

Be bear wise this spring

The Province of Ontario and the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) are reminding people to take simple precautions this spring to prevent attracting black bears as they come out of hibernation.

The potential for human-bear conflicts increases when there is little natural food available for bears. If this happens, black bears will search for other food sources, such as garbage and bird feed, which can draw bears to populated areas.

Follow these simple instructions to minimize the chances of attracting bears:

? Store garbage in waste containers with tight-fitting lids.

? Put out garbage only on the morning of pickup.

? Put away bird feeders. Seed, suet and nectar also attract bears.

? Pick fruits and berries as they ripen ? don't let them rot on the ground.

? Clean outdoor barbecue grills after each use, including the grease trap underneath. Bears will be drawn by smells from great distances, including grease and food residue on grills.

Bears that enter a populated area aren't necessarily a threat to public safety. Public safety is at risk when a bear poses an immediate threat to your safety.

The Ministry of Natural Resources and OPP have agreed on the roles and responsibilities for both organizations to help the public understand which organization to contact when they encounter a bear.

If a bear is posing an immediate threat to public safety by exhibiting threatening or aggressive behaviour, call 911 or your local police. At the request of police, during daylight hours the Ministry of Natural Resources will respond to emergency situations to assist. For non-emergencies, the Ministry of Natural Resources operates the toll-free, 24/7 Bear Reporting Line (1-866-514-2327) and the Bear Wise website to provide the public with information and advice.