

# So what do I do... if I see a bear?

## And other commonly asked questions

**If you see a bear, yell, stomp on the ground, wave your arms, and back away slowly.**

Remember, the bear is more afraid of you than you are of him.

Never corner a bear and always allow him an "escape route." Hikers are encouraged to carry air horns and pepper spray.

**Do black bears pose any danger to me or my children?**

Most bears are wary of people and will usually leave an area when encountering them. Despite the fact that black bears are not aggressive, their size and behavior may be frightening to some. For example, when a bear feels threatened, he may charge a person but stop short and either slap the ground or snort as if to say "Leave me alone!" This is called a bluff charge and is a normal form of bear communication. Bears who are fearful may also flatten their ears against their heads, make huffing noises, clack their jaws together, or slap the ground. These are signs that you are too close, and you should back away and give the bear more room.

Learning about our bear neighbors is very important, and children must be taught that bears are wild animals to be treated with respect. Personal contact with bear should be avoided. Never try to touch or go near a bear. Above all, for their own good, please do not feed bears.

**How do I prevent bears from entering my backyard?**

It's simple—eliminate the food source. Bears enter yards because they smell something good to eat. And don't worry...it's not you—bears don't eat people! But they will eat your garbage, nuts and berries which may be growing naturally, birdseed, or last night's leftover pizza.

And if your neighbors are feeding bears, tell them to stop! Once a bear knows he can get handouts from people, he will continue to come back and could become a nuisance. Remember the old saying: "A fed bear is a dead bear." Feeding bears or unintentionally allowing them access to garbage or other attractants is against the law in New Jersey. The penalty for this civil offense is up to \$1,000 per incident. For everyone's sake, bears **MUST** be discouraged from visiting residential neighborhoods. Try these bearproofing tips:

- n Keep garbage indoors until just prior to pickup
- n Keep your deck, yard and barbeque grill clear of all food sources
- n Electric fencing will discourage bears from entering your yard and must be used to protect companion animals living outdoors
- n Suspend birdfeeders at least 12' off the ground from a line strung between two trees



**Are black bears overpopulating?**

**No. Black bears do not overpopulate.** Because of a unique phenomenon known as "delayed implantation," bear embryos will not become implanted if the mother bear has not consumed enough food for it to survive the winter. This is nature's way of regulating the population. By stopping access to unnatural food sources such as garbage, we can ensure population control.



**Why not kill "problem bears?"**

Some people think that killing individual "problem" bears or a large number of bears through a hunt will reduce bear complaints. However, this is not true. In Pennsylvania, over 3,000 bears were shot during the 2001 hunt—yet bear complaints *rose* 10%.

The bear population adjusts itself according to available habitat and food supplies. Killing a bear in a neighborhood will only free up that territory for a new bear to move in. The most effective, proven solution (in conjunction with bearproofing the home) is aversive conditioning—"training" them to stay away from a particular area. These bears will then be our best allies in securing their territory and warding off "untrained" bears.

See page 2 for a description of aversive conditioning and how it can work for you.



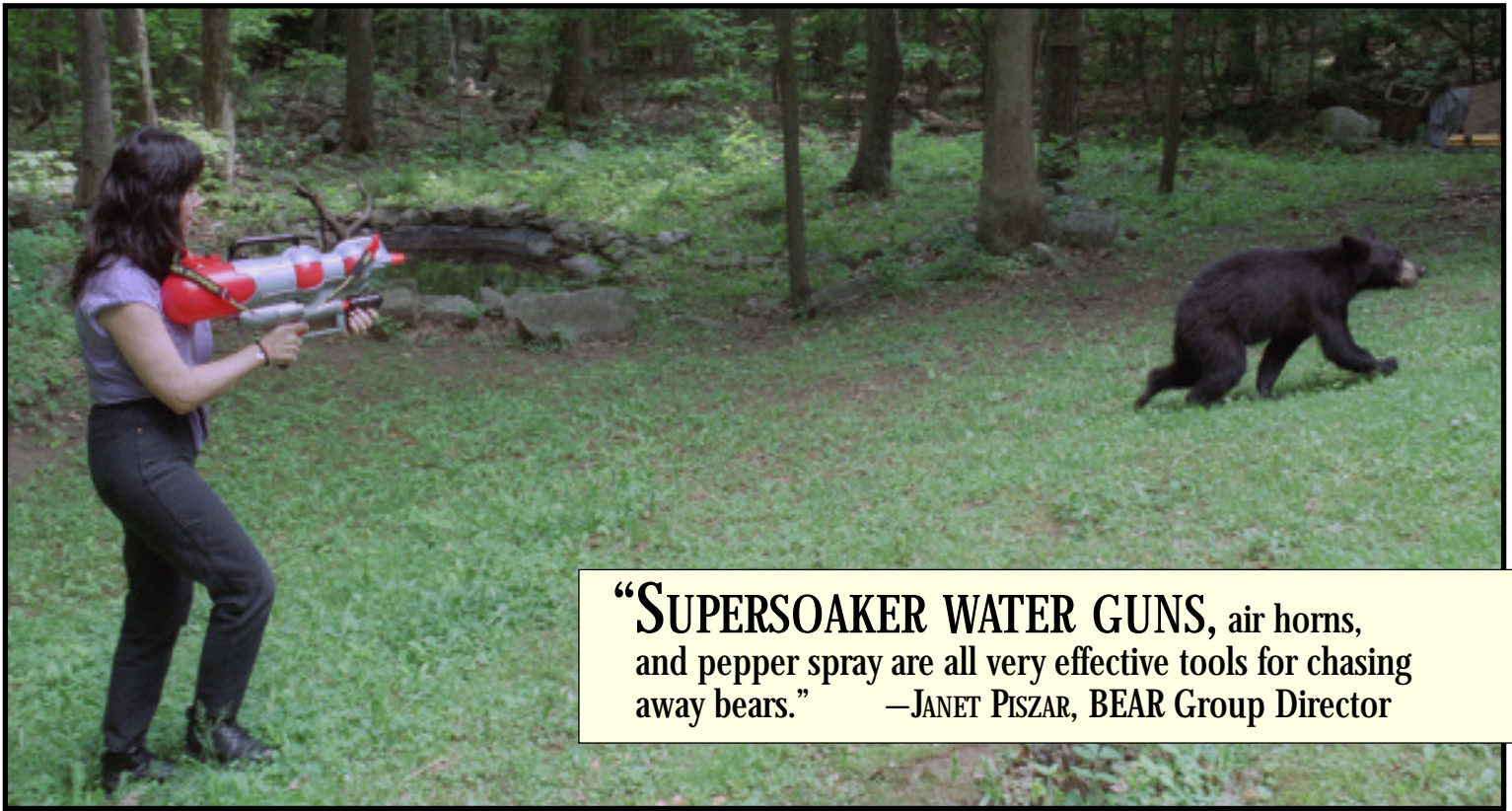


Photo by Nancy Wegard.

**“SUPERSOAKER WATER GUNS, air horns, and pepper spray are all very effective tools for chasing away bears.”** —JANET PISZAR, BEAR Group Director

# How do I chase bears from my yard?

## Taking action to reinstall the bears' natural fear of humans is called “aversive conditioning.”

This technique was pioneered by Wildlife Management Officer Steven Searles of Mammoth Lakes, California. His program is endorsed by the federal government. Police officers here in New Jersey and in many other parts of the U.S., Canada, and British Columbia have been trained in aversive

conditioning using rubber bullets and buckshot and pyrotechnic devices to condition bears. Bears who are caught in the act of raiding garbage cans or birdfeeders and bears who are frequenting areas they shouldn't (ie, schools, restaurants, etc.) can be taught that interacting with humans will result in harassment. They will quickly learn to associate these “off-limit” locations with “punishment” and will retreat to the woods and swamps where they belong.

**For more information on aversive conditioning, log on to [www.bearaffairs.com](http://www.bearaffairs.com).**

## Aversive conditioning techniques can also be used by homeowners.

Tools include supersoaker water guns, air horns, rocks, pepper spray, and pop-open umbrellas to scare bears away. Being assertive towards the bears through body language (waving your arms, stomping your feet, and yelling) will

also be very helpful in teaching them to fear YOU.

If a bear is in your yard, please take the appropriate steps to chase him off. Allowing a bear to linger while you hide in the house only teaches him that HE is the boss, not you. Make whatever efforts with which you are comfortable to assert your dominance over the bear. Teach your children to wave their arms, stomp their feet, and then walk slowly to the house if a bear is present.



## Products recommended for deterring bears

**n** *Critter Gitter* keeps wild or domestic animals away from people or property. It can deter deer, bear, skunks, raccoons, wolves and most animals. It is also effective for protecting fish ponds. Using heat and motion sensors, *Critter Gitter* detects

animals as they enter your yard and then emits a high-pitched sound and flashing lights. This not only frightens the animals away, but also conditions them to STAY away. To order *Critter Gitter*, or to find out more call **1-800-569-3397**, or go to: [www.worldpetstore.com](http://www.worldpetstore.com)

**n** Bear-resistant garbage cans are available and should be used by everyone living in bear country. Please contact the BEAR Group at 973-315-3219 for details.

*The BEAR Group receives no compensation for recommending these products.*

The BEAR Group was founded in 1992 to educate the public about black bears, while fostering a peaceful coexistence between bears and humans. Volunteers are always needed.

We meet monthly in Passaic and Sussex counties. Please visit [www.saveNJbears.com](http://www.saveNJbears.com) for the date and location of our next meeting.

**“YOU HAVE A GREATER CHANCE OF WINNING THE LOTTERY, than ever being harmed by a black bear.”** —DR. LYNN ROGERS, BEAR BIOLOGIST



*Dr Lynn Rogers, pictured above, with one of his many research bears.*

# Can humans and bears peacefully coexist?

**“Yes!” says world renowned bear expert Lynn Rogers, PhD**

of the North American Bear Center. Dr. Rogers is a wildlife biologist who has studied black bears for over 30 years. You may have seen him recently on the one-hour Animal Planet special, “The Man Who Walks With Bears.” He is recognized around the world as the leading expert in bear behavior. Dr. Rogers maintains that one of the safest places to be is in the woods with black bears.

**Why? Because black bears are not aggressive toward humans.** When threatened, their first instinct is to run away or climb a tree. The claws of black bears are strong for climbing trees, but not sharp for holding prey. They are primarily vegetarian.

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**“One of the safest places to be is in the woods with black bears.”**

—world renowned bear expert  
Lynn Rogers, PhD

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**Unlike grizzly bears, mother black bears *do not* defend their cubs against people.** Dr. Rogers and his colleagues have routinely tagged black bear cubs in the presence of their mothers and no one has ever been seriously injured or killed.

As a matter of fact, you have a greater chance of winning the lottery than being attacked by a black bear! No one in the written history of New Jersey has ever been attacked by a black bear. Black bears are very timid, and would rather run up the nearest tree than fight. In fact, according to Dr. Rogers, you are..

- n 67 times more likely to be killed by a dog
- n 374 times more likely to be killed by lightning
- n 1,700 times more likely to die while swimming
- n and 90,000 times more likely to be **murdered** by another human being...

*...than to be injured by a black bear!* So if you do see a bear, enjoy it...It's an experience many people will never get to have!



Dr. Rogers may be contacted through his website: [www.bear.org](http://www.bear.org)

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**THE BEAR GROUP**

PO Box 918 • Hewitt, NJ 07421

**The Bear Education And Resource Group**

is available to advise about bear proofing, address specific unwelcome bears, and give educational presentations. Please call our volunteers at **973-315-3219**, or contact us through our website at: [www.SaveNJbears.com](http://www.SaveNJbears.com)

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# Why do New Jersey's black bears need YOU?

## Because people fear what they don't understand...

While the pro-hunt contingent promotes fear of our timid and gentle black bears, the Bear Education and Resource Group guides residents how to live responsibly in bear country. It is only through our program of public education, aversive conditioning of bears, and containment of attractants, that we can successfully protect New Jersey's black bears.

Founded in 1992, we are a non-profit organization comprised **100%** of volunteers. Without our members, we could not serve the public's need for bear education and non-lethal solutions. It is **only** because of our members, that we can continue to protect our black bears.

## The bears need YOU to speak out for them.

For a small donation, you will receive the *BEARreport* as well as important emails—to keep you informed of the latest news as well as critical action alerts.

*For members who wish to be further involved*, there are many important volunteer opportunities, such as CritterCan assembly, public education, and tabling events. Whether you support us as a volunteer or as a charitable donor, your involvement is much needed and greatly appreciated.



If he could speak, he would say...*thank you!*

**Please be a voice for the black bears...Join us today!**



**Yes!** I want to become a member of the BEAR Group and protect our black bears from hunting.



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_



Referred by: \_\_\_\_\_

\$20.00 for annual membership  \$500.00 for lifetime membership

\$10.00 for student/senior membership  Other \_\_\_\_\_

I am also interested in volunteer opportunities for the bears. Please contact me.

Please make checks payable to the BEAR Group and send to: The BEAR Group, P.O. Box 918, Hewitt, NJ 07421.

Thank you for your support! Donations are tax-deductible.