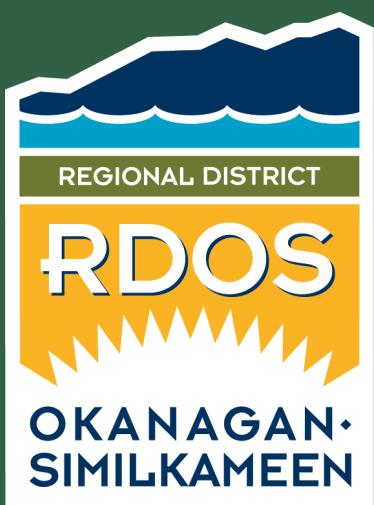


RDOS ANNUAL REPORT 2025

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Communities Safe*



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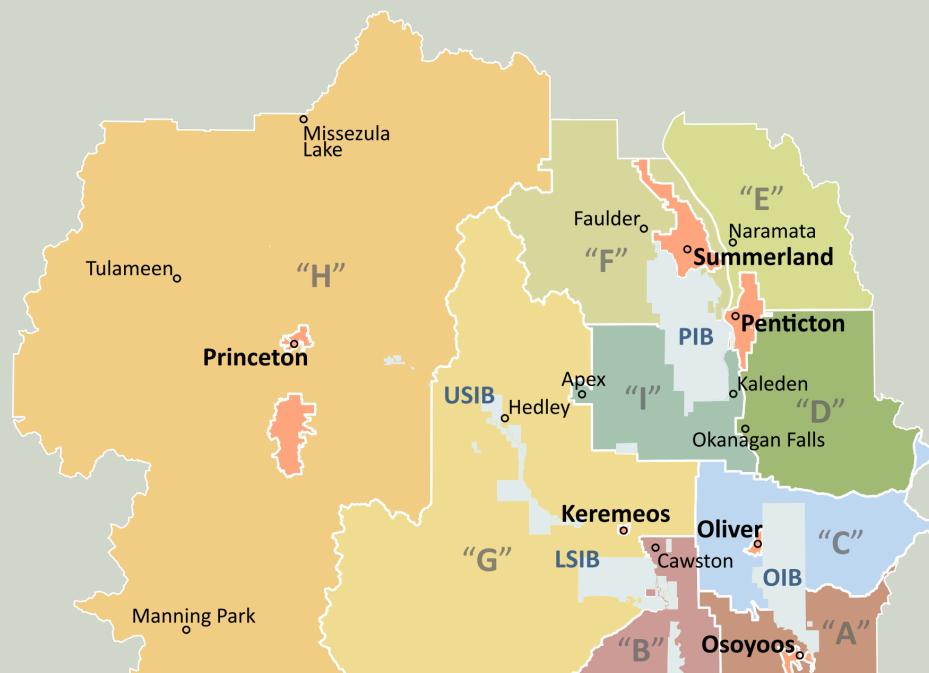
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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Regional District of the Okanagan-Similkameen (RDOS) program for the 2025 season between May 20th 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 RDOS program covers roughly 5,000 square kilometres within the Regional District of the Okanagan-Similkameen, located in the southern Interior of B.C. The map below shows the full RDOS region, however, the WildSafeBC RDOS program covers Electoral Areas A–F, the eastern portion of Area G (Keremeos), and Area I. Municipalities included within the WildSafeBC RDOS coverage area are the District of Summerland, City of Penticton, Town of Oliver, Village of Keremeos, and Town of Osoyoos. The remaining part of Electoral Area G and all of Area H fall under the WildSafeBC Princeton Community Coordinator, a position that was vacant this season.



2025 Highlights

1007

Students Educated

2038

Community Members Reached

28

Community Event Booths

31

Bins Tagged

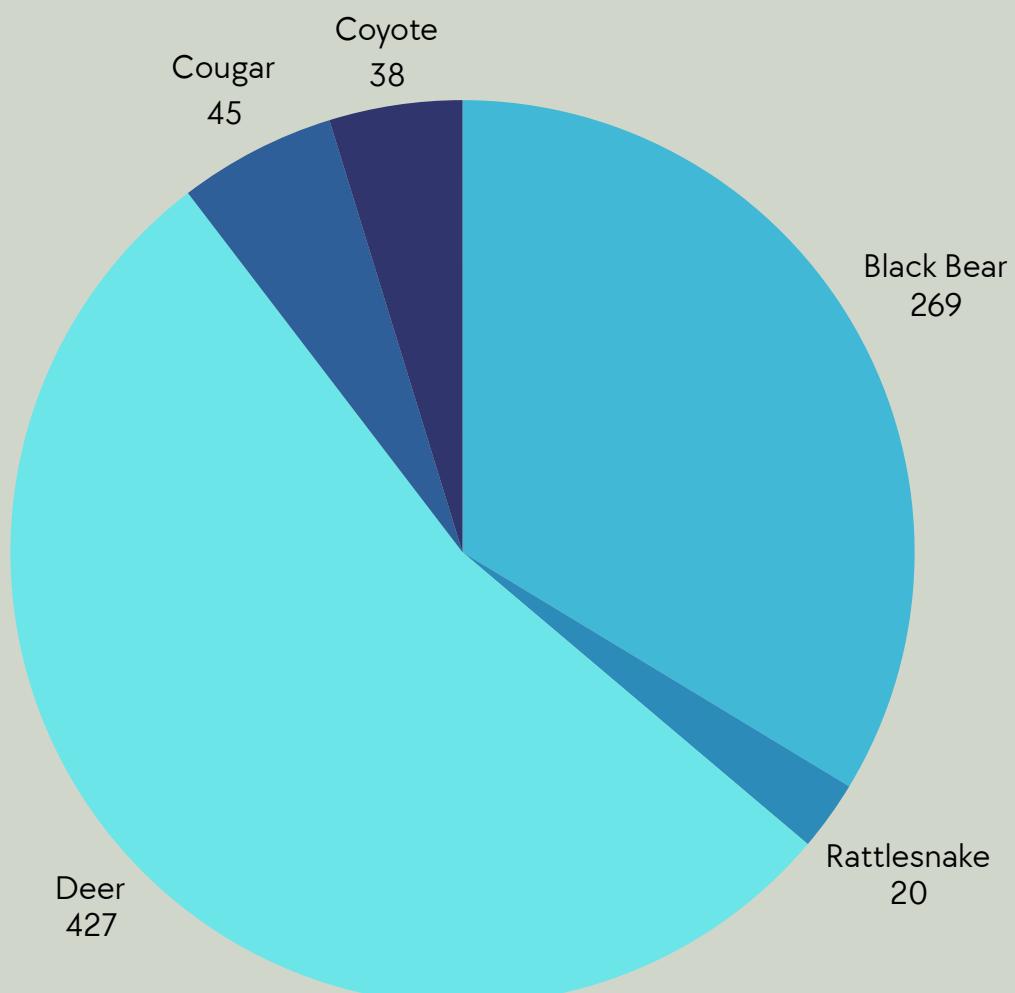
44,170

Facebook Users Reached

Conservation Officer Service Reports

From January 1 to November 4, a total of 799 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/>).

The most frequently reported species to the COS in 2025 were deer, followed by black bears. Between January 1 and November 4, 2025, there were 427 deer reports and 269 black bear reports, with substantially fewer reports of cougars, coyotes, and rattlesnakes. This decline is likely related to the lower population densities of these species and their tendency to avoid human activity. Additionally, through public outreach it was discovered that many residents are unaware that the COS line accepts reports for all wildlife, not just deer or black bears, so sightings of species such as rattlesnakes or coyotes are often not reported.



Conservation Officer Service Reports

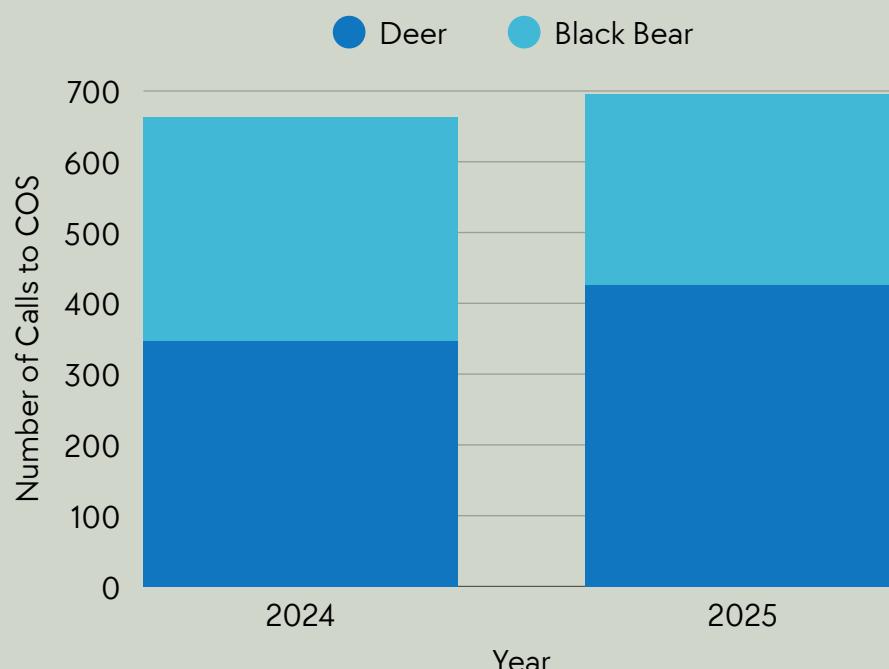
Contrary to most regions in British Columbia, deer are the most frequently reported species to the COS within the RDOS. This pattern was seen in both 2024 and 2025. From January 1 to September 15, 2024, there were 663 total calls relating to deer (347) and black bears (316). Between January 1 and November 4, 2025, there were 696 total calls relating to deer (427) and black bears (269).

In the RDOS, deer continue to be reported more frequently than black bears in both 2024 and 2025. Several factors may contribute to this trend:

- Deer conflicts in RDOS urban areas continue to increase as the local population grows.
- Residents in rural areas are accustomed to seeing bears and often do not feel the need to report them, contributing to the gap between bear sightings and COS calls.
- Some residents fear that reporting black bears to the COS will lead to the bear being destroyed, while deer do not carry the same association.

There continues to be a misconception that calling the COS about a black bear will result in the bear being destroyed. This concern was raised repeatedly at display booths this season.

The WildSafeBC Coordinator explained to many residents that these situations are not caused by the COS but by human behaviour. If attractants are not managed, bears will continue to access them. When a bear becomes habituated and begins to associate humans with food, it may become aggressive when food is not available. In these cases, the COS may have no choice but to destroy the bear to protect public safety.



WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) 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 WildSafe RDOS coordinator delivered 45 WRP presentations with 10 schools, 1 summer camp, and 2 youth programs (see table below). A total of 1007 children throughout the Regional District of the Okanagan-Similkameen became WildSafe Rangers.

School/Group	Grade	# Reached	Date
Columbia Elementary	1-3	85	June 11
Nature Kids BC	K-3	17	July 30, August 27
RDOS Play Recreation Events	K-5	49	August 1, 7, 8, 21
Similkameen Elementary	5-6	80	October 2
Queens Park Elementary	2-5	64	October 3, 9
West Bench Elementary	K-3	83	October 6
Girl Guides Ember Unit Penticton	3-4	15	October 6
Osoyoos Elementary	1-4	76	October 10
Okanagan Falls Elementary	K-3	45	October 14
Trout Creek Elementary	K-3	121	October 16
Summerland Secondary	7	90	November 14
Uplands Elementary	1-3	138	November 17, 20
Wiltse Elementary	K-3	144	November 19, 21

Community Groups

During the 2025 season, the WildSafeBC RDOS Community Coordinator delivered 4 community presentations.

In June, a member of the Heritage Hills community invited WildSafeBC to a local park event to discuss wildlife safety and attractant management; 9 residents attended.

Also in June, Penticton Search and Rescue (PENSAR) and the Okanagan and Similkameen Invasive Species Society (OASISS) requested a presentation on wildlife safety along with a bear spray workshop. This session was attended by 21 PENSAR members and 5 OASISS members.

In August, a wildlife safety and attractant management presentation was provided to the Senior Penticton Adventurers Club, with 31 members in attendance.



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 2030 people visited the WildSafeBC display booth at 28 community events across the RDOS.

This season, 6 booths were set up in Summerland (Summerland Sunday Market and Summerland Fall Fair), 5 in Penticton (Naramata Farmers Market, Yuletide Market, Cherry Lane Market), 6 in Okanagan Falls (Belich's AG Foods, OK Falls Music and Market in the Park), 2 in Willowbrook (Fall Fair and Firehall BBQ), 4 in Oliver (Oliver Station Street Market), 4 in Keremeos (Grist Mill and Gardens), and 1 in Osoyoos (Christmas Faire). Attendance was strong at all locations, with individual events ranging from 29 to 162 visitors. Visitors consistently showed interest in the rubber wildlife tracks (black bear, deer, cougar, and coyote) and the deer antlers. The bear spray canister also drew a lot of attention and sparked many positive conversations about proper use, effectiveness, and the benefits of carrying it.



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 3 outings, a total of 31 bins were tagged across 1 garbage collection zone. Summerland was the primary focus of this year's bin tagging initiative, as many areas within the RDOS had recently received new garbage bins and there was heightened tension between the RDOS and the community regarding waste management. To avoid escalating this situation, WildSafeBC chose not to conduct bin tagging in that area.

Due to time constraints, follow-up checks were not completed in the participating communities; however, correspondence with the District of Summerland indicated that the bin tags were effective.

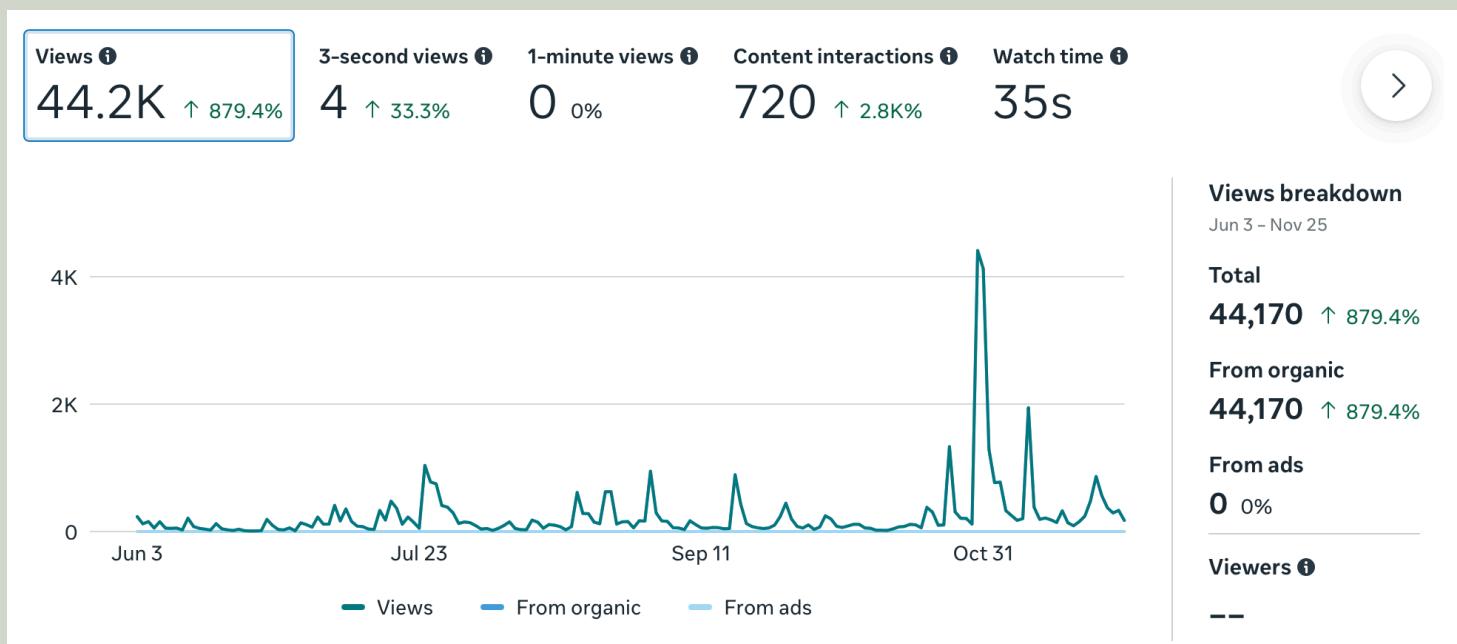
Door-to-door education is not conducted within the RDOS area. The rural nature of the region means that many properties are spread out, and residents are generally unaccustomed to unsolicited visitors. In urban areas, residents tend to be unreceptive to individuals knocking on their doors. Outreach delivered through community events sufficiently compensated for the lack of door-to-door engagement.



Social Media & Press

The WildSafeBC RDOS Facebook page came out of hibernation on June 3, 2025 with an introductory post. Over the season, the page has had 40 new Facebook followers, from 544 followers in November 2024, to 584 followers in November 2025. As well, the page has received 745 interactions during this same time period. Throughout the season, the WildSafe coordinator engaged with posts relating to wildlife activity and provided education and information to residents. 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 RDOS Facebook page. In 2025, a total of 56 Facebook posts were created that reached 44,170 people from June 3rd to November 25th. Many posts on the RDOS page reached over 2,000 Facebook users, with the most popular highlighting the importance of properly disposing of pumpkins after Halloween to prevent attracting black bears. This post reached approximately 12,780 people and was shared 37 times.



Metrics & insights for the WildSafe RDOS Facebook page from June 3 - November 25, 2025

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.

The WildSafeBC RDOS Coordinator promoted the BC Goes Wild colouring and photography contests by creating new posters and booth signage, and by giving children a colouring sheet and a small piece of candy for participating in booth activities. To wrap up the month, WildSafeBC partnered with the Oliver Station Street Market and attended their Teddy Bear Picnic. This community event encouraged families to enjoy picnics, visit the WildSafeBC tables to colour, and support the local fire department's fundraiser BBQ. The event was a big hit with children, and many left their artwork with the Coordinator to enter into the colouring contest.



Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

The En'owkin Centre in Penticton developed a wildlife safety brochure, similar to those of WildSafeBC, focused on black bears (skəm̕xist) and incorporating Indigenous language and cultural knowledge. These brochures were distributed at display booths across the RDOS throughout the season.

For National Truth and Reconciliation Day (September 30), the WildSafeBC RDOS Coordinator attended the 2025 Walk for the Children, hosted by the Syilx Okanagan Nation Alliance. The event was well supported by the community and should be attended in the future. Truth and Reconciliation Day is a time to honour survivors and their families, and to remember the history and lasting impacts of residential schools as we continue to work toward reconciliation.



Challenges and Future Goals

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

- Enforce the importance of attractant management. Continue reminding residents that the relationship between bear destruction and the Conservation Officer Service (COS) depends on our collective ability to manage attractants. Every RDOS resident has a role to play, especially when it comes to properly managing garbage. It cannot be left to someone else.
- Continue to be a strong presence at display booths and markets. These events, particularly in the spring and fall, attract large numbers of local residents and this year, hundreds of people were educated about attractant management and wildlife safety. Display booths remain one of the most effective ways to engage with the public.
- Increase outreach to farm, vineyard, and orchard owners. Many landowners are still unaware of electric fencing as an option or its effectiveness in preventing wildlife conflicts. Focusing on this group could significantly reduce attractant-related issues.
- Focus on garbage bin tagging. Since bin tagging was not conducted this season, it should be prioritized in 2026 to reinforce proper garbage management. Without this initiative, many residents, especially new ones, may be unaware of local regulations and the risks that unsecured garbage poses to both people and wildlife.
- Recruit volunteers for the summer season. Additional help would greatly benefit the WildSafeBC program, particularly for bin tagging and staffing display booths during busy times such as holidays and long weekends.

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC RDOS Coordinator would like to thank the Regional District of the Okanagan-Similkameen, the Province of British Columbia, and the BC Conservation Foundation for funding the WildSafeBC RDOS project. Thank you to the Conservation Officer Service for their direction and support of the program, including Brandon Beck. Thank you to Devorah Ticha and the estate of Barb Marshall for loaning a cast of a grizzly bear track to WildSafeBC for the season, the display booths would not have been the same without it! Lastly, the WildSafeBC RDOS 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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