



Photo: Florian Schulz

The Problem

Hundreds of bear-human interactions take place in and around Alberta communities each year. While most of these interactions are harmless to both bears and people, dozens of them turn into conflicts that result in human injury, property damage and/or dead or relocated bears. These human-caused bear mortalities are especially hard on the grizzly bear population, a sensitive and threatened species in Alberta.

Bear-human conflicts, property damage and bear mortalities arise when bears are attracted into developed areas by accessible food sources like garbage, fruit trees, berry bushes, composts and bird feeders. The good news is that with careful planning and a supportive community these attractants can be eliminated.



Photo: Karsten Heuer

BearSmart works towards three goals that benefit both people and bears:

- 1 Reduce the amount of bears relocated and/or destroyed in Alberta each year as a result of bear-human conflicts.
- 2 Reduce the amount of money spent on property damage and “problem” bear management as a result of bear-human conflicts.
- 3 Reduce the risk of human injury as a result of bear-human conflicts.

These goals will continue to be met as more communities agree to bear-proof their facilities and become BearSmart. The more communities, landowners and businesses that manage bear attractants and people according to accepted BearSmart standards, the fewer bears will need to be relocated or destroyed and the fewer people will be injured or killed by bears.

For more information see www.albertabearsmart.ca.

The Alberta BearSmart Community Program is a multi-stakeholder partnership helping human communities and bears coexist in what is left of bear habitat in Alberta.

Founding partners include:



Fish & Wildlife



P.O. Box 8589
Canmore, Alberta T1W 2V4
Tel 403.678.8532
info@albertabearsmart.ca
www.albertabearsmart.ca

Alberta BearSmart Community Program

The smart way to live with bears



Photo: John Marriott

Albertans are proud to share their province with bears. Approximately 40,000 black bears and 700 grizzly bears range across the northern and western parts of Alberta.

An increasing amount of people and human development in bear habitat means there are numerous conflicts between people and bears in Alberta every year. These conflicts result in significant harm to both people and bears. Invariably, bears inflict human injuries and occasionally a death. They also cause thousands of dollars worth of property damage, and municipal, provincial and federal governments spend large sums of money dealing with so-called “problem” animals after conflicts have occurred.

On the other side of the equation, dozens of bears are destroyed or relocated each year. A major source of these “problem” bears are human communities, few of which have developed or implemented bear-human conflict management plans and use bear-proof solid waste management systems.

The Alberta BearSmart Community Program allows communities to coexist with bears. Once implemented, it can save them money, improve public safety, enhance visitor and resident enjoyment, and reduce the number of bears killed or relocated. How? By following these steps.

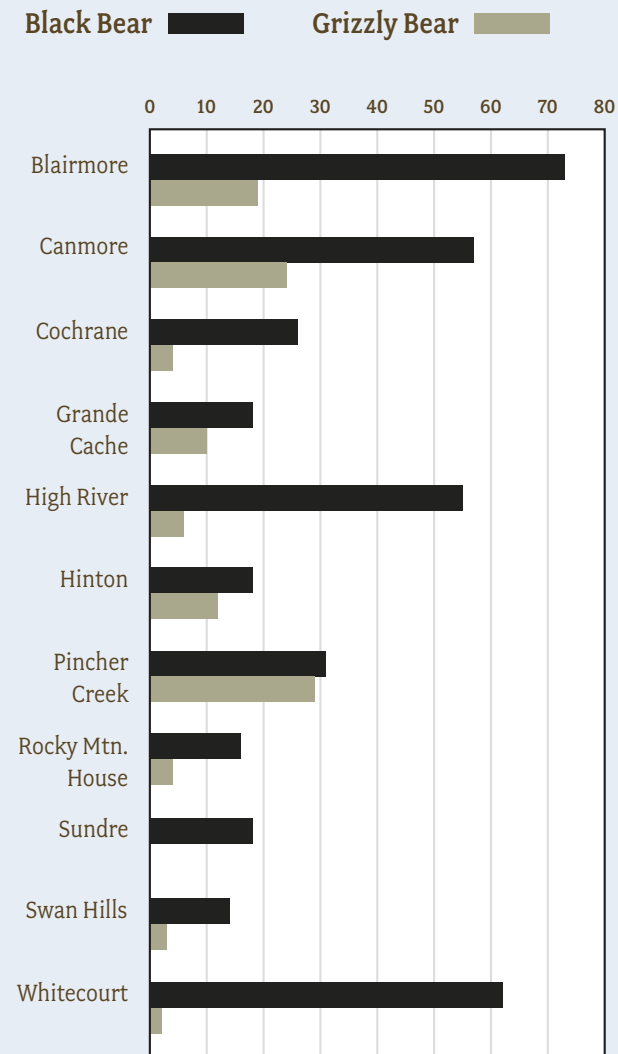


Photo: John Marriott

Alberta BearSmart Community Criteria

- 1 **Prepare a bear hazard assessment of community and surrounding area.** Bear hazard assessments identify high-use bear habitat and all the potential causes of bear-human conflicts, and provide recommendations for how to eliminate them.
- 2 **Convene a community-based BearSmart Stewardship Committee.** A BearSmart Stewardship Committee allows community groups, agencies and stakeholders to develop and implement a bear-human conflict management plan.
- 3 **Prepare a bear-human conflict management plan.** A bear-human conflict management plan includes strategies to eliminate bear attractants and hazards and to reduce the chance of bear-human conflicts in high-use bear habitat.
- 4 **Revise planning and policy documents.** To be effective, these strategies need to become part of all municipal and provincial planning documents.
- 5 **Implement a comprehensive education program.** Residents and visitors need to learn how they can reduce the likelihood and number of bear-human conflicts. Education also increases tolerance for bears.
- 6 **Implement and maintain a bear-proof solid waste management system.** Eliminating bear attractants is the key to bear-proofing your community. A bear-proof solid-waste management system is an essential component of a BearSmart community.
- 7 **Implement and enforce BearSmart bylaws.** Eliminating bear attractants such as bird feeders, fruit trees and backyard compost piles requires BearSmart bylaws and a compliance strategy to make them effective.
- 8 **Monitor human-bear conflicts.** Monitor the number, types and causes of bear-human conflicts in and around your community so you can assess the effectiveness of your strategies and revise them if necessary.

Reported Bear incidents in Alberta (2004)



Communities all over Alberta experience hundreds of bear-human conflicts each year. In 2004 alone, more than 500 incidents were reported to Fish and Wildlife officers, and many more went unreported. The implementation of BearSmart criteria would virtually eliminate bear-human conflicts in these communities, making them safer places for both people and bears.

Done right, BearSmart Community Programs are very effective. They save communities money, prevent human injuries and fatalities, enhance resident and visitor experiences and reduce the number of bears killed or destroyed each year.

Such programs have been developed and implemented with great success in several communities. Canmore, Alberta has had good results from its bear-proofing campaign. In 1998, more than 300 bears were sighted in the town, nine bears were relocated and four had to be destroyed.

Being BearSmart also saves money. In Canmore the savings associated with switching to a bear-proof solid-waste handling program was approximately 44 per cent annually. Property owners also save money because they don't have to repair damage caused by hungry and habituated bears, and the provincial government saves money because they spend less time and expense dealing with “problem” bears.



Photo: John Marriott

Being BearSmart means everyone, including the bears, wins.