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## Bear critic's logic fuzzy

BY MICK WEBB, NORTH SHORE NEWS    AUGUST 12, 2011

Dear Editor:

I would like to respond to Gerry Scott's Aug. 5 letter, North Shore of Yore was a Bearless Eden, in which he questions the logic of Tracey Weldon's earlier letter, Learn to Change Behaviour if You Live in Bear Country (July 13, North Shore News).

Mr. Scott's letter is a nostalgic blend of romance and period reality, referring to the area as a "young boy's paradise," where "parents gave us the freedom to explore the forest without fear of bears or any other dangers."

Our lush, wooded hillsides are still the same "paradise" he enjoyed and are today regularly and safely explored by young and old alike, and in far greater numbers. And, as in Mr. Scott's cherished childhood memories, the bears are still seldom, if ever, seen. They are there (and always have been) but choose to keep their distance from us, tolerating us in their homeland and wishing us no harm - an attitude we often fail to recognize, or appreciate.

As in his youth, paperboys are still safely delivering papers on the same routes mentioned, despite a vastly increased human population from the "five per cent" of Mr. Scott's day. That population is relentlessly encroaching into the bears' traditional territory. Such encroachment is at the heart of our problem. Our garbage attracts the food-seeking bears to our neighbourhoods, inevitably resulting in the problems we often hear about.

Mr. Scott's assertion that "it is the behaviour of bears rather than people that needs to be changed," is absurd and simplistic.

These are food-motivated wild animals, not pet poodles.

However, through literally years of ongoing educational effort by both professional and volunteer workers alike, our North Shore community is becoming more and more cognisant of the need to safely store bear attractants. And more importantly, we are coming to recognize that such measures are the key to safely coexisting with the local bear population - which, like it or not, is not going away.

Such measures are, as Tracy Weldon pointed out, the only logical way to control the situation, empowering residents to become part of the solution rather than the problem.

The North Shore is still a paradise, and millions of people the world over would love to inherit the problems Mr. Scott grumbles about for the chance to live here.

We need to recognize what we have, and that the bears are part of that.

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