

BEAR INSIGHT

For Better Living Alongside Bears

Conflicts Between People and Bears

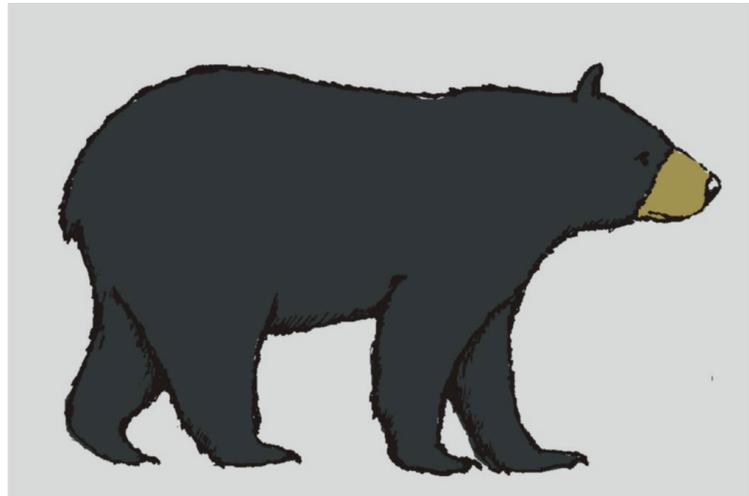
Most conflicts between people and bears are preventable. Yet conflicts in and around the Bulkley Valley are all too common. Typically, non-natural foods and other bear attractants are a key source of conflict. In this issue, you will find some tips and ideas for reducing the availability of bear attractants at home.

Don't Invite Bears into Your Yard

If you remove or secure bear attractants so that bears cannot get at them, you'll be well on your way to success: a more peaceful co-existence for people and bears.

Collaborate with Your Neighbours

Collaborate with people in your community network to identify bear attractants that need attention and find workable solutions. Many solutions are straightforward; others will need more effort.



Reduce Risks for People and Bears

When bears learn to seek food from people, they develop risky and otherwise troublesome behaviours that most people aren't willing to tolerate, increasing risks of property damage and of being harmed by a bear. But in serious conflicts, by far the most common outcome is a dead bear; rarely, people are seriously harmed by bears.

Calling conservation officers to respond to a bear that is getting into attractants at home is like calling the police to respond to a burglar who walked through an open door and is riffling through your possessions—only worse, because when you allow bears to get food from you, risks increase for other people in the community, too—particularly for children.

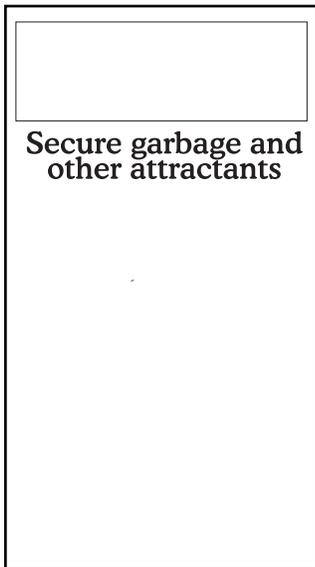
Common bear attractants in Bulkley Valley communities include garbage, bird feeders, pet food, chicken feed, domestic berries and fruit, some garden vegetables, compost, food and grease on barbecues, freezers stored outside, and fish and meat in smokers. Look around your yard and remove or secure bear attractants.

Additional Supports

For more information visit the following:

- Province of B.C. website for preventing human-wildlife conflicts, including bears, moose, cougars and more: <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/human-wildlife-conflict/staying-safe-around-wildlife>
- Smithers Library and Telkwa Reading Centre for books and DVDs about living with bears

Watch for upcoming issues of Bear Insight.



Conservation Officer Service

To report a serious wildlife conflict, call toll free 1-877-952-7277.

Some tips for managing common bear attractants:

Garbage: Store garbage in a secure location, such as a basement or an enclosed garage, shed, or workshop. Do what you can to minimize smelly odours; wash empty garbage bins periodically; don't let smelly garbage pile up. If you have garbage pickup service, only put it outside on the day of pickup; don't let it sit outside overnight. If you don't have pickup service, consider collaborating with neighbours to get garbage to the landfill or transfer station more frequently to minimize odours.

Bird Feeders: Take bird feeders down when bears are active from mid-March to mid-November (as a general guideline), plus any other times when there is evidence of bears. Store bird food in airtight containers in a secure building. A potential alternative is to purchase or build bird feeders that are bear-resistant, so that bears can't get access to the food.

Pet Food and Chicken Feed: Store pet food and chicken feed in airtight containers in a secure building. Feed your pets indoors. If you feed your pets outdoors, remove leftover and spilled food when they're done. Feed your chickens in a way that food is not left out for bears to get into.

Domestic Fruits and Berries: Pick fruits and berries as soon as they are ripe. Remove any fallen fruit daily. Collaborate with friends and neighbours, as needed to minimize attractants.

Some additional measures:

Visit the Get Bear Smart website for more information about securing chickens, bird feeders, and other attractants. See <http://www.bearsmart.com/live/managing-attractants/>

Did You Know?

Bulkley Valley bears spend about four to six months a year hibernating. They achieve this astonishing physiological feat without eating or drinking. The timing and duration of denning is influenced by a bear's physical condition, age, and sex, as well as environmental factors, like weather. Pregnant females and females with cubs tend to den for longer periods. From late summer into fall, all bears will be highly motivated to find the best food possible in order to store a thick layer of fat for denning.