

NEWS LOCAL

Bear-aware plan in works



By Mary Katherine Keown, The Sudbury Star
Monday, March 21, 2016 11:51:03 EDT AM



A cub descends from a conifer at Bear With Us. Jim Moodie/Sudbury Star/Postmedia Network

Spring in Sudbury means melting snow, blooming buds and forests that smell of fresh chlorophyll. But it also means bears.

This year, the city is planning ahead by looking back over the past year and hoping not to replicate the human-bear encounters that caused panic in 2015 and resulted in the untimely deaths of several bruins.

As Trevor Griffin, a district manager with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry, will explain at Tuesday's council meeting, the city, the Greater Sudbury Police Service, the MNRF and the Northern Policy Institute have formed a black bear committee to address the Nickel City's ursine troubles.

In his presentation, Griffin says a "failure of blueberry crops in the summer of 2015" was largely to blame. That meant trouble, as it led to increased incidences of human-bear interactions when the bruins came out of the forests and into our yards, looking for a meal.

Bear calls spiked in 2015. The MNRF indicated in early October 2015 it had received notice of 2,200 sightings throughout the Nickel City, as well as an additional 1,700 ursine-related complaints, four times the number of reports received in 2014.

The Greater Sudbury Police Service said officers responded to 500 complaints and had to kill eight nuisance bruins last year.

Currently, a waste bylaw has been developed to help prevent unwanted bear encounters.

Ward 8 Coun. Al Sizer introduced the motion last October to amend the city's rubbish bylaw to help prevent urban bear encounters.

As of April 1, homeowners will be prohibited from placing waste at the curb before 5 a.m. or after 7 a.m. on the morning of their collection day, the city announced. The existing bylaw prevents residents from putting waste at the curb before 8 p.m. the night before collection. Enforcement of the amended bylaw will be complaint-driven and the fine for non-compliance will be as much as \$150. The new bylaw is in effect until Nov. 30.

Griffin says the MNRF "anticipates a busier than normal spring and the likelihood of bears returning to 2015 food sources." The committee will also coordinate a communications plan, a commercial and high-density waste management plan, as well as ongoing education and outreach.

For information on minimizing bear encounters, go to www.greatersudbury.ca/bears or www.ontario.ca/bearwise.

mkkeown@postmedia.com

Twitter: @marykkeown