

# Black Bear Encounters



Black bear attacks are extremely rare. Most human-bear conflicts occur when bears are attracted by smells and rewarded with an easy meal. In case you encounter a bear, here is some information, provided by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources on what to do:

## Report a Bear Problem

### Emergency encounters

-Call 911 or local police, if a bear poses an immediate threat to personal safety.

### Non-emergency encounters

Call the Bear Wise reporting line at 1-866-514-2327 if a bear is roaming around. Bear Wise reporting is available April 1 to November 30.

## How To Prevent Encounters

- + Never feed bears or try to approach them.
- + Put garbage in containers with tight-fitting lids. Put them out on the morning of garbage day.
- + Frequently wash garbage and recycling containers and lids with a strong disinfectant.
- + Fill bird feeders only in the winter months. Put away feeders in the spring and offer birds natural alternatives (flowers, nesting boxes, fresh water).
- + Do not leave pet food outdoors or in a porch.
- + Refrain from putting meat, fish or fruit scraps in composters outside. Keep scraps in the freezer until garbage day.
- + Pick ripe fruit from trees and bushes and fallen fruit off the ground.
- + Remove grease and food residue from BBQ grills, including the grease cup, after each use.

## Take Safety Precautions

- + Carry a readily-accessible whistle or air horn.
- + Learn how to use bear pepper spray.
- + Consider carrying a long-handled axe, if you are in "remote areas or deep in the forest."

## If You Encounter A Bear

Stop. Do not panic. Remain calm.

- + Determine which type of an encounter this might be - sighting, surprise or close encounter.
- + Do not try to get closer to the bear for a better look or picture.
- + Make sure the bear has a clear escape route: don't corner a bear.
- + Always watch the bear and slowly back away until the bear is out of sight.
- + Get inside if you are near a building or vehicle.
- + Leave the area, if you are berry-picking, hiking, camping, jogging or cycling.
- + If you are with others, stay together as a group.
- + If the bear does not get closer to you, slowly back away.
- + DO NOT: scream, turn your back on the bear, run, kneel down, make direct eye contact, climb a tree or retreat into water or try and swim - a bear can do these things much better than you.

## If This Is A Close Encounter

Yell, wave your arms to make yourself look bigger; throw objects, blow a whistle or an air horn; make noise to try and persuade the bear to leave and prepare to use bear pepper spray.

## If The Bear Keeps Advancing To You

Stand your ground, use your bear pepper spray (if the bear is within seven metres) or anything else you can find or use to threaten or distract the bear. Fight back as if your life depends on it.

## After The Bear Leaves

- + Tell others about bear activity in the area.
- + If the bear was eating from a non-natural food source (like garbage or bird food), remove or secure the item that attracted the bear.

## Bear Warning Signals

A bear usually stands to get a better look at you or catch your scent. This is not aggressive behaviour. If a bear feels threatened, it may try to get you to back off and leave it alone. To do this, it may:

- + salivate excessively, exhale loudly, or make huffing, moaning, clacking and popping sounds with its mouth, teeth and jaws,
- + lower its head with its ears drawn back while facing you, or
- + charge forward, and/or swat the ground with its paws (known as a 'bluff' charge).

## Make Noise

Generally, the noisier the bear is, the less dangerous it is, provided you don't approach the bear. The noise is meant to 'scare' you off and acts as a warning signal.

## About Black Bears

- + Their entire life revolves around food. When they are not hibernating, bears spend most of their time looking for food.
- + When bears pick up a scent with their keen noses, they will investigate it. If bears are rewarded with feasts of bird food, garbage or pet food, they will return as long as the food source is available.
- + It's best to prevent encounters with bears in the first place. But if a bear continues to be a problem, and you've exhausted all other alternatives, as a property owner, you have the right to protect your personal property and yourself. You do not need a hunting licence, but you must report a killed bear to the MNR office.

For more information: [www.ontario.ca/page/report-bear-problem-bear-wise](http://www.ontario.ca/page/report-bear-problem-bear-wise)