

FERNIE ELK VALLEY ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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*Keeping Wildlife Wild and
Communities Safe*



SPARWOOD
★

Columbia
Basin **trust**



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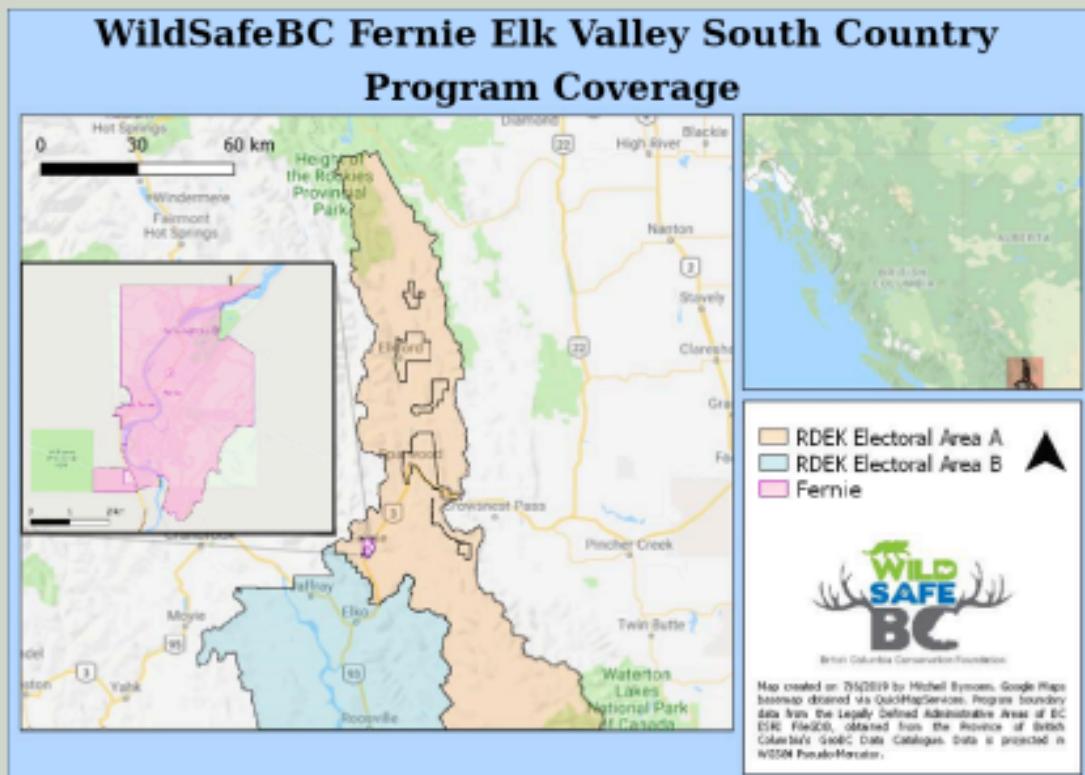
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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Fernie Elk Valley program for the 2025 season between May 20th and November 30th. The primary objective of the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator is to support communities in mitigating human-wildlife conflicts through educational programs, collaboration, and community-driven solutions. The following report summarises key program deliverables over the course of the 2025 season. In addition, this report helps shape the delivery of the program for the 2026 season based on the coordinator, community, and sponsor needs.

Program Coverage Area

The WildSafeBC Fernie Elk Valley program covers the City of Fernie and the Districts of Sparwood and Elkford which are located in the Elk Valley. The Elk Valley is located in the south-eastern most corner of the province, the area spans alpine, subalpine and montane ecosystems and encompasses a number of critically important wildlife corridors. This program operates on the unceded territory of the Ktunaxa Nation, who have been stewards of this land since time immemorial.



2025 Highlights

493

Students Educated

970

Community Members Reached

11

Community Event Booths

133

Bins Tagged

18.9K

Facebook Users Reached

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 wildlife attractants. The program complements the BC Science K-9 Curriculum. Older students also learn more advanced skills about bear spray use and responsible camping. Presentations in Elkford were a collaboration with Bylaw Enforcement. The WildSafeBC Fernie Elk Valley coordinator delivered 20 WRP presentations to students from Pre-K up to Gr.10. Over 450 children became WildSafe Rangers and received a WildSafe Ranger kit to take away with them.

School/Group	Grade	# Reached	Date
Elkford Home Schoolers (Elkford)	K-6	12	June 9
Ecole Isabella Dicken Elementary (Fernie)	K&3	94	June 24 & September 17
Fernie Alpine Resort Kids Camps	1-3	21	7,21, 29 July & August 21
Fernie Academy (Fernie)	8 -10	35	September 24
Fernie Secondry School (Fernie)	7	35	September 26
Frank J Mitchell Elementary (Sparwood)	1-6	151	October 2, 3, 7, & 16
Rocky Mountain Elementary School (Elkford)	K-6	145	October 14,16 & 17

Community Groups

A wide variety of groups received WildSafeBC workshops this year, a total of over 168 individuals from Fernie, Sparwood and Elkford. Staff trainings took place at Wapiti Playschool, Fernie Alpine Resort and Napku. These trainings covered wildlife safety and bear spray training, as well as job-specific scenarios as required. Students enrolled in the Mountain Adventure Skills Training program at College of the Rockies also received hands-on training with inert spray.

In addition to these workshops, we also partnered with AmbassadorWILD to deliver 6 bear spray workshops for members of the community and visitors in Fernie, reaching over 100 people (*not included in the 168 total count as it was funded directly by Tourism Fernie*).

Finally, WildSafeBC worked with the Columbia Basin Alliance for Literacy to offer two workshops, one in Fernie and one in Sparwood, to teach critical wildlife safety information to newcomer families.



Display Booths

Display booths allow the public to view and interact with our educational materials, learn about wildlife safety, discuss wildlife attractant management, and ask questions, in addition to allowing us to showcase our program offerings to diverse groups of residents and visitors. In 2025, more than 799 people visited a WildSafeBC display booth at 11 community events held in Fernie, Sparwood, Elkford, Jaffray and Baynes Lake. These events included community information nights, Elkford Wildcat days, Fernie Family Safety Day, and local Farmers' Markets. Booths were a unique opportunity to reach both locals and tourists to provide information. Educating visitors is important for the sustainability and reputation of the tourism industry, as well as the ecosystems that support it. Booths also presented a great opportunity to promote local initiatives and programs, such as fruit tree management grants and updated solid waste collection.



Bin Tagging and Door-to-Door

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of curbside containers found to be placed out the evening before collection day. During the summer, a total of 133 bins were tagged: 16 in Elkford and 117 in Fernie. In both communities, all residences that are zoned for curbside pickup were surveyed. All three communities have bylaws against placing bins out before 5 am on the day of collection (4 am in Elkford).

In Elkford, bin tagging is being led by bylaw officer Weideck; the number of infractions detected each year is low. In Fernie, both the number of tags issued and the number of repeat properties are higher, especially in area two, but as per Figures 1 and 2, numbers reduced significantly throughout the summer.

Door-to-door education also reached 25 households with door hangers in Fernie, in response to cougar sightings in the Alpine Trails neighbourhood in Fernie.

A Graph to show the number of bins placed out the night before collection in Fernie Area 1

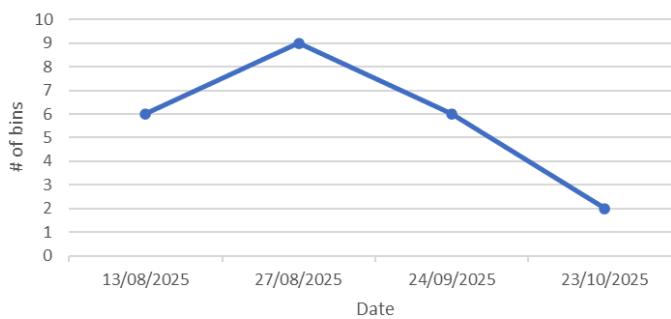


Figure 1

A graph showing the number of bins placed out the night before collection in Fernie Area 2



Figure 2



Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Fernie Elk Valley South Country Facebook page came out of hibernation on June 6th with an introductory post. The page currently has 1316 followers. 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. The page was also used to help promote local initiatives and organizations. In total, 39 Facebook posts were created that reached over 18,900 people from June 6 to November 30th.

 WildSafeBC Elk Valley
Published by Helena Gillett · June 12 · 3

Funding and support programs are available across the Elk Valley to help manage wildlife attractants on your property!

► The electric fencing cost share is great option for gardens, livestock, composts, and desired fruit trees.

► Undesired fruit trees can be removed or replaced with other species

Contact Fernie@wildsafebc.com with questions about responsible attractant management or kootnaycostshares@gov.bc.ca for more information about the programs or to apply.



Receive Financial Support to Reduce Bear Conflicts in the Elk Valley

The Elk Valley is home to both people and wildlife. Bears can be attracted a bit too close to our homes due to garbage, unpicked fruit trees, and livestock such as chickens, bees, or deadstock (deceased farm animals). We are offering a cost-share coexistence initiative to help make neighborhoods less attractive to bears and safer for people. Residents can receive financial support to either remove, or replace their unwanted or unused fruit trees, or for electric fencing to protect attractants from bears.

Fruit tree removal or replacement: Up to \$400 to remove or replace a fruit tree.
Free information on suitable tree replacement species.

Electric fence installation: 50% cost share up to \$2000.
Free expert advice on design and installation.

Our expert team has installed > 500 electric fences throughout the Kootenays, successfully deterring bears from even the most attractive sources — preventing property damage and helping landowners sleep better at night.

Funds are limited and provided on a first-come-first-served basis to any residents of the Elk Valley. For more information and to apply, contact: kootnaycostshares@gov.bc.ca



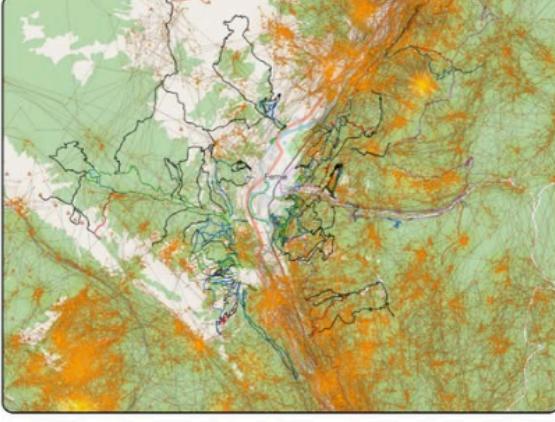
 WildSafeBC Elk Valley
Published by Helena Gillett · July 8 · 3

Will I see a Grizzly Bear? 🐻

The image below shows GPS data collected from ~20 collared grizzlies, with a location point taken every 2 hours. Each dot is a location, and the lines show the location sequence.

Credit: Fernie Trails Alliance and Clayton Lamb, Biodiversity Pathways

Grizzly Collar Data



GPS data collected from ~20 Grizzly Bears with tracking collars. The collars take a location every 2 hours. Each dot is a location, and the lines link dots in the order they were taken for each individual.

Clayton Lamb, Biodiversity Pathways

Views 1
18.9K ↑ 431.5%

Jacki Friesen recommends WildSafeBC Elk Valley.
October 18 · 3

Great work happening in Fernie! Awesome job:)

WildSafeBC Elk Valley

 Like

 Comment

 Share





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 WildSafe celebrated its 10th Annual BC Goes Wild Event.

This year WildSafeBC developed new materials for youth, including the new colouring sheets, which were used in a regional all-ages colouring contest. The colouring sheets were made available online and at public locations.

Photo: Jon McCormack

BC GOES WILD
WildSafeBC

**10th Annual
BC Goes Wild
Month!**

- Photography Contest
- Colouring Contest
- FREE Local Events
- and so much more!

Challenges and Future Goals

Improperly managed garbage, fruit trees, bird feeders, and urban livestock continue to be a source of human-wildlife conflict throughout the Elk 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 how to manage wildlife attractants and how to stay safe when in wildlife country. Specific local challenges include reaching seasonal residents and visitors, promoting responsible fruit tree management or removal/replacement, and providing education and alternatives to shift workers whose work hours clash with solid waste pickup schedules.

The WildSafeBC Fernie Elk Valley Coordinator recommends the following activities for 2026:

- Continue to find new locations to leave information, especially in areas frequented by tourists
- Expand the reach of social media posts by creating engaging and informative original content and utilising the reels feature to gain further reach
- Reach out to additional campgrounds about adopting the Bare Campsite program
- Participate in community-led projects such as Elkford's Urban Wildlife Committee and the Fernie Wildlife Committee
- Provide settlement workers with newcomer resources using accessible language for English learners, and provide an ongoing opportunity to offer support to families
- Utilise public interfacing to support municipal initiatives and pass along public feedback to policy makers if desired
- Continue to collaborate with Bylaw, such as through joint school presentations, bin tagging and community events.
- Maintain partnerships with Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, AmbassadorWILD, Wildsight, Biodiversity Pathways, FireSmart BC

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Fernie Elk Valley Community Coordinator would like to thank The District of Elkford, The City of Fernie, The District of Sparwood, The Columbia Basin Trust, the Province of British Columbia, and the BC Conservation Foundation for funding the WildSafeBC Fernie Elk Valley project. Thank you to the Conservation Officer Service for their guidance and support of the program, as well as Bylaw Officers Leach, Strasser, and Wiedrick, who have generously contributed their time to help make the program a success. Huge thank you as well to large carnivore specialist Sean O'Donovan, Clayton Lamb and the team at Biodiversity Pathways, Fernie's AmbassadorWILD team, Tracey Halliday and the Elkford Urban Wildlife Committee, the Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative, and everyone in these amazing communities who engaged with the program. Lastly, the Coordinator would like to extend 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 successful without the collaboration of all those mentioned.

Thank You!



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