

# The bears are back in town

## Black bear society asks residents to manage attractants responsibly

BY CHRISTINE LYON, NORTH SHORE NEWS    APRIL 21, 2013



In 2010, this black bear was relocated from the Blueridge neighbourhood of North Vancouver to a spot far up the Coquihalla Highway. The following spring, it showed up on the same street it had been tranquilized on and was subsequently destroyed. Scan with Layar for video on how to compost in bear territory.

**Photograph by:** photo Warren Goodman, for the NEWS

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IT'S the time of year when Christine Miller starts fielding phone calls from North Shore residents who have spotted bears in the neighbourhood or have seen the telltale signs of their presence.

"We get a lot of calls from people saying 'Somebody's garbage is strewn in my yard,'" says Miller, education coordinator for the North Shore Black Bear Society.

April typically marks the beginning of black bear season on the North Shore - the time of year when the animals are not hibernating. Miller reminds residents to properly manage their garbage and other bear attractants to reduce the likelihood of human-bear conflicts as the animals wander into urban areas in search of a meal.

Bears are mainly drawn to our garbage, Miller says, but fruit trees, berry bushes, bird feeders, pet food and barbecues are also enticers.

She advises residents to store trash cans indoors until collection day.

District of North Vancouver residents have the option to purchase a bear-resistant garbage container for \$199 from the municipality.

"The bears would figure out that they can't get into the garbage, so they wouldn't continue coming,"

Miller explains.

For those who participate in the Green Can Program, Miller suggests freezing organic food waste before leaving it at the curb to make it more difficult for bears to sniff out.

"They can find frozen food too, but you're certainly increasing the chances of it being collected safely before the bear gets it if it's frozen."

District of West Vancouver residents can face a \$100 fine for placing garbage curbside prior to 5 a.m. and the fine for not storing wildlife attractants responsibly is \$300.

Similarly, District of North Vancouver residents can face a \$100 fine for putting garbage at the curb before 5:30 a.m. on pickup days.

Volunteers from the North Shore Black Bear Society conduct patrols to ensure bear-luring trash isn't left out overnight.

"We provide education and if the resident doesn't pay attention to our education then we send the file over to bylaws," Miller says.

A recent amendment to the B.C. Wildlife Act allows conservation officers to fine people who have food available to bears on their property.

Miller says black bears do not pose a big threat to people but, like any wild animal, they should be treated with caution.

"They're just out looking for something to eat and our pets are not their food source and we are not their food source," she says.

If a bear becomes dependent on human garbage, however, conservation officers will step in. Depending on the bear's behaviour, officers may chase it away, tranquilize and relocate it or, in some cases, kill it.

Last year, 11 bears were killed on the North Shore.

"We try to minimize that number," Miller says.

If you spot a bear in your neighbourhood, call the North Shore Bear Hotline at 604-990-BEAR (2327).

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