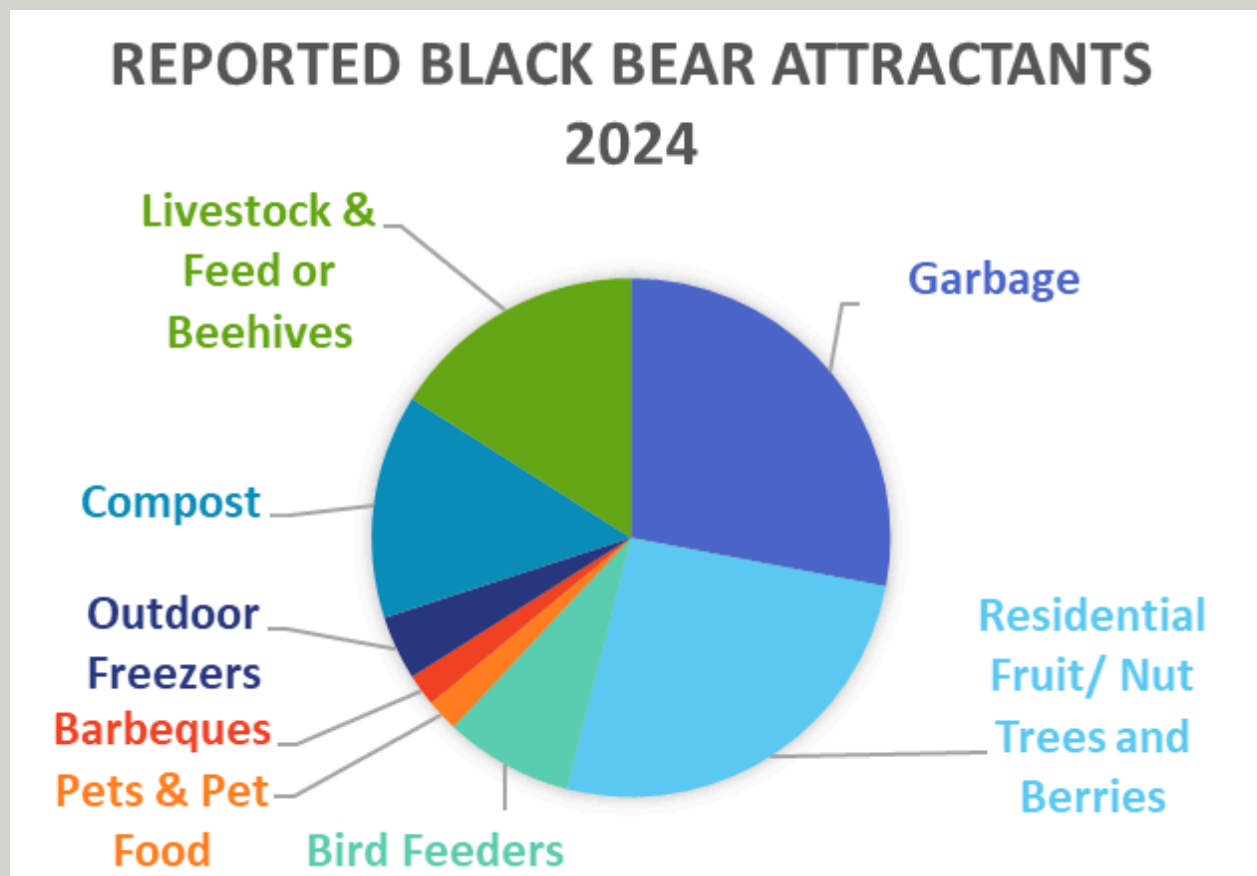
Conservation Officer Service Reports



Conservation Officer Service Reports

Black bears are numerous in BC and can tolerate living close to people. Bears prefer to avoid risk and will avoid people by foraging at night in urban areas. This adaptability and tolerance for people, along with their strong motivation to find food, can lead them into conflict. We use the terms human habituation to describe an increasing comfort around people. Bears that only came into communities at night, might start foraging during the day and become even more inquisitive by entering carports and other confined spaces.

All animals need 4 basic things; food, water, shelter and space. Bears can fulfill these needs near us if we let them. Bears will forage for fruit in backyard trees and then when the fruit wanes, they may turn to garbage. Food-conditioning is a learned behaviour when bears learn they can find food easily and with low-risk around people. When bears become human-habituated and food-conditioned, they can become increasingly determined to find food near people. The figure below depicts the human sources of bear attractants involved in human-wildlife conflicts reported within the Boundary. Garbage remained the most reported attractant in 2024 for black bears.



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 Boundary coordinator delivered ten WRP presentations with four schools (with multiple presentations in a day for sets of classes), three youth programs, and two childcare centers. A total of 620 children throughout the Boundary became WildSafe Rangers and received a WildSafe Ranger kit to take away with them.



WildSafe Ranger Program

School/Group	Grade	# Reached	Date
Girl Guides	School Aged	8	Jun. 4th
Talking Little Feet: Aboriginal Head Start Child Care Centre	3 – 5 yrs	14	Jun. 11th
Grand Forks Secondary School Outdoor Education Class	Gr. 10 & 11	13	Jun. 19th
Christina Lake Stewardship Society	School Aged	7	Aug. 21st
Sunshine Valley Childcare	3 – 5 yrs	18	Oct. 30th
Sparks & Embers	School Aged	10	Nov. 7th
CHEK ABC - Home Schooling Group	School Aged	15	Nov. 7th
John A. Hutton Elementary School	K-7	240	Nov. 5th & 12th
Christina Lake Elementary School	K-7	70	Nov. 12th
Dr. D.A. Perley Elementary School	K-7	225	Nov. 14th & 15th

Community Groups

WildSafeBC recognizes that there is much to learn about how best to safely coexist with the many species of animals that call British Columbia home. The WildSafeBC Boundary Community Coordinator offered free workshops and presentations within the community. A total of six presentations were given, including two Wildlife Awareness & Safety presentations with thirty attendees that explored wildlife behaviour and biology, factors that lead to human-wildlife conflict, and the many solutions available to reduce conflict and stay safe, and two Bear Spray Demonstrations with thirty-two participants that were able to learn about and practice using inert bear spray. The Bare Campsite Workshop, which gave participants the opportunity to learn about how to manage attractants while camping, involved seventy individuals, and the Christina Lake Watershed Management Plan presentation, which included similar topics to the Wildlife Awareness and Safety presentation as well as a report on activities done to help keep wildlife wild and communities safe, with eighty-six attendees. Altogether, these presentations were attended by two hundred and eighteen people, reflecting a strong community interest in wildlife safety and attractant management.



Community Groups

Type of Presentation	# of Presentations	# of Participants
Wildlife Awareness & Safety	2	30
Bear Spray Demonstrations	2	32
Bare Campsite Workshop	1	70
Christina Lake Watershed Management Plan	1	86
Total Number of Participants = 218		

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 1500 people visited the WildSafeBC display booths at nine community events across the community. BC Trails Day, Grand Forks Farmers Market, Canada Day, Christina Lake's Homecoming, Greenwood's Founder's Day, Grand Forks Recreation Backyard BBQ, Grand Forks Fall Fair, Grand Forks Recreation Parade of Programs, and Rock Creek Fall Fair.

These events were well attended and members of the community that visited the WildSafeBC booth were able to ask the Boundary Community Coordinator questions like why it is important not to feed deer, why reporting black bears accessing attractants is important, and why it is not in the community or bear's best interest to delay reporting or simply not report black bear activity. Families enjoyed looking at nature artifacts, listening to the Community Coordinator share different wildlife facts, and the hands-on learning experience.



Display Booths

Venue	# of Visitors	Date
BC Trails Day	21	June 1
Grand Forks Farmers Market	103	June 21
Canada Day	252	July 1
Homecoming	82	July 13
Founder's Day	113	July 14
GF Rec Backyard BBQ	52	July 18
Grand Forks Fall Fair	234	September 7 & 8
Parade of Programs	82	September 10
Rock Creek Fall Fair	609	September 14 & 15
Total Number of Participants = 1548		

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 one outing, a total of six bins were tagged across one garbage collection zone. The entire community of Christina Lake was observed after 9:00pm to check for garbage put out too early.

Garbage and compost set on the curb at night is an easy target for wildlife. By removing access to these attractants we can help prevent food-conditioning wildlife. Garbage bin tagging can be effective, unfortunately due to schedule conflicts the WildSafe coordinator was unable to do more than an initial survey in Christina Lake to see the efficacy of bin tagging and was unavailable to survey other neighbourhoods within the Boundary.

Door-to-door education reached 81 people with door hangers or conversation. The WildSafe Coordinator knocked on every door and engaged residents in conversations about wildlife and provided an educational pamphlet about black bears. If there was no answer at the door the WildSafe Coordinator left a door hanger with information on the top ten ways to manage attractants around the home and contact details if the resident wanted more information.

Help Keep Wildlife Wild and Your Community Safe

Every year in BC, thousands of animals come into conflict with people as they seek out food, water or shelter in our communities.

WildSafeBC provides information on how we can **LIVE, WORK, PLAY** and **GROW** in wildlife country. Visit us at wildsafebc.com.



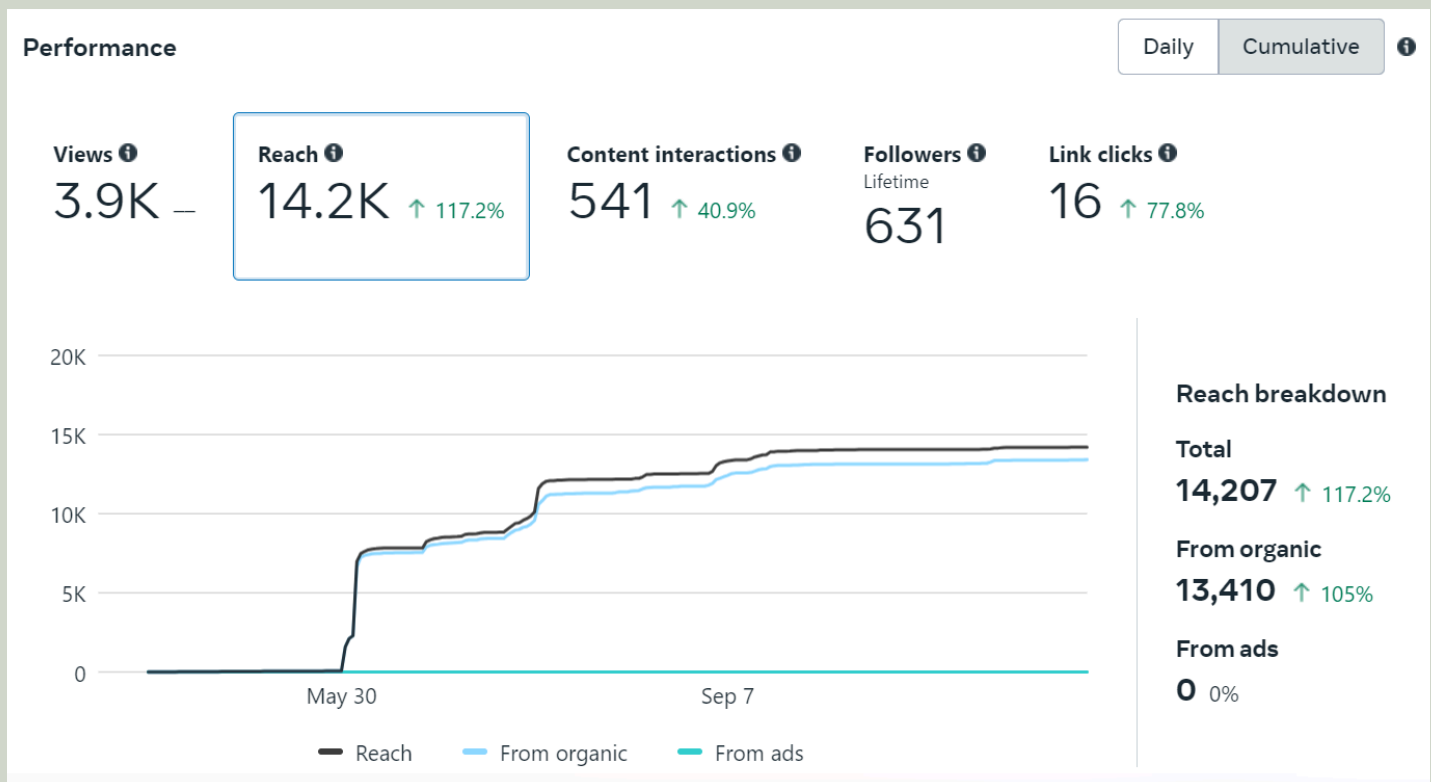
TOP 10 WAYS TO HELP WILDLIFE

1. Keep your garbage secure – store it in a secure location indoors or a bear-resistant enclosure.
2. Only put your garbage/compost/recyclables out on collection day - never the night before.
3. Manage your fruit trees so that fruit is picked as it ripens and no windfall accumulates.
4. Bring bird feeders in from April through November – and when they are out, ensure that the ground underneath is kept free of seeds.
5. Feed pets indoors.
6. Maintain your compost so that it doesn't smell. Add fruit slowly. Never add meat or other animal products.
7. Protect orchards, beehives and small livestock with a properly installed and maintained electric fence.
8. Respect wild animals by not feeding them. Food-conditioned wildlife are more likely to come into conflict.
9. Keep barbecues clean and odour free.
10. Report any wildlife in conflict immediately to the Conservation Officer Service 24/7 at **1.877.952.7277**.

Social Media

The WildSafeBC Boundary Facebook page came out of hibernation on May 31st, 2024 with an introductory post. Over the season, the page has had sixty new Facebook followers, from 576 followers in November 2023 to 636 followers in November 2024. As well, the page has received 611 Facebook Page likes during this same time period.

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. Many Facebook posts created were also shared by Facebook users into other groups or on their own personal timeline, which helped promote the WildSafeBC Boundary Facebook page. In total, 59 Facebook posts were created that reached 14,200 people from May 31st to December 12th. Many posts reached over 500 Facebook users.



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. No new businesses signed the pledge this year. One outdoor recreation-based businesses was contacted within the Boundary Region in 2024. Interfor also contacted the WildSafeBC Boundary Community Coordinator to inquire about the process of a business pledge. It was determined that this was not what the Interfor Grand Forks Sawmill needed at this time. WildWays, although unavailable for training, did carry and distribute several WSBC wildlife species pamphlets to costumers.



Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The Boundary region is a vast region that overlaps the traditional territories of many Indigenous Peoples, such as the Syilx Okanagan, Sinixt, Colville Confederated Tribes, and Ktunaxa Peoples. Some of these nations have legal rights to areas of the Boundary, some have territory through the colonial land claims process, and some are still working towards re-establishing a relationship with their traditional territories. It is essential to understand that only some agree on this subject and that many perspectives exist.

The WildSafeBC program works to keep wildlife wild and communities safe, which aligns with the idea of caring for the land we are privileged to be on. The WildSafeBC Boundary Coordinator was invited to visit Talking Little Feet: Aboriginal Head Start Child Care Centre. The center is founded on the belief that Aboriginal children benefit from learning about their culture and language in an environment that respects and honours Aboriginal diversity, teachings and protocols.



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.

Throughout September, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator increased activity within the community and advertised the BC Goes Wild Photo Contest and WildSafe Rangers Colouring contest on Facebook and at WildSafeBC Information Booths at the Grand Forks Fall Fair and Rock Creek Fall Fair, reaching 691 people at these events.



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 Boundary. 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 Boundary Coordinator recommends the following activities for 2025:

- Continued presence at local events and markets as in-person communication was effective in educating community members
- Continued open communication with the Conservation Officer Service. Unfortunately, a member of the 2-person team has moved on this year and will not be replaced until September 2025. It is important that the WildSafeBC Boundary Coordinator for 2025 works with the remaining conservation officer to reach neighbourhoods with high levels of human-wildlife conflict effectively
- The number of reports of conflict with deer is still high within the Boundary this year. Many people at booths, WRP presentations, and Wildlife Safety and Awareness presentations mentioned instances of people actively feeding deer. Working with By-law officers to help deter this behaviour to prevent conflict will be ideal. It may also benefit the community if more municipalities consider enacting a bylaw.
- Garbage is among the top attractants within communities that draw wildlife into residential areas. Reports indicate bears entered structures and remained in people's yards, impacting the neighbourhood's safety. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community and would benefit from increased education and garbage tagging activities.
- The number one reported wildlife attractant was fruit trees in 2024. The Boundary could benefit from a "Harvest Share" program such as the one in Castlegar where volunteers are connected with fruit in need of picking.

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Boundary Coordinator would like to thank the areas E, D, and C of the Regional District of the Kootenay Boundary, the Province of British Columbia, and the BC Conservation Foundation for funding the WildSafeBC Boundary project. Thank you to the Conservation Officer Service for their direction and support of the program, including officers Brock VanDamme and Marc Plamondon. A special thank you goes out to: The Christina Lake Stewardship Society (CLSS), CLSS Senior Stewardship Assistant LeeAnne Wolf, CLSS Summer Assistant Briana Burch, Grand Forks & District Recreation Supervisor Melina Van Hoogevest, Grand Forks & District Manager of Facilities and Recreation Paul Keys, Aquatics Coordinator Richard Friesen, Head Guard Bella Hoodle, Grand Forks Market Manager Christina Hagemann, Rock Creek & Boundary Fair Association Vendor & Sponsorship Coordinator Lesli Voss, Grand Forks and District Fall Fair Society Secretary Doreen Sorensen, Boundary Invasive Species Outreach Coordinator Olivia Schneider, RDKB Christina Lake Area C Director Grace McGregor, and RDKB Electoral Area' D'/Rural Grand Forks Director Linda Kay Wiese. This season's activities could not have happened without the help of Colin Lee-Mitchell, who volunteered his time and efforts. Lastly, the WildSafeBC Boundary 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***