

BEAR SMART

Crested Butte Area Residents' & Visitors' Guide

People and Bears Can Live Together

It's our personal responsibility!

The Communities of Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte lie in the heart of bear territory. As communities continue to develop and encroach on wildlife habitat, the need for us to protect our bears increases. Whether you're hiking a backcountry trail or strolling through the neighborhood, you may encounter a bear. Bears may be active from mid-March to November. Their constant search for new food sources may draw them into urban areas and into your backyard. People and bears can live in harmony. Communities can be *porous* to bear activity, so that bears can pass through, but are not tempted to stop and get into trouble with people and their non-natural attractants.

Be 'bear smart' and follow these few, simple guidelines to ensure any encounters with bears are positive and free from conflict.

Bear Safety at Home

Respect bears! If you see a bear in a residential area: Act responsibly!

Remain Calm: Never approach a bear for any reason.

Keep Well Away: Do not crowd the bear – give it plenty of space. Warn others to be respectful; bring small children and pets in the house.

Let the bear know it is not welcome in your backyard: Do not allow the bear to feel comfortable.

Make lots of noise and make your presence known to let the bear know it is in human territory.

Ensure the bear has a safe avenue of escape/exit. After the bear has left the area, remove any non-natural foods that attracted the bear.

When to call for help: If the bear appears to be threatening human safety, pets or destroying property – call the police 641-8000. Local authorities use non-lethal alternatives (see next page) as much as possible.

Managing Backyard Attractants: Bears are often attracted to residential neighborhoods by food odors. Once a bear has located a good food source, it has the ability to remember that location and return. This can initiate a process of conditioning. Bears in pursuit of an easy meal may damage property, or in rare cases, cause injury to people. It is important for everyone living in bear country to follow precautions. Encourage your neighbors to participate, as well. Wildlife managers called to deal with 'problem' bears may try using non-lethal tactics or relocating the bear. If these methods fail, however, the bear is usually destroyed. You can prevent the unnecessary destruction of bears by following these simple guidelines:

- **Dispose of garbage properly:** Dispose of household garbage in bear proof containers or store garbage indoors until it can be properly disposed of. Put trash out only on the day of pickup and store cans promptly thereafter. Fines will be assessed for noncompliance of proper trash storage and disposal in Crested Butte and Mt.. Crested Butte.
- **Bear-proof your property:**
- Keep doors and windows closed and locked. Food smells can lure hungry bears inside your home. Do not store food of any kind outside, even if it is inside a locked refrigerator or freezer. Don't leave trash, groceries, food, animal feed, coolers, or any odorous item in your vehicle. Bears can easily pry open car/truck windows and doors to access.
- Hang bird feeders so they are not accessible to bears. Bring them in at night.
- If you don't want bears in your yard, it's best not to have any bushes or gardens on your property.
- Harvest fruits and vegetables as they ripen. Remove fallen fruit or berries from the ground. Keep your lawn mowed and free of weeds, especially dandelions and clover.
- Burn your barbeques clean immediately after use, wash and store them covered out of the wind – preferably indoors.
- Feed your pets inside and store their food inside. Don't leave dog bones lying around your yard.
- Keep your compost clean.

The best way to avoid conflict is to prevent it!

The Towns of Crested Butte and Mt. Crested Butte require both commercial and residential use of bear proof containers. Residential cans can be purchased through Crested Butte True Value at 349-5305.

For commercial containers contact Waste Management at 641-1032.

Become a Bear Smart resident or visitor:

Proper management of garbage and other non-natural attractants is key to reducing human-bear conflict situations.

We want YOU to be part of the solution.

Please do your part to help!

Non-lethal Bear Management

Non-lethal Bear Management uses negative conditioning to modify undesirable bear behavior without destroying the animal. By using an arsenal of rubber bullets, pyrotechnics and pepper spray, bears are taught to stay away from people and non-natural food sources.

This approach requires a new way of thinking for humans. Using human dominance, and demonstrating a body posture and vocalizations that speak the language of the bear, officers command the bear's respect and re-instill its natural wariness for humans. By using a variety of non-lethal tools combined with aggressive 'alpha' male posturing, officers can send bears a clear message of who's boss.

When a human-bear conflict situation arises, non-lethal tactics provide an effective management tool. It must be stressed that negative conditioning should aid, but not be a substitute for preventive measures that eliminate or reduce the potential for human-bear conflicts.

We must all do our part, so that people and bears can live in harmony!

What should I do if I see a bear?

Stop and Assess:

Remain calm. Never approach a bear for any reason.

Back Away

Back away slowly facing the bear. Never run. Running can invoke chase. Be predictable. Don't surprise a bear.

If a Bear Approaches...

Don't Panic!!!! Speak firmly and wave arms or a stick above your head to make your presence bigger.

If a black bear becomes persistent, stand your ground and prepare to use your deterrent. Do not play dead. Seek the safety of a secure building or car, if possible. The bear may bluff charge. If a black bear attacks, fight back with any weapon you can find including stones and branches