

# Black bears back roaming North Shore neighbourhoods

**Tony Webb, chair of the North Shore Black Bear Network, offers a timely reminder to residents to properly manage their animal attractants**

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The fragrant smell of spring and warmer weather is slowly coaxing black bears out from their winter slumber on the North Shore.

While there have been no official bear sightings yet, the burly creatures are starting to roam around again, says Tony Webb, chair of the North Shore Black Bear Network.

“It’s a function of the weather, of course — the bears coming out of hibernation,” explains Webb.

The beginning of black bear season means North Shore residents should start managing their garbage and other animal attractants according to the guidelines set out by the NSBBN.

Those instructions include always keeping any remnants of foods such as fish or meats in the freezer until the day of garbage pickup — and ensuring bird feeders are well out of reach of a bear.

“Keep in mind that a bear can climb up the side of a wooden building with little difficulty,” cautions Webb.

When composting in bear country, only use vegetable waste and thoroughly wash any eggshells.

“The trick is to make sure you don’t

get any smells,” says Webb, of the key to composting.

A bear’s sense of smell is so powerful that it can zero in on an empty and unwashed tin of meat or jam jar in your garbage from at least one block away, or more, depending on the temperature and wind conditions.

And if a bear finds food, the empirical rule, says Webb, is that it will return to the same spot two or three times — even after the attractant has been removed.

Of course, once a bear becomes habituated it becomes challenging for conservation officers to mitigate the safety risk to the neighbourhood — which results, in some cases results, in the bear being killed.

Fortunately — because of public education and proper management of animal attractants on the part of North Shore residents — only one bear was put down last year.

About 12 years ago, 39 bears were killed on the North Shore. The declining number of euthanized bears in recent years can be attributed mainly to the efforts of the NSBBN, whose members work tirelessly to educate the public while also lobbying governments for more stringent wildlife protection bylaws.

Recently the NSBBN has been reviewing its strategic plan, which is in need of a refresh because most of the previous goals set out in the document have been achieved.

“We’ve got most people up to speed on their bylaws — and they have got some



**BEAR AWARE** - Tony Webb, chair of the North Shore Black Bear Network.

*File photo*

nice fines available,” says Webb. “We amended the [B.C.] Wildlife Act. The shift now, and this is crux of the whole thing, is to go to education.”

As always, Webb imparts instructions on what to do if you encounter a bear, helping to ensure bears and humans can coexist in harmony on the North Shore: “Stay calm. Speak to the bear calmly to let it know you are nearby. Give the bear plenty of

space, allowing it an easy exit path. Do not run, but back away slowly still facing the bear. Try and avoid direct eye contact. Go indoors with your pets and children. And phone the bear line: 604-990-BEAR (2327).”

More information is available on the North Shore Black Bear Society’s website at [northshorebears.ca](http://northshorebears.ca)

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