

# Kootenay Conservation Program leverages funding to support Creston Valley wildlife

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More swallow motels and bat roosts were constructed in 2024, supporting at-risk species





1 / 2 Field crew conducting reptile surveys in the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area, April 2024.(Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area)

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The Kootenay Conservation Program (KCP) spent significant funding in 2024 towards land stewardship in the Creston Valley.

With funding from Environment and Climate Change Canada for the Kootenay Connect Priority Places initiative, millions of dollars have supported monitoring and restoration work throughout the Kootenays. KCP is a partnership of over 85 organizations, which collectively have a huge impact on wildlife and habitat conservation in the region.

“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,” said Juliet Craig, KCP program director.

Ecosystem inventories, including for at-risk reptiles such as Western skinks and rubber boas, were carried out this past year in the Creston Valley Wildlife Management Area (CVWMA), with funding through Kootenay Connect. This conservation work helps to understand local ecosystems and monitor ecological health over time.

Ecosystem surveys also inform where to focus habitat enhancement efforts within the CVWMA, in order to reduce encroaching vegetation and decrease wildfire risk. Future monitoring will continue to track the effectiveness of various methods of habitat enhancements for wildlife, including other vulnerable species such as bobolinks and common nighthawks.

Habitat for at-risk barn swallows was enhanced in 2024, when a “swallow motel” of 60 square metres was constructed at the Duck Lake nesting area. The structure provides a secure nesting place for colonies, which in turn supports essential ecosystem services like controlling mosquito populations.

Through the Bat Habitat Enhancement project, six more bat roosts were created, constructed with artificial BrandenBark, and chainsaw cuts in wildlife trees to mimic habitat provided by old growth trees. Wildlife Conservation Society of Canada also deployed and maintained two long-term migration monitors in the CVWMA to better understand important habitats for migratory bat species, such as silver-haired bats. Through creating more critical roosting habitat, this project supports bat recovery while also supporting essential ecosystem services such as insect control.

“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,” said Marcy Mahr, Kootenay Connect Manager.

All this work would not be possible without the support of local and regional funders, including Columbia Basin Trust and the Fish and Wildlife Compensation Program. The KCP team looks forward to developing more projects in 2025 and continuing to benefit ecosystem health for the Creston Valley, now and into the future.

For more information about these initiatives and much more, visit [kootenayconservation.ca](https://www.kootenayconservation.ca).