

Be Bear Smart

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Most problems between bears and humans occur when bears are attracted by the smell of food and are rewarded with food. Bears pick up the scent with their noses and investigate. If bears are rewarded with bird food, garbage and pet food, they will return as long as the food source continues to be available. It takes all humans working together to eliminate these attractants and to stop bear problems. Here are some tips to help avoid these visitors.

What you can do:

- Fill bird feeders only through the winter months (November –March).
- Never purposely feed bears or try to approach them.
- Garbage
 - Put garbage in containers that have tight fitting lids, (only put out on garbage day. Do not put out the night before.)
 - Store garbage in a bear-resistant container, secure shed or garage. (Do not store garbage in plywood boxes, old freezers or vehicles)
 - Do not stockpile garbage; take it to the dump frequently
 - Never leave garbage behind. If you must leave before garbage day, or if you do not have curb side pickup. (Take your garbage with you when you go, drop it off at the dump or bring it home)
 - Keep meat scraps such as fish carcasses in the freezer until garbage day
- Do not leave pet food outdoors, feed your pet indoors and not outside in screened areas or porches
- Remove grease and food residue from barbecue grills, including the grease cup underneath, after each use
- Do not put meat, fish or sweet food (including fruit) in your composter
- Pick all ripe fruit off trees, and remove vegetables and fallen fruit from the ground
- Encourage your neighbours to practice good Bear Wise habits

(If you rent your cottage, tell your tenants the importance of being Bear Smart you are in bear country, their home. You are responsible for your personal safety. Take precautions when you are in the outdoors.)

Bears usually avoid humans. Generally you won't see a bear even if one is close by. Remember, you are a visitor in the bear's home range, so do all you can to avoid encounters.

Bears don't like surprises. If you are a hiker, cyclist, jogger, berry picker, or you plan to spend some time in "bear country", you need to know how bears behave so that you can avoid an encounter.

- Make noise as you move through wooded areas
 - Wear bear bells.
 - Singing/ whistling or talking will alert bears to your presence, giving them a chance to avoid you.
- Travel with others if possible
- Be aware of your surroundings by keeping your eyes and ears open:
 - Do not wear music headphones
 - Keep an eye out for signs of bears, such as tracks, claw marks on trees.
- Carry and have readily accessible a whistle or an air horn, and bear pepper spray. Know how to use them.
- Avoid strong fragrances that may cause a bear to be curious; put any food you are carrying in sealed containers in your pack.
- If you are out with a dog, control them, uncontrolled, untrained dogs may actually lead a bear to you.
- While berry picking, occasionally scan your surroundings to check for bears, and rise slowly from your crouched position so you don't startle any nearby bears. They may not recognize you as a human when you are in a crouched position

What to do if a bear approaches:

- Make yourself as tall as possible, raising your hands to the sky
- Make a lot of noise to frighten the bear away. Bears are just as scared of you as you are of them. Yell at them, rattle bells, etc.
- Contrary to popular belief bears do not generally attack humans. In fact there have been only 63 related deaths in North America by black bears since 1900-2009. These attacks have been ruled to be 95% caused by predatory bears. Most human/ bear altercations occur when we have surprised the bear, or have come between a mama and a cub. If you happen to find yourself between a mama and a cub, Show the mama bear you are not a threat by finding an alternate route away from them. Backing away slowly but steadily.
- Do not try climbing a tree or swimming in water! Black bears can do both.
- If in the very rare occurrence you are attacked by a black bear always remember to FIGHT BACK! Think of Black fight Back!

Black bear are often drawn into conflict situations with humans after being attracted by peoples' food or edible garbage (Eager and Pelton 1979, Herrero 1985). Defensive threat behavior is common when a person or other bear comes within the bear's overt reaction distance (Herrero et al. 2005:363). When this occurs black bear behave as if they were stressed. If bears do not flee they usually direct threats at the intruder. Black bear threats may include physical behaviors such as swatting the ground with one or both front paws, short charges (i.e., running toward) but stopping short of contact, slow and deliberate approaches, and clacking of the teeth by bringing the upper and lower jaws together (Eager and Pelton 1979, Herrero 1983). These displays may be directed at other bears or people. Sounds emitted by a black bear are also a component of threat behavior. These have been described as huffing, snorting, gurgling, and loud growling (Jordan 1976, Eager and Pelton 1979, Herrero 1983). Threat behaviors seldom lead to physical attack by a black bear provided the bear is given the personal space it requires to feel secure.

What do you do if you see a bear?

- Enjoy the view! Bears are beautiful and amazing creatures enjoy this unique opportunity! If it's safe to do so, take a picture.
- Black bears can come in many different colour shades such a black, brown, cinnamon and even blue (whitish colour). In Manitoba you will only find Black bears and polar bears!
- Remember when at the cottages or near bear country we are in their home turf! So it is not unusual to see bears out and about. Especially when near food and smell sources.
- If it is on your property, just wait, generally they will move on to another location. If you are providing an attractant such as garbage, food or bird seed. Remove them from your location. You can try yelling at the bear to remove it from the vicinity and scare it away.
- If you find the bear is stalking you, and will not frighten away after much trying, we recommend you then call MB Conservation.(204-945-7273)
- We highly recommend you call conservation as a last resort. These bears are generally just checking out the area and smells, and will pass through on their own.
- Conservation may try and trap and transfer the bear, however they may also euthanize the bear.

Hibernation:

Contrary to popular belief bears do not hibernate. They go into a state of torpor. This is similar to hibernation in the sense that they go into a prolonged sleep. Their heart rate and breathing will decrease as well as their body temperature. However they can still wake up and be responsive.

To prepare for winter black bears will be searching for food sources to fatten them up for winter, which may be why you are seeing them about more often.