

## Bears In MY Yard?

Yup, we got'em. Bears are living in and moving around in the Sand Lake area. Not just in Taborton, but also on Best Road, Rt 43 and everywhere in between. What are they doing here? Well, they live here. When did they decide to move here? They have always been here. When will they leave? Actually, they may be asking each other all the same questions regarding US!

As we continue to encroach on the territories of wild animals we see more of them than ever. And.....they see us! Many species of wild animals become so familiar with the comings and goings of humans that they barely raise their heads when we go out into the yard. Foxes are a good example. They often have dens in close proximity to houses and raise their young well within the sight of the people living there.

Bear sightings have become quite common now in Sand Lake. While some people are very frightened, I am happy to say that most have taken the opportunity to educate themselves and their children about the rewards of living in close proximity to wildlife. Education and understanding will promote sensible protocols when encountering wildlife and bears in particular.

The most important thing to know about wildlife is that their "safe zone" is different than ours. This is something most people don't know and it is very important information. Everyone knows, or should know, the importance of staying away from wild animals. But that "staying away" should be judged from the animal's point of view, rather than ours. The bear, for instance, can cover ground a lot faster than we can so his safe zone is determined by his own criteria, not ours. If a female has cubs, she determines the safe distance based on how fast the young can move. The message here is stay back a lot further than you think you should from all wild animals. If a bear is in your yard don't go outside at all. If you are in your car stay there until you can't see the bear anymore and then stay a little longer. Educate children about not approaching wildlife, anywhere, anytime.

Bears, and other animals, have territories and it is common for an animal to travel a route where he regularly has available water and food. If a raccoon is on your porch every night consider that he likes your brand of cat food. Bears eat anything. Bird feeders are popular feeding stations for many

species of wildlife. Trash, garbage and compost piles can attract animals. There isn't much a bear can't get into if the mood strikes him. It may be necessary to radically change your habits to avoid making him a regular visitor. Putting trash outside only on pickup days or taking the bird feeder down for a period of time may cause him to take your property off his frequent visitor list.

We are so fortunate to have the opportunity to see wildlife in our area. We can live, both amicably and safely, with our indigenous wildlife. All it takes is a little understanding, education and planning.

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