

COLUMBIA VALLEY ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Prepared By :

Sierra Franklin



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



Columbia
Basin **trust**



www.wildsafebc.com



programs@wildsafebc.com



250-828-2551 ext. 109

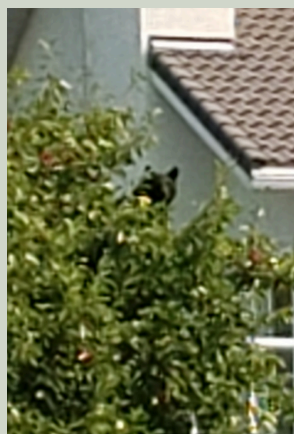
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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Columbia Valley program for the 2025 season between June 1st 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 2025 season, and will help shape the delivery of the program for the 2026 based on coordinator, community, and sponsor needs.

- 322+ people engaged through display booths at 12 community events and recreation sites
- 86 people reached at three recreation sites, with focused education on biking, dogs, and bear safety, including bear spray demonstrations
- 27 garbage bins tagged in Invermere to reduce wildlife attractants
- 60 residents reached through door-to-door education and targeted signage in high-conflict areas
- Wildlife warning signs and garbage-safety stickers distributed throughout the valley
- 3,000+ festival attendees reached through partnership with Wicked Woods Music Festival, including two booths, 55 direct conversations
- 31 social media posts



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 also covers RDEK Areas F & G, and is 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.



2025 Highlights

322

Community Members Reached

12

Community Event Booths

27

Bins Tagged

3000+

Festival Attendees Reached

Education at Recreation Sites

Display booths at recreation sites provides visitors and locals with opportunities to engage directly with our educational materials, learn about safe biking practices in bear country, understand how to reduce wildlife attractants, and discuss best practices for recreating with dogs around bears. These booths also create space for meaningful conversations about coexisting safely with wildlife and for connecting recreationists with our program offerings. In 2025, WildSafeBC set up booths at three different recreation sites across the valley, engaging with 86 people. Many participants also took part in hands-on bear spray demonstrations, increasing their confidence and preparedness while recreating in bear country.

Location	# Reached	Date
Ray Brydon Dog Park (Invermere)	42	June 27-30
Lake Lillian (Between Invermere and Panorama)	31	August 7-9
Legacy Trail (Between Invermere and Fairmont Hotsprings)	13	August 19th



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 **322 people** visited the WildSafeBC display booth at 12 community events and recreation sites across the valley.

Community Event	# Reached	Date	Purpose
Politics & Pizza (Invermere)	30	June 17	Wildlife education
Bear Spray Demonstration (Fairmont Hotsprings)	8	July 3rd	Wildlife education + Bear Spray demo
Valley Appreciation Day	77	July 19th	Wildlife education + Bear spray demos
Wicked Woods Music Festival (Fairmont Hot Springs)	55	August 28/29th	Bear safety + Bare campsite education
Aviation Day (Fairmont Hotsprings)	71	September 6th	Wildlife education + Bear spray demos

Display Booths

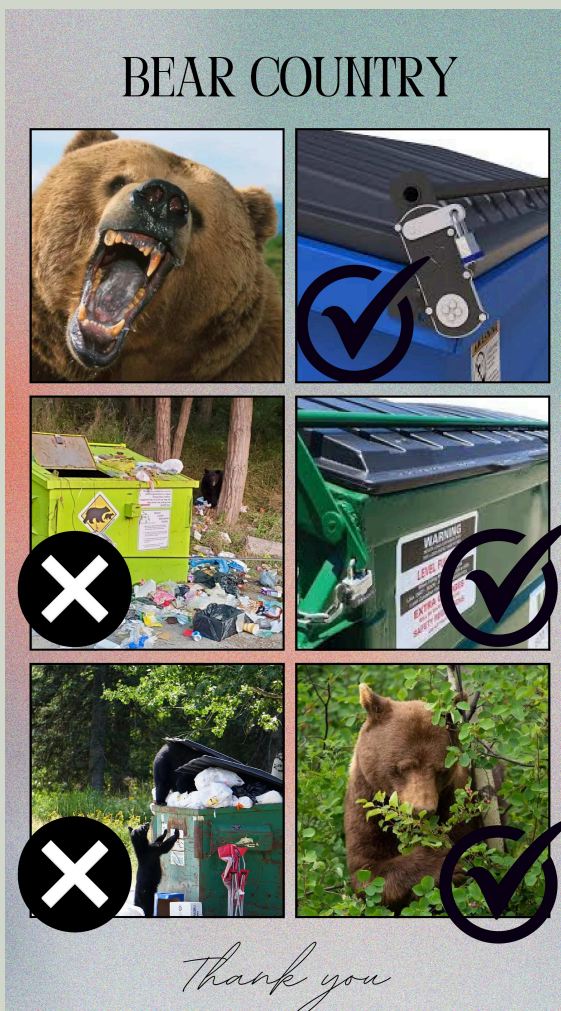


Bin Tagging

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of curbside containers the evening before collection day. During 2 outings in Invermere, a total of **27 bins** were tagged. No bin was tagged twice.

Several wildlife signs such as "Warning - Aggressive Deer in Area" and "Bear in Area" signs were distributed around the valley including Panorama, Invermere and Fairmont Hot Springs. Reflective stickers reminding community members to keep garbage inside bear safe bins were also distributed to Fairmont Hot Springs.

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 **60 people** with door hangers. The WildSafeBC Coordinator also knocked on doors and engaged several 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.



Wicked Woods Music Festival

The WildSafeBC Coordinator worked closely with the Executive Director and staff of Wicked Woods Music Festival in the weeks leading up to the festival to bring education, safety guidelines and signage to the yearly, 4 day festival located just outside Fairmont Hot Springs. This festival attracts more than **3,000 people** from all over the country, and some traveling from all over the world to attend. Many attendees arrive with little to no camping gear, or knowledge of local wildlife and ecosystems. With little resources or knowing this puts a lot of people in a small amount of space at risk for wildlife conflict. The WildsafeBC Coordinator co-created infographics to educated festival goers as well as hosted two booth during the event and spoke directly with 55 people.

Infographics Created

WAY OF THE WOODS:

BEAR, WILDLIFE, & SAFETY 101

SWIPE FOR MORE INFO

WILDLIFE SAFETY... AND WHY IT MATTERS

Protecting our people means protecting the wildlife and habitats that make the Woods so special. We are guests in this beautiful wilderness and respecting the Woods we call home is a top priority.

The BC mountains are home to incredible creatures and fragile ecosystems. When we respect the animals and the land, everyone stays safe and the Woods remain wicked for generations to come.

PRACTICAL TIPS

- Keep all food, drinks + scented items secured in your vehicle or RV.
- Keep garbage in bins regularly + avoid leaving out scraps or empties
- Avoid approaching or feeding wildlife, even small animals.
- Be mindful of your surroundings when walking, hiking, or exploring.

EVERY CHOICE YOU MAKE MATTERS

By staying aware, keeping your camp clean, and respecting the nature around you, you're helping protect both the Woods and everyone who calls it home, even if just for a weekend.

BEARS + WILDLIFE: ON-SITE TIPS

Wildlife safety is about prevention. Your actions at your campsite and while exploring the Woods help avoid conflicts and keep our festival community safe.

1. BE AWARE

- Stay alert to your surroundings and notice signs of wildlife like tracks, scat, or overturned garbage cans and disturbed areas.
- Travel in groups. Animals are less likely to approach larger groups.
- Know your nearest rally point in case you need to move quickly.
- Check your campsite regularly to prevent attractants.

2. BE LOUD

- Make noise when moving through wooded areas to avoid surprising wildlife.
- Talk, clap, play music, or shout "Hey Bear!"
- Audible presence gives wildlife space and reduces the chance of conflict.

3. BE RESPONSIBLE

- Store all food, drinks, and scented items in vehicles, RVs, or secured storage.
- Remove garbage frequently and use disposal bins that get emptied frequently.
- Keep campsites tidy + keep scented products away from tents or sleeping areas.
- Travel with care through dense areas and never sneak up on wildlife.

By staying aware, making noise, and camping responsibly, you protect wildlife, your fellow festival-goers, and the Woods itself.

BEARS IN THE AREA

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ENCOUNTER A BEAR

Bears are a natural part of the BC mountains we celebrate at Wicked Woods. Late summer triggers **hyperphagia**: a period of constant feeding before hibernation. Knowing how they behave and how to respond keeps everyone safe.

MEET THE NEIGHBORS

- Black bears are the most common bear in the region.
- They generally avoid humans unless attracted by food or garbage.
- Cubs may be nearby, never approach them.
- Bears are curious and persistent if smells or scraps are left out.
- Watch for signs like tracks, scat, overturned bins, or claw marks.

ON-SITE PREVENTION

- Travel in groups of 4 or more when exploring.
- Make noise to avoid surprising bears.
- Secure all food, coolers, and scented items in vehicles, RVs, or secure storage.
- Dispose of garbage regularly in dumpster bins that are frequently emptied.
- Keep scented products away from sleeping areas.
- Check your camp regularly for attractants.

IF YOU SEE A BEAR

- Stay calm + keep your eyes on the bear.
- Back away slowly without turning your back.
- Speak calmly + leave the area if the bear approaches.
- If aggressive, make loud noises, wave arms, use objects to make yourself bigger.
- Never approach, feed, or attempt to retrieve belongings from a bear.

If a bear is near your camp and you feel unsafe, call the 24/7 SOS line at **250-688-9968** and move to the nearest rally point.

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 2026:

- **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 District 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 the District of Invermere, the Regional District of East Kootenay, the Columbia Basin Trust, 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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