

Bears and Bird Feeders

Yukon Bird Club
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Grizzlies and black bears are both omnivores and are attracted to all types of food including birdseed, and vegetable and animal fat (e.g., suet). If a bear learns to associate humans and their homes and gardens with a source of food then this will very likely lead to a negative situation for both the humans and the bear.

In the Yukon, we're still fortunate to have lots of wilderness that provides resident and visiting birds with their breeding, nesting, and food requirements. If you only feed birds when the bears are denning then this will greatly reduce the chance of bears becoming a problem around your home. Of course, living in downtown Dawson or Whitehorse means that the risk of attracting bears to a bird feeder is much lower than if you live in a rural or country residential area. However, you have to balance the enjoyment of seeing birds near your house with the risk of attracting bears (and other unwanted wildlife) to your home and your neighbourhood and putting yourself, your neighbours and the bears in danger.

Yukon Bird Club's Recommendations

- Only feed birds during months when bears are denning or are least active – late October to mid-April.
- When bears are active, replace your bird feeder with a bird bath of clean water for the birds to drink and preen.
- If you're feeding birds in the summer hang feeders at least three metres above the ground and two metres away from tree trunks. This helps to make the feeder less accessible to bears and some other wildlife.
- It may be possible to place a feeder on the second storey of your house but also consider the possibility of birds striking windows. See birds and windows advice on YBC's website.
- Regularly clean up spilled birdseed lying on the ground.
- Keep your birdseed supply indoors or in a wildlife-proof container.
- If you do have a bear in your yard, don't approach it. Call a Government of Yukon Conservation Officer and report it. The number is 867-667-8005.

If you have a suggestion on how to improve the information on this page please contact yukonbirdclub@yukonbirds.ca.

Information Sources

Wildwise Yukon. Wildwise.ca

Cornell Lab of Ornithology. allaboutbirds.org

Collier, J. 2018. Bird Feeders and Yukon Bears: Best Practices for Coexistence. Yukon College