

Public Safety

BEARS

Cordillera is prime bear habitat for black bears. Residents should not be surprised to find bears roaming the woods near their homes. Preventing problems with bears is a community effort. In 2001, Cordillera adopted a Resolution aimed at preventing human- bear interaction. Thanks to great community support the program has been very successful.

Cordillera, and Colorado, are home only to black bears. There have been no grizzly bear sightings in Colorado for decades. Black Bears may be observed in a variety of color variations, ranging from black and brown to sometimes cinnamon or even blond. Bears typically come out of hibernation at the beginning of May, although warmer temperatures may prompt them to wander about sooner. Bears are omnivore, which means they eat meat, vegetation and garbage. A large percent of a bear's diet is vegetation and bugs. Bears have an incredible sense of smell. It is said that they can smell a teaspoon of peanut butter five miles away. Bears can smell better than dogs and have no problem detecting what is in your home or vehicle.

Black bears can be very persistent in their pursuit of food, which leads to their interactions with people. Black bears will go to great effort just to get to humming bird feeders. A bear walking thru the woods near your home should not be a concern. A bear sniffing around your home, hot tub or garage should be discouraged.

Black bears normally avoid humans, although they are not afraid of people. Loud noises, such as banging pots, music or air horns, will often scare away a bear. Public Safety uses air horns and rubber buckshot.

In strange circumstances bears stand up and make a huffing noise, an action people interpret as aggressive behavior. In reality, the bear is trying to get a better look and smell. If you see a bear in the wild try not to surprise it and *do not* get in between a bear and its cubs.

If a bear gets into your house, leave it room to escape. Bears often leave the same way they entered. Many people have wondered why the bear will not leave the house when they are standing in the doorway – the bear's only way out!

People ask about using pepper spray on bears. While pepper spray can be a good tool to use against bears it can be equally or more effective against the person using it. Pepper spray is an irritant of mucus membranes, such as in eyes, nose, throat or lungs. People with respiratory conditions should not use pepper spray.

If you decide to use pepper spray it is not recommended for indoor use. For outdoor use, check the wind prior to using pepper spray. Make sure you do not spray into the wind as the pepper spray will come back at your face. Aim the pepper spray directly at the bear's face as it is most effective on moist areas such as the nose, lungs and eyes. After using the pepper spray, wash your hands and do not touch your face – even if you think your hands are clean! Pepper spray cannot be used to coat items, such as a BBQ grill, as a deterrent wildlife. When pepper spray dries it is pepper and bears enjoy the taste.

Cordillera prohibits the feeding of wildlife, both intentionally and unintentionally. It is each person's responsibility to take whatever steps necessary to keep the bears, and other wildlife, away from food. It is said "Garbage Kills Bears" because bears easily become accustomed to eating human garbage. Once this habit is formed it is difficult to break. Black bears, who are especially persistent in their quest for food, will then look to garages and homes for food! When bears develop bad habits, the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife becomes involved. Bears that enter homes will be relocated or destroyed. There is little information on the success of relocation and it is thought that it does not work well for young bears. Bear cubs that learn bad habits from their mothers will not be relocated. Cordillera works hard to prevent the bears from being relocated or being destroyed.

The feeding of pets and wildlife outdoors is prohibited, especially in the spring, summer and fall. THIS INCLUDES BIRD AND HUMMINGBIRD FEEDERS! Black bears will go to great efforts to get to bird feeders!

Trash and garbage must be stored inside of garages or bear proof containers when not at the street for pick-up. A bear proof container is a solid metal container that would prohibit a bear from accessing the garbage inside. Containers at the street for pick-up must be approved bear resistant containers, with the lids closed and secured. The CPOA, as part of the community trash program, supplies all property owners with one 90 gallon bear resistant containers. Containers may only be at the street from 7 am to 7 pm the day of pick-up.

Property owners are encouraged to keep garage doors closed and garbage in closed plastic bags. CPOA operates Community Dumpsters for property owners who have especially smelly trash or who must leave before trash day.

Report problem bears to Public Safety who will respond and use techniques approved by the Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife to try and scare the bear back into the woods.

Below is a list of guidelines and precautions:

- Keep exterior doors and garage doors closed and locked, especially if you store any type of food (pet food) in the garage. If you store pet food in the garage consider keeping it in plastic bags.
- Deadbolt exterior doors, especially if your house has lever style door handles. Bears are agile and smart and on many occasions have walked into homes using the lever style door locks.
- Keep lower level windows closed, especially while cooking or baking.
- Do not feed pets outdoors. Water bowls are acceptable.
- Bird feeders are prohibited. Bears will expend great effort to reach bird feeders and hummingbird feeders.
- Keep BBQ grills as clean as possible. If you start to have problems hang rags soaked in strong smelling detergents, or filled with moth balls to discourage wildlife.
- Garbage can only be at the curb between 7 am and 7 pm. Bears tend to feed at dusk and dawn. This keeps the trash locked up when the bears are most active. *This is perhaps the single most effective step in preventing bear problems.*
- Garbage at the curb must be inside of bear resistant or bear proof containers, with the lids completely closed and secured. Trash cans not kept in garages or similar approved structures must be kept in a bear proof container. A bear proof container is all steel. Contact Vail Honeywagon (476-3511) to arrange for repairs to trash containers.
- Community dumpsters are available behind the Maintenance Facilities on Carterville Road for owners who can not make the Tuesday trash pickup or that need to dispose of particularly odiferous trash!
- Do not store food or garbage inside of vehicles as bears will force their way into vehicles to get food.
- Food trash cannot go into dumpsters unless they are bear proof! Construction sites are required to have bear proof containers.