

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Division of Fish, Wildlife & Marine Resources

Bureau of Wildlife, Region 3

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Joe Martens
Commissioner

Re: Nuisance Bears

Dear Business Proprietor or Manager:

As you probably know, there have been several bears frequenting Phoenicia area businesses, yards and streets at all times of the day and night recently. The bears are in search of easy food sources such as garbage and bird feeders. Allowing them to access these food sources keeps them coming back and often causes them to lose their natural fear of humans. When bears get used to human-based food sources and lose their natural fear of people, a situation is created that could endanger those who may unintentionally get too close to wandering bears. The best method of putting an end to this problem is to eliminate those food sources that are attracting the bears. Note that continuing to allow bears to access food sources, even unintentionally, not only causes a safety issue for humans but is also a violation of part 187 of New York Codes, Rules and Regulations, subject to a fine of up to 250 dollars and/or 15 days in jail. Our staff prefers to solve bear problems without issuing tickets and without interfering with the natural lives of the bears; however, we must also maintain a safe environment for area residents. Besides endangering people, continuing to allow bears to access these food sources often brings about the early death of the bears because they are much more likely to be hit by a motor vehicle, be killed by the authorities for entering buildings or for becoming aggressive, or because they are moved to an area unfamiliar to them where they will typically travel, subjecting them to hazards from motor vehicles, hunters, other bears, and so on.

You are in the best position to help by doing your best to be sure that you, and your neighbors, eliminate all access to those things that attract bears. If you have a dumpster, please make sure that the lids are always closed and latched. Never allow trash to remain outside of the dumpsters and keep the surrounding area as clean as possible. Have your waste management company pick up as often as necessary to keep dumpsters from becoming too full to be closed and latched and ask them to provide latchable, metal lids if possible. After taking these steps, use loud noise to frighten bears and keep them uncomfortable around humans. Always make sure that you are a safe distance from bears and in a spot where you can back away to safety if the bear approaches or acts aggressively. Don't allow patrons to get close to bears or gather in a way that may make bears feel that they are being prevented from escape. Bears have been known to knock people down that were blocking their perceived escape route.

I have heard rumors that some business owners prefer the presence of bears as a means to entertain and attract customers; please do not be lured into thinking this way as it is increasing the chances of something disastrous happening to either the people or the bear(s).

In an emergency involving a bear, such as a bear attacking someone or breaking into a home, call your local police department. For other questions or concerns, including any that involve help in bear proofing your business, call our general wildlife line at the number above.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Matthew Merchant
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