



WILDSIGHT INVERMERE

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



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A vertical photograph on the left side of the page shows two grey squirrels with white underbellies peering out from a hole in a tree trunk. The tree bark is rough and textured. The squirrels are looking towards the right.

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

It has been another incredible year for Wildsight Invermere. Spring is in the air, we're poised to celebrate our 35th year as the environmental voice of the Columbia Valley and there's no slowing down on the horizon.

We were busy with a range of activities, including launching our bighorn sheep project to monitor the herd and habitat around Columbia Lake. We have several workshops underway with a number of partners, including the DTSS climate club. We've also been busy with Spark (our EV car share), nature hikes, paddles, presentations to local government, and, of course, the 10th annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival (our annual fundraiser)!

On behalf of the board, I want to extend a huge thank you to our staff over the past year, Stephanie LaCoppola, Ben Gormley, and Karen Barkley. And I want to extend a warm welcome to our new Program Manager, Helena-Grace Treadwell.

I am stepping down from the board after 9 years. It has been very rewarding to watch our organization succeed and grow in so many ways. I am very excited about the passion that our staff, board and volunteers all bring to our work. Looking ahead, our priorities remain Conservation, Climate and Community. We will continue our bighorn sheep project, community workshops, and all the activities you know and love about our place in the community. In addition, watch for an increased focus on fundraising to solidify a base of support that we can work from. I hope you will all consider helping us do great work with your financial support.

Keep bringing your passion to the conversation and we will see each other soon at a Wildsight Invermere event or out in the wild!

Cam Gillies

WILD CONNECTIONS

INSPIRE, EDUCATE, ENGAGE

PROGRAM OVERVIEW



Wild Connections, our core program area, continues to flourish and expand as we navigate the challenges presented by the ever-changing landscape of environmental stewardship. In 2023, we witnessed the escalating impacts of climate change-induced extreme weather events and disasters. These extreme events have exerted immense pressure on the fragile alpine and subalpine areas, forests, grasslands, and wetlands we strive to protect. These challenges have invigorated us to focus on some of the best climate solutions as well as programs to protect the habitat of our fellow species. Encouraging the adoption of green energy, reducing waste, promoting low-carbon transportation and protecting biodiversity are some of the key ways to ensure a resilient future.

Engaged citizens create great change, so we have designed our programs to bring the community together and build on our collective energy. Our public education initiatives, hands-on events, workshops, and citizen science engagement have increased our collective knowledge and understanding of local and global issues. We asked our members to turn their passion into action, and let us know what programs and issues they are most interested in. The response was inspiring, and will help guide us in the future in designing events and programs.

We recognized the need to collaborate more actively with other organisations in the community to build on our individual strengths. As our membership numbers continue to increase we want to ensure we are providing opportunities to build collective resilience and have a positive impact on preserving and caring for our environment.

COMMUNITY, CONSERVATION, CLIMATE

STRATEGIC FOCUS THEMES

I. COMMUNITY

Support and build an environmentally resilient, healthy, and educated community

10th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival

Another amazing fun-filled and educational night of films. Thank you to everyone for supporting our annual fundraising event on November 18! Through ticket sales, a silent auction and sponsorships, we raised \$17,519. Over 350 people attended the evening of nine films.

Wildsight Invermere Award for Environmental Pursuits

Awarded annually to a graduate of DTSS in Invermere to support ongoing studies in an area of science or environmental pursuits. Hannah Kendler was the recipient for 2023. Congratulations Hannah!

BC Rivers Day

In partnership with Lake Windermere Ambassadors and Columbia River Paddle, 16 enthusiastic paddlers floated from Invermere to Radium on September 24 in this annual celebration of our waterways.

Autumn Sojourn at Diana Lake

The special hike and overnight stay at Diana Lake Lodge on September 19-20 brought together nine people in the spectacular alpine basin on the western edge of Kootenay National Park. It was an opportunity to take the time for meaningful discussions around issues like current forestry practices. The group included bear habitat ecologist Bryon Benn, who shared his wealth of knowledge on bear behaviour and conservation issues.

Ready Set Learn

Wildsight educator and Invermere board member Jessie Caza participated in two Ready Set Learn events organized by Rocky Mountain School District #6. The summer event saw over 75 children attend.

Big Horny Comedy Show

A new collaboration and event for Wildsight, using comedy to bring awareness to the conservation needs of bighorn sheep. This event was organized in collaboration with Wildsight branches in Golden and Kimberley/Cranbrook. The event brought in an audience of over 200 people, many engaging with Wildsight Invermere for the first time.



COMMUNITY, CONSERVATION, CLIMATE

STRATEGIC FOCUS THEMES

II. CONSERVATION

Protect and conserve our local natural environment and species to ensure that thriving resilient ecosystems endure into the future

Bighorn Sheep Biodiversity and Conservation -This project was designed to be an inclusive, community-wide effort to compile monitoring data and expand understanding of the bighorn sheep herd of Columbia Lake. Throughout 2023, we conducted monthly monitoring events, calling on citizen science volunteers to join our project staff. We held seven events with the participation of 26 volunteers. This information will assist the province of BC in its ongoing development of the Kootenay Bighorn Sheep Management Plan. The plan is crucial to the continued conservation of the sheep that inhabit the region. Monitoring this herd will help foster better understanding of their migration patterns, spatial movements & overall health. Some of the project activities in 2024 will include webinars, a film screening, weed pulls and education events.

Sheep Walk & Talk - In celebration of Earth Day, 14 people joined local conservationist Shelagh Wrazej to learn about the bighorn sheep herd in Radium. This herd has been a focus for biologists in the area as they have been under threat from highway mortality. Awareness of the issue and pressure from Wildsight and other groups has resulted in a lowering of the speed limit along a crucial section of the highway. A wildlife overpass is currently in planning for this same section.



COMMUNITY, CONSERVATION, CLIMATE

STRATEGIC FOCUS THEMES

III. CLIMATE

Raise awareness and engagement on climate change actions, informed by current science and based on best practices.

Climate Friendly Homes Tour - In partnership with the Community Energy Association and East Kootenay Climate Hub, we supported Columbia Valley homeowners to participate in the BC wide project. The Climate Friendly Homes Tour was an opportunity to see climate-friendly homes and to engage with experts and homeowners who have successfully implemented sustainable living practices in their homes. Visitors were able to view and learn about technologies and techniques that improve home comfort and climate friendliness.

Home Retrofit Fair - Focused on how to transition to clean energy, affordable ways to retrofit your home, and the available government incentives. This fair brought together experts to share their knowledge with the public and specifically addressed renovations that make houses more energy efficient, thereby helping save on monthly energy bills, reducing maintenance requirements and decreasing carbon emissions and environmental impact. Over 100 people attended the workshops and presentations on November 12.

Zero Carbon Step Code

The second greatest source of GHG emissions in many areas is home heating and cooling. Knowing that municipalities can influence how much energy is used and how much pollution is released into our atmosphere, we met with local governments to bring awareness to the tools that are available to reduce these emissions – tools contained within the BC Building Code.

In partnership with East Kootenay Climate Hub, Wildsight Invermere has been engaging and educating local governments on the differences between the BC Energy Step Code and the Zero Carbon Step Code. We've examined the challenges and benefits of both step codes, encouraging early adoption of the codes to help reduce municipal climate emissions. Wildsight Invermere did multiple presentations at the District of Invermere, Radium, and Canal Flats.



The David Thompson Secondary School Climate Club

DTSS Climate Club is now in its third year! The students continue to hone their leadership and planning skills as they take on new projects. We, at Wildsight Invermere, are honored to support and work with them as they take the lead in deciding where to spend their time and effort. Club members continued with their "greening the school" project, focusing on reducing waste. Selling reusable plates and cutlery provided them with some income and reduced cafeteria waste. Improved recycling procedures in the school diverted refundable containers from the garbage stream and also added to their revenue. Using funds raised, they purchased an electric countertop composter. Compost generated from lunch waste will be used to supplement the community gardens adjacent to the school.

Plans for spring include engaging with local government to bring awareness and seek solutions to the transportation barriers they face as students. They have begun a transportation survey and plan to highlight via a short film the challenges they encounter in travelling to attend work, or after-school and social events.

SPARK

RURAL CANADA'S FIRST ELECTRIC VEHICLE SHARE



Canada's first rural EV car share program - Spark - was launched back in 2020. As electric vehicles become more mainstream and charging stations are popping up everywhere, the interest in this emissions-free transport is increasing. For both individuals and businesses, it is an opportunity to drive emissions-free and contribute to a carbon-free future. In the past year, we have added 79 new members bringing us to a total of 199 registered drivers.

Each year, by driving Spark, members are reducing our collective carbon emissions by at least 20,000 kg. It is also saving costs for users as gas prices continue to rise. Not only that, the car is charged for free when you pick it up, courtesy of the District of Invermere's support of the project.

TRY IT OUT AT [GOSPARK.CA](https://gospark.ca)

OUR MEMBERS

ENGAGED, PASSIONATE AND SUPPORTIVE



Wildsight Invermere members are the backbone of the organisation -- from the engaged volunteer Board of Directors, to all those who support the work, read the newsletter, attend events and speak out on issues.

Our members care about the natural world and want a resilient, healthy environment lasting into the future. We thank you for inspiring us and supporting us with your time, energy, and donations!

Big Thank You to our Monthly Donors!

Monthly donors help us with an assured revenue, making planning and staffing easier.

To become a monthly donor, go to our website and be sure to be on Wildsight Invermere donation page. WILDSIGHT.CA/INVERMERE

OUR TEAM

BOARD OF DIRECTORS & STAFF



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TRACY FLYNN
VICE PRESIDENT



JESSIE CAZA
SECRETARY |
EDUCATOR



TAOYA SCHAEFER
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KAREN BARKLEY
BRANCH MANAGER



**HELENA-GRACE
TREADWELL**
PROGRAM MANAGER

WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR FUNDERS & SUPPORTERS

PROGRAM FUNDERS

BC Gaming
BC Conservation & Biodiversity
Columbia Basin Trust
District of Invermere
Government of Canada
Panorama Foundation
Regional District of East Kootenay



COLLABORATORS

Community Energy Assoc.
Columbia Valley Community Economic Development
Groundswell Network
East Kootenay Climate Hub
East Kootenay Invasive Species Council
First Nations
Lake Windermere Ambassadors
Wildsight Regional
Wings Over the Rockies Nature Festival



10TH ANNUAL WILD & SCENIC FILM FESTIVAL SPONSORS

VISIONARY SPONSORS Cleanline Automotive, Columbia Valley Law, Eagle Eye Tours, thinkBright Homes

CATALYST SPONSORS Collective Carpentry, Columbia Basin Trust, Energy Economics, Juniper Bistro & Hotel, Premier Physio & Purcell Orthotics, Radium Brewing, Veritas Integrative Healing

LEADER SPONSORS Basecamp Innovations, Copper City Dental, Diana Lake Lodge, Kicking Horse Coffee, Kootenay Savings & Credit Union, The Brick, Turning Point Advisory

IN-KIND FESTIVAL DONORS

Alpine Club of Canada - Ambler - Bill Hanlon - Columbia Valley Hut Society - Columbia River Paddle - Copper Point Resort - Dave Jones - Deanna Empey - Max Power Realty - Great West Appraisal - Home Hardware - Invermere Summit Youth Hub - Joe Hildes - John Niddrie - Josh Devins - Juniper Hotel & Bistro - Lena Armstrong - Lena's Raw Gourmet - Lindsay Glassford - Louise Olinger - Mamacitas Empanadas - Maureen Enns - Nipika Mountain Resort - Old Blue Truck Farm - Om Organics - Pat Morrow - Radius Retreat - Rocky Mountain Books - Station Pub - Stolen Church - Summit Trail Makers - Talus Lodge - Taynton Bay Spirits - Tea Etc - Toby Creek Nordic Club - Valley Piecemakers Guild - Valley Zipline Adventures - Valhalla Pure - Wild Mountain Chocolate - Winderberry & Edible Acres - Wings over the Rockies Nature Festival

ADDITIONAL THANKS

Photos: Pat Morrow, Claude Rioux, Karen Barkley

THANK YOU TO ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS WHO SUPPORTED WILDSIGHT INVERMERE IN 2023

