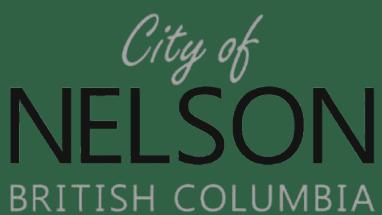


NELSON & RDCK-E&F ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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Communities Safe*



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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Nelson program for the 2025 season between April 15th 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 WildSafeBC Nelson program covers approximately 1224 square kilometers of the unceded land of the Sinixt, and traditional territory of the Ktunaxa and Syilx Peoples. The City of Nelson and the Regional District of Central Kootenay is located in the South East region of British Columbia. The area is surrounded by the Selkirk-Purcell Mountains and the West Arm of Kootenay Lake.



2025 Highlights

302

Students Educated

794

Community Members Reached

7

Community Event Booths

9

Bins Tagged

250K

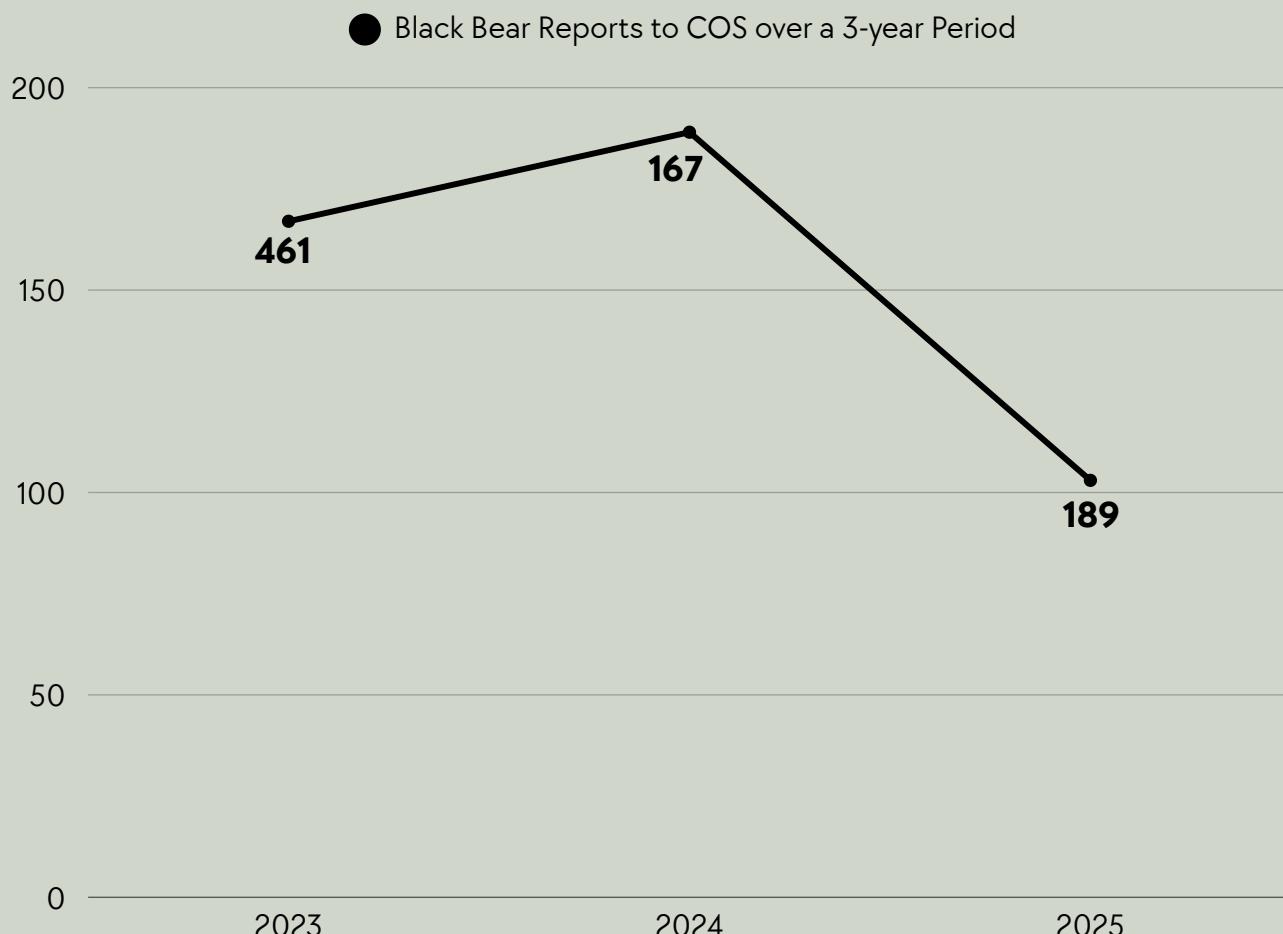
Facebook Users Reached

Conservation Officer Service Reports

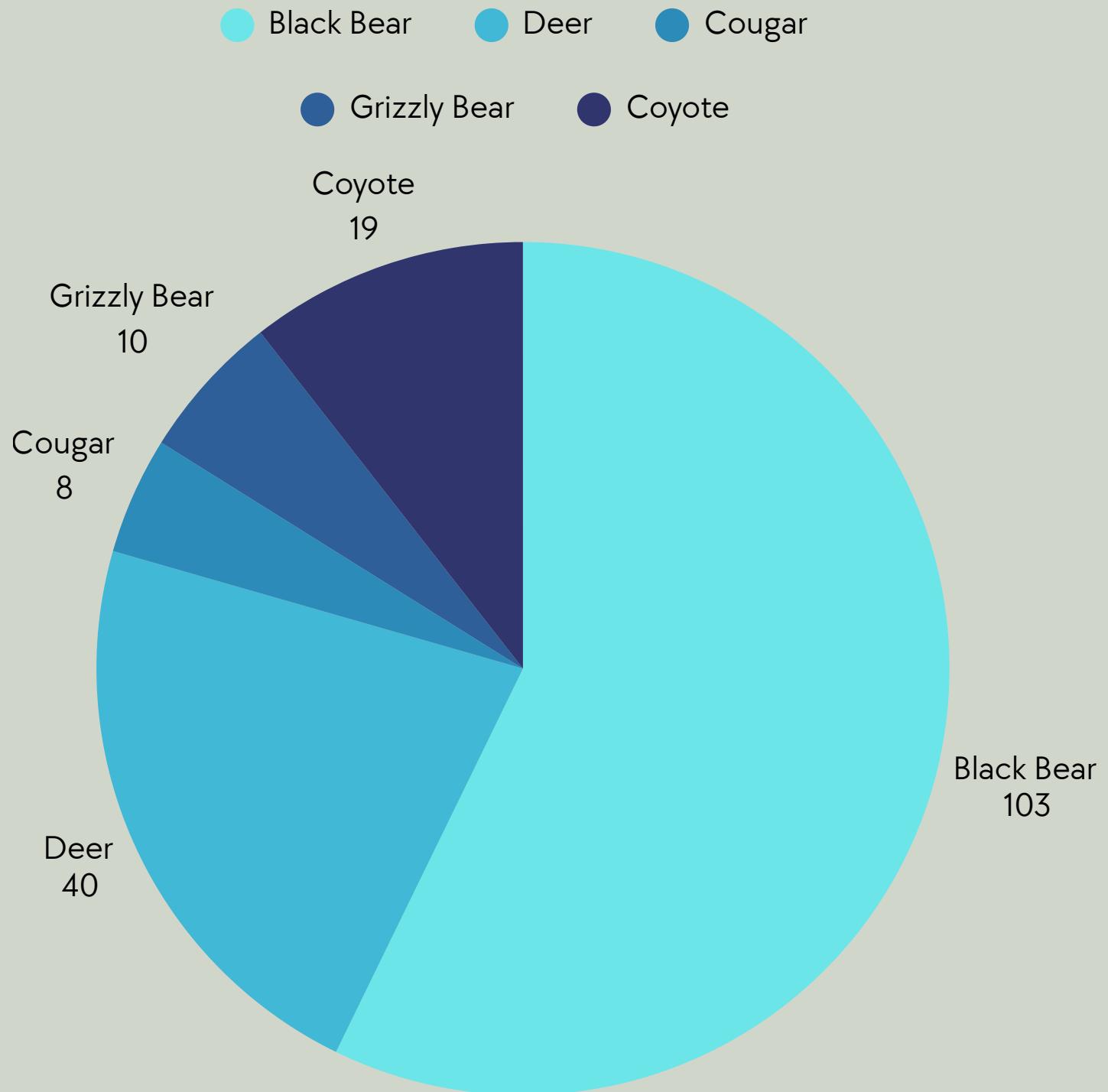
From January 1 to October 31st, a total of 232 wildlife reports have been made to the COS through the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line (1-877-952-7277) or online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>).

Similar to previous years, black bears were the species most often reported to the COS in 2025, followed by deer and coyote. From January 1st 2025 to October 31st 2025, there were 103 black bear reports, which was lower than the number of reports made in 2024. Reasons for lower reports in 2025 may be associated with the abundance of natural food sources, such as spring sedges that re-bloomed, as well as very generous wild berry production.

Three black bears, and one deer were lethally removed in the reporting area, due to human-wildlife conflict.



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 Nelson Coordinator delivered 6 WRP presentations at local schools ranging from pre-school to middle school. A total of 302 children throughout Nelson became WildSafe Rangers and received a WildSafe Ranger kit to take away with them.

School/Group	Grade	# Reached	Date
Kootenay Kids	Pre-school	22	July 8
South Nelson Elementary School	4 and 5	55	September 26
South Nelson at Cottonwood Lake	3 and 4	28	October 3
Hume Elementary School	1, 2-3 and 3-4	168	October 6
Homelinks	K-6	25	November 6

Community Groups

WildSafeBC Nelson was invited by eight different groups to present to members/staff, on wildlife safety, wildlife attractants, bear safety and bear spray workshops. These groups consisted of local senior groups, government departments, school teachers, newcomers to BC, international college students and on-site campground crews. A total of 130 people attended such presentations. Species specific brochures were made available to attendees.

Many attendees work in the great outdoors, and shared insightful knowledge on safety and wildlife behaviour. Presentations always began with covering responsible wildlife attractant management at home.



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 664 people visited the WildSafeBC Nelson display booth at 7 community events across the community.

Nelson Farmer's Markets always yield the highest number of visitors, that included locals and visitors to Nelson alike. Discussions held with local residents are beneficial in identifying high conflict neighbourhoods, as well as helping residents adopt bear smart practices, and solutions to their waste management.

Display booths held at Kokanee Creek Provincial Park Nature Centre always prove to be a favourite with local, provincial and international guests. Visitors enjoy interacting with various booth props that include a black bear hide, replica skulls and a moose antler. It is a pleasure to see familiar faces, who visit the park every year and share their wildlife experiences.



Bin Tagging and Door-to-Door

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of curb-side containers the evening before collection day. During 10 outings, a total of 9 bins were tagged across all garbage collection zones. This is a vast decrease from previous years, and is an indication that Nelson residents are more compliant on garbage days. However, secured garbage management continues to be an issue outside of collection days. This program event remains vital in reminding residents, and businesses of local wildlife attractant bylaws. City of Nelson Bylaw officers issued 5 wildlife warning infringement notices to offending residents in 2025.

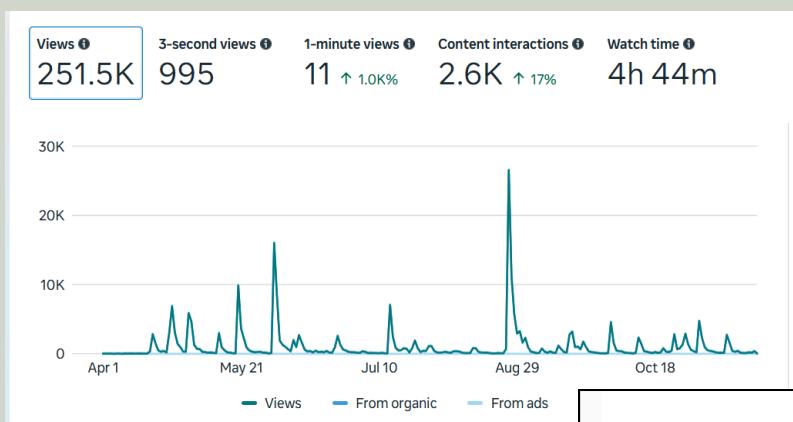
Door-to-door education reached 391 people with door hangers. The WildSafeBC Nelson Coordinator also knocked on doors and engaged residents in conversations about wildlife. The door-to-door program focuses on high conflict neighbourhoods, as reported to the Coordinator by local COS, residents, The Ursa Project Society and City of Nelson departments such as bylaw and public works.



Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Nelson Facebook page came out of hibernation on April 14th 2025 with an introductory post. Over the season, the page has had 62 new Facebook followers, from 2184 followers in November 2024 to 2246 followers in November 2025. As well, the page has received 2074 Facebook Page likes during this same time period. Throughout the season, the WildSafeBC Nelson 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 Nelson Facebook page. In total, 102 Facebook posts were created that reached over 250K people from April 14th to November 30th. The most impactful posts included news on local bear activity, and businesses that signed the WildSafeBC Business Pledge.

Nine press appearances were made by the WildSafeBC Nelson Coordinator in local newspapers, online and on the radio. WildSafeBC Nelson also appeared on a podcast episode on rodents for Kootenay Mountain Culture.



EPISODE #40

Rascally Rodents

Published: September 11, 2025
Episode Length: 37:05
Episode Guests: Lisa Thomson – WildSafeBC Nelson/RDCK Area E & F Coordinator
Ben Brown – Selkirk Pest Control
Cal – Urban Rat Battler
Sally – Rural Rat Battler
Sam – Deep Woods Rodent Zen Master

Listen to "Episode #40 Rascally Rodents" on Spreaker.

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 its 10th Annual BC Goes Wild Event. WildSafeBC Nelson held their fourth annual Bears & Brews Trivia night at The Adventure Hotel's sports bar, The Uptown Tavern. Prizes for the event were graciously donated by Business Pledgers The Hume Hotel, The Adventure Hotel, and The Kootenay Co-op. As well as Whitewater Ski Resort, Nelson Brewing Company, Oso Negro Coffee and The Ursa Project Society. It is always a fun evening that is attended by a combination of locals, and visitors to the region. A total of 36 contestants participated.

Kokanee Creek Nature Centre handed out our BC Goes Wild colouring pages to young campers, and local school students visiting. They were very popular, and included new choices of animals: cougar, wolf, black bear and grizzly. Winners of the colouring competition were announced in November on the provincial WildSafeBC social pages.



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 and a WildSafeBC Business Pledge poster.

The Hume Hotel & Spa, The Adventure Hotel, The Kootenay Co-op and The BridgeFM all committed to re-signing with the WildSafeBC Business Pledge in 2025. For these prominent local businesses, it marks multiple year's committing to keeping wildlife wild, and our community safe. Whitewater Mountain Resort has expressed great interest in joining the WildSafeBC Business Pledge program next season. New operations and development on the mountain did not allow adequate assessment this season. Such a large, year round operation would be a welcomed addition to the pledge program.



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.

BC Parks Kokanee Creek Provincial Park have been local leaders in “bare” camping principals, and do a terrific job at co-existing with campers and local wildlife. The campground proudly displays WildSafeBC brochures at park entrance and in the Nature Centre.

The City of Nelson Campground invites WildSafeBC Nelson for annual training on “bare” camping practices and bear safety, including a bear spray workshop. The campground seems to be a frequent travel highway for local wildlife, including black bears. The campground has been awarded funding for bear-proof food caches. We hope these will be secured in place for the 2026 season.



Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

This WildSafeBC Coordinator attended a number of virtual educational classes covering indigenous relations and history. The Coordinator finds that learning about Indigenous Peoples history is a personal journey that contributes towards sincerity in truth and reconciliation.

WildSafeBC Nelson met with the Confederated Colville Sinixt tribe this fall. We are excited to work together next season, to secure the health and safety of keystone species within the region. This partnership is a most welcomed union.

Future seasons will see this program continue to learn about local wildlife and co-existence through the Indigenous Peoples way of life.



Testimonials

Later in the season, WildSafeBC introduced a new online platform for people to share their WildSafeBC experiences with the provincial office. These testimonials help with securing future funding, as well as providing insight into how effective our programs are, and received within our prospective communities. Below is an example of testimonials received for the WildSafeBC Nelson Community Coordinator:

"Living in a mountain town is great for access to the wilderness. Lisa explained the responsibility we all have to minimize the dependence on human sources of food for wild animals. We all need a reminder to manage our garbage, compost and fruit harvest with wildlife in mind."

"Teaching children about how to safely interact with Wildlife and manage attractants not only raises responsible future citizens, but brings the information home to their parents. The impact is huge."

"We attended a library presentation given by Lisa at the Nelson Public Library. It was about human/wildlife interaction or encounters. It was helpful to be reminded (and to learn new techniques re:) what we can do in town to minimize negative encounters with wildlife. We also learned about steps to take when we're hiking.

Since the presentation, I had reason to contact Lisa about a situation in my neighbourhood which might provide her with an opportunity to educate other members in our community. She was very responsive (which I appreciate).

We live in a spectacular part of the world. People can take steps to help minimize sad and possibly dangerous encounters with wildlife. Lisa's presentation and her outreach are helpful so that we can share our environment with wildlife in a way that is safer for us and for the animals."



Challenges and Future Goals

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

- Continue to support the City of Nelson's and RDCK's organics diversion programs
- Support cost-share/discounted bear resistant garbage container availability to residents
- Promote "living in wildlife country" literature to newcomers through various community resources
- Work cohesively with Indigenous Peoples to be better stewards to wildlife
- Aim to have roadside signage on highways notifying of wildlife crossings/corridors
- Action to remove feral fruit/nut trees along highways, right of ways and public land
- Fruit and nut tree management through shared harvesting programs or funding to promote removal of unwanted food bearing trees
- Review wildlife bylaws to enforce bear smart practices by residents, visitors and business alike
- Complete a renewed Bear Hazard Assessment

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Nelson Coordinator would like to thank the City of Nelson, the Regional District of Central Kootenay, the Columbia Basin Trust, the Province of British Columbia, and the BC Conservation Foundation for funding the WildSafeBC Nelson program. Thank you to BC Conservation Officer's Nathan Smienk and Hilary Desmarais for their dedication, direction and unwavering support of the program (and this coordinator!). Thank you to the City of Nelson's Emily Mask, Bylaw Officers, Public Works department and the Organics Waste Diversion team for your partnership and collaboration. Thank you to Anne & Rick Pigeon, and their team at Kokanee Creek Provincial Park for continued support and accommodating the Nelson program events. Much gratitude to Gillian Sanders of Grizzly Bear Co-existence Solutions for continued support towards this Coordinator's professional growth and collaboration. Thanks to the Ursa Project Society for your collaboration and advocating for local bears. Lastly, the WildSafeBC Nelson 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***