

MOVING BEARS DOESN'T SOLVE THE BEAR PROBLEM!

This September, the Conservation Officers Service removed a bear by trap from Lions Bay because she was hanging around the school and raiding easily accessible food in the neighbourhood. This bear had to be moved because of proximity to the school, student safety and frequency of bear problem reports in that neighbourhood. Many residents expressed their relief that this bear was moved rather than destroyed.

Bears who behave aggressively towards people, repeatedly break into human structures, show ill health, bad teeth or injury, are destroyed. But translocation of bears from urban centres to rural areas is only somewhat preferable to destruction, and not a solution to bear problems in neighbourhoods.

Captivity is a stressful experience for bears. They are kept in the narrow confines of a culvert trap, sometimes for many hours or overnight, and often become covered in their own waste. The bear is moved in the trap, tranquilized, and examined. Then healthy bears, who are also good candidates for translocation, are ear tagged with identification. The tagged bear is transported and released into a wilderness area potentially able to sustain additional bears.

The recently drugged and traumatized bear has to quickly adapt to unfamiliar territory. Some newly introduced bears die from injuries fighting already established, stronger bears. The bear must find new food sources or slowly starve. Bears who have lost their fear of humans often return to communities that had recently provided them with food. Bears are naturally wary of people until they begin to associate humans with easy calories after continually accessing garbage and food, and they experience proximity to people without negative result.

Forested communities that continue to provide food attractants to bears experience only a temporary reprieve from bear activity after any translocation. Removing one problem bear just opens up an area with plentiful food for another wandering bear to become conditioned to human waste and food, and become habituated to human contact.

Lions Bay is working on a Bear Smart program to reduce food attractants and eliminate human-bear conflict. Bears are looking for food. If unnatural attractants like garbage, or outside stored food and diapers, are removed from neighbourhoods, then the bears move on once the fruit is gone and natural food becomes scarce. The need to trap and translocate bears in our area would be eliminated if attractants were removed from properties where residents have no tolerance for bears.

Lions Bay is situated in the middle of bear habitat, with dense forest and creeks to provide travel corridors. Our forest is full of grubs and berries, the open areas covered in grasses and berries. The only way to prevent bears from travelling through Lions Bay would be to enclose the entire Village area within an electric fence. Our Bear Smart initiatives will contribute to creating a community that is "porous" to wildlife, so that bears can safely move through our territory and return to the wild.

If you want to learn more about black bears, and be informed about the movement and management of local bears, please join the growing list of **Bear Watchers**.

Contact Birgitta von Krosigk at 728-4119 birgittavonk@telus.net
or Norma Rodgers at 921-8467 normarodgers@telus.net
to inquire about **Bear Watch**.