



TOWN OF STOWE

Bear Awareness Education Plan

Approved by Stowe Conservation Commission
March 3, 2021

MESSAGES

BLACK BEARS AT A GLANCE

Seeing a black bear is an exciting and memorable experience. When visiting, recreating, or living in or near black bear country, it is always important to be aware that you may encounter a bear at any time. Most conflicts between people and bears are the result of people approaching and/or feeding them or allowing them to obtain garbage and pet/livestock feeds. Learning the appropriate safety techniques will minimize the possibility of a conflict. You are responsible for your safety and the safety of bears. Please help keep bears wild by not approaching or feeding them.

Black bears can be found across most of North America. Black bear habitat varies from the lowlands of Florida to mountains, deserts and subarctic tundra. Black bears can be found in and adjacent to metropolitan areas.

- Colors: Black, brown, blonde, rust, or cinnamon. Rare colors are white and blue.
- Size: Adults measure about 3 feet at the shoulder and 5 to 6 feet when standing.
- Weight: Adults weigh 125 to 425+ lbs. Some can weigh as much as 700 lbs.
- Life Span: Approximately 20 years.
- Eyesight: Similar to humans.
- Sense of Smell: Excellent; can span miles.
- Attributes: Very agile; climb trees well; good swimmers; and can run as fast as 35 mph. A black bear's diet can include acorns, berries, insects, vegetation, fish and other live prey, and carrion. They mate during May and early June. They hibernate between November and April when food is scarce, though this may vary. Healthy mothers produce 1–3 cubs.

DON'T FEED BEARS!

Bears should never obtain human food, pet/livestock feeds, or garbage. Bears that receive these “food rewards” may become aggressive towards humans or cause property damage. To protect people, these bears may have to be destroyed. Bottle caps, glass, aluminum foil, and other related items can be harmful or even deadly to them.

Remember—A FED BEAR IS A DEAD BEAR!

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Minimize odors and the availability of food rewards throughout your yard and community.

Put garbage out on the day of pick up, not the night before. Store attractants in a sturdy building or place in an approved bear-resistant trash receptacle. Feed pets inside.

Hang bird feeders from a pulley system with a catch tray so they're out of reach of bears. Take feeders down between April and November when natural seed and nectar are available. Follow guidance from the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife.

Keep barbecues clean. Store with other attractants (livestock/pet feed, and garbage) inside a sturdy building. Windows, doors, and shutters should close against reinforced jams.

Vegetable gardens, compost piles, orchards, beehives, and chicken coops will attract bears. Use electric fences to keep bears out.

Place children's play areas close to your house with viewable space around them and away from brush or forested areas.

Provide outdoor lighting at entrances and walkways.

If a bear enters your home, leave immediately. If you can't get to an exit, go to the nearest room where you can shut the door securely. Call for assistance from the police or fire department. When help arrives, open doors and windows to provide the bear with as many exits as possible.

Bear activity may intensify in spring when bears are emerging from their dens, during fall when bears are bulking up for hibernation, and during periods of drought when bears' natural food sources become scarce.

CONSERVATION COMMISSION INITIATIVES

Develop Time Frame and Budget for the Following Activities:

1. Utilize \$5,000 from the Conservation Commission budget for the purchase of bearproof trash containers to be located at the entrance of the Rec Path, at Chase Park and at Thompson Park.
2. Develop and install bear awareness signage alongside the containers. Consider using existing bear education campaign materials such as: <http://www.bearsmart.com/managing-communities/education/materials-strategies/> or <https://bearaware.org/products-materials/>
3. Collaborate with Stowe Land Trust and the Select Board and other town committees for the bear awareness education. Develop timeline and messages for social media posts.
4. Do outreach to Stowe Area Association to share bear education materials to tourists and visitors.
5. Designate contributor to write and request an article in the Stowe Reporter.
6. Design, seek approval for, and install a banner for Main Street in March/April.

Be Bear Aware

Secure trash and food

Bring in Bird Feeders

Enjoy bears from a distance.

Design consideration: appealing and friendly; Mama and Bear Cub image

7. Front Porch Forum: Develop suggestions/guidelines on messages for CC members and others to post on Front Porch Forum with respect to bear sightings which encourage people to Stay Bear Aware. Suggest a neighbor-to-neighbor warning network.
8. Highlight the importance of the Shutesville Wildlife Corridor and other conservation projects that allow animals to pass through communities and not be funneled into densely populated areas.
9. Source photos of bears in Stowe and provide to Elisabeth Fenn at SLT for use in social media posts.

Bear Awareness Education Plan Timeline

<u>Task</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Lead</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Design and Print Banner	4/1/21	Alison S. (design) Tom J. (approval & print)	Consistent with BAEP
Social Media (FB, Insta, FPF)	3/15/21	Elisabeth (post) CC members (push)	rollout messages from BAEP link to Stowe reporter PDF
Bear Informational Sheet PDF *Link PDF to Town Website *Post of FPF with Link	4/1/21	Christine M. Tom J. Elisabeth F. (SLT)	incorporate Bear Banner design Utilize for Visitors; home rentals, Stowe Area Assoc.
Press release for kicking off	4/1/21	Catherine D.	announce CC kickoff of bear awareness: why important
Trash container signage * Fabrication	4/1/21	Christine M. TBD	Consistent with BAEP
Coloring contest	5/1/21	SLT Naturalist	TBD and facilitated by SLT & CC
Ready to go FPF Post	4/1/21	SLT (?)	For responding to misinformation on FPF
Follow up article in Stowe Reporter	6/1/21	Catherine D. initiate	supply information for article messaging living with bears; responsible viewing; how to keep them safe; what to do if nuisance, etc.