

CASTLEGAR ANNUAL REPORT 2025

Prepared By :

Tara Pejski



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



Columbia
Basin **trust**



www.wildsafebc.com



programs@wildsafebc.com



250-828-2551 ext. 109

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Castlegar program for the 2025 season between April 19th 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 2025 season, and will help shape the delivery of the program for the 2026 based on coordinator, community, and sponsor needs.

Program Coverage Area

The program area includes the City of Castlegar and the communities located in Areas I and J within the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK). WildSafeBC would like to acknowledge that Castlegar and the surrounding area are located on traditional territories of the Sinixt Nation.



2025 Highlights

720

Students Educated

789

Community Members Reached

14

Event Booths & Presentations

140

Bins Tagged

19.2K

Facebook Users Reached

360

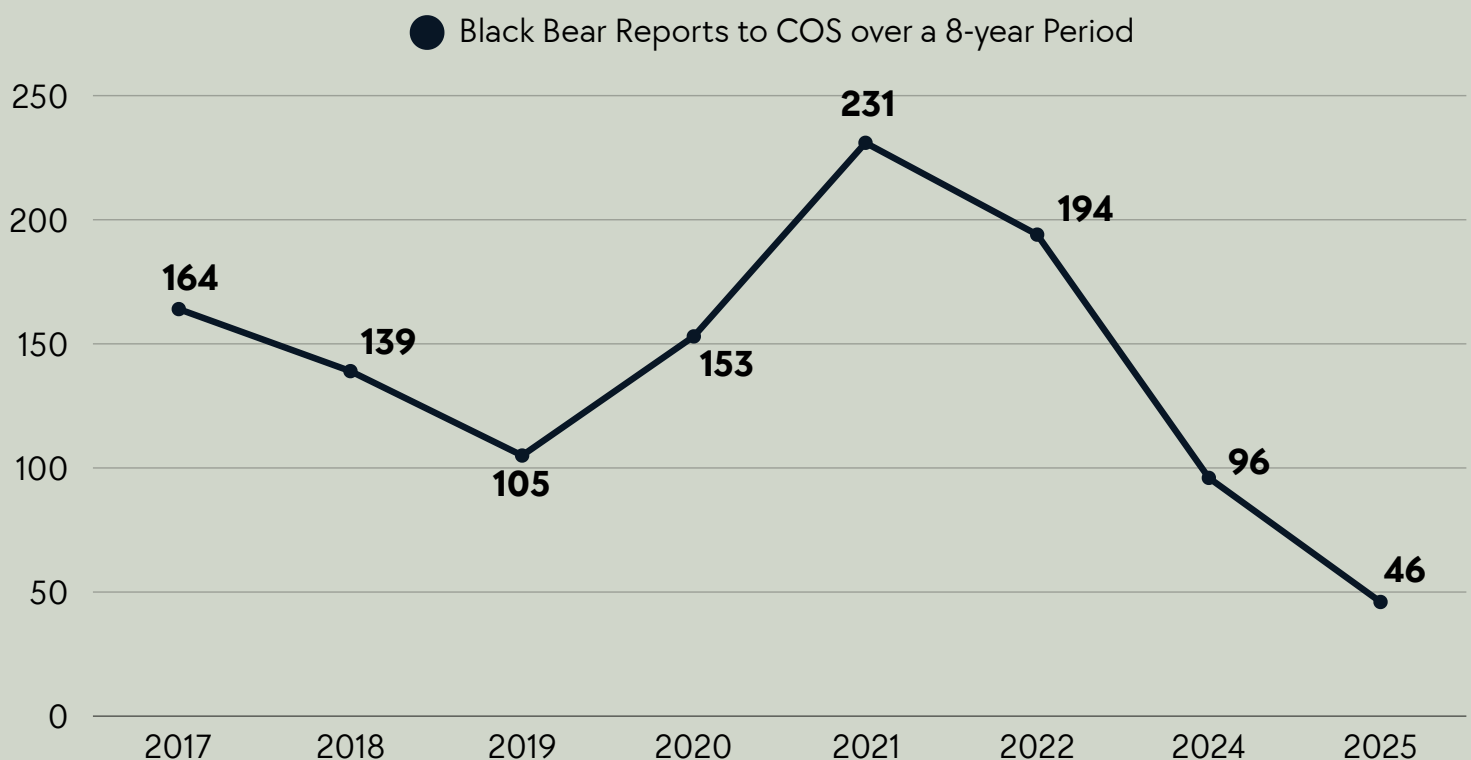
Harvest Match Users

Conservation Officer Service Reports

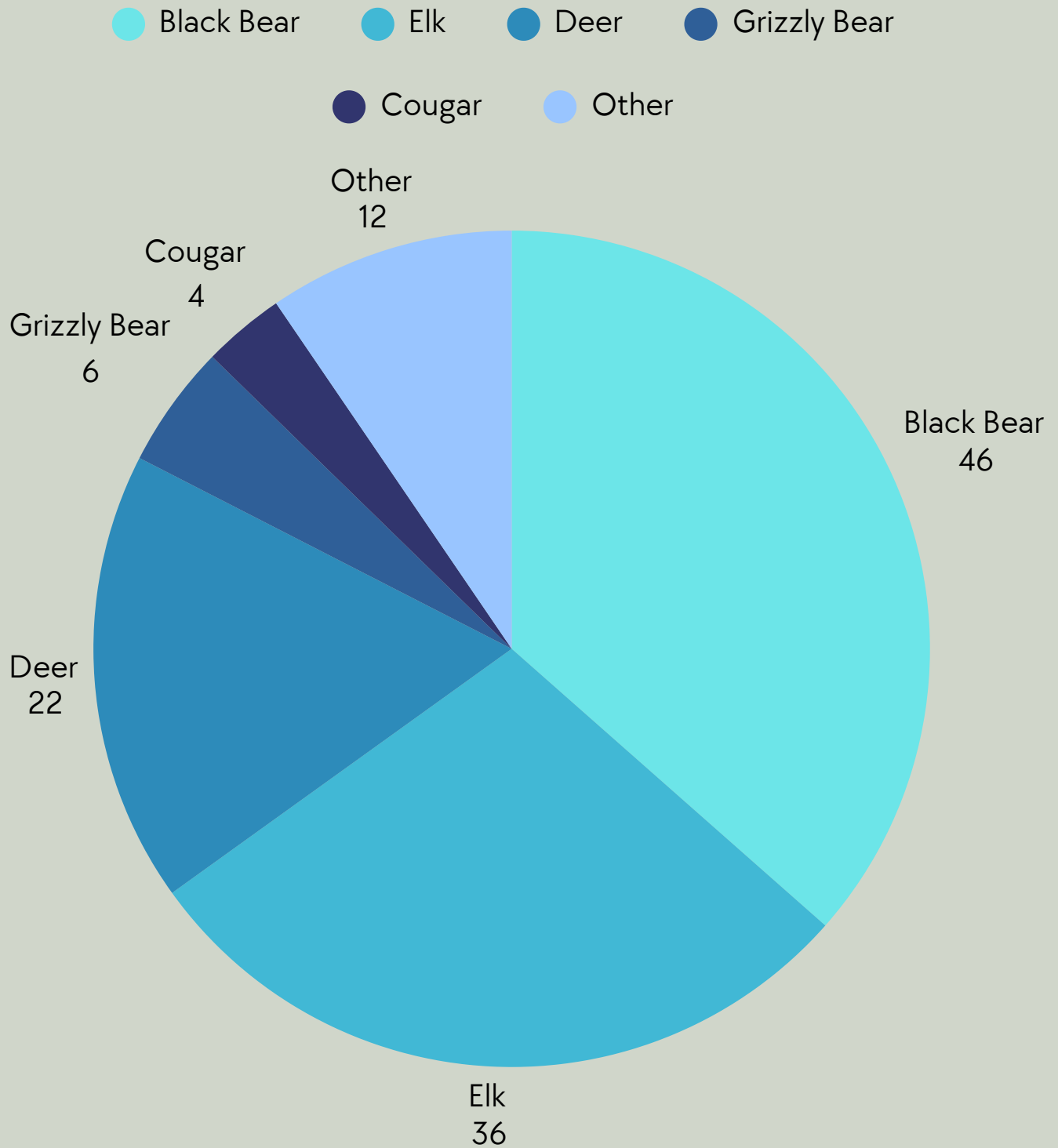
From January 1st to October 31st, a total of 126 wildlife reports have been made to the COS through the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line (1-877-952-7277) or online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>).

Similar to previous years, black bears were the species most often reported to the COS in 2025, followed by elk and deer. From January 1st, 2025 to October 31st, 2025, there were 46 black bear reports, which is the lowest number ever reported since WSBC starting tracking in 2017*. While many local experts agree that 2025 was a quiet year for bear activity, it has also been noticed that many members of the community do not report to COS as they (incorrectly) fear that the bear will automatically be destroyed. As a result, many sightings are not reported. In previous years individuals would be able to report on the WARP line.*2023 data was unavailable

It should also be noted that certain neighborhoods did report a lack of bear activity to WildSafeBC, while noticing an increase in other species. For example, there were multiple reports of elk in residential areas, where they are more commonly spotted on the outskirts of town.



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 Community Coordinator delivered 34 WRP presentations with 3 elementary schools, 1 summer camp, the local Scouts group and 3 childcare facilities. A total of 720 children throughout Castlegar became WildSafe Rangers and received a WildSafe Ranger kit to take away with them.

School/Group	Grade	# Reached	Date
Selkirk Daycare	Preschool	30	May 8
Twin Rivers Elementary	K-7	120	June 10
Exploration Station	Preschool	15	June 18
Silly Monkey's	Preschool	55	July 9
Library Summer Reading Program	PreK-6	65	July 15, 16, 17, 18
Robson Community School	K-6	136	Oct. 3
Kinnaird Elementary	K-6	228	October 6, 8
Scouts	3-5	11	November 24



Community Groups

This year the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator was able to provide 3 Wildlife Awareness presentations to a variety of groups within Castlegar. It is noteworthy that the majority of people who attended these presentations were not familiar with local wildlife and their behaviours. A large focus was placed on wildlife attractants and how to stay safe in the event of a wildlife encounter. The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator was able to host 3 Bear Spray Workshops reaching 36 individuals. Between presentations and workshops, more than 100 individuals received important wildlife education.

It is notable that six community groups have already requested presentation for the 2026 season.

Group	# Reached	Type of Presentation	Date
CBAL	15	Wildlife Awareness	May 20
Open call to community	10	Bear Spray Workshop	June 3
City of Castlegar	18	Bear Spray Workshop	June 4
Selkirk College	50	Wildlife Awareness	September 8
Open call to community	4	Wildlife Awareness	September 25
Scouts	8	Bear Spray Workshop	November 24



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 2025, more than 560 people visited the WildSafeBC display booth at 8 public events across the community. These booths were held in a variety of locations in an attempt to reach a broader audience. Regardless of location, a large variety of pamphlets on wildlife are always readily available, and a bear pelt, footprints and skulls on display are always sure to start a conversation with those in attendance.



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 eight outings, a total of 81 residential bins were tagged across 4 garbage collection zones. In addition, a round of commercial bin tagging was also conducted. This resulted in 14 commercial bins being reported as either being unlocked, or with an open lid, to the City of Castlegar.

This year the City of Castlegar strengthened the wording of their Wildlife Attractant Bylaw to make it clear that ALL bins (garbage, organic and recycling) must be kept locked and secured until the morning of collection. In the past, the Community Coordinator only tagged garbage and organic bins, but this year recycle bins were also included.

The residents have made great improvements in following the Bylaw in regards to garbage bins, but more education should be conducted focusing on the importance of including all bins. This season it was witnessed that 28 homes placed out only organic bins, 34 homes placed out only recycling, 5 homes placed out only garbage bins, and 14 homes placed out multiple bins (8 homes had organics and recycling, 6 homes had organics and garbage). Multiple bins - which only results in one tag. This season, 14 wildlife attractant tickets were issued - and 77 received warnings.



Door-To-Door Canvassing

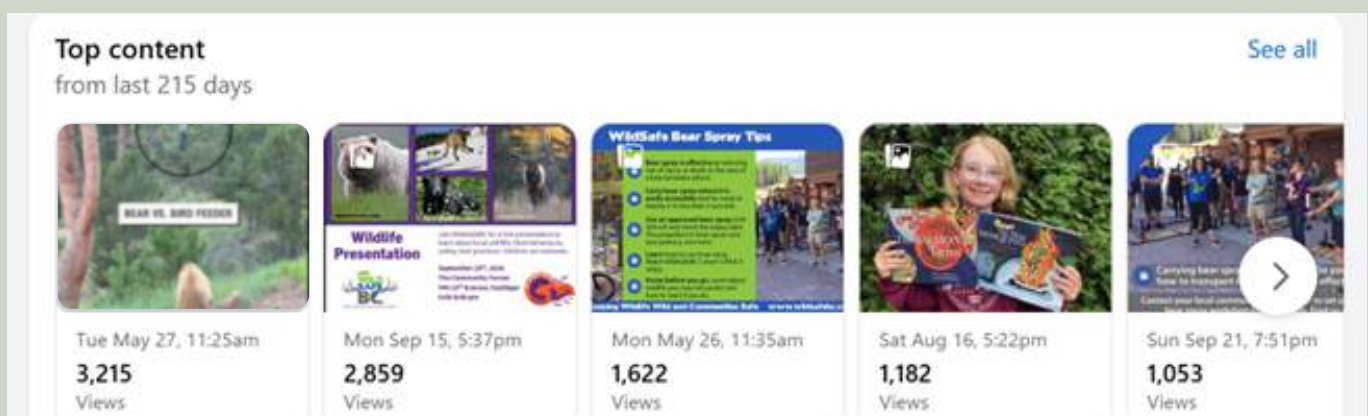
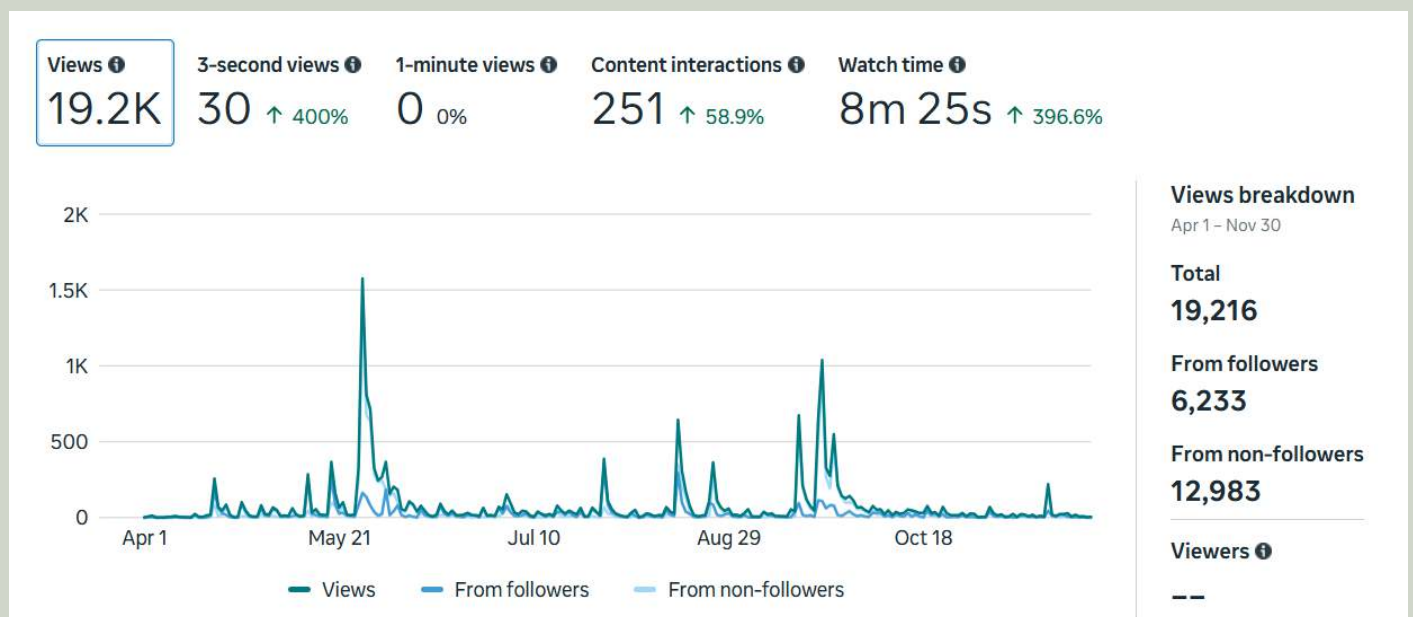
Door-to-door education reached 132 people with door hangers. The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator engaged residents in conversations about wildlife and provided pamphlets with additional information.

Typically, canvassing areas is the result of calls reporting active wildlife in a specific area. This year there were calls about bears, but fewer than in previous years. Aside from bears, canvassing was also completed due to calls about rats, skunks and elk. Many of the conversations held during canvassing focused on wildlife attractants and proper management of the attractants.



Social Media

The WildSafeBC Castlegar Facebook page came out of hibernation on April 19th with an introductory post. Throughout the season, the WildSafeBC Castlegar 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 Castlegar Facebook page. In total, 53 Facebook posts were created that reached 19.2K people from April 19th to November 19th, resulting in over 250 interactions. The most impactful post was a video of a bear climbing a tree to reach a bird feeder with 3215 views.



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 10th Annual BC Goes Wild Event. In partnership with the City of Castlegar, we were able to host a free family movie night at the Old Movie Theatre, where we watched Arctic Tale. This event had a good turnout with over 60 people in attendance. WildSafeBC also had an information booth and coloring sheets to handout at the event.

In addition to the free family night, there was also a wildlife safety presentation that was open to the public, and the opportunity for a free bear spray workshop.



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.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator visited the Pass Creek Campground Manager and was pleased with the progress they have made. They adopted the practice of having campers sign a declaration upon check-in that they will not leave any attractants out when their site is unattended. The campground also has also installed food lockers to help ensure the safety of campers staying in soft-sided units. Further, they have installed a communal kitchen for campers to help keep food prep areas away from sleeping areas and properly dispose of gray water. Various wildlife pamphlets were provided as handouts to campers and a “pick me” was left to help glean the few fruit trees within the campground.

Syringa Provincial Park was also visited and provided pamphlets on the various wildlife that frequents the area. Most notably, this includes black bears, marmots, skunks, and coyotes. The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator also returned to host an interactive attractants game to campers at the campgrounds park area.

Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

For the past two season, the WildSafeBC Castlegar Community Coordinator along with other WildSafeBC Coordinators, has had the opportunity to complete training provided by the Indigenous Training Academy. The goal of this training is to gain a stronger understanding on how to effectively engage with local Indigenous groups, to appreciate traditional consultation and negotiation processes, and of course, to learn more about the history behind these practices.

Locally, further research was done into understanding and appreciating the Indigenous groups with ancestral connections within the Castlegar area. Not all local experts agree on where one Band’s territory ends and another begins so deeper research is required. Castlegar spans the traditional unceded territories of the Syilx, Sinixt, Ktunaxa, Secwépemc and Metis Peoples.

Challenges and Future Goals

Improperly managed garbage, fruit trees, bird feeders, and urban livestock continue to be a source of human-wildlife conflict in Castlegar. 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 Castlegar Coordinator recommends the following activities for 2026:

- Initiate the bin tagging program as soon as possible in the active bear season (starting as early as April) and attempt to recruit volunteers to assist with this program with appropriate conflict mitigation training. Consistency is key with this program
- Continue to educate the public on the importance of keeping *all* bins locked and secured until the morning of collection. Additional learning needs to be completed in regards to organic and recycle bins
- Increase efforts towards monitoring local commercial bins, ensuring they are also properly locked and secured
- Continue the promotion of the Harvest Match program – particularly with houses that have unmanaged fruit trees or renters that may not be motivated to properly glean the fruit
- Encourage continued education and enforcement efforts, especially focusing residents and businesses where repeated attractant mismanagement occurs
- Work with residents to find effective bin security solutions
- Focus on engaging with local businesses and having them commit to the business pledge

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Castlegar Community Coordinator would like to thank the City of Castlegar, the Regional District of Central Kootenay, the Columbia Basin Trust, and the Province of BC for their financial support of this program. Thank you to local Conservation Officer Service, Castlegar Bylaw Officer Preet Pal, the great staff at City Hall, and the various media outlets for running stories and broadcasts that helped spread the messaging of WildSafeBC. Thank you to the community members of Castlegar for their support and readiness to learn about wildlife and attractant management strategies. Lastly, the WildSafeBC Castlegar 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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