

**Alberta Conservation Association
2021/2022 Project Summary Report**

Project Name: Kids Can Catch Program

Information, Education and Communications Program Manager: Don Myhre

Project Leader: Ken Kranrod

Primary ACA staff on project: Charmaine Brunes, Budd Erickson, Colin Eyo, Ken Kranrod, Tara Holmwood, Joanne Melzer, Don Myhre, and Laura Volkman

Partnerships

AltaLink	Lesser Slave Lake Watershed Council
Big Lakes County FCSS	MNP LLP – Taber
Cabela’s Canada	Onoway Fish & Game Association
Cabela’s Bass Pro Shops Outdoor Fund	Pigeon Lake Watershed Association
City of Lacombe	Riverrunner Recreation
Coronation Community Support Services	Sun Sport Recreation Ltd.
Coronation Elks	Sunny 94
County of Grande Prairie Parks & Recreation	Terry’s Lease Maintenance Ltd.
D&M Concrete Products Ltd.	Thompson-Pallister Bait Co. Ltd.
Dow Chemical Canada	Town of Taber
EQUUS	The Launch at Sylvan Lake
Foster Park Brokers	Town of Sylvan Lake
Fountain Tire	TransAlta
Innisfail Fish & Game Association	United Farmers of Alberta (UFA)
Joussard Community Association	Walleye Master Tackle & Bait Ltd.
Lacombe Co-op	Wolf Midstream
Larry & Janis Schmidek	Wolverine Guns & Tackle/Zebco
	Zone 3 Fish & Game

Key Findings

- Over 850 adults and children came out to fish at nine Kids Can Catch events across Alberta.
- 35 organizations, partners and sponsors made Kids Can Catch events possible through financial, in-kind, and volunteer contributions.
- Dow, Wolf Midstream, and Cabela's Bass Pro Outdoor Fund partnerships helped ACA continue the program for communities around Alberta.
- AltaLink's sponsorship allowed ACA to source fishing rods and gear for local organizers to use at future Kids Can Catch events. Organizers will keep these rods in their inventory to use year over year.
- Approximately half of the regularly scheduled Kids Can Catch events had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic regulations in Alberta.
- Due to COVID-19 restrictions, we were unable to host our signature event at Wabamun Lake in February during the free Family Fishing Weekend. However, the ongoing support from partnerships—AltaLink, Cabela's, Dow, EQUUS, TransAlta, and Wolf Midstream—allowed us to create an online giveaway for families to win 1 of 50 available family ice fishing kits, which was a huge success in public relations and in keeping ice fishing popular. During the summer giveaway we received 1,222 entries; and during the winter giveaway we received 541 entries.

Abstract

Kids Can Catch is a province-wide program in which ACA partners with community and corporate partners to create free family fishing events at lakes and ponds. We developed Kids Can Catch as a way to invite Albertans to fish at stocked and natural waterbodies and to hook new and young anglers on fishing, fish conservation, and responsible angling. In 2021, Kids Can Catch events across Alberta welcomed over 850 adults and children and 35 organizations, partners, and sponsors. During this year, COVID-19 restrictions prevented many events from happening but that allowed those that hosted events to become creative with ways to bring audiences in safely.

Introduction

Kids Can Catch is a province-wide program in which Alberta Conservation Association (ACA) partners with community and corporate partners to create free family fishing events at local lakes and ponds. We developed Kids Can Catch as a way to invite Albertans to fish at stocked and natural waterbodies and to hook new and young anglers on fishing, fish conservation, and responsible angling.

Methods

ACA manages the province-wide program, including promoting the program as an opportunity for local groups interested in fishing, conservation, youth, recreation, or tourism; connecting local organizers with resources and partners as they plan, promote, and host their Kids Can Catch events; providing web and communication services to profile each event on the Kids Can Catch website (albertakidscatch.com); and offering online registration services to event organizers.

ACA provides local organizers with tools and resources to help as they plan, promote, and host their events. These tools and resources include building them a webpage, promoting the event on our social media pages, handling online registration for them if requested, sending them brochures and promotional items to give away, providing helpful checklists for how to plan the event and what to expect, and more. Typically, one local organization takes the lead to plan the event and engages community and corporate event partners to help with it. Partners help in a variety of ways, such as volunteering at the events, providing in-kind donations, providing sponsorship, coordinating specific event activities, or promoting the event.

Each Kids Can Catch event is free, non-competitive, and family friendly, making fishing fun and accessible for new and young anglers. Some events are new; others are long-standing community fishing events or part of an annual festival. Some attract large numbers of participants; others attract smaller numbers. But what all the events share is a chance to fish and to learn about fishing, fish conservation, and responsible angling.

Results

Our Corporate Partners in Conservation—AltaLink, Dow, and Wolf Midstream—make it possible for ACA to help local organizers source the supplies they need to host Kids Can Catch events. Cabela's Bass Pro Shops Outdoor Fund provided substantial funding (\$15,000) towards the project as well.

This year was incredibly different from others, as the COVID-19 pandemic continued through the province and local health regulations prevented many events from going forward. On a positive note, we added two new events this year: Sylvan Lake and a partnership with The Africa Centre for an event at Hermitage Park Pond in Edmonton. All of the Kids Can Catch events that occurred (Clairmont, Coronation, Lacombe, Lesser Slave Lake, Onoway, Pigeon Lake [cancelled due to weather], Spruce View, Sylvan Lake, Taber, and The Africa Centre – Edmonton) either held smaller in-person events where social distancing and detailed cleaning processes were in place, or they constructed a program where families could borrow fishing kits (i.e., rods, tackle, bait, snacks, local business coupons, etc.) and use the equipment to go fishing at local waterbodies. These events were seen as successful because they were well-received by locals in those communities who had not been able to spend much time outdoors doing activities like fishing.

Another successful note this year, the Kids Can Catch family ice and open water fishing giveaways that were held on ACA's social media platforms during spring 2021 and winter 2022. We were able to purchase fishing gear to create kits consisting of fishing rods, tackle box, tackle, a multi-tool, accessories, and a carrying bag. Once the ice fishing giveaway opened on our social media platforms, participants were able to fill out some basic information and upload pictures of artwork that their children (or themselves!) had created related to ice fishing. To enter the giveaway, participants completed a brief fishing-related quiz. The summer giveaway received the highest number of entries ever in an ACA giveaway at 1,222 entries. The winter giveaway received a total of 541 artwork submissions. Of them, 50 participants in each respective giveaway were randomly selected and contacted to pick up their prizes. For the summer giveaway, our primary Facebook post reached 35,049 people with 3,217 engagements. For the winter giveaway, an e-newsletter was sent to over 76,000 people with a 36% open rate, and the

primary Facebook post reached over 82,000 people with 3,895 engagements. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback from families regarding these giveaways. It was the perfect way to encourage families to get outdoors and fish together safely while health regulations are in place.

Lastly, the lack of events this year allowed us to purchase equipment to have on hand for future local events. Ice fishing tents and heaters will be able to be used and enjoyed by all participants!

Conclusions

Partnerships are key to the success the Kids Can Catch Program and each Kids Can Catch event. A special thank you to all our partnerships, sponsors, event organizers, and volunteers for giving kids and their families the opportunity to go fishing.

Communications

- ACA website (ab-conservation.com): ACA's main page promoted Kids Can Catch and events.
- Kids Can Catch Program website (albertakidscancatch.com): one webpage was created for each event to promote the event and its sponsors. After the event, the webpage summarized the event and recognized all event organizers, partners, and participants.
- Constant Contact e-newsletter: ACA's e-newsletter promoted Kids Can Catch events and the giveaway.
- Social media: Posts were used to promote events and the giveaway, share stories, and thank organizers and event partners.

Literature Cited

Not applicable

Photos



Photo 1. Participants at the Coronation Kids Can Catch event in July 2021.

Photo: Jordan Stonehouse



Photo 2. An fishing mentor, Colin Eyo, educating participants at the Kids Can Catch event that partnered with The Africa Centre in August 2022. Photo: Budd Erikson



Photo 3. A happy angler trying her hand at fishing off the dock at the Kids Can Catch event in partnership with The Africa Centre. Photo: Budd Erickson



Photo 4. Another ACA fishing mentor, Ken Kranrod, assisting a participant with settling up a fishing rod at the Kids Can Catch event in partnership with The Africa Centre. Photo: Budd Erickson