

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Offers These Suggestions To Avoid Problems with Black Bears



Black bears will soon be emerging from their winter dens. Typically, black bears are timid and will avoid all contact with humans. However, bears will become a nuisance if they believe they can obtain an easy meal from bird feeders, garbage cans, dumpsters, barbecue grills, tents, vehicles, out-buildings or houses.

It's in the best interest of both bears and people if bears get their food solely from wild sources. Once a bear learns to associate certain structures with food, it can become a serious nuisance to people and a threat to itself. Bears that lose their natural fear of humans are much more likely to be destroyed under a DEC nuisance permit.

Once a bear becomes a problem, DEC is often asked to relocate the bear. However, bear relocations are rarely effective at solving the problem. Bears are extremely mobile and have excellent homing abilities. Relocated bears often return to their original capture site or simply continue their bad habits at a new location. If the circumstances that led to the original problem are not corrected, other bears will quickly be attracted to the site and the bear/human conflicts will persist. The simplest way to avoid a nuisance encounter is to remove all food sources.

Bear problems can be minimized by taking these simple precautions:

Never intentionally feed bears;

Stop feeding birds as soon as the snow melts. Clean up all seed fragments and shells left over from winter feeding as the smell will attract bears;

Keep garbage secured. Keep garbage in cans inside buildings whenever possible. Sprinkle ammonia inside the garbage bag before closing;

If garbage is picked up at the curb, put the garbage out just before the scheduled pickup or place it in a roadside bear-resistant container. Do not put garbage out the night before pickup at the curb;

Do not burn garbage, it is illegal and attracts bears;

Feed pets indoors and store pet food indoors. If pets must be fed outdoors, take in all uneaten food and dishes before dark;

When camping, keep food out of sight and secured in the trunk of a hard topped, locked vehicle if one is available. If a vehicle is not available, hang food and garbage from a tree at least eight feet off the ground. Keep picnic tables, utensils, fireplaces and the surrounding areas clean.



Everyone is asked to respect bears as wild animals – from a distance. For more information about bears in the western New York, call the DEC Region 9 Wildlife office in Allegany at (716) 372-0645 or visit DEC's website at www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6960.html