

# Kootenay Conservation Program elevates conservation partnership in Wycliffe

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New modified wildlife-friendly fencing (in progress) in Wycliffe Conservation Complex. Chris Bosman/Submitted.

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The Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP), a partnership of over 85 organizations, leveraged significant funding in 2024 towards land stewardship in the East Kootenay that, in turn, supports community well-being. With funding from Environment and Climate Change

Canada for the Kootenay Connect Priority Places initiative, KCP has brought in millions of dollars to support monitoring and restoration work throughout the Kootenays, including the Cranbrook and Kimberley area.

“We are extremely proud of KCP, and the ability of our partnership to work collaboratively towards shared conservation goals that benefit local ecosystems and communities” says Juliet Craig, KCP Program Director. “Collectively, KCP partner organizations have a large conservation impact on wildlife and the habitats they depend upon in our region.”

Here in the Cranbrook and Kimberley area, Kootenay Connect supported the sixth consecutive year of conservation projects in the Wycliffe Wildlife Corridor, delivered by the Nature Conservancy of Canada, The Nature Trust of BC and the provincial government. Habitat enhancements in 2024 included the installation and maintenance of 1,800 metres of wildlife-friendly fencing to create safe passage for wildlife through the area.

To reduce the negative impacts of invasive species on local biodiversity, 34 hectares of invasive plants were treated across Wycliffe conservation lands targeting spotted knapweed, St. John's wort, dalmatian toadflax, and blueweed among others. Monitoring showed that the treatments are having a positive effect, significantly reducing infestations in key habitat areas. In addition, forest thinning to benefit at-risk Lewis's woodpeckers, Williamson's sapsuckers and American badgers was also completed on 15 hectares of the conservation complex. Work on these projects financially supports and diversifies the local economy, with a number of local contractors being hired to construct fences, treat and monitor invasive species, and restore open forest habitat through thinning.

“The collaborative partnerships supported through Kootenay Connect Priority Places have enabled local people and organizations to pool their expertise and collectively address priorities that will significantly improve our chances for protecting our region's biodiversity and ecological resilience in the face of a changing climate,” explains Marcy Mahr, Kootenay Connect Manager.

All this work would not be possible without the support of our local and regional funders, including Columbia Basin Trust and the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program. The KCP Team and Board would like to acknowledge the important contribution of these funders, as well as KCP partners, as we look ahead to 2025 projects that continue to benefit ecosystem health and East Kootenay communities now and into the future. For more information about these initiatives and much more, please visit KCP's website, [kootenayconservation.ca](http://kootenayconservation.ca).

*Submitted by Megan Jamison, Kootenay Conservation Program*