

COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE

Bears and Bird Feeders

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW



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The Birds and the Bears



Every year in Colorado, we have the joy of viewing many types of “backyard” birds at bird feeders. What most people don’t know is that bird feeders (seed, suet and hummingbird) are also very attractive to bears. In fact, bird feeders are so attractive that bears will go to great lengths to gain access to them including climbing decks, climbing across pulley ropes and tearing down iron pole holders.

Bird feeders are so appealing to bears because they are convenient calorie sources. A bear’s entire life revolves around gaining enough weight to survive hibernation and bird feeders are full of calories.

It’s also much easier to pull down a bird feeder than it is to forage for natural foods like berries, insects and nuts in a bear’s natural habitat.

Hibernation: A Key to Bear Behavior

During the winter, a bear’s natural food sources dwindle, so bears hibernate to cope with being unable to eat. A bear’s hibernation period is also known as torpor, denning or winter lethargy. Unlike a true hibernator, bears can be stimulated to wake anytime during these inactive months. In the fall, bears enter a period of compulsive overeating (hyperphagia).

They start feeding for 22 hours a day and need to gain 20,000 calories a day to survive hibernation. That’s equivalent to eating 37 McDonald’s Big Macs a day!

After hyperphagia, bears enter the extreme sport of hibernation. They crawl into their winter dens as their body processes begin to shut down.

A hibernating bear:



Will not eat, drink, urinate or defecate for approximately 200 days.



Experiences a 50-60% drop in their normal heart rate and metabolism.



Can lose 20-27% of their total body weight.

Bear Calorie Counter

Suet (4 oz)	968
Berries (1 lb)	2,000
Peanut butter (28 oz)	4,750
Bird seed (7 lbs)	12,180
Shortening (3 lbs)	12,430
Dog food (25 lbs)	42,425



Winter Bird Feeding

If you enjoy feeding birds, winter would be the best time as bears are hibernating and no longer active. Winter feeding may also benefit some birds during this stressful season when natural food sources are hard to find.

It is still important to responsibly feed birds in winter as other animals, such as deer, coyotes, raccoons and skunks, can be attracted to this easy food source.



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Below is a quick list you can follow to minimize which animals are being attracted to your bird feeders:

- Clean spilled seed and shells from underneath and around your feeders.
- Hang feeders where other wildlife cannot reach them, especially deer. Eating bird seed can cause multiple digestive tract diseases and even be deadly for deer.
- Bring feeders in at night.
- Clean feeders often to prevent the spread of diseases like salmonella.
- Avoid using open, platform-style feeders which can be messy.
- Research which seed is best for the birds in your area. Never feed bread, table scraps, etc.

Attracting Birds, Not Bears

Native Gardens



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Native gardening is a great way to attract many different types of birds and other native wildlife like butterflies and native bees. Native gardens also require less water and maintenance once established. Visit cmg.extension.colostate.edu/gardening-resources/online-garden-publications/native-plants/ for more information on native gardening in Colorado.

Flower Pots



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Not the gardening type? Try flower pots or container gardening! Birds will be just as interested in visiting a flower in a pot as they would be to one in the ground. For hummingbirds, plant red, orange or pink flowers with a tubular shape.

Bird Baths/ Nest Boxes



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Birds are always looking for the things they need to survive including a reliable source of water and a safe place to raise their young. Adding a bird bath or nest box to your backyard landscape gives birds a reason to visit and to stay!

Living Responsibly with Bears

Colorado Parks and Wildlife understands that viewing backyard birds is a great connection to the wildlife in your own neighborhood. We have a responsibility as stewards of our outdoor spaces to live responsibly with all wildlife, including black bears.

The sight and smell of bird feeders alone is enough to attract bears onto your property and into your neighborhood. Once bears discover bird feeders, they will visit every home in the area looking for more, making bird feeders (and trash cans) among the top reasons for human-black bear conflicts.

In addition, leaving attractants out, like bird feeders (hummingbird, suet and seed) and trash cans where they are accessible to bears, is a violation of state law, as well as some local city and county ordinances.



To avoid causing problems in your neighborhood, remove all bird feeders from April-November when bears are most active.



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Hazing vs Harassing

Hazing

Hazing is a lawful activity, or series of activities, conducted in an attempt to change the behavior of a habituated bear (i.e. a bear that has become too comfortable around people) or to establish a healthy wariness of people. **CPW encourages lawful hazing.**

Harassing

Harassing is to unlawfully endanger, worry, impede, annoy, pursue, disturb, rally, concentrate, harrass, drive herd or torment wildlife. **Harassment of wildlife is unlawful and NEVER ok.**

HAZING OPTIONS



Yelling and clapping



Using air horn, car alarm, noise makers



Motion-sensor sprinklers



Pepper spray or bear spray



Paintball

Aim for the rump, and use extra care to avoid hitting in the face, eyes, ears, nose or mouth.

Contact your local law enforcement agency for what methods are lawful for your neighborhood.

Only haze nuisance wildlife and be mindful of where wildlife will move (such as into a busy street).

Your local CPW office can provide additional ideas and recommendations.



Remember: Hazing will only be effective if the original attractants that drew the bear in are permanently removed.

SAVE A LIFE, DON'T FEED WILDLIFE

Feeding big-game animals, like bears, is bad for animals and dangerous for people. People feed wildlife because they want to see them or think wildlife needs our help to survive. However, feeding wildlife is more harmful than helpful.

- ▶ Feeding wild animals can change their natural behavior and cause them to become habituated, demanding and/or dangerous.
- ▶ A habituated bear can escalate its behavior and start breaking into vehicles, garages and homes.
- ▶ Concentrating animals can lead to the spread of diseases, plus feeding big-game animals, like bears, is illegal in Colorado.

COLORADO PARKS & WILDLIFE REGIONAL FIELD OFFICES

CPW offices are open Monday-Friday, 8a.m. to 5 p.m. For after-hours emergencies, contact the Colorado State Patrol at (303) 239-4501 or your local Sheriff's Department.

Brush	(970) 842-6300
Colorado Springs	(719) 227-5200
Denver	(303) 291-7227
Durango	(970) 247-0855
Ft. Collins	(970) 472-4300
Glenwood Springs	(970) 947-2920
Grand Junction	(970) 255-6100
Gunnison	(970) 641-7060
Hot Sulphur Springs	(970) 725-6200
Lamar	(719) 336-6600
Meeker	(970) 878-6090
Monte Vista	(719) 587-6900
Montrose	(970) 252-6000
Pueblo	(719) 561-5300
Salida	(719) 530-5520
Steamboat Springs	(970) 870-3333

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