

Y2Y Partner Profiles

Partners across Canada and the United States assist communities in successfully coexisting with wildlife.

One of the most important components of the Y2Y vision is the successful coexistence of humans and wildlife. With prudent management, thoughtful planning, and common sense, human communities and wildlife populations can both thrive. Given the way roads, railroads, towns, and work sites are expanding into areas that were once the primary domain of wildlife, it's inevitable that people and animals (including large predators) will cross paths. Although many of these interactions end badly for wildlife, this doesn't have to be the case.

In two separate bear-mortality studies in Banff National Park and the state of Montana the results showed that 86 to 91 percent of all bear mortalities were human-caused. This includes illegal or accidental shooting, road kill, and the lethal removal of 'nuisance' bears. A bear is considered a 'nuisance' when it becomes habituated to food sources associated with humans, such as pet food, livestock feed, garbage, bird feeders, compost, and fruit trees. Fortunately, the solution to this problem is straightforward and workable: eliminate attractants from 'humans-only' zones. Bears naturally prefer to keep their distance from people, but a hungry bear is almost certainly going to take advantage of an easy meal.

Residents throughout the Yellowstone to Yukon region are eager to help establish safer, more sustainable communities that exist in harmony with the surrounding wild environment. Y2Y's regional partners are dedicated to providing education and assistance to those who wish to live 'bear smart.' Three of these organizations (highlighted below) have received Y2Y partner grants to further their efforts:

Karelian Bear Shepherding Institute of Canada (Canmore, Alberta) received a grant of \$4,000 to help support the Foothills Bear Resistant Container Loan program, through which rural residents can borrow bear-resistant storage bins. This allows property owners to understand and implement the measures they can take to reduce their risk of bear conflicts. The overarching intent of the program is to encourage rural residents to personally commit to reducing bear conflicts, and to take an active role in deterring bears from their communities and properties.

Crowsnest Conservation Society (Crowsnest Pass, Alberta) is using its \$3,000 Y2Y partner grant to work with community members to ensure a healthy future in which people and wildlife coexist in a respectful and sustainable manner. Among other things, the CCC manages and monitors the use of 20 bear-resistant containers, conducts educational outreach through a door-to-door campaign, and sponsors a community apple round-up. The high incidence of bear-human encounters in this area underscores the importance of engaging

community members in bear management, and encouraging residents of rural communities to be good stewards of wildlife.

Swan Ecosystem Center (Condon, Montana) works with partners through their Bear Aware project to protect bears and humans, and to prevent property damage. Their \$2,500 Y2Y partner grant helps with educational outreach efforts, including publication of the Swan Valley Bear Newsletter, which they distribute each spring and fall. The newsletter offers tips for preventing human and bear conflicts, and provides up-to-date information about bear research and local bears.

A number of other Y2Y partner organizations are also working to educate the public about safe coexistence with bears. Those groups include:

Bear Aware (throughout British Columbia) sends Bear Aware coordinators out to work with the public, conservation officers, and city officials in preventing conflict. They might mean change garbage collection schedules, install bear-proof litter cans and dumpsters, amend wildlife corridors or green spaces through city planning, and even remove fruit-bearing trees which are not being harvested. Trained volunteers deliver the Bear Aware message, and Bear Aware also works with the media to inform the public about the problems bears face, and about solutions to human-bear conflicts.

Bow Valley WildSmart (Canmore, Alberta) takes a coordinated approach to education and outreach programs. One of their outreach programs is in partnership with Alberta Parks and Friends of Kananaskis Country and involves Wildlife Ambassadors, trained volunteers who rove the trails throughout the Bow Valley near Banff National Park and provide wildlife safety information to visitors and locals. WildSmart also supports management activities that increase public safety and enjoyment, and help maintain sustainable wildlife populations.

Keystone Conservation (formally Predator Conservation Alliance, Bozeman, Montana) blends local knowledge, hard science, and on-the-ground strategies in its work with ranchers, local residents, and wildlife management agencies to reduce and prevent problems between people and bears. The group works to remove or secure attractants in areas adjacent to Yellowstone and Glacier National Parks, and plans to expand into other parts of Wyoming and Montana this year.

