



Be "Bear Aware"

Friends and Neighbors,

It has been said, "*experience is the best teacher.*"

Recently, I was sitting at my desk here at Town Hall, drafting a special newsletter about being "bear aware." Little did I know that at that very moment, a bear was in my kitchen, eating directly out of the refrigerator.

Yes - fridge and freezer doors both open, bear bent over having a lunchtime feast.

That evening, after hours of clean-up, tossing all the defrosted food from my freezer, and a lot of bleach, I was on a Zoom meeting, and heard the sleigh bells that hang on our kitchen door jingle. Thinking it was one of my kid's friends stopping by, I shouted out my usual "hello!" to whomever had come in, as I focused on the discussion in the meeting. A few minutes later, my meeting wrapped up and I realized no one had come through the house. I walked back into the kitchen - no one was there. I checked upstairs with my kids - nope, no one came by. As I went back into the kitchen - VERY concerned as to who had been in the house - someone, rather *something*, was attempting to open the kitchen door.

You know that moment when you're watching a scary movie, and the ancillary character (that you know is about to get murdered by the werewolf) hears a creepy noise in the basement and they go right down the stairs toward the creepy noise, instead of running in the opposite direction?

That was me.

I walked right up to the door and grabbed the handle as the bear pivoted to a standing position. We stood there, both holding the door handle - on opposing sides of the door with only the glass between us. After a few seconds (which seemed *much* longer at the time), he pivoted back down, stopped for a few moments in a blind spot on the porch, and came out and ambled off the porch, licking his lips. Based on the evidence he left behind, and how he was licking his lips as he left, he had come back in (when I heard the sleigh bells) for a Nutella dessert.



Not only did the bear cause an enormous mess - he went through most of the food cabinets,

ransacked the refrigerator and freezer, pulling most of the food out onto the floor - it was quite traumatizing for my daughter's partner, who was visiting from out of state, and came upon him as she walked into the kitchen.

An officer from the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) came out that evening to take a report, and the following morning, a team came out with a large trap on a trailer to attempt to trap the nuisance bear. The Biologist reminded me that we coexist with all types of wildlife living where we do, but that the balance was off:

"The balance should be that the bear needs to be afraid of you. Unfortunately, the balance has shifted to where you are afraid of the bear."

She went on to offer that in order to keep a safe balance, we all must make sure wild animals do not see people, or our homes & yards as 'comfortable.' She strongly recommended that any time a bear comes into your yard, you should make every effort to make sure they are uncomfortable in your space. Make loud noises, clang a cowbell, keep a bucket of golf balls at your back door to toss at them - whatever it takes to send the message that where people are is not where they want to be.

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP), the state agency that oversees wildlife management in Connecticut, has many resources and lots of pertinent information on their [Living with Black Bears webpage](#).

From the [DEEP's "Living with Black Bears" webpage](#):

"In wilderness settings bears usually avoid people. But food attractants near homes can cause them to grow habituated to humans and disturbances, such as dogs and other noises. Bears are attracted by bird feeders, garbage, outdoor pet food, compost piles, fruit trees, and berry-producing shrubs."

Tips to avoid attracting bears:

Around your home:

- Remove bird feeders from late March through November. If a bear visits a bird feeder in winter, remove the feeder.
- Do not leave pet food outside overnight. Store livestock food in airtight containers.
- Do not put meats or sweet-smelling fruit rinds in compost piles. Lime can be sprinkled on the compost pile to reduce the smell and discourage bears.
- Thoroughly clean grills after use or store in a garage or shed.
- Never intentionally feed bears. Bears that associate food with people may become aggressive and dangerous. This may lead to personal injury, property damage, and the need to destroy problem animals.
- Encourage your neighbors to take similar precautions.



If you use a curbside hauler:

- Keep trash bags in a container with a tight lid and store in a garage or shed until the morning of collection before bringing out trash containers.
- Ask your hauler about bear-proof containers.
- Add a few capfuls of ammonia (or ammonia-soaked rags), to trash bags and garbage

- cans to mask food odors.
- Consider switching to using the Kent Transfer Station for your garbage and recycling.

If you see or encounter a Black Bear:

- Back away slowly if you surprise a bear nearby.
- Do not approach or try to get close to a bear to get a photo or video.
- Do not run or climb a tree. If possible, wait in a vehicle or building until the bear leaves the area.
- If a bear approaches you, make loud noise, wave your arms, and throw objects at the bear. Black bears rarely attack humans. If you are attacked, do not play dead. Fight back with anything available.

A complete list is on the DEEP website

What Does It Mean if a Bear Has a Collar or Ear Tags?

A common misconception is that a tagged bear in Connecticut is a problem bear, and a bear with two ear tags was caught on two different occasions because it was causing problems. Actually, when any bear is tagged, it receives two ear tags (one in each ear) the first time it is handled by DEEP, regardless of why it was tagged. Only male bears get tagged. Only female bears are collared; the data transmitted is used to research and understand the state's bear population.

TIP: Try to remember whether a bear you observed was collared or tagged (and the tag number if possible - but never risk getting close) - it is useful when you submit a bear sighting report!

If you see or encounter a bear, please report it to DEEP:

**Report a Black Bear
sighting**

As we head into colder months, bear activity will increase as they are seeking food sources to bulk up before hibernation.

Thank you for allowing me to share my story, and learning more about bears and being pro-actively ***Bear Aware***.

Stay well,



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