

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2022

Arrow-Slocan Lakes

Prepared by: Cora Skaien

WildSafeBC Arrow-Slocan Lakes Coordinator

(Formerly New Denver, Nakusp, Silvertown, and RDCK Areas H and K)



NAKUSP



Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Arrow-Slocan Lakes region (formerly known as the New Denver, Silverton, Nakusp and Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) Areas H and K region) between April 11th and November 30th, 2022 (Figure 1). This region is on the traditional and unceded territory of many First Nations, namely the Sinixt Peoples, but also the Syilx, Ktunaxa, and Secwépemc Peoples. Reports of conflict with wildlife were above average for this region in 2022, with reports being consistently high from June to October. Human-wildlife conflict was high throughout the West Kootenays in 2022 due to a large natural crop failure in the mountains. Although our WARP data was unable to capture data concerning attractants in 2022, our social science survey indicates that fruit, nut and ornamental trees are the top attractants bringing bears into communities in this region.

The Arrow-Slocan Lakes WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) performed outreach activities in a variety of forms with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community. In total, the WCC reached approximately 2,800 people through a variety of activities. The following summarizes key program deliverables over the course of the season:

- 177 people who participated in Human-Bear Interaction social science surveys in Nakusp (n = 41), New Denver (n = 106) and Silverton (n = 30).
- 15 WildSafe Rangers (WRP) presentations and 447 youth reached
- 14 presentations given to community groups, reaching 113 participants
- 59 people reached through door-to-door canvassing in person and 222 door hangers left
- 12 bin tagging outings and 25 bins tagged; 100% of the residences whose bins were tagged during the initial survey were not found on the curb again during the second survey
- 19 display booths and 1,345 people reached
- 135 Facebook posts and 99 new Facebook page followers from January 1, 2022 to November 30, 2022
- Approximately 35 phone calls with residents to offer advice on how to reduce human-wildlife conflict
- Two campgrounds that signed up for the Bare Campsite program and received online training, but did not complete full implementation in 2022

The WCC collaborated with several organizations, including Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions, Harvest Share, Valhalla Wilderness Society (VWS) Slocan Valley Area H Bear Smart Program, and The Healthy Community Society. Collaborations included education on electric fencing and participation in shared events (e.g. VWS Slocan Valley Area H Bear Smart Program joint bear-western toad biology walk). For BC Goes Wild in 2022, the WCC hosted an in-person art excursion with New Denver's preschool and daycare to create art inspired by nature, using elements from nature. Throughout September, the WCC also promoted local options for electric fencing cost-sharing opportunities and loaner fences with Harvest Share, in addition to regular programming (e.g. electric fencing workshops, bear spray workshops, etc.).

WildSafeBC Arrow-Slocan Lakes is grateful for the generous support the program receives from its funders including the Villages of New Denver, Silverton and Nakusp, Regional District of Central Kootenay, Columbia Basin Trust, the BC Conservation Foundation and the Province of British Columbia. Key challenges this year were large numbers of bears residing within municipalities accessing fruit and nut trees, and despite efforts to promote the Bare Campsite Program, campgrounds that signed up were unable to follow through in 2022. Providing additional resources and assistance in early spring 2023 may help get the Bare Campsite program off the ground for these locations. Moving forward, these initiatives and collaborations will help “keep wildlife wild and our community safe”.



Figure 1. WildSafeBC Arrow-Slocan Lakes coverage area.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Highlights from the 2022 Season	5
Wildlife Activity	5
Human-Bear Interaction Social Science Surveys.....	7
WildSafe Ranger Program.....	14
Presentations to Community Groups	15
Display Booths	17
Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging	18
Social Media and Press.....	19
Wildlife in Area Signs.....	19
Collaborations	20
WildSafeBC Business Pledge.....	21
WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program	21
Special Initiatives.....	21
Challenges and Opportunities	22
Acknowledgements.....	23

Table of Figures

Figure 1. WildSafeBC Arrow-Slocan Lakes coverage area.....	2
Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP by sub-region from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.....	5
Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP by species from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.....	6
Figure 4. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.	7
Figure 5. Reports to the COS and WARP by attractant from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2021. No data available at time of report for the year 2022.	7
Figure 6. Nakusp residents responding to a survey question on how they feel about bears in their community.....	8
Figure 7. Nakusp residents responding to survey questions on the frequency of bear sighting and observed bear activity.	9
Figure 8. Nakusp residents responding to survey questions regarding reports to the Conservation Officer Service and the importance of Bear Smart status.	10
Figure 9. New Denver residents responding to a survey question on how they feel about bears in their community.....	10
Figure 10. New Denver residents responding to survey questions on the frequency of bear sighting and observed bear activity.	11

Figure 11. New Denver residents responding to survey questions regarding reports to the Conservation Officer Service and the importance of Bear Smart status.	12
Figure 12. Silverton residents responding to a survey question on how they feel about bears in their community.....	12
Figure 13. Silverton residents responding to survey questions on the frequency of bear sighting and observed bear activity.	13
Figure 14. Silverton residents responding to survey questions regarding reports to the Conservation Officer Service and the importance of Bear Smart status.	14
Figure 15. The WCC presenting to Slocan WE Graham School. Photo credit: Kathryn Rexin. ...	14
Figure 16. Testing the voltage of the demonstration electric fence at the New Denver electric fence workshop.....	16
Figure 17. Gillian Sanders showing a standard electric fencing set-up at the Burton workshop.	16
Figure 18. Typical display booth setup. This booth was hosted at the New Denver Farmers' Market. Photo credit: Karen Radnor.	17
Figure 19. Number of garbage bins placed out early for collection over three visits in New Denver from May to September.	18
Figure 20. Number of garbage bins placed out early for collection over nine visits and three zones in Nakusp from May to September.....	19
Figure 21. Bear in Area and Cougar in Area signs put up throughout the region at trailheads, beaches and along walking trails.....	20
Figure 22. The bear and western toad biology hike, co-organized by the WCC and Amber Peters from the VWS Area H Bear Smart Program. Photo credit: Amber Peters and Cora Skaien.....	20
Figure 23. Collage of art created during the BC Goes Wild art day with New Denver's day care and preschool.	22

Cover Photo: The WCC providing the story-board version of the WildSafe Rangers presentation to the New Denver preschool. Photo credit: Sara Wearmouth.

Highlights from the 2022 Season

Wildlife Activity

Reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) or online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>) are available to the public through the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP). This data is updated daily and this report for Arrow-Slocan Lakes includes data from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022 (Figure 2).

In 2022, the number of calls to the COS were 1.3 times greater than the seven-year average for the region as a whole, and above the seven-year average in most sub-regions, including New Denver (1.5 times higher), Silverton (2.0 times higher), Area H (1.5 times higher) and Area K (1.5 times higher) (Figure 2). The only subregion that did not have higher than average reports to the COS was Nakusp, which had less than half of the seven-year average (Figure 2). Although the number of reports was higher in 2022, it was less than half the number of reports made in 2016 for each sub-region, reflecting the nature of annual fluctuations in conflict with wildlife. Such fluctuations are largely associated with abundance and availability of natural food sources, with 2016 and 2022 being years with low abundance of natural food sources locally, resulting in a large number of reports of sightings and conflict to the COS.

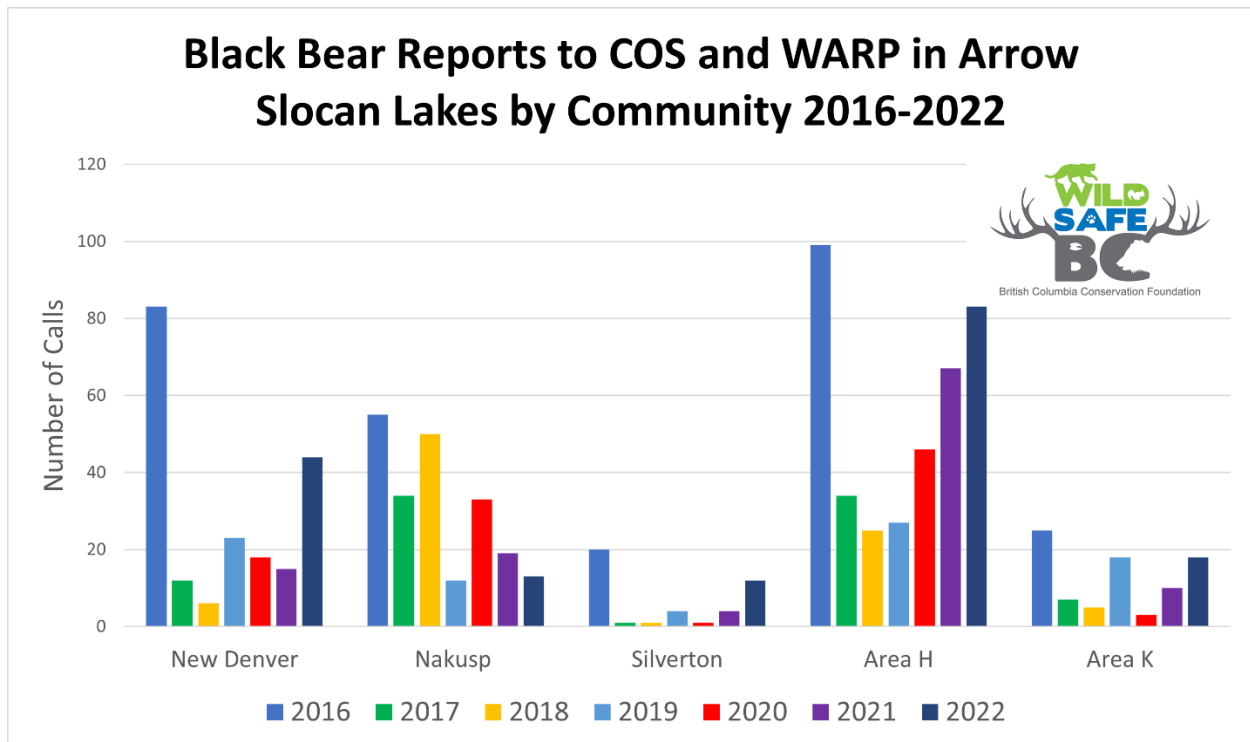


Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP by sub-region from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.

Black bears remained the most reported species in the region (Figure 3). There were 170 black bear reports made to the COS in 2022, which is higher than the seven-year average of 132 (2016-

2022). Reports of black bears were consistently high from June to October (Figure 4). Unfortunately WARP was unable to track the wildlife attractants as it has in previous years. However, we present previous results for 2016 to 2022 that demonstrate a wide variety of attractants associated with reports to the COS, and the frequency for each attractant fluctuates over time (Figure 5). Community reports and residents contacting WildSafeBC indicate that fruit and nut trees remained a major attractant in the late summer and early fall in 2022. Reports of conflict with other species were lower than average for cougar and deer, above average for elk, and about average for grizzly bears, remaining at low numbers overall for these species (Figure 3).

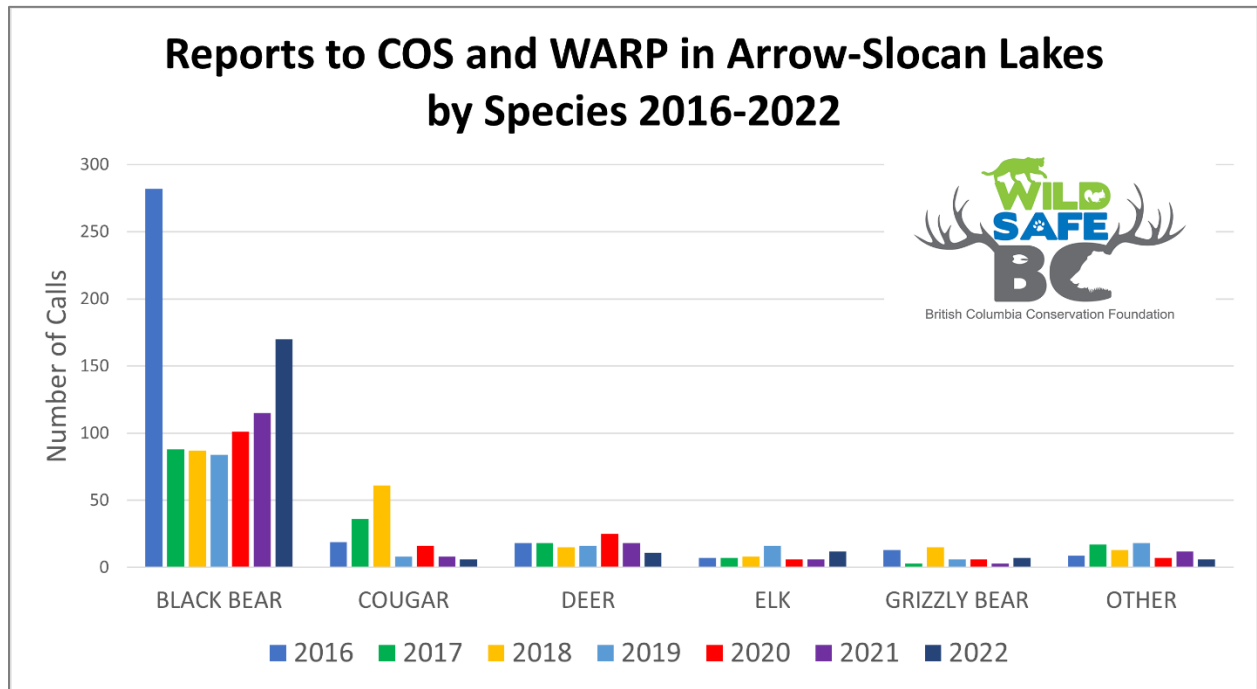


Figure 3. Reports to the COS and WARP by species from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.

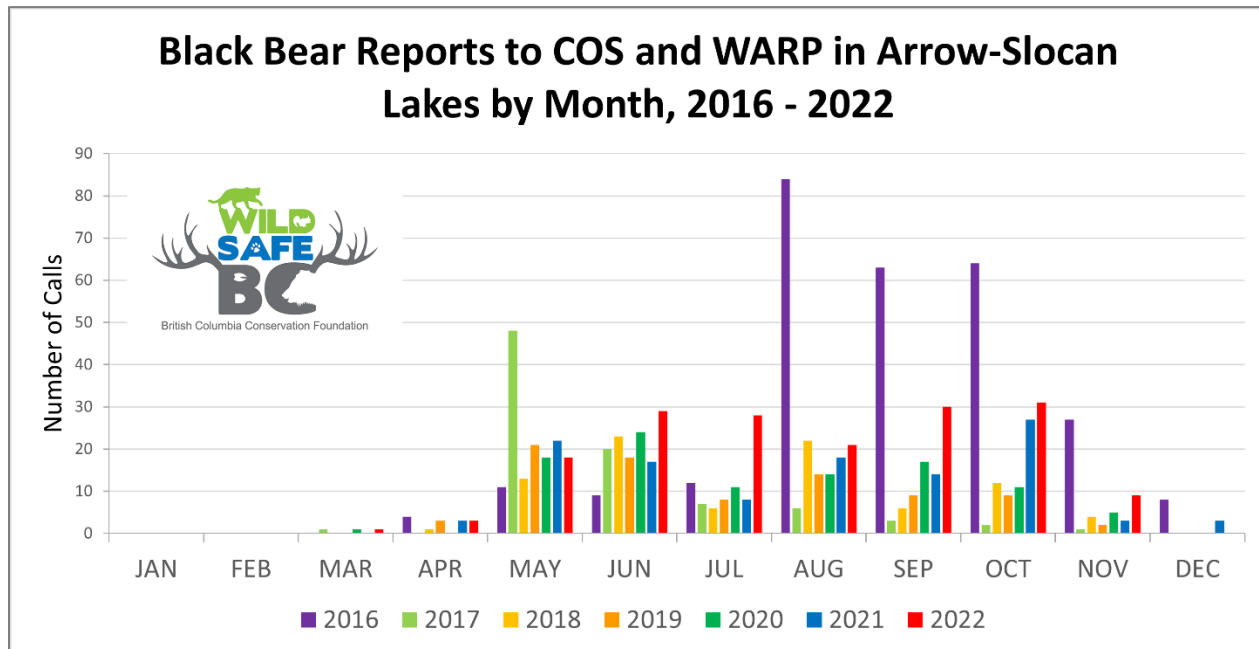


Figure 4. Reports to the COS and WARP regarding black bears from January 1, 2016 to November 26, 2022.

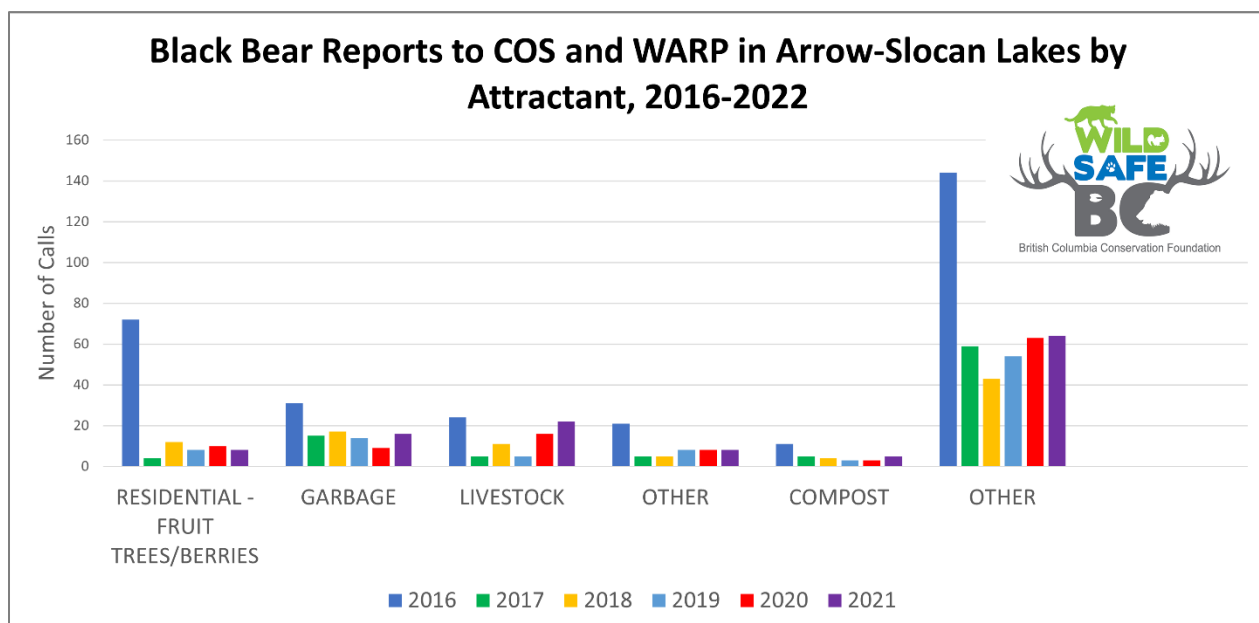


Figure 5. Reports to the COS and WARP by attractant from January 1, 2016 to December 31, 2021. No data available at time of report for the year 2022.

Human-Bear Interaction Social Science Surveys

Information was collected through a social science survey about perceptions of bears, the number of bears in the community, the types of human-bear interactions that occur in the community and on the respondents' property, and barriers and solutions for reducing bear attractants. The Human-Bear Interaction Survey was developed by WildSafeBC in 2020 with

consultation from social scientist Dr. Beatrice Frank. The survey was administered to residents of Nakusp, New Denver and Silverton (as three separate surveys) via Survey Monkey with online distribution from July 25th to October 23rd, 2022. Advertisement for the surveys was accomplished via Facebook posts, newspaper announcements, posters on local community boards and fliers left at businesses within each community. The survey consisted of 44 questions, with questions 33 to 44 being personal information questions that were not included in this analysis. Survey questions included closed-ended quantitative and open-ended qualitative questions. Closed-ended questions were used to reduce the response burden for participants and offered predetermined answers. Open-ended questions were included to allow respondents to offer additional comments and clarify their responses if they wished. The survey allowed us to measure and better understand the community concerns about safety, other risks associated with bears, and barriers for managing wildlife attractants.

A total of 177 people participated voluntarily in the survey; 41 in Nakusp, 106 in New Denver, and 30 in Silverton. Many people living in RDCK Area H expressed interest in participating in these surveys, suggesting that there is an opportunity next year to conduct similar surveys for RDCK Areas H and K. Below, we present the key findings from these surveys, and separate survey summaries have been created to summarize the surveys as a whole.

Results for Nakusp

Within Nakusp, 2.7% of the population (41 respondents) participated in this voluntary Human-Bear Interaction Survey. The survey was administered in 2022, a year which had below average reports of conflict with wildlife locally in Nakusp, but in a region that otherwise had above average conflict reported. The majority of respondents (82.9%) liked having bears in the area, but just over half of these individuals expressed safety concerns and/or concerns for general conflict (Figure 6).

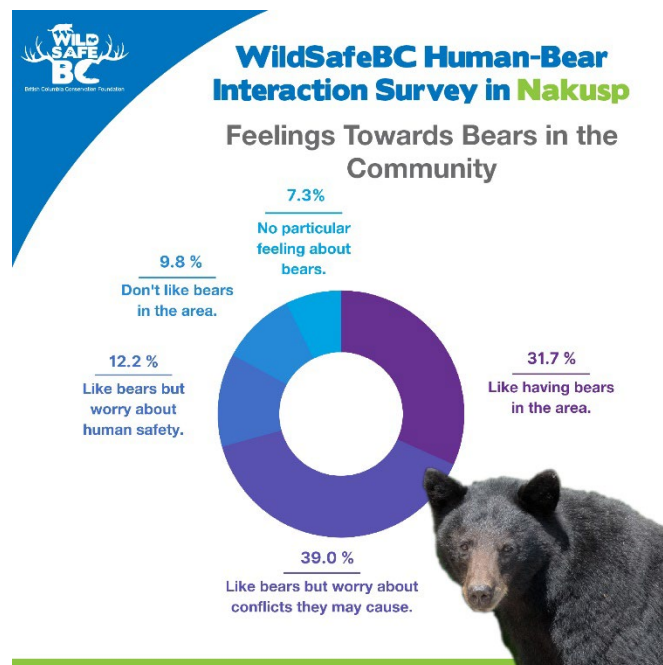


Figure 6. Nakusp residents responding to a survey question on how they feel about bears in their community.

Respondents felt strongly that bears were important for keeping the natural ecosystem in balance (97.6%), for future generations to enjoy (82.9%), and for the bear’s cultural value (68.3%), and felt that bears deserve to exist in their own right, regardless of their interactions with people (68.3%). Most respondents have only seen bears on their property or street 1-3 times in the last three years (43.6%), with 10.3% of respondents indicating they have not seen a bear on their property or street during this time (Figure 7).

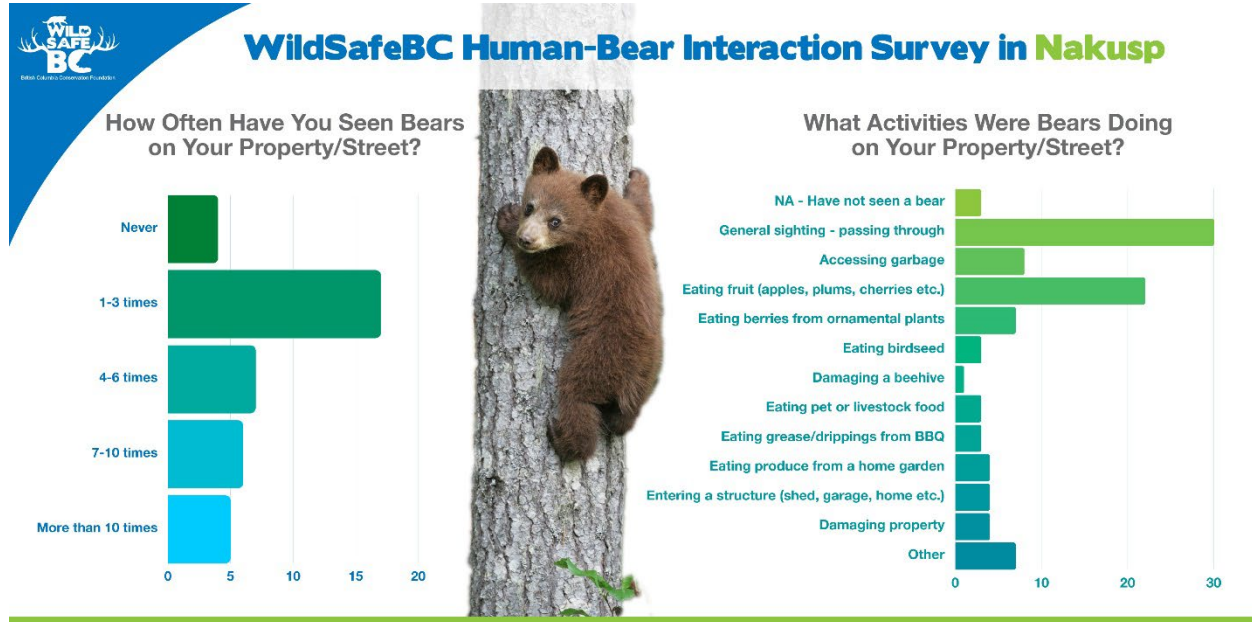


Figure 7. Nakusp residents responding to survey questions on the frequency of bear sighting and observed bear activity.

Bears were most often sighted in May when first emerging from their dens, and then again in August and September when fruit is most abundant. Respondents indicated that bears were most often seen in fruit, nut or ornamental trees when accessing an attractant locally (Figure 7). As such, fruit trees are identified as a main attractant as well as a source of human-wildlife conflict in Nakusp, and most residents expressed an interest in managing these attractants proactively. The use of electric fencing for fruit tree management could be further enhanced and promoted in Nakusp. Working with local hardware stores to stock these supplies may help reduce barriers felt by some considering such an installation.

Respondents indicated they are already taking initiative to manage their attractants, and most felt they were adequately managing their garbage, compost and other attractants. However, while most residents feel they do well with keeping their garbage secured, 20.5% of respondents did observe bears accessing garbage (Figure 7).

The majority of respondents felt strongly about Nakusp obtaining Bear Smart status; 87.2% felt that it was “important” or “very important” (Figure 8). WildSafeBC continues to have a strong presence within the community, being one of the top resources for respondents for acquiring information about local wildlife behaviours and attractant management solutions (68.6%). Most residents are not reporting sightings or conflict to the COS (76.9%)(Figure 8). Many residents felt that the nature of their sighting or observation did not warrant reporting to the COS (58.1%),

whereas others feared that the bear would be killed if they called the COS (19.4%). Campaigns to increase awareness of the value of reporting to the COS may be considered, emphasizing that the COS only considers destroying a bear when it has become a definitive threat to public safety.

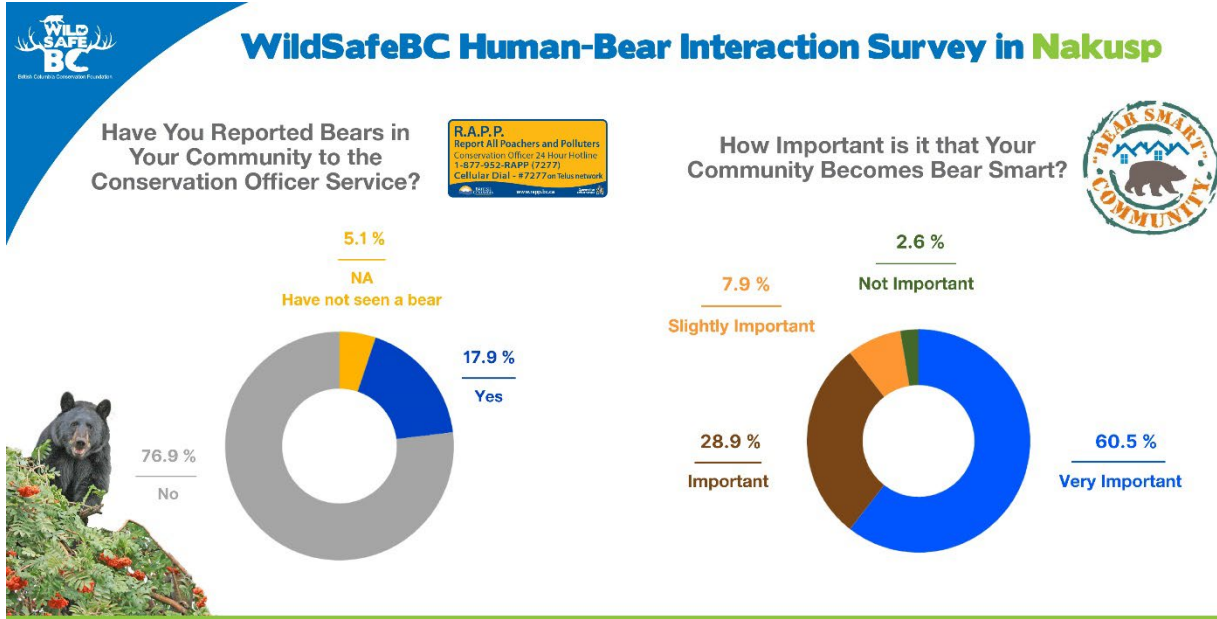


Figure 8. Nakusp residents responding to survey questions regarding reports to the Conservation Officer Service and the importance of Bear Smart status.

Results for New Denver

Within New Denver, 21.8% of the population (106 respondents) participated in this voluntary Human-Bear Interaction Survey. The survey was administered in 2022, a year which had above average reports for sightings and conflict with wildlife, particularly with black bears. The majority of respondents (73.6%) liked having bears in the area, but two-thirds of these individuals expressed safety concerns (especially for elderly and vulnerable people) and/or concerns for general conflict (Figure 9). Respondents felt strongly that bears were important for keeping the natural ecosystem in balance (86.8%), for future generations to enjoy (79.2%), and for the bears’ cultural value (65.1%).

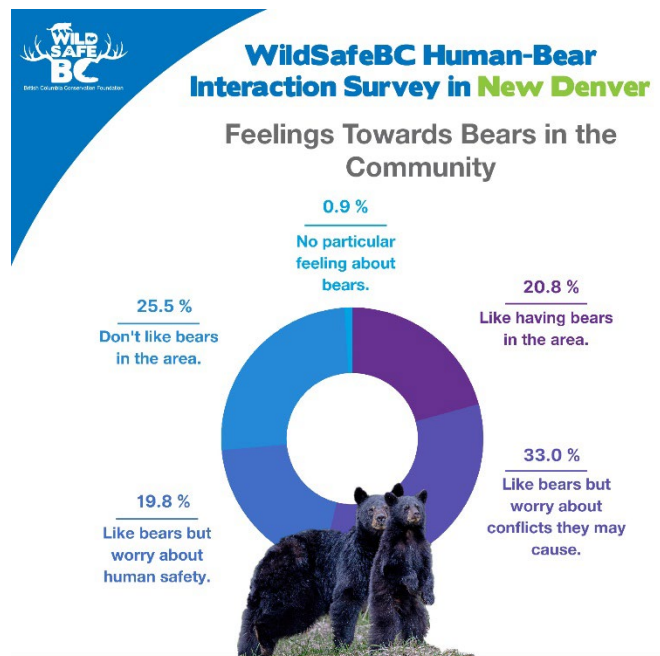


Figure 9. New Denver residents responding to a survey question on how they feel about bears in their community.

Nearly every respondent has seen a bear on their property at least once over the last three years, with most indicating they have seen bears on their property or street 10 or more times in the last three years (63.3%)(Figure 10). Most respondents felt that both bear sightings and conflict had increased in the last three years, but others felt that both these categories fluctuated over time.

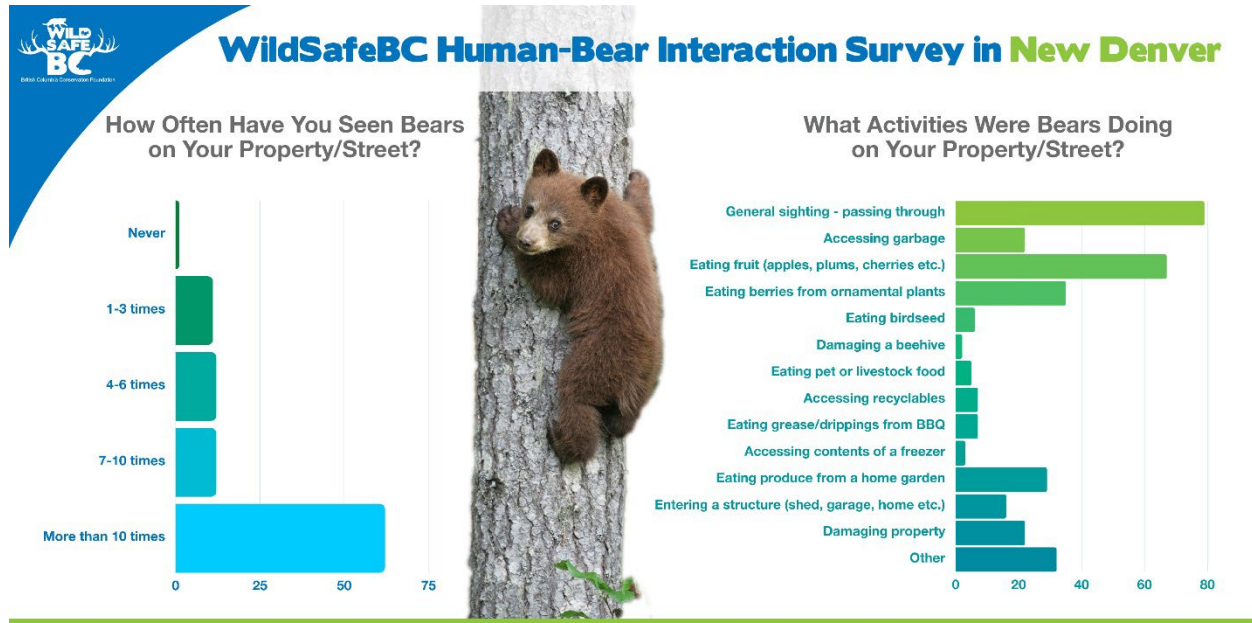


Figure 10. New Denver residents responding to survey questions on the frequency of bear sighting and observed bear activity.

Bears were most often sighted from August to October when fruit is most abundant, and respondents indicated that bears were most often seen in fruit, nut or ornamental trees when accessing an attractant locally (Figure 10). As such, fruit trees remain a main source of human-wildlife conflict in New Denver, and most residents expressed an interest in managing these attractants proactively. The use of electric fencing for fruit tree management could be further enhanced in New Denver, and the availability of supplies at the local hardware store in nearby Silverton will hopefully help in these endeavors, as will access to the loaner electric fence program with the local fruit gleaning organization, Harvest Share. Respondents are already taking initiative to manage their attractants, and most felt they were adequately managing their garbage, compost and other attractants. However, while most residents feel they do well with keeping their garbage secured, 22.5% of respondents did observe bears accessing garbage (Figure 10).

The majority of respondents felt strongly about New Denver maintaining Bear Smart status; 70.4% felt that it was “important” or “very important” (Figure 11). WildSafeBC continues to have a strong presence within the community, being one of the top resources for respondents for acquiring information about local wildlife and attractant management solutions (69.6%). Most residents are not reporting sightings or conflict to the COS (81.6%)(Figure 11). Many residents felt that the nature of their sighting or observation did not warrant reporting to the COS (40.2%), whereas others feared that the bear would be killed if they called (28.1%). Campaigns to

increase awareness of the value of reporting to the COS may be considered, emphasizing that the COS only considers destroying a bear when it has become a definitive threat to public safety.

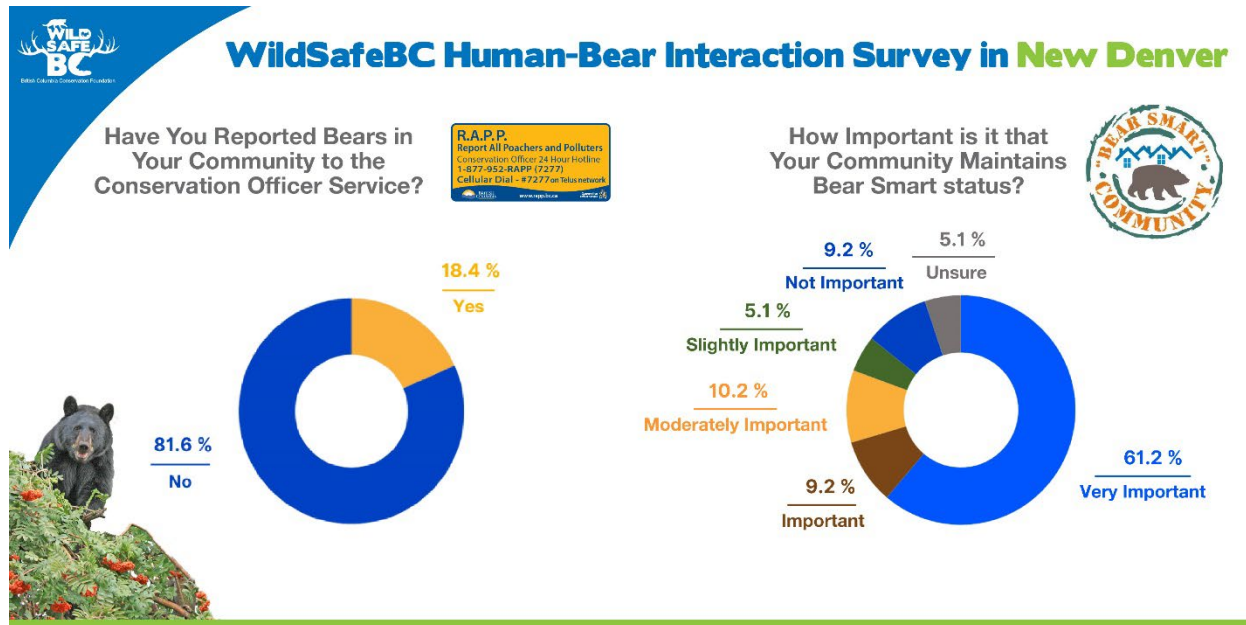


Figure 11. New Denver residents responding to survey questions regarding reports to the Conservation Officer Service and the importance of Bear Smart status.

Results for Silvertown

Within Silvertown, 20% of the population (30 respondents) participated in this voluntary Human-Bear Interaction Survey. The survey was administered in 2022, a year which had above average reports for sightings and conflict with wildlife, particularly with black bears. The majority of respondents (86.7%) liked having bears in the area, but two-thirds of these individuals expressed safety concerns (especially for elderly and vulnerable people) and/or concerns about general conflict (Figure 12). Respondents felt strongly that bears were important for keeping the natural ecosystem in balance (83.3%), for future generations to enjoy (80%) and for the bears' cultural value (73.3%).

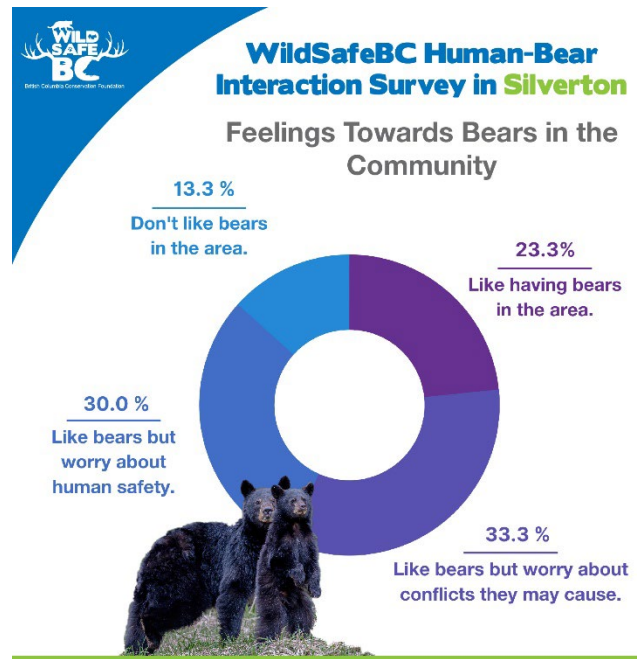


Figure 12. Silvertown residents responding to a survey question on how they feel about bears in their community.

Every respondent has seen a bear on their property at least once over the last three years, with approximately equal proportions of respondents observing bears on their property or street 1-3 times, 4-6 times, 7-10 times or 10 or more times in the last three years (Figure 13). There was no consistency in responses for whether sightings and conflict has increased, stayed the same or fluctuated over the last three years, suggesting that individuals may have different experiences or memories of conflict over time.



Figure 13. Silverton residents responding to survey questions on the frequency of bear sighting and observed bear activity.

Bears were most often sighted from August to October when fruit is most abundant, and respondents indicated that bears were most often seen in fruit, nut or ornamental trees when accessing an attractant locally (Figure 13). As such, fruit trees remain a main source of human-wildlife conflict in Silverton, and most residents expressed an interest in managing these attractants proactively. The use of electric fencing for fruit tree management could be further enhanced in Silverton, and the availability of supplies at the local hardware store will support these endeavors, as will access to the loaner electric fence program within the local fruit gleaning organization, Harvest Share. Respondents are already taking initiative to manage their attractants, and most felt they were adequately managing their garbage, compost and other attractants. However, while most residents feel they do well with keeping their garbage secured, 10% of respondents did observe bears accessing garbage (Figure 13).

The majority of respondents felt strongly about Silverton acquiring Bear Smart status (82.1%), or following Bear Smart principals (Figure 14). WildSafeBC continues to have a strong presence within the community, being one of the top resources for respondents for acquiring information about local wildlife and attractant management solutions (64%). Most residents are not reporting sightings or conflict to the COS (85.7%)(Figure 14). Many residents felt that the nature of their sighting or observation did not warrant reporting to the COS (62.5%), whereas others feared that the bear would be killed if they called (29.2%). Campaigns to increase awareness of the

value of reporting to the COS may be considered, emphasizing that the COS only considers destroying a bear when it has become a definitive threat to public safety.

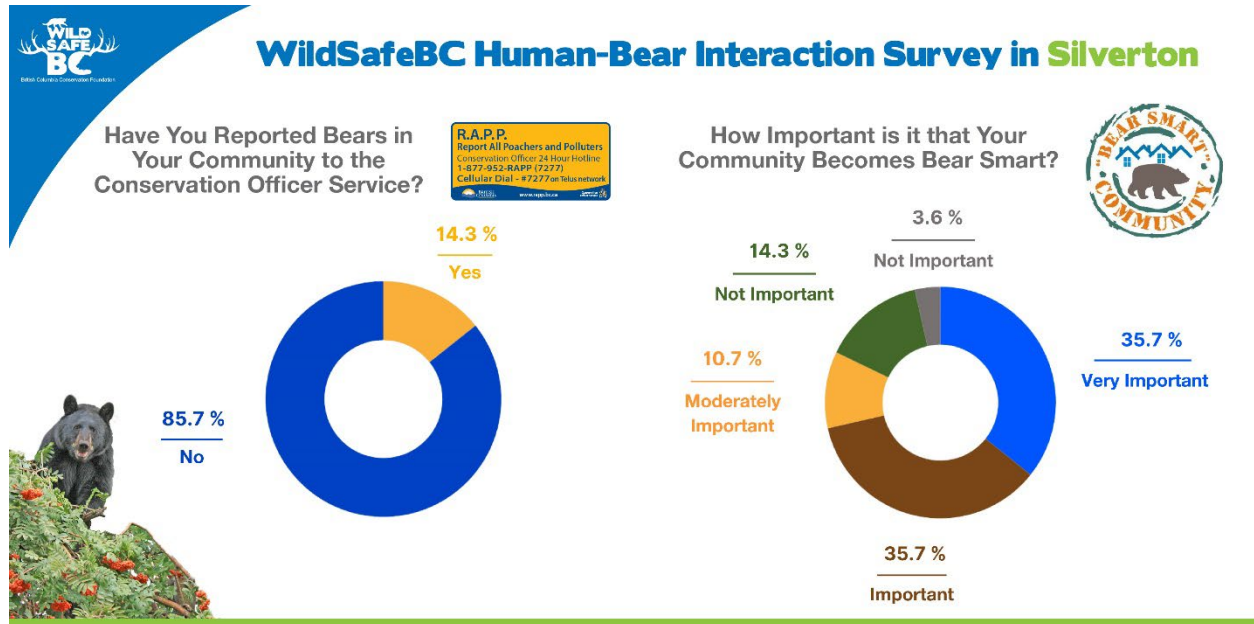


Figure 14. Silverton residents responding to survey questions regarding reports to the Conservation Officer Service and the importance of Bear Smart status.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. In 2022, WildSafeBC was able to provide the WRP program to schools in Slocan and further south, a region not historically in the WCC’s coverage region. As a result, the WCC conducted 15 presentations by visiting eight elementary schools from Crescent Valley to Nakusp and south to Edgewood (Figure 15). In addition, the WCC visited the New Denver preschool and daycare.



Figure 15. The WCC presenting to Slocan WE Graham School. Photo credit: Kathryn Rexin.

Combined, 447 youth became WildSafe Rangers and received WildSafe Ranger kits (Table 1). This is more than double the number of children reached in 2021. The interactive storyboard released in 2021 continued to be presented to youth in grade 3 and younger to more effectively communicate WildSafeBC messaging to young children.

Table 1. Schools and programs that received the WildSafe Ranger Program in 2022.

School/Program	Grade/Age	Students/Children
Brent Kennedy Elementary School	K-4	85
The Whole School in Winlaw	K-6	15
Slocan WE Graham School	K-2	13
Heartwood Nature School	Ages 5-10	27
Lucerne Elementary School		
June Cohort	K-7	56
October/November Cohort	K-2, 5-7	38
Nakusp Elementary School	K-5	126
Burton Elementary School	K-7	54
Edgewood Elementary School	K-3	3
New Denver Daycare (Goat Mountain Kids Centre)	< 5 years age	8
New Denver Preschool		
June Cohort	< 5 years age	12
November Cohort	< 5 years age	10

Presentations to Community Groups

The WCC gave 14 community presentations in both indoor and outdoor settings, to 113 participants including: Wildlife Awareness and Safety presentations, bear spray workshops and electric fencing workshops (Table 2; Figure 16, 17). Electric fencing workshops were held in collaboration with Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions, and one in Winlaw was additionally co-hosted with Valhalla Wilderness Society Slocan Valley Area H Bear Smart Program.

Table 2. Presentations and workshops provided in 2022.

Event	Date	Number of Attendees
Wilderness Awareness and Safety + Bear Spray		
New Denver with North Slocan Trail Society	June 8, 2022	11
Nakusp and Rosebery Transfer Stations	August 17, 2022	9
Nakusp Search and Rescue	September 29, 2022	9
Electric Fencing Workshops		
New Denver	June 23, 2022	8
Nakusp	July 5, 2022	5
Burton	September 13, 2022	6
Passmore Hall	October 25, 2022	18
Bear Spray Workshops		
Nakusp High School Outdoor Ed Class	April 29, 2022	10
Burton @ Burton City Cider	June 26, 2022	4
After Bear Biology Walk (below)	August 10, 2022	6
Nakusp @ Shon's Bike Shop	September 10, 2022	5
New Denver: Daycare Staff	September 13, 2022	3
SD10 Experiential Learning Group	November 9, 2022	16
Bear Biology Field Trips		
Collaboration with VWS Area H Bear Smart Program	August 10, 2022	7



Figure 16. Testing the voltage of the demonstration electric fence at the New Denver electric fence workshop.

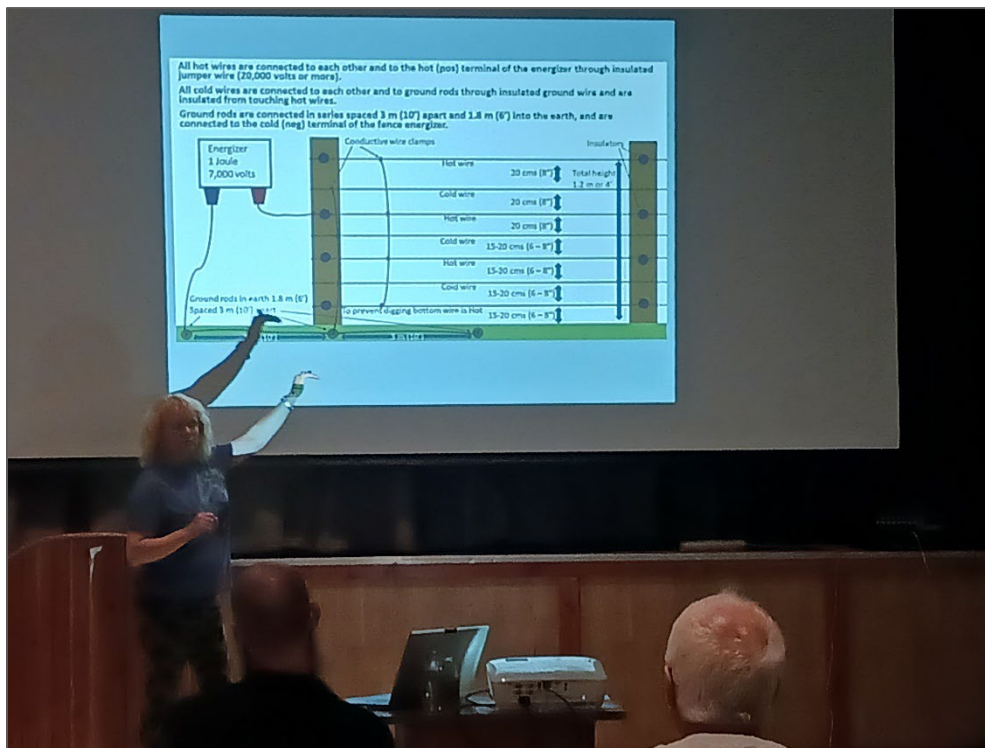


Figure 17. Gillian Sanders showing a standard electric fencing set-up at the Burton workshop.

Display Booths

The WCC hosted 19 booths at farmers’ markets, trailheads, recycling depots, and local events in 2022 (Table 3; Figure 18). Combined, display booths reached approximately 1345 people, accounting for approximately 48% of the individuals reached through the program in 2022. Each location offered different benefits; for example, display booths at recycling depots and allowed residents to easily share information about wildlife sightings and concerns. Farmers’ markets often reached a large number of individuals, many of which were visitors from areas with lower rates of human-wildlife conflict and therefore these visitors greatly benefited from WildSafeBC messaging.

Table 3. Dates and number of attendees at display booths in the region in 2022.

Event	Date	Number of Attendees
Nakusp Farmers’ Market	June 4, 2022	85
New Denver Recycling Depot Transfer Station	June 23, 2022	6
New Denver Farmers’ Market	June 24, 2022	55
Nakusp Farmers’ Market	June 25, 2022	131
Silverton Canada Day Flea Market	July 1, 2022	35
New Denver Recycling Depot Transfer Station	July 5, 2022	14
New Denver Farmers’ Market	July 8, 2022	97
Nakusp Farmers’ Market	July 9, 2022	172
Nakusp Hot Springs Trailhead	July 10, 2022	30
New Denver Farmers’ Market	August 5, 2022	101
Nakusp Farmers’ Market	August 6, 2022	167
Nakusp Recycling Depot Transfer Station	August 8, 2022	5
Nakusp Hot Springs Trailhead	August 21, 2022	29
New Denver Recycling Depot Transfer Station	August 23, 2022	11
New Denver Farmers’ Market	August 26, 2022	91
Nakusp Farmers’ Market	August 27, 2022	158
Camp Valhalla Booth	August 27, 2022	9
New Denver Farmers’ Market	September 9, 2022	57
Nakusp Farmers’ Market	September 10, 2022	92



Figure 18. Typical display booth setup. This booth was hosted at the New Denver Farmers’ Market. Photo credit: Karen Radnor.

Door-to-Door Education and Bin Tagging

Door-to-door education was performed as it was traditionally prior to 2020, in which the WCC knocked on doors or left door hangers. Through door-to-door education, a total of 59 people were reached during in-person conversations and 222 door hangers were left at homes where residents were unavailable for a face to face conversation at the time of the visit. Areas were prioritized when there were recent wildlife issues, or if a relatively large number of garbage bins were tagged during a bin tagging session.

Garbage bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of containers set curbside the day before collection. In this region, garbage bins being left out is not common. During three outings in New Denver, three bins were tagged, accounting for 0.9% of houses surveyed (3 of 351, an increase in total households serviced from 2021 as Denver Siding is now included in curbside collection), and zero were tagged more than once (Figure 19). During nine outings in Nakusp (three outings for each of the three zones), 22 bins were tagged, accounting for a total of 2.0% of households (22 of 1,084), and no repeat offenders (Figure 20). The effectiveness of garbage tagging for changing behaviour is suggested by the 100% of the residences whose bins were tagged during an initial survey and then were not found on the curb again during subsequent surveys (Figures 19-20).

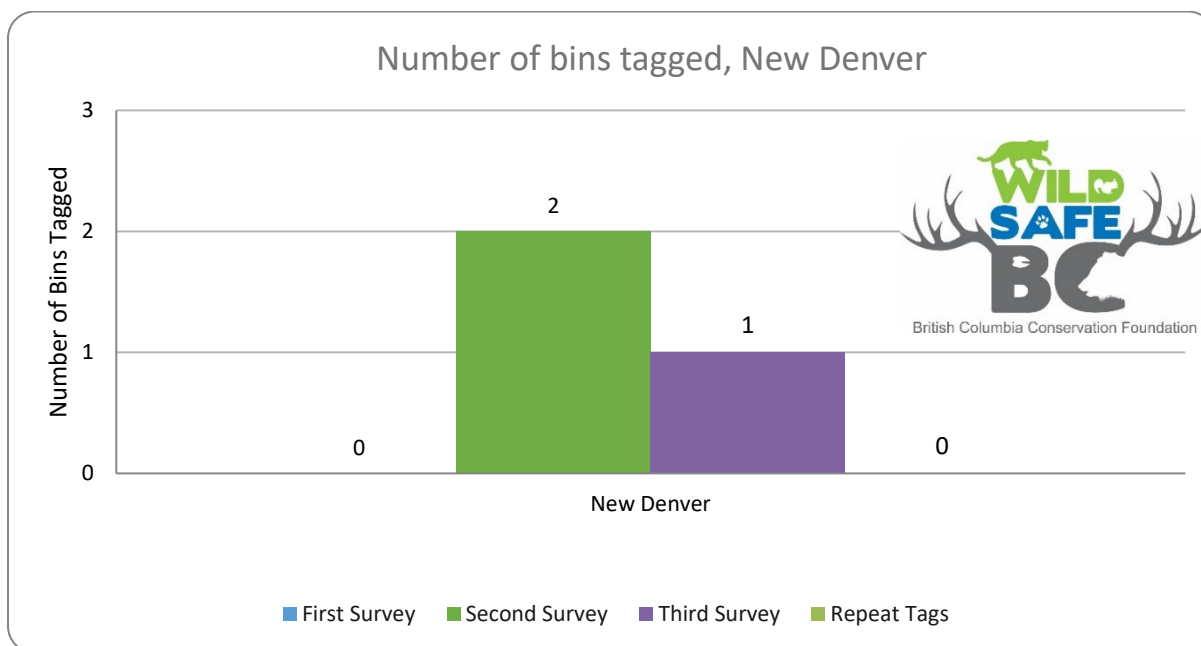


Figure 19. Number of garbage bins placed out early for collection over three visits in New Denver from May to September.

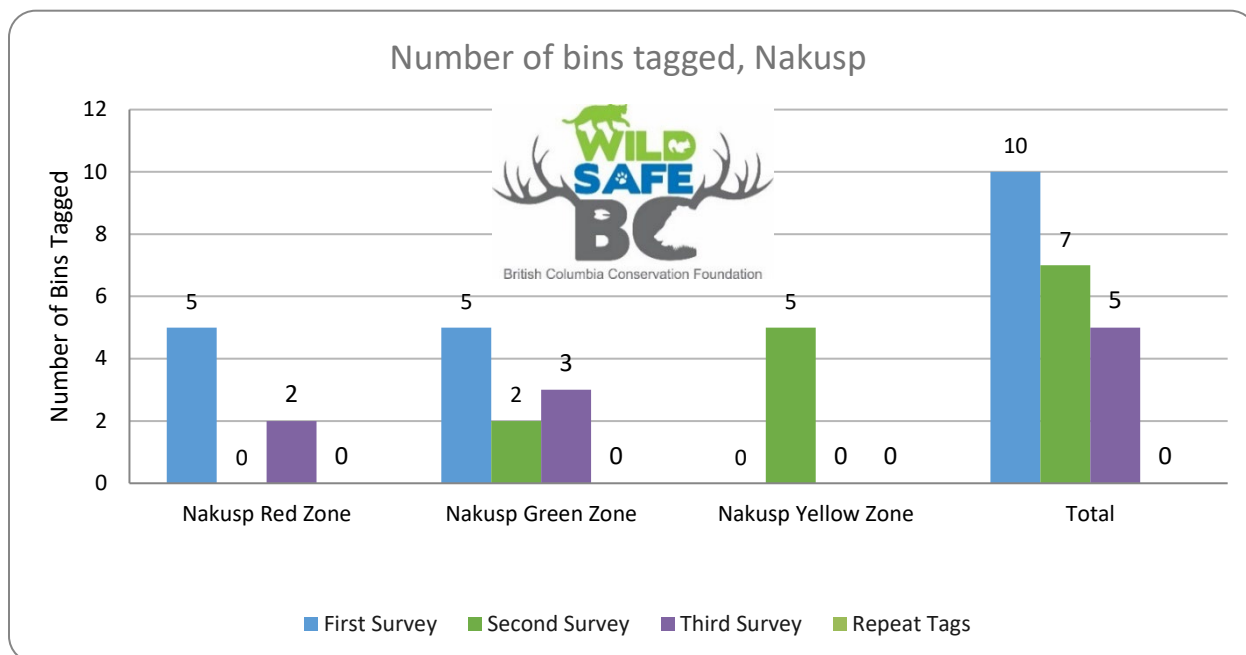


Figure 20. Number of garbage bins placed out early for collection over nine visits and three zones in Nakusp from May to September.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Arrow-Slocan Lakes Facebook page grew 19.6% from 505 to 604 followers from January to November 2022. Over 135 posts ranging in topic from local event information to specific information on local wildlife behaviours and how to remain safe in wildlife country, were made to the WildSafeBC Arrow-Slocan Lakes Facebook from April 11, 2022 to November 15, 2022. The WCC submitted eight news articles that were published in the *Valley Voice* or *Arrow Lakes News* in 2022. These publications included articles about bear biology, fruit tree management, and BC Goes Wild events. The WCC was also interviewed for four additional articles published in the *Valley Voice* and *Arrow Lakes News* (two articles each).

Wildlife in Area Signs

Wildlife in Area signs were established in New Denver at a campground, along the river and at trailheads. Signs in Silverton were placed at the Hills. Signs were also posted at campgrounds and rec sites in RDCK Area K between May and October when reports of potentially dangerous black bear and cougar activity were reported to the WCC by residents or the Conservation Office Service (COS) (Figure 21). While putting up signs, the WCC had the opportunity to talk to residents in the area to warn them of current bear or cougar activity. Signs were established at trail entrances or in areas where users would be most likely to see the warning. They were kept up for 10 to 14 days and then removed once no further reports of the wildlife species were made. This was done to keep the warnings relevant and updated. If reports continued, signs were left up for longer. “Bare Camping” posters were also provided at unattended rec sites and interested campgrounds.



Figure 21. Bear in Area and Cougar in Area signs put up throughout the region at trailheads, beaches and along walking trails.

Collaborations

WildSafeBC Arrow-Slocan Lakes continues to collaborate with Harvest Share for fruit gleaning referrals in New Denver and Silverton. The two programs together oversee five loaner electric fences within New Denver and Silverton that can be established on private property to secure fruit trees before harvesting. The WCC also collaborated with the Valhalla Wilderness Society (VWS) Slocan Valley Area H Bear Smart Program to host a joint bear and western toad biology walk and bear spray workshop (22).



Figure 22. The bear and western toad biology hike, co-organized by the WCC and Amber Peters from the VWS Area H Bear Smart Program. Photo credit: Amber Peters and Cora Skaien.

WildSafeBC Arrow-Slocan Lakes also collaborated with Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions to co-host four electric fencing workshops in 2022, the last of which was additionally co-hosted by VWS Slocan Valley Area H Bear Smart Program. The WCC referred residents to Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions to discuss cost-sharing options for residents and general advice for electric fencing considerations in areas that were considered near grizzly bear habitat. The WCC also referred residents to VWS Slocan Valley Area H Bear Smart Program to discuss cost-share options on energizers for electric fencing within RDCK Area H.

The COS sent over 35 reports to the WCC to request follow-up education to the specific areas where callers resided.

WildSafeBC Business Pledge

The WildSafeBC Business Pledge Program has been developed to encourage businesses to be 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 safety and conflict reduction information. In return, WildSafeBC will provide ongoing support to the business in the form of staff training, WildSafeBC materials (subject to budget constraints) and a WildSafeBC Business Pledge poster. Two businesses were approached in Nakusp, Mountain Top Coffee and the Home Hardware. No new businesses signed the business pledge this year.

WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

Through the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program, WildSafeBC provides clear guidelines and resources to assist campground operators in maintaining a safe campsite for both people and wildlife. Two campgrounds signed up for the pledge this year: the New Denver Municipal Campground, and Nakusp Hot Springs Campground. Despite receiving training amongst staff, neither location was able to fully implement the program in 2022 and should be revisited in April or May of 2023 to provide additional support for the successful and full implementation of the program at these sites.

Special Initiatives

BC Goes Wild is a campaign to celebrate wildlife in BC occurring in September which is typically the month when human-bear conflicts are at their highest in BC. This year, the WCC collaborated with Harvest Share to promote fruit gleaning and loaner electric fences through posters around town, news articles in the local paper, and numerous social media posts. The WCC also hosted an art day inspired by nature with New Denver's daycare and preschool (12 participants) (Figure 23). All children attending the art event received WildSafeBC animal-themed tattoos.



Figure 23. Collage of art created during the BC Goes Wild art day with New Denver's day care and preschool.

Challenges and Opportunities

Reports of human-wildlife conflict were above average for the region in 2022 due to a widespread natural crop failure in the region, but conflict was also variable across the region, being higher in some areas than average, but lower in Nakusp. Most conflict reported to the COS was within New Denver, and anecdotally, conflict was also high in Arrow Park and Fauquier regions. Conflict was seemingly not above normal levels in Nakusp and Silverton, although this may have been a reporting issue. The below recommendations apply to the entire region, but some recommendations have specific areas of higher conflict frequency in mind.

Fruit trees continue to be major attractants in local communities, drawing wildlife into residential areas. This is particularly evident in years with large scale crop failure of natural food sources, such as in 2022. In New Denver in particular, bears were reported as remaining in residents' yards and walking around the community during the day, near schools, and other public areas, which affects the safety of the community. To address the abundance of fruit in the communities within this region, the following initiatives should continue to be implemented by WildSafeBC in 2023:

- Continued electric fence demonstrations and workshops
- Education campaign focusing on the hazards and solutions using platforms such as social media, news articles, workshops, flyer addition to municipal tax information
- Connect residents with Harvest Share, the local fruit-gleaning organization in New Denver and Silverton, or Root and Branch, the fruit-gleaning organization in Nakusp
- Increased door-to-door canvassing in hotspots

Additional considerations and opportunities for 2023:

- Emphasize the Bare Campsite program in municipal campgrounds early in the spring. Providing additional supports early on to ensure full implementation of the program.
- Working with communities to develop a protocol for “What to do if a bear is in Area X”, where Area X might be a campground, schoolyard, or specific area of a community.
- Work with Harvest Share to have designated weekends where a group of volunteers goes around the community to ask if they can assist in picking fruits, nuts and windfall. Consider two different weekends, earlier and later in the fall, due to different timing of when different fruits ripen.
- Schedule collaborative meetings with First Nations groups in the region.
- Increased presence in Nakusp and Fauquier to determine level of human-wildlife conflict as these areas are under-reported to the COS and WARP.
- Form a Bear Working Group for New Denver, and facilitate regular meetings throughout the season. Attendees would include the Village of New Denver, the RCMP, the COS, WildSafeBC and Harvest Share.
- Conduct regional group meetings every few months between CAOs of Nakusp, New Denver, Silverton, Slocan and Kaslo to discuss local bear conflict and solutions.
- Create Human-Bear Conflict Surveys for RDCK Areas H and K.

Local municipalities can assist residents in managing their fruit trees by considering programs such as:

- Cost-share on electric fencing materials or other rebates
- Fruit-tree replacement program for those no longer managing their fruit trees
- Electric fencing loan-to-buy program with the current temporary electric fences, using the proceeds to replace sold fences.
- Adding two temporary electric fences to the loaner fleet per year to increase capacity over time

Additional considerations for municipalities would be increased enforcement of bylaws for garbage not properly secured between collection days and any elements related to animal attractant bylaws, such as the requirement to pick up windfall from fruit trees and manage fruit and nut trees broadly.

Acknowledgements

WildSafeBC Arrow-Slocan Lakes is grateful for the generous support the program receives from its funders including the Villages of New Denver, Nakusp and Silverton, the Regional District of Central Kootenay (Area K), Columbia Basin Trust, the BC Conservation Foundation (BCCF) and the Province of British Columbia. The WCC also thanks the BCCF team and the local Conservation Office Service team for communication and shared knowledge of wildlife activity and advice. Lastly, thanks to all the individuals and organizations the WCC collaborated with, including Audray Wright with Harvest Share, Gillian Sanders with Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions, Amber Peters with the Valhalla Wilderness Society Bear Smart Program for Area H, and Julia Greenlaw with the Healthy Community Society.