

## Living with Bears

It's that time of year when Colorado's bears emerge from hibernation. Woodland Park being nestled in the foothills attracts the animals on a frequent basis this time of year. The Woodland Park Police Department would like to pass along some helpful advice when dealing with these animals in our neighborhoods.

Male bears come out first. Depending on the weather and elevation, they start coming out in early to mid-April. If they don't find green grass or new plant growth to eat, they might go back into the den. Females with cubs come out later, but they will all be out by May.

Every year, the Woodland Park Police Department receives phone calls from residents concerned about bears visiting their property. It ran through my yard! It knocked over my trash! It was on my deck! reports usually end with the question, "What should I do about it?"

In communities located in bear country, residents often have conflicting views about what to do. Most people say, "learn to live with them," but some want bears moved "back where they belong."

A hundred years ago, there were places in Colorado where bears could live without coming in contact with people, but today there are few places left in bear habitat where people haven't built subdivisions, campgrounds, or summer homes.

Given a choice, bears would just as soon avoid people, but there are not many far-away places to move bears "back where they belong" anymore. Bears are territorial. Sometimes, bears return to where they were captured within days.

As a result, the one of the best options left today is for people to take precautions and learn to co-exist with bears, and other wildlife.

To keep bears out of trash cans, garages and homes, people should reduce the chance that bears find easy food by removing attractants. Once a bear finds food in a location, it becomes programmed to continue looking for food in similar places. If that location is near people, the desire for easy food will replace its fear of humans.

In all likelihood, the bear that was determined to get inside the trash can found food in a similar trash can before. Leaving garbage out overnight - even one time - is a tempting invitation to bears. A mother bear that eats trash teaches her offspring to do the same.

On the other hand, if a bear wanders through a community and does not find anything to eat, it will keep moving and go back out of town looking for natural foods such as seeds, insects, edible plants, nuts, or berries.

Changing human behavior and removing common attractants discourages bear visits that put both humans and bears at risk.

The Colorado Division of Wildlife encourages residents to make property "bear-resistant" by cleaning or removing any items a bear might consider potential food sources.

- Keep garbage in airtight containers inside a garage or storage area.
- Clean trash cans with ammonia to reduce odors that attract bears.
- Place garbage for pickup outside just before collection and not the night before.
- Use a bear-proof can or dumpster - if not available, ask your trash-removal company for options.
- Take down bird feeders when bears are active. If a bear finds a birdfeeder, it will look around the neighborhood for other easy food within reach.
- Do not leave pet food or dishes outdoors at night. Store pet food inside in airtight containers.
- Clean outdoor grills after each use. The smell of grease can attract bears, even when no food is present.
- Never intentionally feed bears to attract them for viewing. It is illegal to feed bears in Colorado.
- Do not keep food in vehicles; even fast food wrappers will attract bears. Bears have the capability to enter locked and unlocked vehicles which generally results in damage to the exterior and interior of the vehicle.

Should you encounter a bear it is best to stay calm and make sure the bear is aware of you but do not approach the bear. Here are a few ways to teach the bears they are not welcome at your residence.

- If a bear comes into your yard try to scare it away. A confident attitude plus loud noises like a firm yell, clapping your hands, banging on pots and pans or blowing an air horn sends most bears running.
- If a bear enters your home, open doors and windows and make sure it can leave the same way it came in. Don't approach the bear or block escape routes.
- Never approach a bear. If it won't leave call your local CDOW office. If it poses an immediate threat to human safety call 911.

Remember, "A fed bear is a dead bear." By making food available to a bear, even a single time, teaches the bear to associate humans with food. Once a bear learns this association, they can become a returning nuisance and wildlife officers must destroy the bear. For more information go online to [www.wildlife.state.co.us/bears](http://www.wildlife.state.co.us/bears)

An ounce of prevention is truly worth 200 pounds of cure.

# Bearproofing Your Home

Help Keep Bears Wild



Only people can prevent conflicts with bears. Please do your part to protect your home and property, and prevent conflicts with bears.

## Keep Bears Out

- Many bears that enter homes do so through an unlocked or open window or door. Close and lock all bear-accessible windows and doors when you leave the house, and at night before you go to bed.
- If you must leave downstairs windows open, install sturdy grates or bars. Screens don't keep out bears.
- Keep garage doors and windows closed and locked at night and when you're not home. Don't leave your garage door standing open when you're not outside. Install extra-sturdy doors if you have a freezer, refrigerator, pet food, bird seed, or other attractants in your garage.
- Keep car doors and windows closed and locked if you park outside. Make sure there's nothing with an odor in your vehicle, including candy, gum, air fresheners, trash, lotions and lip balms.
- Bears are great climbers — remove any tree limbs that might provide access to upper level decks and windows.
- Replace exterior lever-style door handles with good quality round door knobs that bears can't pull or push open.
- Put on talk radio (not music) when you leave home; the human voice startles most bears.

## Get Rid of Attractants

- Bears follow their super-sensitive noses to anything that smells like food, and can follow scents from up to five miles away.
- Don't leave trash out overnight unless it's in a bear-proof enclosure or container. Obey all local regulations.
- We recommend feeding birds only when bears are hibernating. If you want to feed birds when bears are active, please review the Attracting Birds, Not Bears fact sheet on our Web site.

- Don't store food of any kind in an unlocked garage, flimsy shed or on or under your deck.
- Don't leave anything with an odor outside, near open windows or in your vehicle, even if you're home. That includes scented candles, air fresheners, soaps and lotions.

## Teach Bears They're Not Welcome

- If a bear comes into your yard or close to your home, do yourself and the bear a big favor, and scare it away. A confident attitude plus loud noises like a firm yell, clapping your hands, banging on pots and pans or blowing an air horn sends most bears running.
- If a bear enters your home, open doors and windows and make sure it can leave the same way it got in. Don't approach the bear or block escape routes.
- Never approach a bear. If a bear won't leave, call your local CDOW office. If a bear presents an immediate threat to human safety, call 911.

Visit [www.wildlife.state.co.us/bears](http://www.wildlife.state.co.us/bears) for more information or call your local Division of Wildlife Office.



Please Do  
Your Part  
to Keep  
Bears  
Wild

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