

What to do when a bear is 'stuck' in the neighborhood

By Cheryl Millham

I guess you all wondered when I would be talking about bears. OK. It's time.



I got a call last week. It sounded like a young woman who told me a bear was “stuck” in a tree. I found out that the bear weighed about 150 to 200 pounds. Well, first of all, bears **do not** get stuck in trees. They are not even taken out of their birthing den until they learn to climb a tree.

So, I told her that the bear must be eating someone's garbage, or it wouldn't be around. She laughed and said the bear “had” been eating her garbage for about two months. Isn't it interesting that she had been feeding the bear for two months out of her garbage can. No wonder the bear stayed by her house.

Maybe you should put yourself in the bear's place. Think about it. A bear looks at a garbage can as a bear dish. We humans are so nice by putting a big food bowl out – just for them. Not only that, but we do it once a week and it can be from everyone on your block.



A bear feasts on items found

in an outdoor
food locker.
Photo/LTWC

So, one of the first things we all need to do is to secure our garbage by using either a bear proof garbage can, or keep in it your garage and only take it to the curb when you hear the refuse truck approaching. Ours arrives at 5:30am, but we hear it about 15 to 20 minutes before it reaches our house.

Also, bears have learned how to open most car doors. Bears can smell even an old French fry that has fallen between the seats. And, yes, I have had a bear open my car door, as well as my sliding glass door to my house.

Now, when we can't keep our car in the garage, I first make sure there is no food – new or old – in the car and make sure the car is locked. So, when the bear(s) try to open the door, he/she can't. Lots of times, we will see bear pawprints on our car door and window, but, at least, they do not get in the car.

Should you ever need any personal assistance, we are happy to help out. Just give us a call at (530) 577.2273. Or, you can also call the BEAR League, which we are members (530.525.7297). More about bears later this spring/summer.

Cheryl Millham is executive director of Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care on the outskirts of South Lake Tahoe.