



Bears travel *far for food.*

Bears are highly intelligent. They easily learn where food sources can be found and use their keen sense of smell to seek them out. Bears will travel more than 100 kilometres to a known food source like a berry patch or a stand of beech trees and they will return to these same locations year after year. Bears are always looking for new food sources, including your garbage or the contents of your cooler. Once they determine that food can be found at your house or campsite, they will revisit again and again.

**BEARS CAN
BE DANGEROUS**



In an immediate emergency, call your local police or 911. To report bear problems call:

1 866 514-2327

(1 866 514-BEAR)

TTY 705 945-7641

For more information, visit our website:

ontario.ca/bearwise

Some things to remember about Ontario's black bears:

- When food crops fail, the potential for human-bear conflicts increases as bears search for alternate food sources
- Bears lose their natural fear of humans through repeated exposure to people in areas where food is intentionally or unintentionally provided. In such cases, conflict with humans is inevitable. Bears may even become destructive or dangerous
- Such bears are often destroyed because they have become "nuisances" or are perceived as a threat to human safety. They also have a greater risk of getting injured or killed in collisions with vehicles. That is why you should never intentionally feed bears or place food to attract other wildlife (including birds) to your yard for viewing
- Bears quickly learn to associate human residences and campsites with a readily available food source. In fact, most bear problems occur as the result of improperly stored household garbage
- Bears are also attracted to pet food that is left outdoors, bird feeders, grease and food residue left on barbecue grills, composters, fruit trees, sweet corn and grain fields
- Garbage dumps provide a concentration of readily available food that often attracts bears. Bears that feed on garbage in landfills risk physical injury. They also become conditioned to eating garbage at landfills

To learn more about bear encounters, see our Fact Sheets "What to do if you encounter a bear" and "Be safe in bear country".

There's more ...
see over!





Bears are part of *our natural heritage.*

Black bears are an important part of our ecosystem. They are highly intelligent, powerful and potentially dangerous. Usually, bears avoid and fear humans. They are opportunistic omnivores. In other words, they will eat just about anything people will eat. They will also eat food waste created by humans. Here are some facts to help you better understand how black bears behave, both in the wild and around human habitation.

BEARS CAN
BE DANGEROUS



In an immediate emergency,
call your local police or 911.
To report bear problems call:

1 866 514-2327

(1 866 514-BEAR)

TTY 705 945-7641

For more information, visit our
website:

ontario.ca/bearwise

A quick look at black bears:

- Black bears live primarily in forested areas and throughout most of Ontario
- They are large, powerful animals. Adult males can weigh between 120-270 kilograms (250-600 pounds). Adult females can weigh between 45-180 kilograms (100-400 pounds)
- Female bears have their first cubs when they are between five and seven years old. Mother bears do not produce cubs every year, they stay with their cubs throughout their year of birth and until the following spring

Hibernation:

- Black bears hibernate for about six months. In this time, they do not eat or drink
- Most black bears in northern Ontario move into their winter dens by mid-October. In central Ontario, bears usually enter their dens by early November
- In most years black bears in northern Ontario emerge from their dens between mid-April and early May. Bears in central Ontario leave their dens from mid to late April

Food:

- Bears feed from mid-April to late fall
- From the time bears come out of hibernation until berry crops are available, bears live off their stored fat and the limited energy provided by fresh spring greens
- Black bears eat a variety of foods. They get most of their food energy by feeding on summer berry crops such as blueberries, strawberries and raspberries, as well as hazel nuts, mountain ash, acorns and beech nuts in the fall
- In late summer and early fall some bears actively feed for 20 hours a day, ingesting as much as 20,000 calories
- Black bears are selective feeders and prefer foods that are accessible, high in energy and easy to digest. They eat both plants and animals, but the bulk of their diet is plant material
- Bears need to fatten up so they can survive winter hibernation and in the case of females, produce and feed young. Bears are instinctively driven to feed. Bears typically double their body weight during the summer and fall

Human-bear conflict:

- If natural foods are not readily available, bears will look for other food sources – primarily your garbage
- Once bears learn where to find and get a non-natural food source, they will return again and again

To learn more about bear encounters, see our Fact Sheets "What to do if you encounter a bear" and "Be safe in bear country".

There's more ...
see over!





Don't invite bears *to the cottage.*

Most problems between black bears and humans occur when bears are attracted by the smell of and rewarded with an easy meal. When bears pick up a scent with their keen noses, they will investigate it – even at your cottage property. If bears are rewarded with feasts of bird food, garbage or pet food, they will return as long as the food source continues to be available. It takes all cottagers working together to eliminate these attractants and to stop bear problems. Here are some tips to help avoid these unwanted visitors.

**BEARS CAN
BE DANGEROUS**



In an immediate emergency, call your local police or 911.

To report bear problems call:

1 866 514-2327

(1 866 514-BEAR)

TTY 705 945-7641

For more information, visit our website:

ontario.ca/bearwise

What cottagers can do:

- Fill bird feeders only through the winter months
- Never purposely feed bears (or other wildlife) or try to approach them
- Put garbage in containers that have tight fitting lids, and only put it out on garbage day, not 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 curbside pick up, take your garbage with you when you go. Take it to the dump or to your home
- Keep meat scraps in the freezer until garbage day
- Do not leave pet food outdoors. Feed pets indoors, not outside or in screened in 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 Wise
- You are responsible for your own personal safety. Take precautions when you are in the outdoors. Visit ontario.ca/bearwise to learn more

For more information on bear encounters, see our Fact Sheets "How to avoid encounters with black bears while enjoying the outdoors" and "Be safe in bear country".

There's more ...
see over!





Before you leave the cottage.

Garbage continues to be the number one reason why bears are drawn onto properties, followed closely by bird seed, suet and nectar. Whether you are closing the cottage for the season, or just between stays, you can take a few simple precautions to avoid problems with bears and other animals too.



In an immediate emergency, call your local police or 911. To report bear problems call:

1 866 514-2327

(1 866 514-BEAR)

TTY 705 945-7641

For more information, visit our website:

ontario.ca/bearwise

Before you go:

- Remove your garbage. Take it home or drop it off at the dump on your way out
- Use a strong disinfectant to eliminate all odours from garbage and recycling containers and lids
- Never discard cooking grease outside. Instead, place it in a container with a lid, transfer it to a plastic bag, and put in with other properly stored garbage
- Take your barbecue with you when you leave the cottage, or store it in a secure shed. Make sure it is clean
- Do not leave any food or food scraps outdoors for pets or other wildlife
- When packing up, remember to remove all the food from the inside of your cottage – a box of pudding or fruit-flavoured dessert mix may be all it takes to attract the bear
- Do not leave scented products outside. Even non-food items like suntan lotion, insect repellent, soap and candles may attract bears
- Close and lock all windows and doors
- If you are away for an extended period of time, have a neighbour or someone in the area occasionally do a walk around to look for signs of a bear visitor or break in. Let the person know where and how to contact you

For more information on bear encounters, see our Fact Sheets "How to avoid encounters with black bears while enjoying the outdoors" and "Be safe in bear country".

There's more ...
see over!





How to avoid encounters with black bears while enjoying the outdoors.

Black bears are nothing like friendly cartoon bears. They are smart, curious, powerful and potentially dangerous. And they 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.



In an immediate emergency, call your local police or 911. To report bear problems call:

1 866 514-2327

(1 866 514-BEAR)

TTY 705 945-7641

For more information, visit our website:

ontario.ca/bearwise

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.

- Make noise as you move through wooded areas – especially in areas where background noise is high, such as near streams and waterfalls. 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, flipped-over rocks or fresh bear droppings
- Carry and have readily accessible a whistle or an air horn, and bear pepper spray. Know how to use this spray – practise on a stationary object to get the feel for how the canister sprays, and to know its limitations
- Consider carrying a long-handled axe, particularly if you are in "back country"
- 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 it. 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

There's more ...
see over!





What to do if you encounter a black bear while enjoying the outdoors.

Bears usually avoid humans. But if you do encounter one, it's important to remember that they are powerful and potentially dangerous animals. If you are a hiker, cyclist, jogger, berry picker, or anyone who plans to spend some time in "bear country", there are some things you should do if you encounter a bear.



BEARS CAN
BE DANGEROUS

In an immediate emergency, call your local police or 911. To report bear problems call:

1 866 514-2327

(1 866 514-BEAR)

TTY 705 945-7641

For more information, visit our website:

ontario.ca/bearwise

If you encounter a bear:

- If the bear is not paying any attention to you, slowly and quietly back away while watching the bear to make sure it isn't following you
- Do not approach the bear to get a better look
- If the bear obviously knows you are there, raise your arms to let the bear know you are a human. Make yourself look as big as possible. Speak in a firm but non-threatening voice while looking at the bear and backing away
- Watch the bear to gauge its reaction to you. Generally, the noisier the bear is, the less dangerous it is, providing you don't approach the bear. If a bear huffs, pops its jaw or stomps its paws on the ground, it wants you to back away and give it space
- If a bear closely approaches you, drop any food you are carrying and continue backing up
- If the bear continues to try to approach, stand your ground and be aggressive – use your whistle or air horn, yell, stand tall, wave your arms and throw objects
- If a bear keeps advancing and is getting close, continue to stand your ground. Use your bear pepper spray and anything else to threaten or distract the bear – bears will often first test to see if it is safe to approach you
- Do **not** run or climb a tree. Bears can run faster and climb better than you
- If the bear makes contact, fight back with everything you have

If you are concerned, contact the local Ministry of Natural Resources office in the area you are going to visit to determine whether there have been any reports of bear encounters or conflicts.

There's more ...
see over!

