

# CENTRAL OKANAGAN ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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



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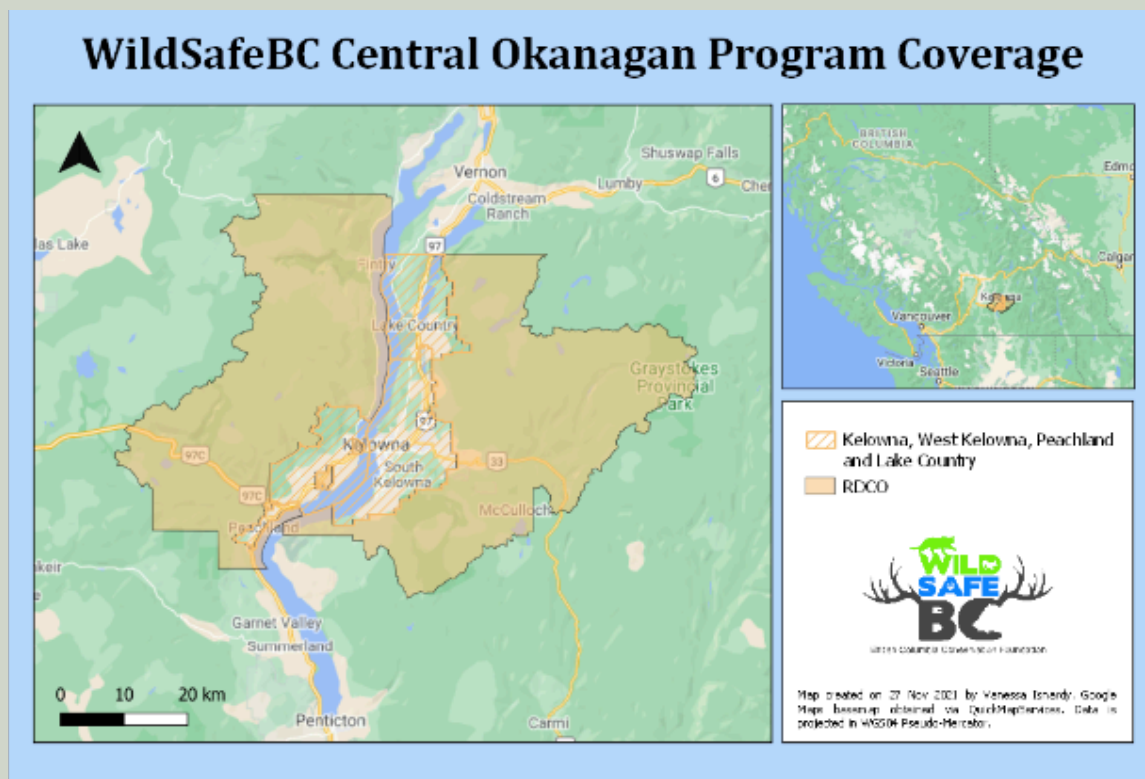
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# Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Central Okanagan program for the 2025 season between April 16th 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 2026 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.



## 2025 Highlights

**457**

Students Educated

**1350+**

Community Members Reached

**10**

Community Event Booths

**2000+**

Bins Tagged

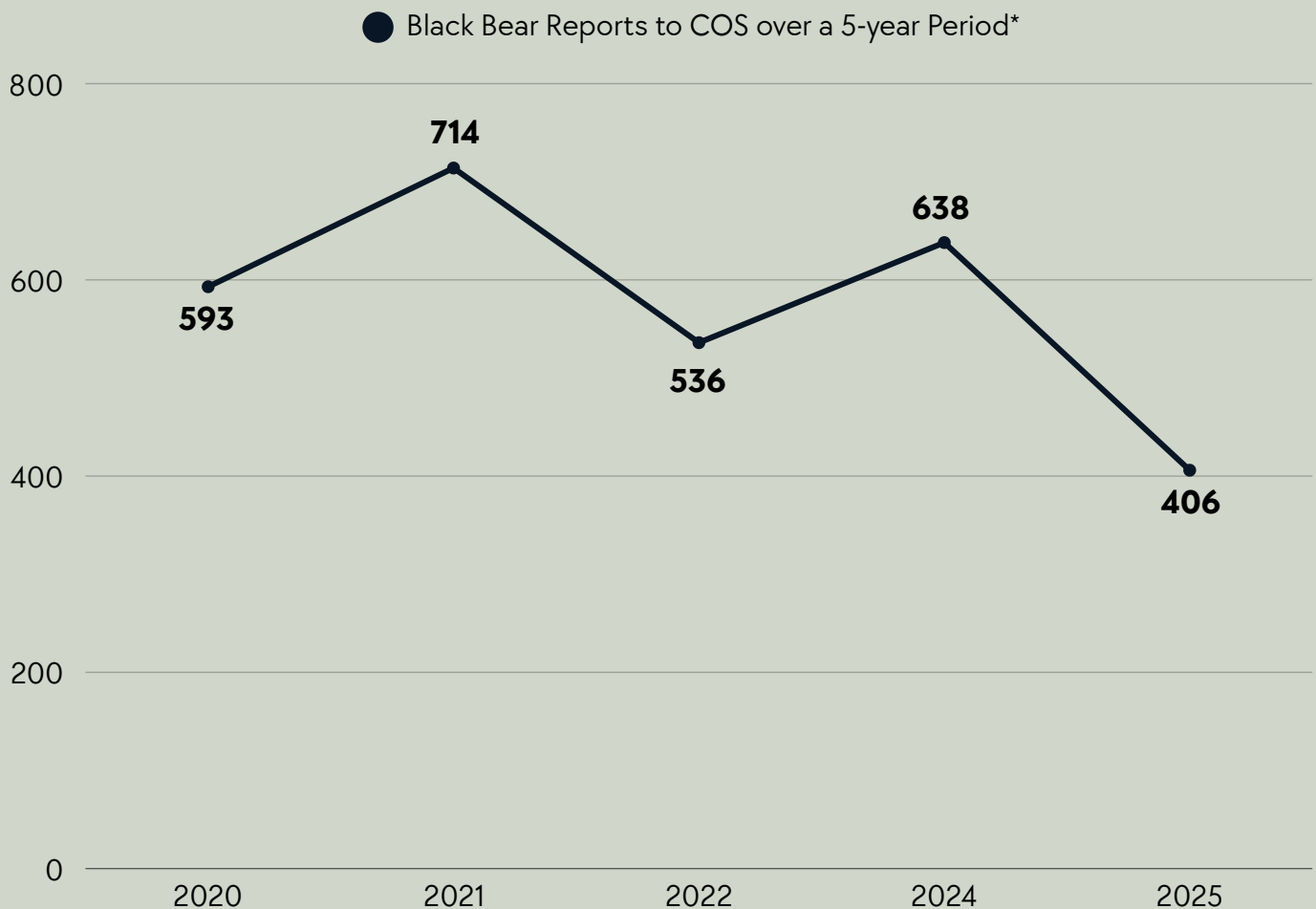
**24.2K**

Facebook Users Reached

# Conservation Officer Service Reports

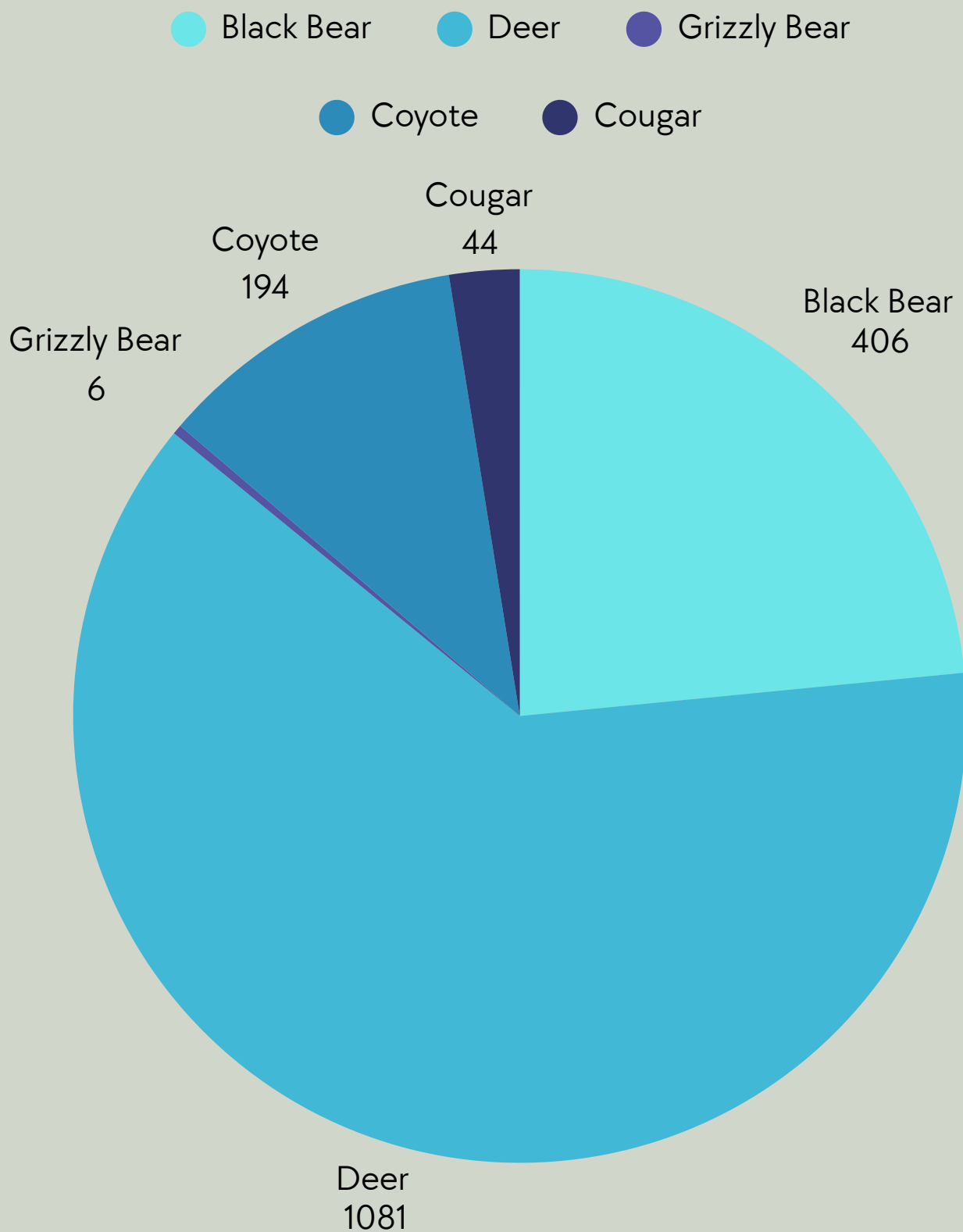
From January 1 to October 31, a total of 1731 wildlife reports have been made to the COS through the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line (1-877-952-7277) or online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>).

Similar to previous years, deer were the species most often reported to the COS in 2025, followed by black bears and coyotes. From January 1st, 2025, to October 31st, 2025, there were 406 black bear reports, which is lower than the average number of reports made over the 5-year period (577). Black bear reports may be lower than average due to a variety of reasons such as the plentiful berry season and misconceptions around reporting. Deer reports remain the highest reported species, likely a result of increased urban deer populations and vehicle collisions.



*\*Excluding 2023 data*

# 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 Central Okanagan coordinator delivered 19 WRP presentations with 3 elementary schools, 4 summer camps, and 3 youth programs. A total of 457 children throughout Central Okanagan became WildSafe Rangers and received a WildSafe Ranger kit to take away with them.

School/Group	Grade	# Reached	Date
Beaver Scouts	2-4	25	June 2
BCSPCA Summer Camp	K-4	54	July 9, 17, 30, Aug 14
Boys & Girls Club Okanagan	1-5	12	Aug 19, Oct 4
Davidson Road Elementary	1-3	183	Oct 6, 9
Peachland Elementary	1-4	157	Oct 21, 23
Hudson Road Elementary	K	25	Nov 6

## 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 6 presentations were delivered to community groups in the Central Okanagan.

The Wildlife Safety Awareness presentation was delivered to 90 community members at 5 events. This presentation covers local wildlife, their behaviour, and safety procedures for each species. Wildsafe was especially excited to present to the Central Okanagan Naturalists club, as well as collaborate with the Okanagan Similkameen Stewardship Society, to run a workshop focused on the Winfield Wildlife Corridor.

A total of 2 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, 32 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 2025, more than 840 people visited the WildSafeBC display booth at 10 different community events.

This season, WildSafeBC was able to hold booths at the Peachland farmer's market, the Peachland community open house, various RDCO events, regional parks, and at trailheads for hikers! During these events, adults and kids alike enjoyed the biofacts such as the replica animal skulls, prints, claws, and scat. Activity sheets such as nature bingo, word searches, tracking guides, and colouring sheets were handed out at booths and were popular among families. The events were very successful and had positive engagement. Community booths create an opportunity for residents and tourists to express concern or ask questions about wildlife in a low-pressure environment, which also helps the coordinator to learn about recent sightings and conflict risks that may not be reported formally to the COS.



## 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 25 outings, a total of 2071 bins were tagged across 13 garbage collection zones. Neighbourhoods were visited based on reports forwarded from local Conservation Officers and resident concerns.

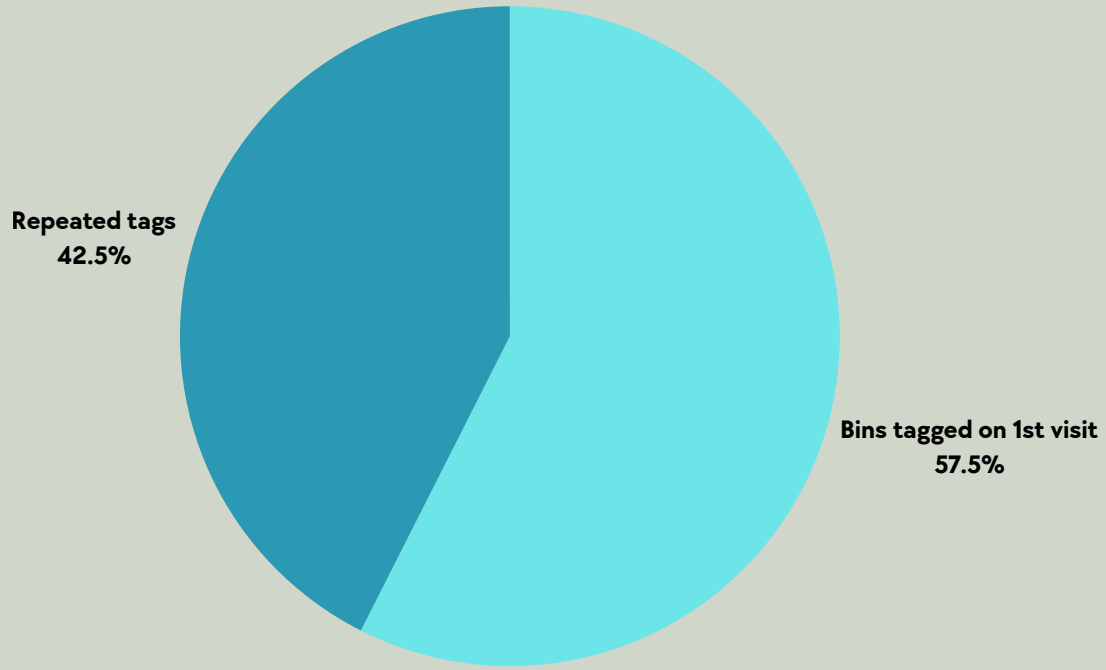
The success of bin tagging was shown as 58% of residences whose bins were tagged during an initial survey did not have bins out on the curb again during a second survey, and only 42% of residences whose bins were tagged during an initial survey had their bins out on the curb again during a second survey. Results varied per neighbourhood as tagging efforts in Smith Creek resulted in almost a 90% decrease in bins on the curb, whereas tagging in Clifton Rd showed only 41% compliance with garbage management.

Door-to-door education reached 278 households 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 151 were spoken to in person, which provided the opportunity to express concerns and ask questions.



# Bin Tagging and Door-to-Door

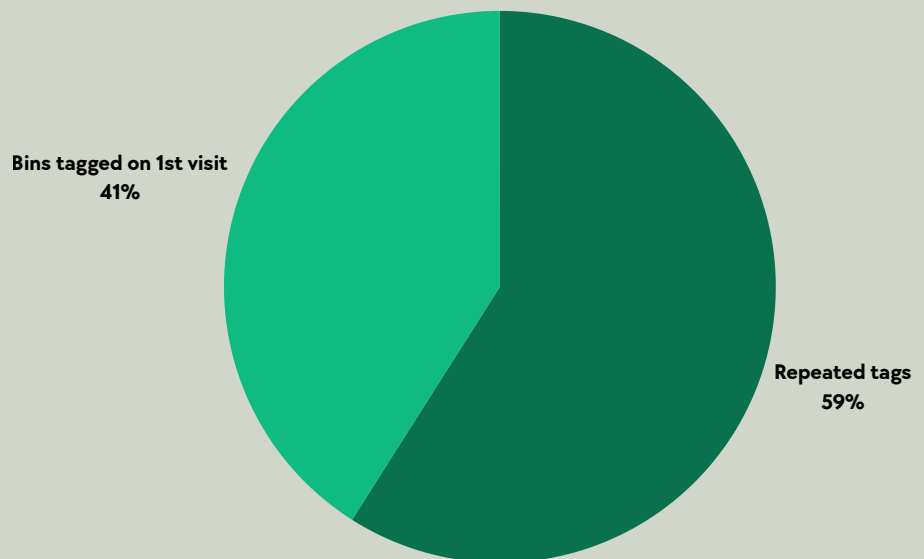
## Bin Tagging Effectiveness Across Program Area 2025



## Most Effective Area: Smith Creek



## Least Effective Area: Clifton Rd



## Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Central Okanagan Facebook page came out of hibernation on April 22nd with an introductory post. Over the season, the page has had 29 new Facebook followers, from 967 followers in April 2025 to 996 followers in November 2025. 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, 105 Facebook posts were created that reached over 6900 people from April 21st to November 30th. Many posts reached over 150 Facebook users, with the most impactful post generating over 4500 views. This was a bear alert post which helps residents to be aware of their surroundings and the presence of the bears.

Over the season, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator participated in over 7 press releases from municipalities and local media outlets. These releases regarded local wildlife sightings, safety, and attractant management. These releases, along with neighbourhood social pages, make a noticeable difference in resident awareness and influence success in efforts such as bin tagging.



### BEARS & FRUIT DON'T MIX

## Don't let bears feast from your fruit trees: WildSafeBC

Cindy White - Jun 24, 2025 / 4:00 am



## 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 10th Annual BC Goes Wild Event.

This BC Goes Wild, Central Okanagan participated in 5 community events and presentations, discussing why September is the time conflicts peak by exploring salmon life cycles, berry seasons, and hyperphagia in black bears. At each event, our province-wide contests, such as our colouring contest and our photography contests, were promoted to the community to encourage people to get involved. During the month, activities such as door-to-door and bin tagging also increased as black bear activity peaked in the Okanagan.



# 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](http://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 email with the Westbank First Nation, reaching out about community engagement booths or newsletters, and meeting with members of the Okanagan Nation Alliance to search for opportunities for collaboration between local nations and WildSafeBC.

WildSafeBC is very grateful to be working on Syilx/Okanagan land and acknowledges that fundamental information about wildlife coexistence and 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, WildSafeBC reached many new organizations and built valuable relationships with the Okanagan Naturalists Club, Okanagan Boys and Girls Club, the Association of Interior Realtors, the Okanagan-Similkameen Stewardship Society, and Okanagan Nation Alliance. Keeping these connections will help to reach community members through joint events and presentations while opening opportunities for collaboration. Many of these connections were set as goals from last year and should continue next season to support proactive attractant management and contribute to WildSafeBC's connection to the community.



### UPCOMING ACTIVITIES:

**CONC SPEAKER, SEPTEMBER 9 GENERAL MEETING BREANNA SCOTT, WILDSAFEBC**

[WildSafeBC](#) is the provincial leader in preventing conflict with wildlife through collaboration, education, and community solutions. WildSafeBC evolved out of the highly successful *Bear Aware* program and is managed and delivered by the British Columbia Conservation Foundation. There are coordinators throughout the province who deliver the program to over 100 communities. Our activities include: door-to-door outreach, presentations for school-aged children, presentations on wildlife awareness and safety, bear spray workshops, booths at community events, garbage tagging, and more.

Our motto is "**Keeping wildlife wild and communities safe**".

Throughout the presentation, we will talk about general safety, biology, and behaviour of various animals including Black Bear, Grizzly Bear, Cougar, Coyote, Raccoons, Rats, and Rattlesnakes.



## Challenges and Future Goals

Challenges this season involved an increasing population in the Okanagan, with new residents unaware of how to manage attractants and coexist with wildlife. This resulted in many cases of improper attractant management, especially in newly developed neighbourhoods. The lack of bear-smart language in bylaws also made this a challenge, as residents are allowed to store garbage bins outside and unsecured as long as they are not at the curb. Misconceptions about non-predatory animals continue to be a struggle, as interactions with wildlife such as deer are handled incorrectly, with more conflicts reported than usual in recent years. Residents also expressed hesitation in reporting wildlife conflicts to COS for fear of the animal being destroyed or not knowing which interactions are considered conflict situations.

The WildSafe Central Okanagan Coordinator recommends the following activities for 2026:

- Electric fencing workshop to be held before the fruit harvest season
- Ensure the bear working group is in contact early in the season, creating a space for collaboration between bylaw, COS, community members, local governments, and the community coordinator
- Put focus on deer-human conflicts and spread awareness early
- An in-person visit to campgrounds to promote the Bare Campsite program
- Continue relationship with local realtors to distribute homeowner information packages
- Continued collaboration with the bylaw, RDCO, COS, and volunteer group for bin-tagging and door-to-door efforts to increase reach
- Continue conversations that break misconceptions of wildlife behaviour, and with COS response to increase the number of wildlife reports to the RAPP line
- Seek out neighbourhood social pages to promote attractant management
- Promote updated bylaws that use bear-smart language for our communities

## 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 Nicole Kittmer, Cynthia Coates, 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. 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***