

WildSafeBC Annual Report 2022

Kaslo and Area D

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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the 2022 WildSafeBC Community Coordinator (WCC) in Kaslo and Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) Area D (Figure 1). WildSafeBC respectfully acknowledges that this program operates on the traditional territory of the Ktunaxa, Syilx (Okanagan), and Sinixt Peoples. The WCC is grateful to have the opportunity to work in this territory.

Kaslo and Area D are located within the watershed of the Columbia Basin with settlements surrounding Lake Kootenay and to the southwest and east of Duncan Lake. The area has numerous creeks and rivers such as the Duncan River, Lardeau River, Meadow Creek, Cooper Creek, Fry Creek, Kaslo River, Fletcher Creek and Falls. These waterways can serve as corridors for wildlife seeking fish or natural fruits and vegetation. Settled between the Selkirk and Purcell mountain ranges, grizzly bears, black bears, elk, and mountain goats, are all known to venture down the mountainsides from alpine meadows to visit Kootenay and Duncan Lake. The WildSafeBC Kaslo and RDCK Area D program covers the communities of Gerrard, Popular Creek, Howser, Meadow Creek, Argenta, Johnsons Landing, Cooper Creek, Schroeder Creek, Lardeau Valley, Shutty Bench, Kaslo, Fletchers Falls, Mirror Lake and Ainsworth (Figure 1).

In 2022, wildlife activity reported was somewhat decreased compared to 2021. There were 39 wildlife reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) in the Kaslo and Area D region. Of these, 25 (64%) reports were of black bears.

The WCC performed outreach activities with the goal of preventing conflict with wildlife in the community. These activities included:

- 1 WildSafe Ranger presentation with 14 youth reached.
- Through door-to-door activities, 16 people were contacted in person and 84 received door hangers.
- There were 4 booths held at the Kaslo Saturday Market and Kaslo Transfer Station with 113 people reached.
- The WildSafeBC Kaslo Facebook page grew from 351 to 518 followers, as a result of 46 posts made from May 15, 2022 to November 30, 2022.
- 3 businesses renewed the WildSafeBC Business Pledge commitment.
- 2 campgrounds and sites were provided Bare Campsite Program materials.

The key attractants reported to this WCC in 2022 were livestock, carrion, and fruit trees, resulting in human-wildlife encounters this season with 25 black bears and 11 grizzly bears. Management of these attractants by residents remained challenging, however, with WildSafeBC initiatives and collaborations such as educational outreach, door-to-door campaigns, fruit gleaning programs, electric fencing workshops, and supporting the Village of Kaslo moving towards becoming a Bear Smart Community, the community will be able to continue to improve their ability to “keep wildlife wild and the community safe”.

The WCC thanks the BC Conservation Foundation, the Province of BC, the Regional District of the Central Kootenay, the Village of Kaslo and Columbia Basin Trust for funding the program.

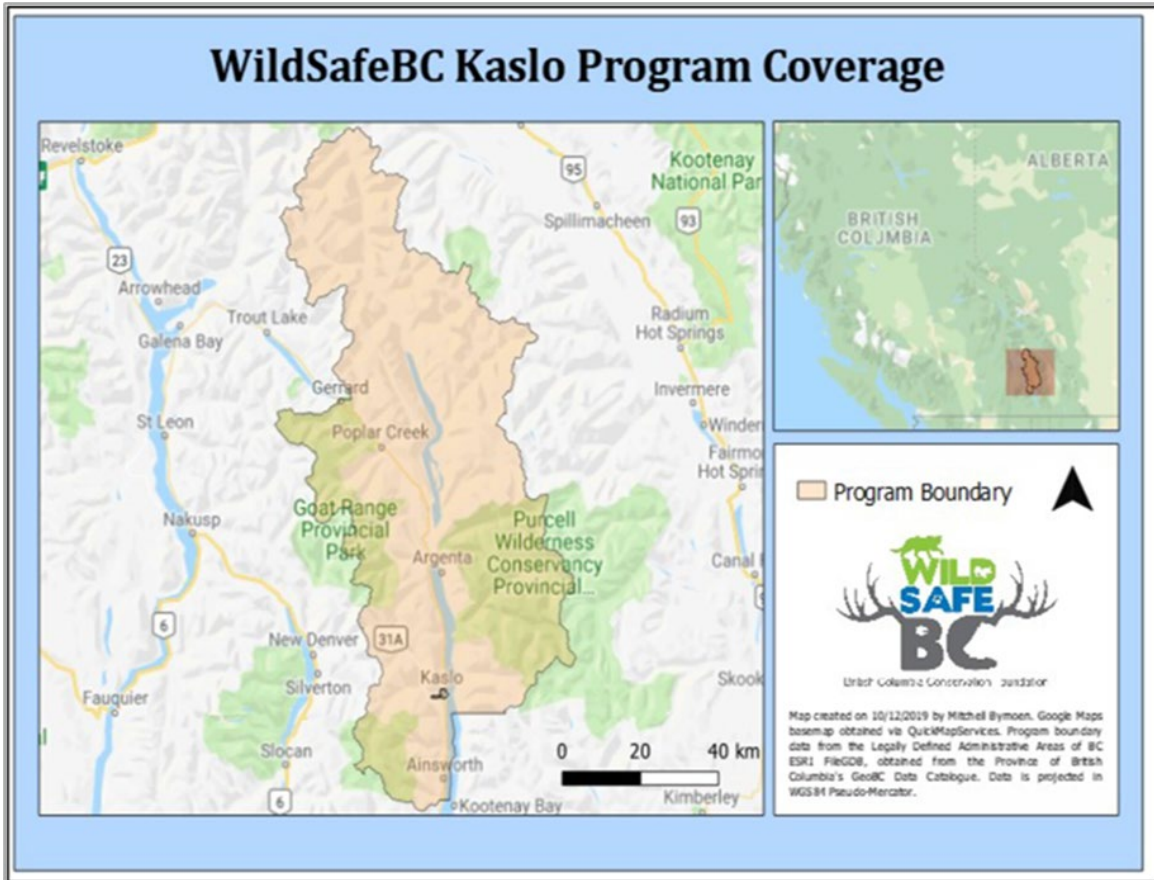


Figure 1. WildSafeBC Kaslo and Area D program coverage area.

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Cover Photo: Black bear passing through in Kaslo, BC.

Highlights from the 2022 Season

Wildlife Activity

Data for wildlife activity is captured by reports made to the Conservation Officer Service (COS) through the RAPP line (1-877-952-7277) and through the RAPP on-line reporting form. Such data is available to the public through the WildSafeBC Wildlife Alert Reporting Program (WARP) at <https://warp.WildSafeBC.com/warp/>. The data is updated daily and this report for Kaslo and Area D includes data from January 1, 2017 to November 26, 2022 (Figure 2). WARP underwent a software update early in the season, which prevented the inclusion of several factors in the report, including attractants and outcome. Therefore, these aspects of WARP will be excluded in this season's report.

There were 25 black bear reports for Kaslo and Area D, which is a reduction from the past three years (Figure 3). Grizzly bear reports increased this season with 11 reports. The region had its first cougar report since 2019. These reports were from encounters by residents in Kaslo, Mirror Creek, Shutty Bench and Meadow Creek. Deer were not reported this season, unlike previous years.

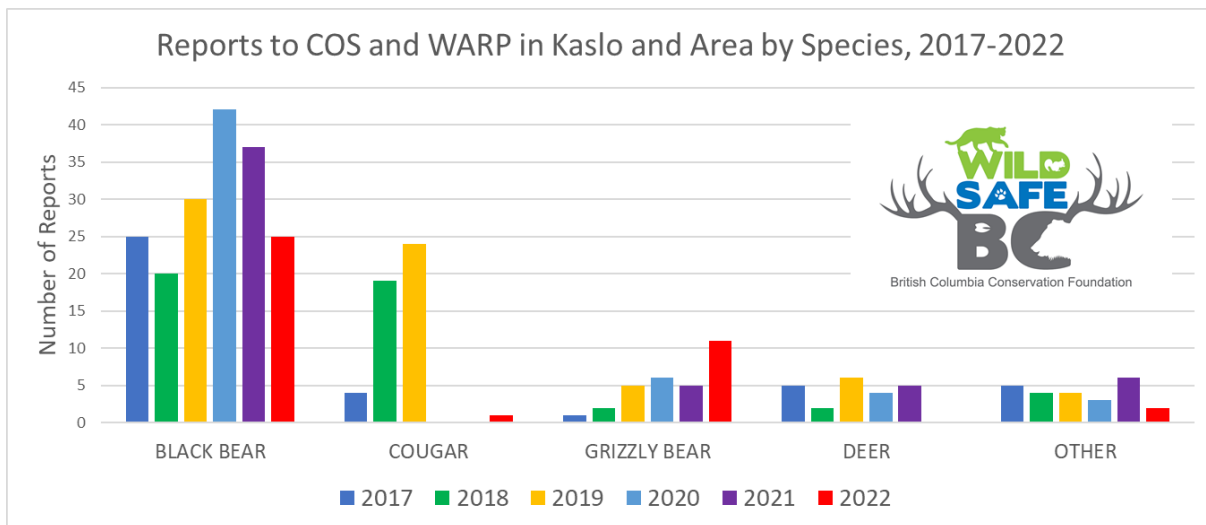


Figure 2. Reports to the COS and WARP by species from January 1, 2017 to November 26, 2022.

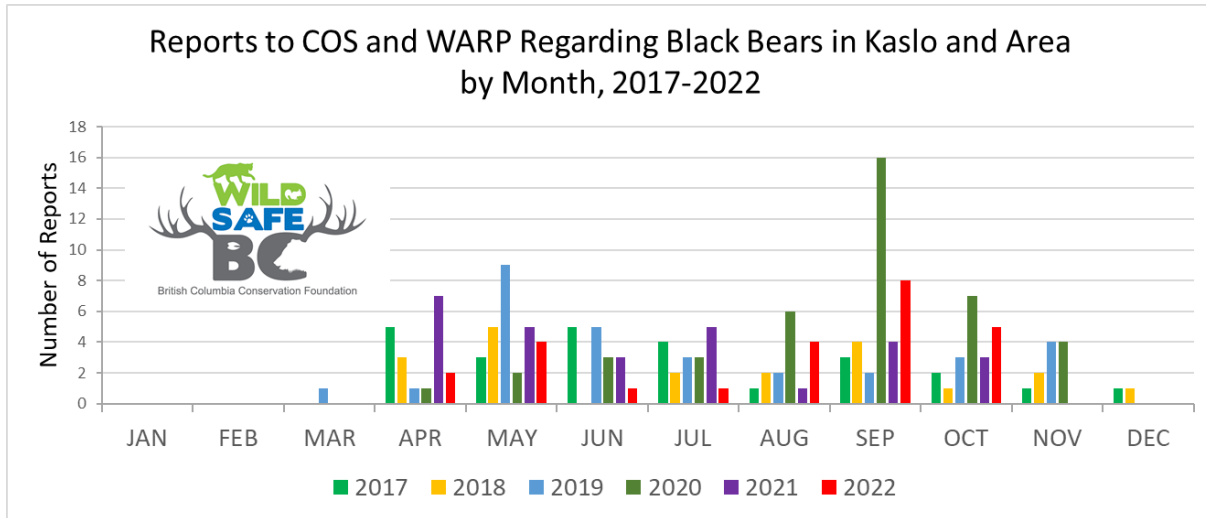


Figure 3. Black bears reported in Kaslo and Area D from January 1, 2017 to November 26, 2022.

WildSafe Ranger Program

The WildSafe Ranger Program (WRP) introduces youth to the basic needs of local wildlife (water, food, shelter and space), the concept of human-wildlife conflict, and how we can avoid and reduce our interactions with wildlife. Youth are encouraged to take an active role in reducing human-wildlife conflict at home by helping their families identify backyard wildlife attractants. Youth are also taught how to stay safe while in wildlife country and the best way to react in the event of encounter.

There was one WRP presentations held at the Jewett Elementary School in Meadow Creek with nine children from kindergarten to Grade 6 in attendance (Figure 4). The students became WildSafe Rangers and received WRP activity kits (activity book, bookmark, stickers, buttons and brochures on bears) to take home with them.



Figure 4. Wildlife Rangers Program at Jewett Elementary School in Meadow Creek

Display Booths

WildSafeBC attended three Kaslo Saturday Markets between July and October (Figure 5; Table 1). Unfortunately, due to illness, the WCC was not able to attend the Lardeau Valley Fall Festival in October. This additional outreach opportunity would be valuable to revisit for the next season.

A display booth was set up at the Kaslo Transfer Station to help educate local visitors on the importance of reporting wildlife encounters and how to mitigate such experiences through attractant management. This event reached the outer communities that do not have access to in-town services and so have different needs regarding attractant management strategies as well as different experiences with wildlife encounters and conflicts.

Table 1. Displays at Community events, 2022.

Date	Event	People reached
July 2022	Kaslo Saturday Market	42
August 2022	Kaslo Transfer Station	14
September 2022	Kaslo Saturday Market	30
October 2022	Kaslo Saturday Market	27



Figure 5. Booth display at the Kaslo Saturday Market & Transfer Station, 2022.

Door-to-Door Education and Community Support

Door-to-door education outreach was made by the WCC to ensure that everyone in an area is aware of recent wildlife activity and serves as a reminder about managing attractants. Door-to-door education consisted of leaving informative door hangers at residences when the resident was not at home to have a conversation. This ensured that every resident in the area with human-wildlife encounters or increased activity was included and visited. The use of door hangers increased communication with residents.

Specific areas were prioritized in the neighbourhoods of Kaslo and Area D where encounters with wildlife were reported to the COS, WARP, the Kaslo RCMP, or directly to the WCC. While canvassing the WCC also gained information in areas with increased wildlife activity that may have not been reported directly to the COS or WARP. Door-to-door education took place in upper and lower Kaslo, Shuttly Bench, and Mirror Lake. In total, 100 residential properties were visited. Of those 100, 16 were in-person conversations with residents who were home and available at the time of the canvassing session.

Following canvassing sessions the WCC was approached and contacted in follow-up by email, Facebook messaging, phone and in person by residents in Kaslo and Area D wanting to discuss more about topics from bear safety, skunks, electric fencing, fruit tree management, waste management, and human-wildlife encounters on properties.

Bin Tagging

Bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of residential containers set curbside the evening before collection. WildSafeBC garbage tagging normally focuses on garbage bins alone, however recyclables and recycling bins can also be

attractants to black bears especially if bins are left outside, or bins and their contents are not clean and so these bins can also be tagged if left out and unsecured during bin tagging outings.

Kaslo and Area D residents and businesses dispose of waste and recyclables either by contracting a service provider, or by travelling to either the Kaslo Waste Transfer Station or the Marblehead Waste Transfer Station operated by the RDCK.

It had been the experience of this WCC, through conversations with locals and members of Kaslo Bear Smart Working Group, that residents “self-police” their neighbourhoods with regards to garbage bins placed out early. Along with 2021 minimal offenses (6), with 100% compliance rate, this season did not see a bin tagging campaign executed.

Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Kaslo and Area D Facebook page grew from 351 to 518 page followers. The highest number of people reached for a Facebook posting was 1,628 in October regarding bears and fruit trees. A post on Bat Week in October also proved to be popular with 162 viewers.

There was one news article in *The Valley Voice* that was co-commented on with the WildSafeBC Arrow-Slocan Lakes Coordinator. This collaboration allowed both WildSafeBC program areas to combine information and outreach opportunities to get messaging out to more community members.

Wildlife in Area Signs

In August 2022, a Bear in the Area sign was placed within the Kaslo Community Garden compound after repeat reports of a black bear accessing the garden (Figure 6). Upon canvassing the area, there were no obvious attractants found. The large compost may have been the source of attractant, however, there was no evidence that it had been tampered with by the bear.



Figure 6. Bear in Area sign posted in the Kaslo Community Garden

Collaborations

Although WildSafeBC does not participate directly in fruit gleaning or installation of electric fencing, the WCC does connect people to Kaslo Food Hub's Harvest "Feed Families Not Bears" sharing program for fruit gleaning. WildSafeBC also collaborates with Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions for advice and referrals on electric fencing installation.

The WCC provided information and educational materials for the Kaslo Bear Smart Working Group, and attended their booth at the Kaslo Saturday Market in June 2022.

In August 2022, the WCC provided support to the WildSafeBC Arrow-Slocan Lakes program for bear spray workshops at two RDCK transfer station locations in Rosebery and Nakusp. During these events, nine RDCK employees were in attendance.

WildSafeBC Business Pledge

The WildSafeBC Business Pledge has been developed to encourage businesses to become good examples in their community and demonstrate through their actions how to safely co-exist with wildlife. The WildSafeBC Business Pledge helps support communities in becoming Bear Smart. To take the pledge, a business is required to follow best practices in solid waste management, provide adequate training to staff and support the WildSafeBC safety and conflict reduction information. In return, WildSafeBC provides ongoing support to the business in the form of staff training, WildSafeBC materials, and a WildSafeBC Business Pledge poster. Three businesses in Kaslo renewed their WildSafeBC Business Pledge this year:

- True Blue Kaslo Home Hardware (Figure 7)
- The Kaslo Adventure Centre
- Kaslo Kayaking

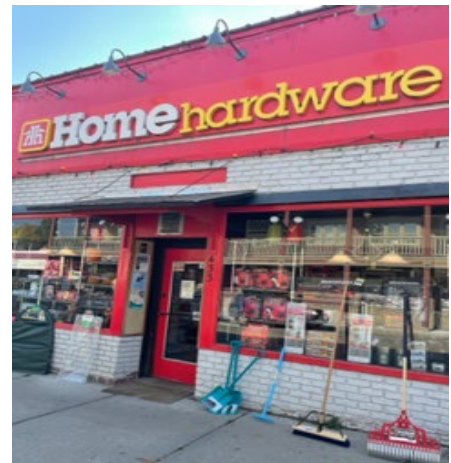


Figure 7. True Blue Kaslo Home Hardware renewed the WildSafeBC Business Pledge.

WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program

In 2021, WildSafeBC introduced a new program called the WildSafeBC Bare Campsite Program which aims to reduce wildlife attractants at camping sites and provide programming on how to successfully camp and co-exist with bears and other wildlife species. In 2022, The WCC visited two campgrounds and provided brochures informing users about wildlife and camping in bear country (Figure 8). Campgrounds included Kaslo Municipal Campground and Mirror Lake Campground.

With increased demand and interest in outdoor camping by locals and visitors again this year and with the goal of reducing attractants such as garbage at campsites in Kaslo and Area D,

this program can be presented to more campground operators in the area in the next season's programming to make an even greater impact on reducing human-wildlife conflicts.



Figure 8. Brochures at local campgrounds

Special Initiatives

September is the month when the WildSafeBC BC Goes Wild campaign occurs. This initiative is geared toward encouraging individuals to engage in activities that promote keeping our wildlife wild and communities safe. This year, the WCC collaborated with neighbouring WCC's from Castlegar and Selkirk-Purcell communities to host a "Bears & Brews" trivia night at the Angry Hen Brewery in Kaslo on October 4, 2022. This successful event had 16 enthusiastic attendees.

In addition, a colouring competition for youth was promoted at the Kaslo Saturday Market and online, connecting other local residents with the BC Goes Wild campaign.

Challenges and Opportunities

Fruit trees continue to be a main source of attractants in the community. These trees draw wildlife into residential areas. Bears have been reported damaging trees and remaining in people's yards, which affects the safety of the neighbourhood. Several areas have been identified as hotspots in the community and would benefit from increased education, tree trimming or removal, and/or fruit gleaning activities.

There has been an increase in communications around fruit sharing and assistance with overabundant fruit as seen in social media postings. To address the abundance of fruit in the community, the following initiatives should be implemented in 2023:

- Electric fence demonstration and workshops.
- Continue to connect residents through a social media food-sharing group.
- Education campaigns focusing on the hazards and solutions for reducing human-wildlife conflicts through social media, news articles, and workshops.
- Increased door-to-door campaigns in hotspots.

Opportunities to address local food security, waste management, and managing bear attractants needs to continue through dialogue and the common interests of many residents and community groups in Kaslo.

Additionally, the Village of Kaslo has made great progress in becoming Bear Smart with the Animal Attractant Bylaw coming into effect recently. In addition, the Village continues to work from the framework and suggestions put forward in the Bear Hazard Assessment completed in January 2022. A Kaslo Bear Smart Working Group has been formed and has been working together on this initiative since the fall of 2020. The working group has supported the work of the WCC and has been involved in education and outreach opportunities as well as identifying locations with fruit trees as attractants in Kaslo. Maintaining communications and support to the Village and staff by the Kaslo Bear Smart Working Group and the WCC can assist Kaslo in their progress towards becoming a designated Bear Smart Community.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to local Conservation Officers Nathan Smienk and Jason Hawkes, whose valuable support was immeasurable for this new WCC during this 2022 season. Thanks to the Village of Kaslo Council and staff for their support and receptivity to Bear Smart and wildlife safety initiatives in Kaslo. Thank you to the Regional District of Central Kootenay, the Columbia Basin Trust, the BC Government and BC Conservation Foundation (BCCF) as well, for providing funding for such a vital community program.

Thank you to Kathy Allaire of the North Kootenay Lake Community Services Society and the Kaslo Food Hub for coordinating fruit gleaning opportunities and for organizing the Kaslo Saturday Markets. Thank you to Gillian Sanders of Grizzly Bear Coexistence Solutions for expertise in electric fencing. Thank you to Marlaina Blanche, Anna Kallstrom, Joan Murach, Gillian Sanders, and Patricia Feeney of the Bear Smart Working Group for Kaslo for the efforts to support Kaslo's interest in becoming a Bear Smart Community and continued efforts to educate and reduce bear attractants in the community.

And finally, thank you to all the residents, tourists, farmers, and communities of the Kaslo and Area D program area with whom the WCC met and had conversations around wildlife safety and reduction of attractants.