

## Neighborhood Wildlife Stewards

*Teaching our Highlands neighbors how to live safely with wildlife and keep the wildlife wild.*

### **American Black Bear**



**Black Bear**

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Black bears living in the woods are drawn into our neighborhood, usually on a weekly basis. It's a thrilling part of living here in Issaquah Highlands with beautiful Northwest habitat close by. But what happens next is far from beautiful- the bear tips over a garbage can, rips into a bag of garbage and begins to eat it, leaving garbage strewn in the street.

On July 10th, 2009, a resident filmed a young adolescent bear carrying a bag of garbage from the Wisteria Park neighborhood towards the greenbelt where the bear then ripped it open and began to eat the contents.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmehhmwa8a8>.

Unfortunately, scenes like this are repeated every week in our neighborhood. Bears have knocked over garbage cans left out the night before pickup in Ashland Park, Concord Commons, Dahlia Park and many others. A mother bear and cub were seen in Ashland Park and Grand Ridge, and an adolescent bear in Wisteria Park and Crofton Springs. This adolescent was probably a cub that learned last year from its mother about how easy meals are to find in Issaquah Highlands.

Black bears number one priority is food. They are opportunistic omnivores; they eat or drink just about anything with calories, eating both plants and animals, with 90% of their diet consisting of vegetarian matter. They rely on their sense of smell which is seven times more sensitive than a bloodhound's nose: bears can smell a bird feeder or rotting garbage from a mile away. Once a bear is food conditioned, associate food with people,

they will lose their natural fear of people and are more likely to approach people.

### **Black Bears Facts**

- Bears are smarter than German Shepherds: they have excellent memories and will return year after year to a neighborhood that provides food.
- They hear in the ultrasonic range, and they see as well as humans, though they might be a bit nearsighted.
- Bears den from mid-October into April because food is scarce, but if a bear learns food is available year round, such as garbage, they may not den at all.

### **Community Involvement - Prevent Conflicts with Black Bears**

- Never feed wildlife.
- Store garbage cans inside garage or in an approved ARC enclosure.
- Put garbage cans out the morning of garbage pickup, not the night before.
- Rinse all cans and bottles before placing them in the recycle bin.
- Only put plant material in compost bins.
- Keep barbecues clean and grease free.
- Do not feed pets outdoors and keep them indoors at night.
- Remove bird feeders from early March through November.
- Fence your vegetable garden and fruit trees.

### **What to do if you come in close contact with a Black Bear**

- Never approach a bear or bear cubs and give it plenty of room to escape.
- If you see a bear, stop, remain calm, and assess the situation. If the bear seems unaware of you, move away quietly when it's not looking in your direction.
- If a bear walks toward you, avoid direct eye contact, stand up, wave your hands above your head, and talk to the bear in a low voice. Don't throw anything at the bear.
- If you cannot safely move away from the bear or the bear continues toward you, try to scare it away by clapping, stomping your feet, yelling, and staring the animal in the eyes.
- Don't run from the bear unless you are absolutely certain you can reach safety. Don't try to climb a tree.
- In the unlikely event a black bear attacks you, fight back aggressively.

For additional information about black bears, see:

- Living with Wildlife: Black Bears  
[wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living/bears.htm](http://wdfw.wa.gov/wlm/living/bears.htm)
- Get Bear Smart Society  
[Bearsmart.com/bearsBackyard/](http://Bearsmart.com/bearsBackyard/)

Interested in learning about the bears in your backyard? Join Julie Hopkins, Wildlife Biologist with the Grizzly Bear Outreach Project and Jason Capelli from the Washington Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, for an engaging presentation on co-existing with Washington's Bears.

September's topic: Living Safely with Black Bears

Time and place: 7:00 p.m. on Thursday September 10th at Blakely Hall

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