

COWICHAN VALLEY ANNUAL REPORT 2025



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*Keeping Wildlife Wild and
Communities Safe*



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Executive Summary

This report describes the activities of the WildSafeBC Cowichan Valley program for the 2025 season between June 1st, 2025 and November 30th, 2025. 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 Cowichan Valley program covers approximately 3473 square kilometers. WildSafeBC Cowichan Valley acknowledges that it operates on the unceded traditional territories of the Cowichan Tribes, Halalt First Nation, Lake Cowichan First Nation, Lyackson First Nation, Malahat First Nation, Penelakut Tribe, and Stz'uminus First Nation. The program covers the communities of Chemainus, Duncan, Cowichan Lake, Youbou, Cobble Hill, Malahat and Shawnigan Lake.



2025 Highlights

300+

Students Educated

60+

Community Members Reached

20

Households through Door-to-Door

400

Bins Tagged

44K

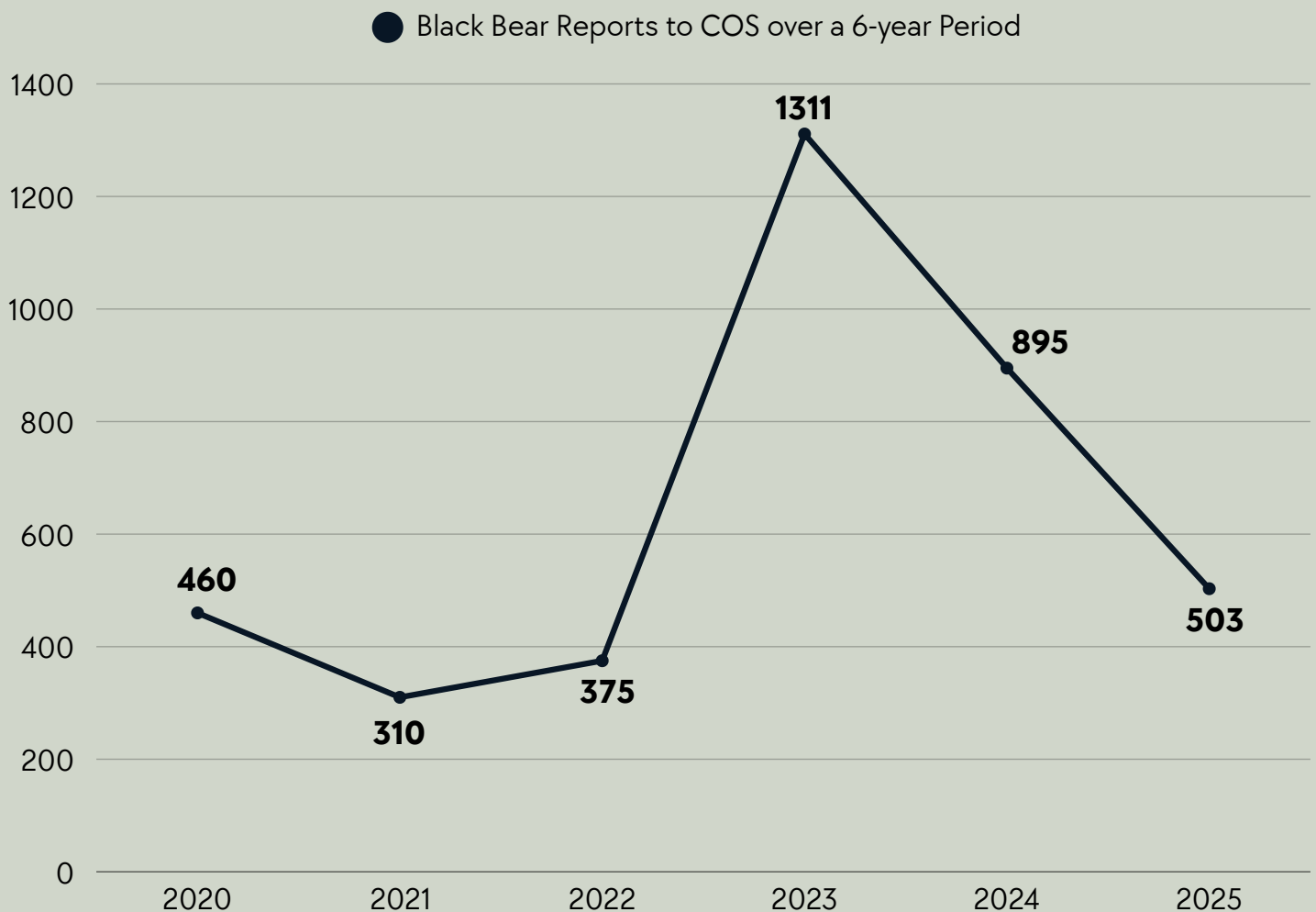
Facebook Users Reached

Conservation Officer Service Reports

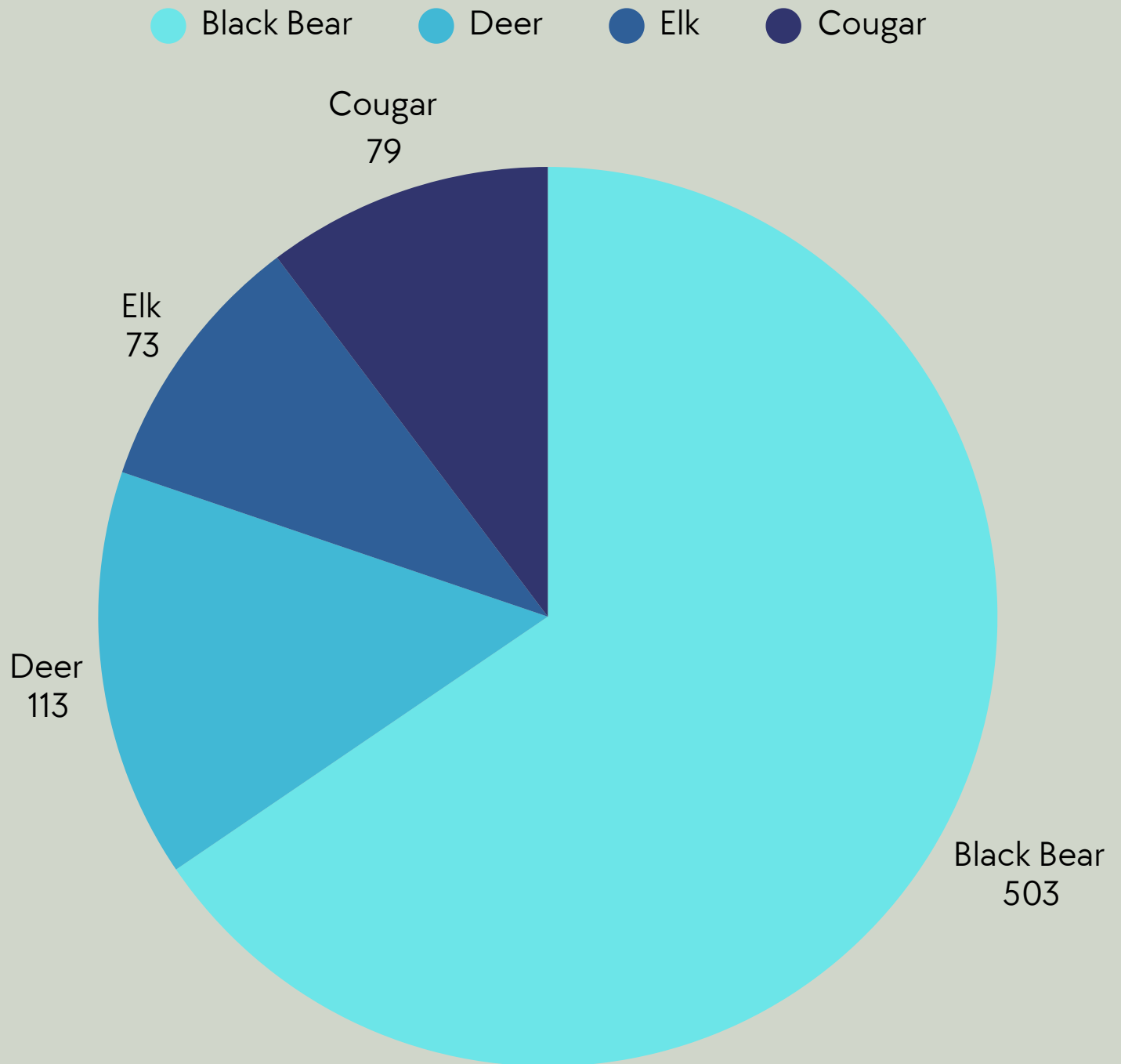
From January 1 to November 6, a total of 503 wildlife reports have been made to the COS through the Report All Poachers and Polluters (RAPP) line (1-877-952-7277) or online form (<https://forms.gov.bc.ca/environment/rapp/>).

Similar to previous years, black bears were the species most often reported to the COS in 2025, followed by Deer, Cougar and Elk. From January 1st, 2025 to November 6th, 2025, there were 503 black bear reports, which is lower by 392 than the number of reports made in 2024, which was 895.

This year a lot of impetus was placed in the fall season (i.e in the months of September, October and November) to spread education and awareness in the community through multiple channels of engagement.



Conservation Officer Service Reports



Total Number of Calls = 768 (YTD)

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 WildSafe Cowichan Valley Coordinator delivered 9 WRP presentations with 2 elementary schools as well as 1 Camp. A total of 300+ children throughout Cowichan Valley became WildSafe Rangers and most received WildSafe Ranger kits to take away with them.

School/Group (Presentations)	Grade	# Reached	Date
Maple Bay Elementary School	2-7	240	November 3rd
Cowichan Valley Open Learning - The Grove	K-2	30	November 5th



WILDSAFE RANGERS

The WildSafeBC WildSafe Ranger Program introduces students to the concept of human-wildlife conflict. It encourages them to take an active role in reducing human-wildlife conflicts by helping their families identify wildlife attractants around their home. The program fosters a respectful relationship with all wildlife that emphasizes keeping wildlife wild and communities safe.

WILDSAFE RANGERS WILL LEARN:

- Basic needs (habitat requirements) of local wildlife species
- The root causes of human-wildlife conflicts
- How human-wildlife conflicts impact both people and animals
- What we can do at home to prevent human-wildlife conflicts
- How to stay safe in wildlife country

To learn more about the WildSafe Ranger Program visit: <http://wildsafebc.com/wrpf/>

THE WILDSAFE RANGER PROGRAM COMPLEMENTS THE BC SCIENCE K-9 CURRICULUM TO FOSTER: "a basis for an intuitive relationship with and respect for the natural world; connections to their ecosystem and community; and a sense of relatedness that encourages lifelong harmony with nature."

To request a WildSafe Ranger Program presentation: contact your local WildSafeBC Community Coordinator, call 250-828-2551, or email bcj@wildsafebc.com

Community Groups

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator gave 3 in-person presentations to 54 people across various community groups in the region. These presentations were focused on local Wildlife Awareness and Safety combined with Bear Spray use and safety. These presentations were given to the Malahat Nation, Cowichan Intercultural Society as well as girl guides who further helped in spreading awareness to many more children and adults in the Cowichan Valley in the season of 2025.

Community Group	Attendees	Date
Malahat Nation Presentation	20	August 14th
Girl Guides	19	November 19th
Cowichan Intercultural Society	15	November 20th



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 40 people visited the WildSafeBC display booth at 2 community events across the community.

This year the WCC put up display booths at trailheads to connect with the public to spread awareness and education about wildlife safety as well as discuss wildlife attractant management. A display booth was set-up at Mt. Tzhouhalem on September 24th, and at Cobble Hill Mountain on September 25th.

There were various amazing interactions conducted with the community members where the significance of education in reducing human-wildlife conflicts was at the core. Many kids and adults alike were really appreciative of the set-up including bear skull and hide.

Community Event / Trailhead Booth	Attendees	Date
Mt. Tzhouhalem (Kaspa Rd)	30	September 24th
Cobble Hill Mountain	10	September 25th

Display Booths



Mount Tzouhalem Trailhead Booth September 24th, 2025

Display Booths



Cobble Hill Trailhead Booth September 25th 2025

Bin Tagging and Door-to-Door

Bin tagging consists of placing a highly visible and removable warning sticker on top of curbside containers the evening before collection day. This year was also the first year of bylaws being in place for placing bins curbside before 5AM which was a good tool for encouraging people to keep their bins secured until collection day. During 9 outings, a total of 400 bins were tagged across various garbage collection zones across all major hotspots (Lake Cowichan, Youbou, Mill Bay, Shawnigan Lake, Cowichan Bay, Duncan and Sahtlam). Furthermore, the WCC collaborated with volunteers whenever possible to increase safety and efficiency while out bin tagging. Special thanks to Larissa Grymaloski and Austin Leblanc for making bin tagging possible.

During the door-to-door education outreach efforts, 20+ homes throughout the community were visited and educational door hangers were left. Moreover, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator also engaged with residents in conversations about wildlife awareness and safety in those neighbourhoods and discussed attractant management strategies to reduce human-wildlife conflicts.



Social Media and Press

The WildSafeBC Cowichan Valley's Facebook page came out of hibernation June, 2025 with an introductory post. Over the season, the page has had 6 new Facebook followers, for a total of 914 followers in November 2025. As well, the page has received 277 Facebook Page likes during this same time period.

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. Many Facebook posts created were also shared by Facebook users into other groups or on their own personal timeline, which helped promote the WildSafeBC Cowichan Valley's Facebook page.

In total, 12 Facebook posts were created that reached over 44K people from June 1st, 2025 to November 30th. Many posts reached over 700 Facebook users, with the most impactful post created on June 30th, 2025 reaching approximately 15K people and was shared 12 times.

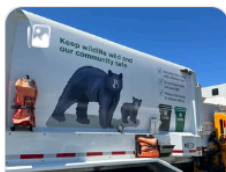
44,620 Views ⓘ

+2,664.6% from previous 172 days



Top content

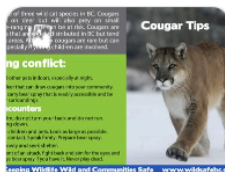
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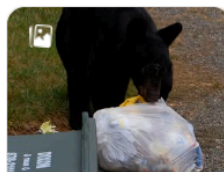
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15,120
Views



Thu Oct 2, 5:36pm
12,489
Views



Sun Jun 22, 10:28am
4,900
Views



Wed Jul 16, 2:57pm
2,951
Views



Thu Jun 19, 2:26pm
1,226
Views



Wed Jul 23, 6:18pm
940
Views

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 it's 10th Annual BC Goes Wild Event.

For BC Goes Wild, the WCC increased the Cowichan Valley Facebook page's social media presence. Posts were aimed at being relatable to current issues and full of information locals may need to ensure they are keeping wildlife wild and their communities safe. The WCC also tried to get into the community as much as their schedule allowed and attended local trailheads in which they spoke to locals about recent wildlife reports, trail safety and answered any questions they had. There were several newcomers to Canada or Vancouver Island that mentioned the booth was very informative and the Coordinator was happy they could answer any questions posed about local wildlife.

Also, on social media, many posts and content were posted and reposted for the 10th Annual BC Goes Wild Event during the entire month of September 2025 to spread awareness and education across the community members.



Indigenous Awareness and Engagement

During the 2025 season, the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator connected with various First Nations such as Cowichan Tribes and Malahat First Nation regarding spreading awareness and education about human-wildlife conflict and WildSafe BC messaging. This resulted in a community presentation at Malahat First Nation followed by discussions with elders and community members on attractant management. Furthermore, many resources were shared with all the members and attendees. Cowichan Tribes invited the WildSafeBC Community Coordinator to Quw'utsun Sta'lo' Skweyul (Cowichan River Day) however they were unable to attend due to another commitment.

The WildSafeBC Community Coordinator also completed the Indigenous corporate training offered by the WildSafe team as a part of learning and development. This training provided a lot of important learnings and understanding to support the Truth and Reconciliation efforts and working with First Nations.

WildSafeBC recognizes the importance in taking a collaborative approach to keeping wildlife wild and our communities safe.



Photo by Barry Hetschko

Quw'utsun Sta'lo' Skweyul (Cowichan River Day)

Challenges and Future Goals

Waste continues to be the largest source of attractants in the Cowichan Valley. The region covered by the WCC is quite a large geographical area and has five waste removal systems, each with separate schedules of removal. Another challenge to waste collection is early placement of bins. An effective solution to this has been Bin-Tagging and educating residents about CVRD's new wildlife attractant bylaw. Furthermore, fruit trees, bird feeders, and urban livestock continue to be a source of human-wildlife conflict in Cowichan 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.

Another issue relevant in Cowichan Valley is elk populations in Lake Cowichan, Youbou and neighbouring areas. Reports of elk accessing Halloween porch pumpkins and garbage were seen as well as a few tangled up antlers. All these issues continue to be seen, and residents could benefit from further education.

Therefore, on the basis of above, the WildSafe Cowichan Valley Coordinator recommends the following activities for 2026:

- More bin tagging (more volunteers to cover larger areas)
- Engaging more volunteering opportunities with high school students to spread the awareness and education throughout the community
- Deliver more workshops on bear spray, WildSafe Rangers and general wildlife info
- Increase Facebook engagement or branch out to other social platforms
- Increase presence at community events and information tables in popular spots around the valley
- Increase media presence (utilize the local news stations to pass on WildSafeBC messaging)
- Promote Bare Camping and Business Pledges to the community

Acknowledgements

The WildSafeBC Cowichan Valley Community Coordinator would like to thank the Cowichan Valley Regional District, Municipality of North Cowichan, Town of Lake Cowichan and Town of Ladysmith, the Province of British Columbia, and the BC Conservation Foundation for funding the WildSafeBC Cowichan Valley project.

Furthermore, thank you to the Conservation Officer Service for their direction and support of the program, including Sgt. Scott Norris, Mark Kissinger and Christopher Ford. Lastly, the WildSafeBC Cowichan Valley 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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