

Revelstoke Bear Aware



Revelstoke Bear Aware Program 2006

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Summary Information

Located snugly between the Selkirk and Monashee Mountains, Revelstoke is a meeting place in more ways than one. Five valleys join here-the Columbia River Valley, the Illecillewaet River valley, the Jordan River valley, and the Eagle Pass. The city itself is quite contained on the valley floor, hemmed in by the surrounding peaks and waterways. What is good habitat for people is also prime habitat for bears.

Not only are the surrounding mountain slopes abundant in food and shelter for bears, they are protected for the most part from further settlement or development. Revelstoke sits just below Mount Revelstoke National Park and west of Glacier National Park, both protected areas for bears. Development has been limited to the north, south, and west by geographical constraints. The result is that residents of the community, no matter which part of town they live in, reside in bear country.

Prior to the fencing of the municipal landfill by the regional district, garbage at the dump was a major local bear food source. It was also an attraction for residents and tourists alike, allowing them to view bears in broad daylight. However, the result was a large number of food conditioned grizzly and black bears in the community. These bears, conditioned to the attractants at the landfill, began to make their way into the community.

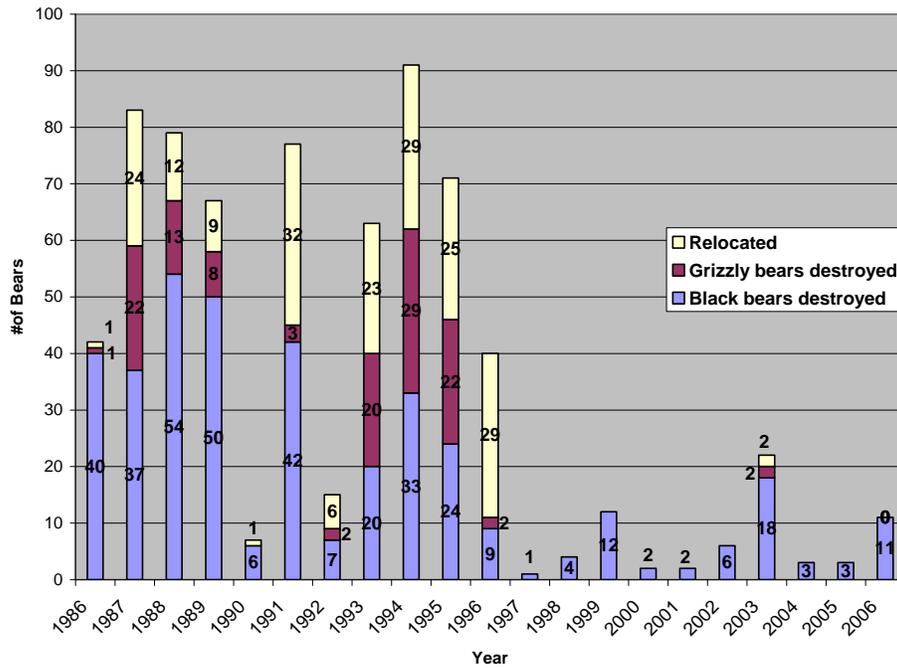
Before 1994, 40 bears were destroyed on average annually within the community.

Without warning to the community, the landfill was fenced in 1994. All the food conditioned bears, deprived of their food source, began searching in town for the garbage to which they had become accustomed. The direct result was the destruction of most of these bears. In 1994, 33 black bears and 29 grizzlies were "managed"; in 1995, 24 black bears and 22 grizzlies had the same fate. This sparked an outcry among the community, even though the management numbers were not that dissimilar compared with previous years (consider 1988, when 54 black bears and 13 grizzlies were managed). The community was frustrated with the ineffectiveness of destroying large numbers of bears.

In response to the outcry, local residents, agencies, organizations, and levels of government created the Bear Management Committee. This committee was created to reduce human/bear conflicts and thus avoid destroyed bears needlessly. From this committee, the Bear Aware education program was born.

The education program is simple: identify human behaviours that attract bears to urban areas and educate to remove the problem. The program has been very successful, and similar programs have sprouted up across the country. In Revelstoke, the average number of bears destroyed annually has been reduced from 27 to 7.

Bear Management in Revelstoke 1986-2006



The residents of Revelstoke have been receiving the Bear Aware message for ten years. They respond to, and respect, the educational components of the message. When a resident has a problem on their property, they are normally fast to correct it once it has been pointed out. For the most part, it is complacency resulting from fewer bear encounters that result in behavioural lapses. Because the Bear Aware program is so successful, residents no longer perceive bears as a problem, resulting in a continued need for the program's existence.

The delivery of the Bear Aware program has been consistent since 1996. In 2003, which was a very bad year for bears across the province, the provincial government ended their funding of the program. Unlike many communities, the program continued in Revelstoke, thanks to the support of local organizations and the persistence of the coordinator and management committee. The continuation of the program is a testament to community support for Bear Aware in Revelstoke. In 2006, the program was once again supported financially by the British Columbia Conservation Foundation.

Like 2003, the year 2006 has been witness to an exceptionally high number of bears sighted in town and coming into conflict. Eleven bears have been destroyed because of conflict within the community. The Conservation Officer Service received over 250 complaint calls in the Revelstoke area.

What worked in 2006:

- Public education of children and adults through local festivals and events such as the farmer's markets
- Door to door visitations, weekly radio interviews and garbage raids resulted in more people complying with Revelstoke's garbage bylaw
- Relationship building with community members such as City Council, Public Works staff, businesses, our ski hill development owners, and the general public.

What didn't work in 2006:

- Our fruit exchange/fruit picking program. Usually we are hindered by a lack of volunteers; this year, however, we had volunteers but no one calling to donate fruit.
- Our garbage bylaw. Though people were complying with the bylaw by keeping their garbage from the curb until pickup day, the garbage was not being stored properly. We had bears breaking into flimsy sheds, going under decks, and rummaging through garages and carports to access poorly stored garbage.
- Responsibility for fruit trees. We had a number of bears destroyed because property owners would not/could not remove fruit from their property.

What was the Problem?

The problem in 2006 was not with the program itself, but with weather, which is beyond our control. Revelstoke experienced a rare hot, dry summer with several late frosts in June. The combination of events resulted in greatly reduced natural food sources, such as berries, throughout the summer. Traditionally, September through November is peak season for bear conflicts in Revelstoke; this year more complaints were received in July and August than in all of 2005.

Garbage storage and fruit tree mismanagement remain the two largest issues for Revelstoke's Bear Aware program.

Program Delivery

Revelstoke Bear Aware 2006 Program Delivery Summary		
Volunteers	Volunteers picked fruit, participated in door to door campaigns, manned the display at public events.	17 individuals volunteered for a total of 230 hours of work.
Door to Door Visits	The coordinator and volunteers conducted door to door visits to pass out brochures and information about bear activity.	104 homes were contacted to date.
Information Displays	The Bear Aware public information display was set up at: Farmers Market (3 times) Kokanee Fish Festival Chickadee Nature Festival CMI Bear Conservation Workshop Revelstoke Volunteer Fair	Approximately 761 contacts were made.
School Programs	The Bear Aware program was delivered to 1 school group. At the Kokanee Fish Festival, classes from all local elementary schools from grades 1-3 received the Bear Aware message.	230 children, teachers, and adults were reached.
Media Presentations	The following media coverage was utilized: 9 newspaper articles, 14 radio interview, 2 newspaper advertisements, 289 brochures were handed out at events 8000 garbage schedule brochures.	A weekly radio show, inclusion in city mail-outs reduced media costs and increased exposure.
Fruit Picking	A fruit exchange was created where fruit tree owners and fruit pickers were connected. 8 volunteers picked fruit for the program.	Not many fruit tree owners took advantage.
Garbage Raids	4 garbage raids completed to date. Southside: 1 st visit 9 cans stickered; 2 nd visit 13 cans stickered. (may be skewed because of garbage day change confusion after long weekend) Columbia Park: 3 cans out (in a formerly high sticker area) Arrow Heights: no cans out!	Compliance with the city bylaw is very high in areas where garbage is not picked up in back alleys. In back alleys, cans are often left at the curb all week long.
Working with City Officials	2005 report presented to city council May 8 Numerous meetings with planning department and Public Works 2 Council members sitting on management committee	Bear proof bins installed in parks; OCP changes to meet Bear Smart criteria; inclusion in OCP for ski hill development; city budget discussions for solid waste mgt and bylaw enforcement.

Was Bear Aware Effective?

The Revelstoke Bear Aware program has been effectively reducing bear/human conflict in the city and surrounding area for 10 years. Though a large number of bears were destroyed in 2006 compared to previous years, the program was very effective in keeping that number as low as possible. In 2003, similar dry conditions caused food shortages and 18 bears were destroyed; in 2006 that number has been kept to 11. With over 250 complaints logged in the city, it is a testament to the program that only 11 bears have been destroyed and no human injury has occurred.

More importantly, the Bear Aware program is responsible for a fundamental shift in this community's attitude toward bear/human conflicts. This is particularly manifest in the municipal government and their efforts in 2006.

The people of Revelstoke no longer accept bears being destroyed because of individual irresponsibility. The majority of residents know what attracts bears into our community and are willing to change their own actions. Fruit trees are slowly coming down and being managed properly. Garbage is not being placed at the curb before the day of pickup in most areas.

However, the number of bear conflicts and bear complaints in 2006 clearly shows that the community still has major attractant issues, mainly fruit and garbage related. The program has been effective in educating the public about our current bylaws, bear behaviour, and tolerance, but problems still exist.

Funding received in 2006 allowed Bear Aware to attend the Kokanee Fish Festival and Chickadee Nature Festival. At these events, the coordinator used the display and Bear Aware games to spread the Bear Aware message to approximately 200 children, teachers, and parents. Portions of funding received were also used to purchase a new ecology game, replica grizzly skull, bear claws, track imprints, and scat replicas. These new additions to the display were very well received by the public and were very useful educational tools, particularly at these two events.

The city has included Bear Aware in the review of all Official Community Plan documents. As a result, Bear Aware has influenced the writing of an OCP amendment for the proposed ski hill development to ensure all solid waste management systems will be bear proof. Bear Aware has developed a strong relationship with city staff and councillors and is consulted on a regular basis.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of 2006 is the recommendation by the Public Works committee to hire a seasonal bylaw enforcement officer. Signage will be placed throughout the city, at the city's expense, to remind residents of attractant problems. The Public Works committee and city staff are also beginning a bylaw review process to address garbage storage problems and fruit tree issues. As

well, Public Works is now pricing options to update the solid waste management system to match the bear proofing requirements of new developments in all other parts of the city. This process has been 10 years in the making, and is finally coming to fruition.

Financial Contributions

The British Columbia Conservation Foundation provided funding for the coordinator's training and salary from May 15 to October 27, 2006, for which the Revelstoke Bear Aware Society would like to express its sincere gratitude.

The Columbia Basin Trust Community Initiatives program provided \$7500 toward the Bear Aware program in 2006.

The Columbia Basin Trust Environmental Initiatives program provided \$3000 in funding for updating our display and attending two local festivals.

The TD Friends of the Environment Foundation provided \$1600 for schoolyard cleanup projects in Revelstoke.

Acknowledgements

The Revelstoke Bear Aware Society and Coordinator would like to express gratitude to the following individuals and organizations:

Program Funding and In-Kind Support

- BC Conservation Foundation
- Canadian Mountain Holidays
- City of Revelstoke
- Columbia Basin Trust
- Columbia Shuswap Regional District
- Downie Street Sawmill
- Parks Canada
- Revelstoke Times Review
- Selkirk Tangiers Helicopter Skiing
- EZ Rock Radio

Volunteers and Community Contributions

- Local volunteers Melissa Andrews, James Shaw, Joel King, Julie McKay, Michelle Reid, Ingrid Boaz, Pete R., and Michael Morris;
- Revelstoke Bear Aware Society members Loni Parker, Jackie Morris, Brian Gadbois, Susan Hall, Adam Christie, Peter Stent, Marcia Woods, Nelli Richardson, Russ Gibbs.
- Our city council representatives Russ Gibbs and Nelli Richardson for promoting our program and initiating progress with the city;
- Conservation Officer Adam Christie and the local RCMP;

- Concerned citizens for their input, ideas, calls and emails of support and reports of bear movements;
- Mt. Begbie, Arrow Heights, Mountain View and Columbia Park Elementary Schools;
- Hap Stelling, Tim Luini, Bryant Yeomans, Ron Tisdale, Debbie Williams, Public Works and city staff for their support, help and input;
- Community Connections, Visitor Info centre staff, Welcome Wagon, RE/MAX Realty, and the Revelstoke English Language School for participation and helping to spread the word;
- The BC Conservation Foundation for its continued efforts and support of Bear Aware programs throughout the province;
- Previous Bear Aware Coordinators in Revelstoke: Karen Bennett, Debby Robinson, Francis Maltby, Paula Couturier, Todd Arthurs, and Steve Kent;
- Current Bear Aware program specialists throughout BC for your ideas, support, hard work, and laughter throughout the year;
- Jacques Drisdelle and Barb Waters for your continuing help and support;
- The Revelstoke Bear Aware Society for your tireless efforts in sustaining our community's program and the direction with which you have provided me.

Volunteers

Our 2006 local volunteers included Melissa Andrews, James Shaw, Joel King, Julie McKay, Michelle Reid, Ingrid Boaz, Pete R., and Michael Morris.

The volunteer members of the Revelstoke Bear Aware Society include: Loni Parker, Jackie Morris, Brian Gadbois, Susan Hall, Adam Christie, Peter Stent, Marcia Woods, Nelli Richardson, Russ Gibbs.

The volunteers mentioned in the first paragraph participated in door to door activities and the fruit picking exchange. Michael Morris also helped with our display at the local Volunteer Fair. These volunteers contributed approximately 170 hours of volunteer time to the program. This is an estimate, as some of them did not accurately record the amount of time they spent picking fruit.

The volunteer members of the Bear Aware Society contributed approximately 100 hours of volunteer time in total.

We have a group of small but dedicated volunteers in Revelstoke that keeps our program functioning. Without the persistence of our committee members, the program would not exist.

Recruiting volunteers is a perennial problem in our community, like many others. We are fortunate to have received such wonderful help in 2006.

Common Issues and Obstacles

Garbage, garbage, garbage. Not just garbage at the curb, but garbage in dumpsters, garbage in carports, garbage in alleys, and garbage in locked sheds. Wherever there was garbage in Revelstoke, it seems there was a bear to sniff it out.

Traditionally in Revelstoke we have several problem areas at different times of year. In 2006, we bucked the trends that have been developing and evenly distributed our bear conflicts throughout the community. From downtown to the suburbs, no one area was immune.

Bears were accessing garbage in carports, in yards, and in sheds. Bears tore apart small sheds, bent large metal garage doors, crawled under trailers, and tore apart decks to get garbage. Steady reports came throughout the summer and fall of bears going to great lengths to access this attractant.

In a bad year, it seems that current bylaws aren't enough. Garbage raids found very few residents were placing garbage at the curb early; bears weren't accessing garbage on garbage day, but all week long. Garbage storage arose as the true obstacle facing most homeowners. Not only that, a rotating garbage schedule thoroughly confuses many residents and is an unnecessary complication.

Many people just don't have space to store their garbage inside a secure building on their property. There are several large trailer parks in Revelstoke where garbage storage is a huge issue. Cans sit outside doors and in yards because residents have no place for storage. In the downtown area, many residents don't even move their garbage cans from the alleyway; they just carry their garbage bags out as they fill up.

In the past, residents have been reluctant to discuss changing solid waste management. Many believe they have the "right" to curbside pickup because they pay taxes. In 2006, this attitude changed. In the hot summer, people don't want smelly garbage around. They don't want to have to figure out when garbage day is (we have a rotating schedule that changes one day forward each holiday). Most importantly, they don't want bears destroying their property to get at their garbage. We are witnessing a change in attitude. The demand for bear proof solid waste management is increasing, and the city is responding.

As stated in the effectiveness section, the city of Revelstoke is reviewing its current waste management system to identify problem areas. The city is making financial commitments to achieve the last of the Bear Smart criteria remaining-bear proof solid waste systems. Public Works is also currently discussing bylaw changes or introductions to ensure garbage is securely stored. These breakthroughs are a welcome change in our community, and we are eagerly anticipating a better year in 2007.

The other main attractant in Revelstoke is fruit. Fruit is everywhere. There are numerous fruit trees located on property in every neighbourhood. Trees range from small, well managed fruit producers to 30 ft tall cherry and plum trees that are used for shade. Several yards have more than 20 different trees.

Fruit tree management is the problem. In many areas where these trees are concentrated, residents are aging and are not able to maintain the trees properly. Subsequently, trees become overgrown and the residents cannot pick all the fruit on their own. Younger residents do not see the value of the trees as a food source (they are not as apt to grow fruit for canning or cooking) and neglect the trees.

This year, as in the past, Bear Aware operated a fruit picking and exchange program. Previously, more fruit existed than volunteers to pick; this year, we had more volunteers picking but less residents calling in with fruit donations. The program was modestly successful, as in previous years, but does not even begin to address the problem.

The other problem that arises with fruit as an attractant is the common attitude toward bears and fruit. Fruit is seen as a good food for bears by many people, and they don't have a problem with the bear eating fruit in their yard. This attitude is a very large obstacle and I have found it very frustrating.

The alternate route I have taken to address this issue is through municipal bylaws. Our Conservation Officer simply does not have the time to complete all the necessary work to utilize the Wildlife Protection Act; he has repeatedly requested that the city create a bylaw (which he will gladly enforce) regarding cleanup and maintenance of fruit trees.

One of the good things that have arisen out of so many bears being destroyed in 2006 is the continued attention and support of City Council and staff. The city has promised to review and strengthen existing bylaws and draft new ones if necessary, to reduce attractants in our community. I will continue to work to ensure that fruit trees are included in this draft.

Media

The Revelstoke Bear Aware program received a large amount of media attention this summer, due to the increase in conflicts.

Radio Interviews

The local radio station provided an ongoing weekly spot every Tuesday morning dedicated to Bear Aware issues. Each week the focus changed, discussing current problem areas, bear locations, and what residents needed to do to avoid conflict. The sessions were very successful and I received large amounts of positive feedback.

Newspaper Articles

As in 2005, the Revelstoke Times Review donated space for a Bear Aware article each month (see appendix). In addition, several local residents wrote letters to the editor concerning bear issues. I was also interviewed by the paper for an article written by the editor.

Website

Revelstoke Bear Aware has its own website, which was launched in December 2005. It was maintained throughout the summer and enjoyed steady traffic. Additional information concerning grizzly bear biology was added in 2006. In 2007, a major update of information will occur.

The future of the Bear Aware Program in Revelstoke

The future continues to look bright for the Revelstoke Bear Aware program. Public support for the program is high; more importantly, we have made significant inroads with the municipality in dealing with attractants.

In November 2006, the Public Works committee struck a committee to look at redrafting and drafting new bylaws to address our two major attractants, garbage and fruit. This same committee is currently pricing different bear proofing options for solid waste management. In 2007, the city will pilot centralized bear proof bins in several areas of the community.

With the above changes, Revelstoke will be ready to complete its Bear Smart application. This accomplishment will be the culmination of 10 years of hard work, sweat, and tears by Bear Aware coordinators and volunteers, and bodes well for the continuation of the program for years to come.

In 2007, the program will work to secure long term funding, achieve Bear Smart status, and further reduce bear/human conflict within the community of Revelstoke.

Recommendations for 2007

I would like to make the following recommendations for the upcoming year:

- That the city discontinue the rotating garbage schedule and move to a set day per area schedule to lessen confusion.
- That the city fund a pilot bear proof central bin system for the 2007 season with the option of increasing the number of bins in following years; the city and Bear Aware will consult as to where the bin shall be placed;
- That the city complete a solid waste management strategy document outlining their plans and target dates to achieve a bear-proof solid waste management system;
- That the Bear Aware coordinator continue to foster a good relationship with the ski hill development team and work to make the development wildlife-proof in terms of solid waste, recycling, and other bear attractants;
- That the management committee, the city of Revelstoke staff, and local gardeners/fruit growers discuss management options for the fruit tree attraction problem;
- That, provided the city has a solid waste management document prepared, Revelstoke will apply for Bear Smart status;
- That the Management committee, the city, and the coordinator continue to lobby the provincial government for long term program funding;
- That the Ministry of Environment provide, as an incentive/reward for completing Bear Smart requirements, funding in perpetuity for the Bear Aware education program in our community;
- That our garbage bylaw/unsightly premises bylaw be changed to include secure garbage storage between pickup times, as this was the greatest attractant for bears in our community in 2006.
- That the municipality hire a bylaw enforcement officer in 2007 to address compliance within the community.

Appendix

Newspaper Articles

The Bears Are Awake!

Where are the bears? Why, they are awake! They roam the forests and open fields in search of tender spring delicacies after a long winter's rest. I have received four bear sighting calls in the last week as the bears begin another season in the sunshine.

Our furry city symbols have enjoyed a good winter, by all reports. Certainly the sow and two cubs I spotted on Highway 23 North looked healthy. Let's keep them that way!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the many people and organizations that have kept the Bear Aware program vibrantly alive in our community. Without your dedication of time, funds, and enthusiasm, the program would not be entering its 10th year. Thank you!

As we do our spring cleaning, don't forget to knock the cobwebs from the corners of our brains. It is time once again to remember the simple Bear Aware message. A few simple actions on your part will keep our neighbourhoods and backyards safe for children and pets. Please remember to:

- Keep your garbage and garbage cans stored securely inside until the morning of pickup. Your carport or deck is not a secure location and is the last place you want to run into a bear!
- Prune your fruit trees to keep extra fruit to a minimum. If you don't eat the fruit, consider picking off the blossoms, using a dormant spray, or removing the tree. If you know you'll have extra fruit, call and sign up for our free fruit picking program.
- Keep your barbeques and bird feeders clean.
- Keep your compost turned over and odor free. An occasional sprinkling of lime will help reduce odours.
- Ensure that pet and livestock feed are secured at night. As well, ensure that your pets and livestock are safe and secure!

Are you new to town? Do you have questions about bears, bear proofing, local bylaws, or the Bear Aware program? Have you seen a bear? Please call 837-5507, email beaware@telus.net, or visit our wonderful website at www.revelstokebearaware.org.

Hike and bike safety in bear country

Since the spring thaw began, I have heard many stories about bear encounters from hikers, walkers, bikers, and campers recreating in the forests and trails around Revelstoke. This year, though we have had few bears reported within town, an unusual number of bears have been sighted by people enjoying the outdoors.

There are no hard and fast reasons why more people are seeing bears this year. While speculation is fun, it doesn't change the fact that we live and play in bear country and must know how to respond to bears if we encounter them.

Bears have been seen at Mt. MacPherson, Mt. Mackenzie, Mt. Revelstoke, along the Illecillewaet, near the greenbelt, along Airport Way, and basically everywhere else! It is spring, the bears are roaming about looking for food, mates, and all the good things life can bring. It is essential that you know how these bears behave, why they do the things they do, and how you should behave if you encounter them. At this particular time of year, mating couples and females with cubs are particularly dangerous to surprise.

Here are some brief tips for walkers, hikers, and cyclists for personal safety:

- Make noise and travel in groups. Sing, clap, and talk your way along. It is especially important for cyclists to make noise, as you are traveling much faster and are more apt to startle a bear.
- Learn to recognize bear signs: poop on the trail, scratches on a tree, or tracks. Avoid areas with this signs.
- Bears are more active in the early morning and late evening. If you can, avoid entering bear habitat during those times.
- If you see a bear and it doesn't see you, leave the area the way you came, slowly and quietly. If the bear sees you, talk to it in a low voice to let the bear identify you.
- If a bear does not run away from you, slowly back away. If the bear charges, stand your ground and DO NOT RUN. Do not climb a tree.
- Keep young children and pets at your side at all times. Do not allow your dogs to roam off leash.
- If you are in bear country often, carry a bear deterrent such as bear spray.

If you have concerns about bears, I strongly urge you to watch the video "Staying Safe in Bear Country". It is an excellent resource.

It is important that we inform ourselves as much as possible about bears and their behaviour. For more information about bears, visit our website at www.revelstokebearaware.org. If you see a bear or have a bear encounter, please call 1-877-952 RAPP. If you would like more information about bear behaviour or bear safety, please call 837-5507 or email beaware@telus.net. Stay Safe!

Are you a safety hazard?

Revelstoke in the summer is one of the most beautiful places I have ever seen. Glistening mountain peaks, cool streams, quiet streets, and friendly people. Is it any wonder so many new people are moving here? They are just discovering what you knew all along.

Residents of Revelstoke, you know we live in bear country. "Bear Country" does not mean the woods and mountains outside of town, the national parks, or elsewhere, but our backyards. Bears live here, and they did so long before we arrived, and will hopefully continue to do so for a long time. When they pass through, however, it is vital that they do not sit down to a meal because chances are they will not leave.

This is a friendly reminder, like the stickers on your garbage cans and brochures at your front door, that living here comes with responsibility. Bears are unpredictable and dangerous wild animals. It is illegal under the provincial Wildlife Act to feed this bears either deliberately or by neglect. It is also illegal, under city bylaws, to place your garbage cans at the curb before 7 am on the day of pickup.

How do these laws apply to you? It means that if you provide food to a bear, whether it is garbage, fruit, compost, or dog food you are breaking the law. However, my greater concern is that you are creating a huge public safety risk for yourself, your family, and your neighbours.

Are you a safety hazard? Are you inviting wild animals into your yard, either intentionally or by neglecting to clean up your attractants? If so, I ask you to think carefully about what you are doing. If you allow a bear to eat your garbage or your apples, you are creating a dangerous situation that is entirely preventable. How would you feel if that same bear, protecting its food source, injured your family pet? Your child? Your neighbour's child? Would you be able to carry the burden of responsibility for your actions?

I ask these questions because I know many residents enjoy seeing bears on their property. You think it's fine if a bear eats the fruit that you don't really want anyway. I am asking you to think beyond this, however, and look at the possible repercussions of your actions. No matter how calm and tame a bear may seem, you never know how it could react. We do not need a tragedy in our community.

For more information about removing bear attractants from your yard, visit our website at www.revelstokebearaware.org. If you see a bear or have a bear encounter, please call 1-877-952 RAPP. You can reach Abby at 837-5507 or email beaware@telus.net.

Autumn Bear Safety Tips

Autumn is upon us once again, and the bears are as well. There are bears living and feeding in all areas of our community at all hours of the day. Do you know what to do if you come across a bear?

Bear safety is a serious issue. We live and work in bear country and must be knowledgeable about bear behaviour in order to protect ourselves and our families.

Bears are dangerous wild animals. They have a personal space around them that they will defend, particularly if they are near a food source or if they have cubs. Each bear's personal space and tolerance of humans is different. How can you tell if you're too close? Bears get stressed when you get too close, and they show it by making huffing noises, popping their teeth, swatting the ground, salivating, and bluff charging. These are defensive behaviours. Back slowly away, talk in a normal voice. Do not yell, or stare the bear down, as the bear will see this as an increasing threat. If a bear acting in this way attacks, you should lie face down on the ground, lace your hands behind your head, and stay completely still. If you are not threatening, the bear should leave you alone.

Bears that approach you directly, follow you, have no fear, and are making no noise are aggressive bears. They may think you are potential food, so you must convince them otherwise. Stand your ground. Make yourself as large as possible. Tell the bear to get away. Yell, make noises, and shake a stick. If you have a deterrent such as bear spray, get it ready. If this kind of attack occurs, fight back.

These guidelines are the same for grizzly and black bears. The bear's behaviour, not its species, should be the determining factor for how you respond. If you want to minimize your chance of an encounter, do not use wooded trails or travel through bushy areas, particularly in the morning and evening. Make noise such as talking or singing as you travel. If you ride a bicycle, ride slowly and make noise in wooded areas, even while on a road. Stick a hockey card in your spokes!

Be safe at your home. Bears are entering carports, garages, and sheds to reach garbage. If you have anything smelly to put in your garbage, stick it in a Ziplock and put it in the freezer until garbage day. Keep your garbage inside, pick your fruit, and do not put food in your compost until after the bears go into their dens. Remember that it is a punishable offence to feed bears and you can be fined under the Wildlife Act. Our increased vigilance at this time of year makes the difference between a living bear and a dead one.

The city of Revelstoke is pursuing Bear Smart status. We have met all of the criteria except one-updating our solid waste management system (garbage) to

become bear-proof. If you are concerned about wildlife accessing garbage in your neighbourhood and would like to see change, I encourage you to write to Bear Aware and city council. Updating our garbage system does not necessarily mean moving to a centralized bin system; there are many unique and creative ways we could keep wildlife out of our garbage. Let us know what you think!

Bear Aware would like to take this opportunity to thank the many volunteers that make this program possible. Loni Parker, Jackie Morris, Adam Christie, Brian Gadbois, Susan Hall, Marcia Woods, our city council representatives Nelli Richardson and Russ Gibbs, and our many fruit exchange volunteers. You have made our community a safer place for both people and bears, and made Revelstoke a shining example of cooperation and innovation in action.

To contact Bear Aware, call 837-5507 or email beaware@telus.net. For more information, come visit our new display at the Kokanee Fish Festival this Friday and Saturday!