

—Slug:.....COMM-0858.wc.bears_waking_up
—Contributor.....
—Contributor email.....
—For section..... Town and Village
—Format..... News - no byline
—Dateline.....Montpelier
—Article Number:.....43333



Notes from editor (not for publication):



HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

####BEGIN HED####

1 With bears waking up, Vermonters should take down
2 birdfeeders and secure other food sources

####END HED####

####BEGIN SUBHED####

3

####END SUBHED####

4 TEXT BODY:

####BEGIN TEXT####

5 Officials at the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department have
6 been receiving reports of bears coming out of their dens. They
7 urge Vermonters to remove their bird feeders and take additional
8 steps now to prevent conflicts with bears over the spring and
9 summer.

10 “Do not wait to take down your bird feeders and bear
11 proof your yard until [after] a bear comes to visit,” said Jaclyn

12 Comeau, the Fish & Wildlife Department’s bear biologist. “You
13 need to act now to head off bear conflicts over the spring and
14 summer, even if you have never had a bear visit your property
15 before.”

16 Bear incidents have been on the rise over the past several
17 years. Officials believe this trend is, in part, a result of Vermont’s
18 abundant black bear population learning to associate populated
19 areas with sources of food over multiple generations.

20 Even with a steady increase in the number of bears
21 harvested by hunters in recent years—including harvests
22 exceeding 1,000 bears in 2024 and 2025 — Vermont’s bear
23 population shows signs of growth over the past five years.

24 Shorter winters also mean that bears are emerging from
25 their dens earlier in the spring. In recent years, bear activity has
26 begun in mid-March. This is roughly two weeks earlier than what
27 is traditionally considered the start of “BearWise season” in
28 northern New England.

29 “Preventing bears from having access to human-related
30 foods is key to successful coexistence with these long-lived and
31 intelligent animals,” said Comeau. “Bears can be found in every
32 corner of Vermont other than the Champlain islands. Put bluntly,
33 most Vermonters live in bear country.”

34 The department asks Vermonters to take the following
35 proactive steps for coexisting with bears:

- 36 • Do not supply bird feeders between mid-March and
37 December.
- 38 • Store garbage in bear-resistant containers or structures;
39 trash cans alone are not enough.
- 40 • Follow the steps on the Vermont Fish & Wildlife web
41 page for composting in bear country.
- 42 • Use electric fences to keep poultry coops and beehives
43 safe.
- 44 • Request a bear-resistant dumpster from your waste
45 hauler.
- 46 • Feed your pets indoors.

47 • Never feed bears. It is illegal.

48 “Deep snow may delay some bears from emerging from
49 winter dens until April, but mid-March is the time for Vermonters
50 to prepare for the early risers,” said Comeau.

51 “This will help teach bears that our yards and
52 neighborhoods are not good places to search for food, but it will
53 only work if everyone does their part.”

54 Taking these precautions will also help reduce the
55 chance of attracting other wildlife species such as raccoons,
56 skunks, and rodents.

57 The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department also asks
58 Vermonters to submit reports of bears engaging in potentially
59 dangerous behavior like targeting bird feeders and garbage,
60 feeding on crops or livestock, or investigating campgrounds.

61 Reports can be submitted on the department’s Living
62 with Black Bears web page. The data help biologists keep track of
63 bear incidents and provide early interventions to head off
64 conflicts.

65 “At the end of the day, purposely feeding a bear is not
66 just bad for the bear,” said Comeau. “It is also dangerous for you,
67 it causes problems for your neighbors, and it is illegal. If bears are
68 finding food on your property, it is your responsibility to remove
69 that attractant and report a problem before the situation gets
70 worse.”

71 To learn more about coexisting with bears, visit
72 bit.ly/858-bear.

####END TEXT####

BIO/COATTAIL:

####BEGIN BIO/COATTAIL####

73

####END BIO/COATTAIL####

LAST ISSUE IN WHICH THIS FILE CAN BE RUN:

74 #####BEGIN MAXISSUE#####
0
#####END MAXISSUE#####

LINKS:

75 #####BEGIN LINKS#####
#####END LINKS#####

VIDEO:

76 #####BEGIN VIDEO#####
#####END VIDEO#####

LOGLINE (SOCIAL MEDIA):

77 #####BEGIN LOGLINE#####
#####END LOGLINE#####