

Shelburne police provides bear advice after local sighting

Last Thursday a Shelburne Police officer observed a young Black Bear in the area of Col. Philips Drive and Highway 10 ? the north edge of town. The bear wandered into the fields north of Highway 10 when the officer shone a spot light on the visitor.

Bear sightings in Dufferin County have slowly been on the rise over the past few years.

The Ministry of Natural Resources was advised of this sighting. Below is a summary of what the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) recommends in relation to bear sightings and encounters. For the full details please check their Bear Wise website at: www.ontario.ca/page/prevent-bear-encounters-bear-wise.

The following is from the MNR website:

Not every bear sighting is an emergency situation. Here is who to call if you encounter a bear.

In emergency situations, call 911 or your local police if a bear poses an immediate threat to personal safety and exhibits threatening or aggressive behaviour, such as:

? Enters a school yard when school is in session

? Stalks people and lingers at the site

? Enters or tries to enter a residence

? Wanders into a public gathering

? Kills livestock/pets and lingers at the site

Police will respond first to an emergency situation, but may request assistance from the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry.

For non emergency encounters call the toll-free Bear Wise reporting line at 1-866-514-2327 if a bear:

? Roams around or checks garbage cans

? Breaks into a shed where garbage or food is stored

? Is in a tree

? Pulls down a bird feeder or knocks over a barbecue

? Moves through a backyard or field but does not linger

This line operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week, from April 1 to November 30.

If you encounter a black bear:

When bears are caught off guard, they are stressed, and usually just want to flee.

STOP. DO NOT PANIC. REMAIN CALM.

Generally, the noisier the bear is, the less dangerous it is, provided you do not approach. The noise is meant to 'scare' you off and acts as a warning signal.

Things to do

- ? Slowly back away while keeping the bear in sight and wait for it to leave.
- ? If the bear does not leave, throw objects, wave your arms and make noise with a whistle or air horn.
- ? Prepare to use bear spray.
- ? If you are near a building or vehicle get inside as a precaution.

Things not to do

- ? Run, climb a tree or swim ? a bear can do these things much better than you
- ? Kneel down
- ? Make direct eye contact

Bear warning signs

Black bear attacks are extremely rare. A threatened or predatory black bear will give off warning signs to let you know you are too close. If a black bear stands on its hind legs this is not aggressive behaviour, and the bear is trying to get a better look at you or 'catch your scent'.

A bear that feels threatened will:

- ? Salivate excessively and exhale loudly
- ? Make huffing, moaning, clacking and popping sounds with its mouth, teeth and jaws
- ? Lower its head with its ears drawn back while facing you
- ? Charge forward, and/or swat the ground with its paws (known as a 'bluff' charge).

A predatory bear

The bear will approach silently, usually in rural or remote areas, and may continue to approach regardless of your attempts to deter them by yelling or throwing rocks. If the bear attacks:

- ? Use bear spray.
- ? Fight back with everything you have.
- ? Do not play dead unless you are sure a mother bear is attacking in defence of her cubs.

After the bear leaves

? Report the bear encounter by calling 1-866-514-2327 between April 1 and Nov. 30.

? Tell your neighbours about bear activity in the area.

? If the bear was eating non-natural food (such as garbage or bird food), remove or secure the item.

If you have tried everything possible to get a bear to leave your property and you are afraid for your safety, you have the right to protect yourself and your property.

Killing a bear in self-defence must be an action of last resort.

Any action you take must be done:

? According to applicable laws (for example, discharging a firearm by-laws)

? Safely

? In the most humane way possible