

Learning to Live with Bears on Cortes Island

We need to keep our bears WILD to ensure the safety of islanders and bears. Here's what each of us can do to safely coexist and reduce human-wildlife conflict.

1. Never feed bears and secure all bear attractants

In BC, it is an offence to intentionally feed or leave attractants available to bears.

****Garbage is the #1 bear attractant*; thoroughly wash all food / drink containers and packaging before placing in your garbage or recycling.

*Store garbage in a secure location inside; outside in bear resistant container / enclosure.

***Manage your compost properly**; layer equal amounts of green (kitchen scraps / grass clippings) & brown (dried leaves / shredded paper) materials. Do NOT add fish, meats, oils, cooked foods or unrinsed eggshells; this is key to healthy, **odour free composts**.

*Clean BBQ's after every use; burn grills & remove grease traps; remain odour free!!!

2. Do not feed other wildlife

Bird-feeders often become BEAR-feeders; please only feed birds during the winter months. Alternatively, bird baths & native flowering plants will support local birds.

3. Keep yourself safe

If you encounter a bear, DO NOT RUN; back up slowly, speaking in a loud but low voice; give the bear space and do NOT make eye contact.

*When hiking / biking, travel in groups & keep talking to alert bears that you are there.

Proactively carry bear spray (easily accessible, has not expired, know how to use it!).

*If you have a bear in your yard, retreat into your house and observe what is attracting the bear, so it can be immediately removed after the bear has left.

4. Keep your pets safe

*Dogs must be leashed when walked; never walk dogs in areas w/ known bear activity.

***Feed pets in a secure location INSIDE**; keep your yard free of attractants, eg. bones.

*Store pet food in secure location inside; outside in bear resistant container / enclosure.

5. Practice good plant & animal husbandry

*Harvest fruits from trees & bushes daily as they ripen; **do NOT allow windfalls to accumulate on the ground**. Proactively use electric fencing to protect your fruit crops. DILIGENCE around fruit crops is critical to prevent bears from hanging around and next discovering your vegetable garden...

***Use electric fencing to protect livestock** (includes bees) **by day**; proper installation & maintenance is key. By night, ensure livestock are in predator proof shelters.

*Store all livestock feed in secure locations inside; outside in bear resistant container / enclosure and ensure livestock feeding areas are clean & free of attractants.

*After butchering livestock, dispose of carcasses responsibly; buried deeply & well away from residential areas. Consider using electric fencing around food smokers & areas for preparing & curing wild meats.

Guess what... Cortes Island IS black bear country!!!

Report routine bear sightings to FOCI at 250 935 0087 or friendsofcortes@gmail.com;
report bear encounters of concern to the COS at 1 877 952 RAPP (7277).