



BLACK BEARS



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The North Shore is Bear Country

Black bears are the only bear species living in the North Shore's dense, vast forests. Black bears evolved in forested areas and are excellent climbers. Black bears are naturally wary of humans and expel a lot of energy attempting to avoid us. Their instinct is to hide from threats in trees. As intelligent animals, they are adapting to increased human and dog activity in their environment. Bears may become more tolerant of our presence and this should not be mistaken for boldness or aggression.


Female black bears with cubs are statistically the least dangerous bear you will meet

Black bear attacks on humans are incredibly rare

Exploring bear country

Look out for signs a bear may be in the area:

- Fresh scat/tracks
- Natural bear foods: berries, crabapples
- Tree markings/fur on trees/shredded logs
- Always be aware of your surroundings and avoid using headphones
- Use your voice in the forest to avoid a surprise encounter. Be louder on narrow, overgrown trails and when by a creek or river to warn bears people are close by
- Stay on the trail where you are less likely to disturb or surprise a bear
- Never leave food unattended. Never feed bears or other wildlife
- Keep your dog on-leash. Dogs pressure bears to defend themselves. Off-leash dogs are the cause of more than half of all negative encounters between people and bears
- Never approach bears for photographs, especially with your phone. Getting close pressures the bear to respond, disturbs their natural behaviour and can force them into another bear's home range where conflict can result, including the death of cubs

 Slow down, give bears space. Stopping your engine to take a photo allows bears to get comfortable around vehicles, contributing to them being hit and killed.

What black bears eat

Black bears are omnivores that eat some animal protein: insects, fish and winter-killed wildlife. More than 80% of their diet is vegetation: grasses, dandelions, berries, nuts and fruits. Bears must travel great distances in search of natural foods in order to survive, and often have no choice but to travel through our neighbourhoods. We have a responsibility to ensure we do not leave food available that will encourage a bear to stay in the community.

- Keep garbage/organics stored securely inside the house, garage or shed
- Place items at curbside on morning of collection only (as per bylaw)
- DNV-issued carts are not bear-proof. Always keep locked when on your property
- Freeze odorous organics such as meat/fish
- Clean carts regularly with a water and vinegar solution
- Wrap organics in newspaper
- Wash milk jugs, food containers, cans and jars. Rinse beverage cans and bottles and keep in a secure area
- Add yard trimmings to compost and aerate often
- Pick all fruit from trees/collect fallen fruit daily
- Take down all bird feeders, esp. Mar-Dec
- Feed your pets indoors. Store pet food inside
- Clean BBQ grill and grease trap after each use
- Store fridges/freezers/coolers inside only
- Keep garage doors closed unless in immediate area
- Install electric fence around chickens and beehives

Every year bears are killed on the North Shore for finding food in our neighbourhoods. Relocation is not an option. Another bear will soon fill the void if food sources remain accessible.

If you meet a bear

- Stay calm – it helps to take a deep breath
- Speak to the bear in a calm voice – this identifies you as a human
- Slowly back away – give the bear an exit and show you are not a threat

Leave your phone alone

- If a bear has visited your property, remove any food sources.
- From the safety of an open window or deck, give the bear a negative experience by making loud noises (shouting, banging pots and pans) and by shining a flashlight on them at night.

Seasonal habits



Den late-November to March. Cubs born in den late January. Male bears may remain active over winter, especially if they have access to unnatural food sources.



Cubs of the year emerge late April. Juvenile cubs are dispersed to establish own home range. Mating season begins late spring.



Mating season continues into early summer. Mothers teach cubs to forage, climb, swim and protect themselves from danger (humans, dogs, other bears).



Hyperphagia, a period of excessive eating to prepare for winter in den with no food. This is when bears are most active, with increased sightings in our community.

