



# Help keep bears wild

As Metro Vancouver grows,  
people are living, working  
and playing in closer  
proximity to bears.

Understanding bear behavior  
helps keep people safe  
and bears wild.

To report any wildlife-human interactions where public safety may be at risk, call Conservation Office Services toll free at 1-877-952-7277.

## Building a Sustainable Region

Metro Vancouver has a vision to achieve what humanity aspires to on a global basis – the highest quality of life embracing cultural vitality, economic prosperity, social justice and compassion, all nurtured in and by a beautiful and healthy natural environment.

## Metro Vancouver

Metro Vancouver is a federation of 22 municipalities and one electoral district. Its services include the provision of drinking water, sewage, drainage and solid waste management, affordable housing and Regional parks.

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# What about Bears?

## A Guide to Coexisting with Bears

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**metro  
vancouver**

[www.metrovanancouver.org](http://www.metrovanancouver.org)

# *We live in* Bear Country



**Bordering vast mountain wilderness, many Metro Vancouver regional parks and communities provide prime bear habitat.**

## Beyond boundaries

Curious and opportunistic, bears may travel hundreds of kilometres through all but the most urbanized areas seeking seasonally available foods, safe cover, mates, and denning sites.

## Room to roam

Bears use a patchwork of habitats and travel corridors—both natural and man-made. Although they prefer deep forest cover, bears are often spotted along roads, hiking trails, and at the edge of waterways.



## Just passing through

A bear's movements are dictated mostly by the availability of food. When the food supply is exhausted in one area, a bear will move on to the next. Bears are most often observed in the regional parks in summer and fall, when local berries and nuts ripen, and salmon are moving up the rivers to spawn.

## It smells like... food!

Bears are not picky eaters. They eat almost anything and rarely pass up an easy meal—even if it means going near humans to get it.



## Black bears or grizzlies?

If you're going to see a bear in this area, it will likely be a black bear. The wary grizzly prefers remote locations away from human activity.



## A symbol of wilderness

For many park visitors, it's a thrill to see a bear in the wild—from a distance! Bears are an important part of the biodiversity of our region and are a sign of a healthy ecosystem.

## We need your help!

Park staff reduce the risk of bear encounters by removing human sources of attractants that can get a bear into trouble.

**In the parks and at home, keeping bears wild is everyone's responsibility!**

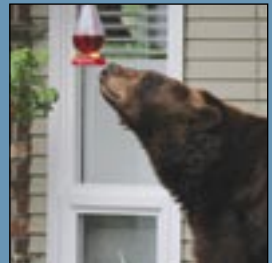
It's normal for bears to roam through urban areas, especially as development encroaches on wild spaces...



...the challenge is to keep bears from staying in urban areas.



Garbage, BBQ's, birdfeeders, and a host of other human-produced items can provide an irresistible feast.





# Hungry as a Bear

Bears are driven by a powerful hunger. They are typically active from mid-March to November, but if food is available, they may be active year-round.



**Packing on a thick layer of fat** helps to ensure a bear's survival in winter, a bear may double its weight from the time it emerges from its den in the spring, to the time it hibernates in the fall.

**Mid-March through summer:**  
Black bears leave their dens to feed on seasonally available foods.



**A Vertical Buffet** Pick a time of year. Where do you think a bear might be? (Answer: Following the availability of seasonal food!)



November

**September through November:**  
Bears feed intensely, gorging on high-calorie foods before hibernating. They may eat as many as 10 salmon in an hour or up to 250,000 berries in a day!

**An Invisible Map** Bears use their keen sense of smell to navigate the landscape, find food and mates, keep track of their cubs, avoid humans and sometimes other bears. Strong smells—such as a rotting carcass or garbage—may lure a bear from several kilometres away.

Bear cubs learn everything from their mothers—good habits and bad.

**Bad habits are hard to break**

Bears that associate food with human activities often lose their natural fear of humans.

Becoming bolder and more aggressive in their search for food, bears can get into all kinds of mischief, putting themselves and people around them at risk.

## Avoiding bear encounters:

Travel as part of a group

Be alert where bears may not be able to see, hear, or smell you: on twisting trails, in dense brush, near running water, or when the wind is in your face

Avoid wearing strong perfumes

Keep children close to you at all times, don't let them wander ahead or lag behind

Keep your dog on a leash at all times

## Avoiding unwanted dinner guests at your house:

- ✓ Store garbage in a secure building or bear-proof garbage container
- ✓ Put out garbage on the morning of pick-up only
- ✓ Keep barbeques clean and grease-free; do not leave food unattended
- ✓ Pick berries and fruit as they ripen; pick up fallen fruit regularly
- ✓ Remove outdoor freezers
- ✓ Feed pets indoors
- ✓ Remove bird feeders between April and November; use thin piano wire to hang feeder higher than 3.3 m
- ✓ Put away all petroleum products including rubber, tarpaper, paint, turpentine, kerosene, and charcoal fluid; bears are drawn to these products
- ✓ Sprinkle compost with lime to decrease odours. Do not compost fruit or eggshells in summer or fall.

### An invitation to dinner

One meal from a backyard or garbage can is enough to bring a hopeful bear back again and again. And bears are smart: if they get a meal from your garbage can, they quickly learn to check every can in the neighbourhood.

Make noise (clap or sing); let the bear know you are on the trail

Avoid wearing headphones while walking or jogging

Watch for fresh bear signs

Never approach a bear, maintain a distance of at least 100 metres

### But if I do see a bear?

- Stay calm, stand still and assess the situation. Remember: Bear attacks are uncommon
- Speak to the bear in a calm, firm voice; your voice helps to identify you as a human
- Back away slowly and NEVER run; running may trigger a pursuit
- Get your bear spray ready and know how to use it!
- If a black bear attacks, use bear spray and fight back! Do all that it takes to let the bear know you are not easy prey!



Watch for fresh bear signs: scat (droppings), tracks, scratches on trees, overturned boulders, or smashed logs.



Bear spray can be an effective deterrent when used properly. Be aware that wind, spray distance, rain, freezing temperatures, and product expiry can all influence bear spray effectiveness. If you plan to carry it, learn how to use it.