

BEAR SMART

Whistler Resident's Guide

Prepared by the Get Bear Smart Society

People and Bears Can Live Together It's our personal responsibility!



The black bear is a long-time resident of Whistler and one of our most prevalent forms of wildlife. As Whistler continues to develop and encroach on wildlife habitat, the need for people and bears to coexist safely increases.

Whether you're hiking the Rainbow Trail or strolling through the neighbourhood, you may encounter a black bear. Black bears are most active from mid-March to November, but may remain active during the winter months if non-natural foods are available. Their constant search for new food sources may draw them into Whistler's urban areas and into your backyard.

The residents of Whistler have chosen to live in harmony with their bears. We strive for our community to be *porous* to bear activity, so that bears can pass through, but are not tempted to stop and get into trouble with people and their non-natural attractants.

Be Scents-ible about bears!

Bears live to eat, consuming up to 25,000 calories a day (10 times more than the average person). While they prefer natural vegetation, they will eat almost anything and will do almost anything to obtain food.

And since Whistler is located in the midst of prime bear country, we all have to be extra careful with what we leave accessible to bears.

Bears have a keen sense of smell and are driven to investigate any potential food source. They are attracted by scents as diverse as vinyl and citronella. Bears learn quickly and will repeat behaviours that lead to food rewards. Carelessly stored garbage, birdfeeders, or an unclean barbeque are an open invitation to bears. Bears in pursuit of an easy meal may damage property or, in rare cases, cause injury to people and pets. Paying attention to common household activities will reduce encounters and contribute to a Bear Smart community. Encourage your friends and neighbours to participate as well.

You can keep your neighbourhood safe and prevent bears from being killed unnecessarily by following these simple guidelines:

Bear safety at home

Respect bears! If you see a bear in a residential area, act responsibly!

- *Remain calm*
Often the bear is just passing through, and if it finds no food, will simply move on.
- *Keep well away*
Do not crowd the bear – give them plenty of space. Ask others to be respectful; bring small children and untrained pets inside.
- *Let the bear know s/he is not welcome*
Do not allow the bear to feel comfortable in your backyard. After, ensuring the bear has a safe

avenue of escape, make lots of noise to encourage the bear to leave. After they have left the area, remove any non-natural foods that attracted the bear.

- *When to call for help*

Call **604-905-BEAR (2327)** to report:

(1) a bear sighting in any congested area; (2) property damage caused by a bear; or (3) wildlife attractants such as garbage. An officer will attend and attempt to teach the bear, through negative conditioning, that this behaviour is inappropriate (see section on non-lethal bear management for more information).

Dispose of garbage properly

- Keep garbage securely inside prior to disposal – minimizing odours.
- Dispose of household garbage in designated compactor sites (Nesters Rd. or Function Junction) or in the bear-proof container provided at your complex.

Bear-proof your property

- Keep accessible doors and windows closed and locked. Food smells can invite hungry bears inside your home.
- Do not store food of any kind outside, even if it is inside a locked refrigerator or freezer.
- Don't leave trash, groceries, pet food, coolers or any odorous items in your vehicle. Bears can easily pry open car/truck windows and doors to access the food inside.
- Ensure birdfeeders are inaccessible to bears. Fallen seed should be removed daily before nightfall.
- It's best not to have any fruit-bearing trees/bushes or gardens on your property. If you do, harvest fruits and vegetables as they ripen. Remove fallen fruit from the ground below the tree. Keep your lawn mowed and free of weeds, especially dandelions and clover.
- Burn your barbecue clean immediately after use, wash and store it covered out of the wind – preferably indoors (without the propane tank). At minimum, remove the grease can/drip tray and store it securely indoors.
- Feed your pets indoors and store their food inside. Don't leave dog bones lying around your yard.
- Keep your compost clean and odour free. Or use the community composting system.

What YOU Do Really Matters!

Become a Bear Smart residence. Proper management of garbage and other non-natural attractants is key to reducing human-bear conflict situations.

***You have an important role to play in preventing conflict.
Be aware that your behaviour does have an impact.***

Non-lethal Bear Management

In the past, management of bears that came into conflict with humans consisted of destruction and relocation. In British Columbia, an average of 750 black and almost 50 grizzly bears are killed each year as a result of human-bear conflicts.

More recent management techniques focus on an understanding of bears and their behaviour and placing increasing responsibility on people for the role they play in causing conflicts. In June 2002, the British Columbia Ministry of Environment (MOE) implemented the Bear Smart Program. The goal of the program is to reduce the number of bears killed and increase public safety in the province by minimizing human-bear conflict.

Today, in Whistler, bears are killed or relocated much less frequently and managers are seeking methods of reducing human-bear conflicts that do not remove the bears from the resident population where appropriate. Nonetheless, non-lethal bear management must be used in combination with Bear Smart practices to reduce the availability of attractants.

The Non-lethal Bear Management Program teaches bears that happen to enter human territory that “inappropriate” or “undesirable” behaviour will not be tolerated.

Non-lethal tools capitalize on using bears’ innate behaviour and their natural tendency to avoid conflict with humans to our advantage. Using tools of human dominance, such as voice and body postures, combined with traditional noise and physical deterrents (like rubber bullets), bears are taught that they must respect certain rules when they are within human territory.

Whistler RCMP and Conservation Officers are fully equipped and trained to manage human-bear conflicts in a non-lethal way.

We must all do our part, so that people and bears can live in harmony!

Bears in the Back Country: Tips for hiking and camping - Please refer to our Bear Smart Visitor’s, Bear Viewing or Camping Guides. Check with Visitor Information to get a copy.

To learn more about living with bears, visit us online at www.bearsmart.com or email info@bearsmart.com.

To report a human-bear conflict, please call **604-905-BEAR(2327)**.

