

Sandy Hook Community Association 2006 Bear Aware Survey

This summer SHCA undertook a bear survey with the following goals:

- To assess if our residents perceive bears as a problem.
- To identify human behaviour which is attracting bears.
- To distribute Wildlife Bear Aware brochures.
- To educate residents about ways to minimise bear attractants.
- To assess feasibility of an unwanted fruit tree removal program.
- Ultimately, to minimise the need to destroy problem bears.

The Provincial Wildlife Service has identified Sandy Hook as a NON-hot spot for bear problems and is concentrating its bear programs elsewhere on the Coast.

The results of the survey confirm this view. There were a large number of bear encounters, but few problems. The average number was 8 per year per household (range 0 to 100) but the average was skewed by the one reporting 100. The median is closer to 4 a year. This includes evidence of feeding, sightings and "close encounters of the turd kind".

Threatening bear behaviour was very rare. Most sightings involved mutual surprise and disorganised retreat of both parties involved.

Only one person admitted to deliberately feeding bears and no one ratted on their neighbours for doing so.

50% of respondents have compost heaps and half of those put kitchen waste in it. 10% do not have secure garbage storage. 10% admit to putting garbage out the night before (and 15% say their neighbours do it !!). Hopefully the education component of the survey will improve these stats.

40% of respondents had fruit trees whose fruit they did not pick. The number of trees ranged from 1 to 6. One respondent has 35 but picked all the fruit. Unfortunately, only 2 were interested in fruit recovery and 3 in tree removal. There was similarly little interest in replacement with ornamental trees at subsidised rates.

SHCA activities which could potentially reduce bear food supply (and therefore bear problems) include:

Newsletter next spring reminding residents about Bear Aware principles:

- Pick all fruit.
- No kitchen waste in compost
- Lock up garbage.
- Put garbage out the morning of pick up.
- Consider removing (or replacing) underutilised fruit trees and berry bushes.

Garbage Patrol: A kindly reminder left on garbage cans left out the night before.