

Kootenay Orienteering Club - 2024 Year in Review

The Kootenay Orienteering Club had a very busy & active first half of the 2024 year - followed by a somewhat quieter fall season.

Event Highlights

- Our close partnership with the Kimberley Nordic Centre continued. We held three Ski-O events during the winter, the final one during Nordic Fest weekend in March. A permanent course was also started that participants could ski on their own time.
- The Spring weeknight series was held for eight consecutive weeks from April to June. Attendance was mostly existing long-term members with only a few new members occasionally participating. The last of these weeknight events was a Biathlon Orienteering foot event - likely the first ever held in Western Canada. The participants found the format so much fun and it was such a success that we hope to bring it to a bigger audience in 2025.
- The Rossland branch of the club started up activities again this year - holding events at the Black Jack ski club in the winter months and spring events on foot in parks in Rossland and neighbouring communities.
- In October we hosted the 6-hour Run The Wild event - anticipated all year by local orienteers and bringing in many visitors as well. This was the only orienteering meet the club held in the fall season.
- As usual - KOC was also involved in the local community. We put on the Stair Climb Challenge again, held the Turkey Run-Off, and were responsible for the timing at the big Round The Mountain event in June.

Junior Activities

- KOC re-started a spring junior program over four Saturday mornings for about a dozen youth. We found it beneficial to start with a smaller scope to see what we were able to handle & offer.
- We held many sessions specifically for a youth audience - including three for TrackAttack ski kids and a pair of sessions for McKim elementary students. We were also asked by the KNC regional dry-land camp to return again this year - putting on courses on both Friday and Saturday to a group of 75 youth.
- Over the full year well over 200 youth participated in at least one of these programs.

Membership

- We adjusted our membership scheme for 2024 and saw a healthy rise in our membership numbers - ending the year with 96 members in all versus 67 for 2023. Of those 96 - seventeen are juniors.
- Scott Donald - the original founder of the club back in the 1980s - was inducted into the Orienteering Canada Hall of Fame in the Lifetime Achievement category.

2025 : Future & Challenges

- KOC will be hosting the BC Championships during the fall of 2025. This will lead to much of the organizing resources of the club being focused on this one event over the next year.
- While the club's membership base may have grown over the past year - the number of key volunteers & organizers has not. A majority of the activities of the club for the year was due to the many hours and days of volunteer work of about 8 individuals. As the number of requests from groups to hold events or training for them increases - we are increasingly having to turn some down due to lack of resources and time. If we wish to

continue to grow and improve our local junior program to levels it has been in the past - it will inevitably need greater manpower.

We need to address this gap before we suffer volunteer burn-out, by bringing in more volunteers and building up the skill and experience level of others.

- The club's membership base is still mostly located in the Kimberley area. Without dedicated volunteers in the other areas across the Kootenay's - this will remain an ongoing issue we face.
- While the club has some prized maps around Cranbrook - we have not yet found any new areas for future mapping projects. We are becoming cognizant of not overusing those maps we already have so that they remain special to us and will still be available for important events when necessary.

Looking back over the past twelve months - the Kootenay Orienteering club can be proud of all the orienteering and recreation opportunities we have provided to our members and the community at large. We look forward to hosting all BC orienteers to our corner of the province in the Fall of 2025.

JP Buysschaert
Kootenay Orienteering Club