

COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE

Deterrents Can Teach Bears to Stay Away

Help Keep Bears Wild



© ESTES PARK TRAIL GAZETTE / (HAZELTONS)

Bears are always on the lookout for food sources. Like most animals, bears are interested in finding the most calories they can for the least amount of work. Every calorie a bear can save is a calorie that can help it fatten up and live through the winter. Bears that have been rewarded with an easy meal for poking their nose into someone's bird feeder, garbage can or garage will often investigate any similar food sources in their home range. Sending bears on their way empty-pawed helps protect your home and property, and teaches the bear a lesson that could save its life.

Deterrents can be useful in areas where bears have already learned that where there are people, there is usually easy-to-get-at food. The purpose of a deterrent is to make your home less attractive and persuade an exploring bear to move on.

The best deterrent of all is to make sure there's nothing at your home or on your property to attract bears in the first place, so be sure to review our *Living with Bears* brochure and fact sheets for bearproofing tips.

Electronic Deterrents

Motion activated lights, noise makers and alarms

A bear may be sufficiently startled by flashing lights, noise makers, alarms and sprinkler systems to leave the area the first time, but if nothing else happens to reinforce the experience, studies show,

like most wildlife, bears will learn to ignore these type of devices, quickly figuring out they're all bark, no bite. Still, the commotion can alert you to the presence of an intruder of some sort.

If you're reviewing options, products that randomly produce a different noise each time they're activated or have lights that flash in different patterns may be more effective than something with a single repetitive sound or a light that simply comes on for several minutes.

Radios

Leaving a radio tuned to a talk show can make it sound like someone is home and may persuade bears to leave the area. It's the human voice that does the trick; music doesn't seem to have any effect. If you'll be gone for an extended period of time, you can put a radio on a timer. Some people have found this to be an effective technique in chicken coops as well.

Scent Deterrents

A bear's nose is 100 times more sensitive than a human's. If you find bleach or ammonia fumes unpleasant, you can imagine what they smell like to a bear. Bleach or ammonia-based cleaners are good for trash cans and other areas where strong scents could attract bears. Some people have had some success with covered buckets or other containers filled with bleach or ammonia, with holes punched in the lids to let the scent out, placed outside bear-accessible doors and windows. Bears also dislike the strong scent of pine-based cleaners, but avoid using anything with a fresh, lemony or fruity smell. And never mix bleach and ammonia; the combination produces fumes that can be deadly to both people and bears.

Warning: Ammonia Can Blind Bears

Some sources recommend ammonia-filled balloons covered with honey or peanut butter as a deterrent; theoretically when the bear tries to bite the balloon, it gets a face full of ammonia instead of a treat. But an eyeful of ammonia or bleach is more than a deterrent – it can seriously injure or blind a bear.

Bear Spray is Not A Deterrent

Bear pepper spray is meant for defensive use in a close encounter with a bear that has escalated into a charge. (See *Hiking and Camping in Bear Country* for more information on bear spray and bear encounters) Unfortunately spraying bear spray on things you'd like bears to avoid doesn't work — when the spray dries, the pepper residue left behind mellows out and creates odors that can actually attract bears.

Barrier Deterrents

Ordinary chain-link, wood or vinyl fencing won't keep out bears. Bears are great climbers and can easily scoot up and over fencing if there's something on the other side they really want. Black bears are also good diggers and can tunnel underneath fencing as well.

Enclosures



If you can't store your garbage inside a sturdy, locked building, a heavy-duty chain-link fenced enclosure with a chain-link "roof," concrete pad bottom, and locking (not latching) gate can help keep out your average bears — but smells will still attract them, as well as other wildlife, so you will need to be extra vigilant and make sure there are no other food sources around.



In areas with high bear activity, it's better to secure trash inside the house, in a sturdy locked garage, or specially constructed outbuilding with concrete or cinder block construction with heavy duty wood or steel doors and roof. Sides need to be flush with the ground, with no more than a 2-inch gap at the bottom of the doors. Ventilation holes should be kept to a minimum and covered with heavy-gauge steel mesh.

Electric Fencing

A properly installed and maintained electric fence is an excellent bear deterrent, and proven to be effective at turning back bears. Electric fencing can be used to protect gardens, fruit trees, livestock pens and even campers, trailers and vacation homes. It's important to check local regulations to see if electric fencing is permitted in your area, and to read and follow all of the manufacturer's installation requirements and directions. You'll find detailed information on how to install an electric fence on our website.

Unwelcome Mats



SOME PEOPLE USE ROT RESISTANT CEDAR FENCING TO CONSTRUCT UNWELCOME MATS.

Unwelcome mats are typically made of sheets of sturdy plywood that have been carefully studded with small nails pointing up that can be placed in front of bear-accessible doors and windows. They've been shown to be very effective at deterring bears, and are sometimes used to protect summer and vacation homes when owners are away. Unwelcome mats can also be used on a temporary basis if there is a bear active in your neighborhood. It's very important that unwelcome mats be made, installed and used properly to avoid injuring bears or human or canine visitors.

For more detailed information on creating you own mats, see the fact sheet *Unwelcome Mats*.

Please Do Your Part to Keep Bears Wild

Visit www.wildlife.state.co.us/bears for more information or call your local Colorado Parks and Wildlife Office.

Bearproofing Your Trash

Help Keep Bears Wild



Garbage Kills Bears

Allowing bears to use trash and garbage as a food source creates serious problems for both people and bears. Because the food reward is so great, bears are willing to work hard to get at trash and garbage, and return often in hopes of finding more. These food-conditioned bears sometimes enter homes, garages or even vehicles in search of an easy meal. Bears in pursuit of such a good source of calories can do a lot of property damage, and even become aggressive. Allowing bears to get into the garbage is one of the leading causes of human-bear conflicts. Being smart about how you handle and store your trash can protect your home and property, and help keep bears alive and wild.



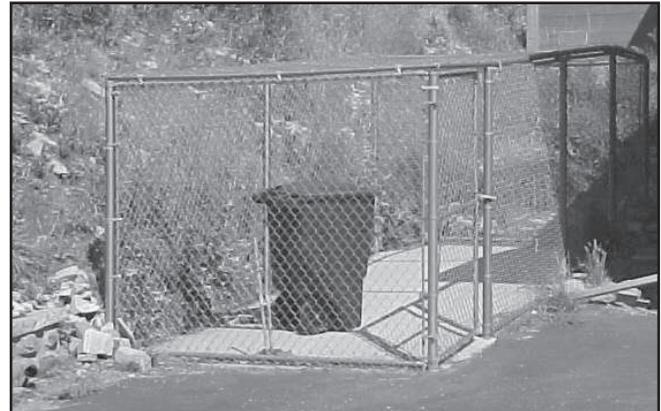
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Lock it Up

Keep trash and recyclables safely locked inside your home or a sturdy, locked garage or outbuilding constructed of heavy wood or metal. Don't leave any trash outside overnight; even empty bottles, cans, packages and recyclables have odors that attract bears. Don't store trash on your deck or screened-in porch, and don't stash your trash in your car, truck or camper. If you keep trash in your garage or an outbuilding, it should have sturdy doors and windows that lock. Put trash out the morning of pick up only.

Use a Bear-Resistant Enclosure

Ordinary chain link, wood or vinyl fencing won't keep out bears. Bears are great climbers and can easily scoot up and over fencing if there's something on the other side they really want. Black bears are also good diggers and can tunnel underneath fencing as well.



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If you can't store your garbage inside a sturdy locked building, a heavy-duty chain-link fenced enclosure with a chain-link "roof" and a concrete pad bottom and a locking (not latching) gate can help keep out your average bears. Just remember that garbage in an enclosure still gives off odors that attract bears and other wildlife, so it's very important you always remember to lock the enclosure, and check your home and property often to make sure there's nothing else for bears to explore after they give up on the trash. See our brochure on Living with Bears and our fact sheet on bear proofing your home for more information.

In areas with high bear activity, it's better to secure trash inside the house, or a sturdy locked garage or specially constructed outbuilding with concrete or cinder block construction with heavy duty wood or steel doors and roof. Sides need to be flush with the ground, with no more than a 2-inch gap at the bottom of the doors. Ventilation holes should be kept to a minimum and covered with heavy gauge steel mesh.

Freeze It

You can reduce odors that attract bears by keeping smelly items out of the trash until pick up or you're ready to take it to the dump. Keep a bag or container in your freezer for any bits of food, meat, bones, fruit or anything else that's likely to give off odors. Then just throw out the bag the morning of pick up, or when you take your trash to the dump.



Keep it Clean

Clean your trash containers frequently with ammonia or bleach solutions, or use a heavy-duty pine-scented cleaner. Avoid using anything with a fruity or lemony scent to clean trash cans or anything else outside. You can use a heavy-duty air freshener designed to remove odors on the inside of the lid to help cut down odors. Double bagging trash or using special bags that eliminate or contain odors can help as well. Just remember never to leave plastic bags of trash outside of the container. Of course, don't mix ammonia and bleach; doing so produces dangerous fumes that can be deadly for both people and bears.

Use a Bear-Resistant Container

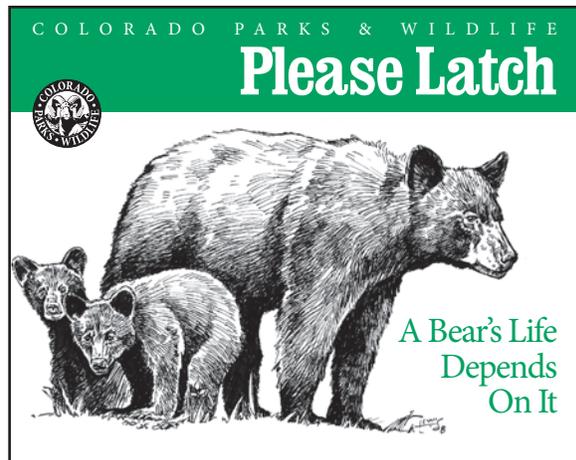


Bears are also very strong, so if the lid doesn't pop off, it's not much effort for a bear to dent, crack or split an ordinary can. There are a wide variety of bear-resistant containers available, from your typical 35-gallon household container to dumpsters. For a complete review of bear resistant options, visit the Living with Wildlife Foundation's website at www.lwwf.org.

This non-profit organization tests and certifies containers for the International Grizzly Bear Committee. There's also a comprehensive list of containers on our website at www.wildlife.state.co.us/bears — just scroll down under **Living with Bears**.

If you have curb side pick up, check with your trash collection service to make sure they'll service bear-resistant containers. If they won't, you can do the bears, yourself and your neighbors a favor if you encourage the company to do the wildlife-friendly and responsible thing, and service containers that don't put bears at risk.

Central Trash Collection



This weather-resistant sticker is a great way to remind people that a bear's life could depend on them taking the time to latch the dumpster. You can get free stickers at your local Colorado Parks and Wildlife office.

If you take your trash to a dumpster, please do your part to avoid attracting bears, and never leave trash outside the dumpster. Make sure the lid is securely closed and latched. If your dumpster doesn't have a latching lid, or has a flimsy plastic lid bears could easily peel back, ask your trash hauler to provide a bear-resistant dumpster. Some homeowners associations and neighborhoods that want to help prevent problems for themselves and the bears have worked with their trash companies to replace plastic lids with sturdy metal ones that chain and lock, which can be a cost-effective alternative to a new dumpster.

PLEASE DO YOUR PART TO KEEP BEARS WILD

Visit www.wildlife.state.co.us/bears for more information or call your local Colorado Parks and Wildlife office.

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 website.

■ 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 CPW office. If a bear presents an immediate threat to human safety, call 911.

Visit www.wildlife.state.co.us/bears for more information or call your local Colorado Parks and Wildlife Office.



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