



**NOTICE FROM NH FISH & GAME DEPARTMENT
TAKE DOWN BIRDFEEDERS --
DON'T BE PART OF THE PROBLEM**



CONCORD, N.H. — While this past winter was certainly not severe by New Hampshire standards, it was a more normal winter compared to 2012. Nonetheless, spring is here, the snow is melting fast, and bears are getting active across the Granite State. As you celebrate the strong spring sun, you need to be thinking about removing your birdfeeder until next winter. To help prevent bear visits, the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department recommends taking down birdfeeders from April 1 to December 1.

If you or someone you know still needs convincing, just watch the Fish and Game video of a bear family taking down a backyard birdfeeder at http://youtu.be/aJ-_nDnQJ_w. The New Hampshire public needs to be proactive and take action now to prevent attracting a bear to their home. Last year was severe in terms of conflicts between bears and the public and resulted in a record total of over 1,100 statewide complaints, according to Fish and Game Bear Biologist Andrew Timmins. This was predominately due to the fact that most natural bear foods were completely absent during spring and summer. Droughty conditions in 2012, coupled with blossom-killing frost in May, led to poor fruit crops. Fall production of acorns and beechnuts was not much better. The N.H. Fish and Game Department has spent the past 20 years working to increase public awareness to the fact that bears are readily attracted to backyard human-related food sources. Despite that fact, nearly 10% of the bear complaints last year involved bears at bird feeders. In addition, approximately 40% of the complaints were the direct result of bears raiding unsecured garbage at homes and businesses. These two common food attractants accounted for half of the total bear-human conflicts in New Hampshire during 2012.

"About half of the annual complaints last year could have easily been avoided by removing birdfeeders for the spring and summer season and securing garbage," said Timmins. "Remove these two common attractants and do your part to minimize conflicts. The N.H. Fish and Game Department and your neighbors thank you for your efforts."

Given that 2012 was a poor food year for bears, natural foods will be scarce this spring until green-up occurs. Bears will be readily attracted to birdfeeders that are still up. Your location in the state and the corresponding bear density has little influence on the likelihood of attracting a bear to a birdfeeder. "It does not really matter if you have two bears or ten bears for every 10 square miles in the area," said Timmins. "Bears are experts at finding high quality food and they will find it. Bear complaints are closely associated with the density of food attractants in the area, not the number of bears."

Black oil sunflower seeds are simply too high a quality of food (high in fat and protein) for bears to ignore. Natural bear foods during spring and summer are generally high in carbohydrates and low in protein and fat. As a result, birdseed is high on the menu! If bears have previously acquired sunflower seeds at your home, they will be back looking for more. The best way to prevent attracting bears is to remove birdfeeders until December 1 and secure other household food attractants.

Homeowners should take action to reduce the chances of a bear visiting their home. Avoid encounters with bears by taking a few simple precautions:

- * Stop all bird feeding by April 1.
- * Clean up any spilled birdseed and dispose of it in the trash.
- * Secure all garbage in airtight containers inside a garage or

adequate storage area, and put garbage out on the morning of pickup, not the night before. If using a dumpster, inform your dumpster company that you need a dumpster with metal locking tops and doors that are inaccessible to bears and other wildlife.

- * Avoid putting meat or other food scraps in your compost pile.
- * Don't leave pet food dishes outside overnight.
- * Clean and store outdoor grills after each use.
- * Finally, never feed bears!

These steps will help to ensure that your backyard does not become attractive to bears and other wildlife, which is important because it prevents property damage by bears and because it keeps bears from becoming nuisance animals.

For more information on preventing conflicts with black bears, visit http://www.wildnh.com/Wildlife/Somethings_Bruin.htm.

If you have questions about bear-related problems, you can get advice by calling a toll-free number coordinated jointly by the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Wildlife Services and the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department: 1-888-749-2327 (1-888-SHY-BEAR).

