

# The Bear Facts

*by Joyce Wolff*



Property Owner Harriet Vaugeois was thrilled to see this magnificent Black Bear (even though he's brown) at the Gallinas pond early in April. Fortunately she had her camera and was rewarded with this terrific picture.

The dentist pulls a tooth. It hurts. Pain "goes with the territory." You win the sweepstakes. You pay the taxes. "It goes with the territory." Bears literally go with the territory on the SFTR.

Last year Black Bears (the species name) popped up all over, peered in kitchen windows, crawled through doggie doors, and thought they were invited to your barbecues. The lack of moisture in the last year produced dry non-nutritious grasses and greens that do not meet the bears' requirements for good health. They are forced to search, not only their habitat for adequate food and water, but ours as well. Bears are eating machines with excellent memories. It takes only one "food find" to keep them returning in the hope of finding more.

While enjoying the NRCS Soil Conservation tour in June last year we learned that Las Animas County is developing at nearly twice the rate as the rest of Colorado. This presents a second problem for bears; they are being constantly squeezed from their territory. The third critical factor is human attitude: negligence, ignorance and our continuing refusal to adapt to nature's laws. Put them all together and they spell "problem." Yet another result of these scenarios is that the Division of Wildlife (DOW) is running out of places to relocate the bears when they must be trapped.

Last fall District Wildlife Manager, Bob Holder, asked Walt and me to help process a bear that had been trapped near Aquilar. It was exceedingly sad to learn that this wild animal, young and quite underweight, must be darted, tattooed (both lips), tagged (both ears), trussed, weighed and transported to a different location. Unfortunately it's a process we have created by our insistence that nature revolve around us, which won't work, instead of our entering into a peaceful coexistence with it.

I am very vocal about my feelings regarding wildlife. I feel personally pressured to prove that we can, with education followed by a little effort, avoid unpleasant confrontations with wildlife. Bad situations will inevitably arise, but they can be reduced in number and minimized in severity if we take a few simple precautions.

Secure your pet's foods and trash where a bear can't get to them. Bird feeders are a big attraction. Bring them in at night and/or when no one is home. Hang your hummingbird feeders high out of reach. Burn off residue on barbecue grills with a hot fire. Even charred bits are tempting, so remove grills, drip pans and trays, and store and/or wash them. Keep lower windows and sliders closed and locked when you are gone. In order to leave their windows open, Marilyn Casey and Allan Bacon, who live with bears north of town, have added decorative grills that secure their lower windows. Bears seem to enjoy teething on rubber and plastic, like wheelbarrow tires and water hoses. They have been known to haul off hats, gloves, and shoes. Try to put away anything you think a bear might like to play with. Joanne Roundy watched a bear lumber off into the woods carrying a flowered chaise lounge pad that the dogs used for a bed.

The Roundys have lived on the far south end of the ranch for several years where the forest is quite dense. Bears and mountain lions are numerous. They quickly learned how to "bear proof." Joanne has a deep, abiding love of wildlife and feels strongly that we need to live in harmony, not only with the small, cuddly, furry ones, but the larger and potentially bothersome ones as well. An ecosystem is critical, not allowing us to pick and choose which animals we tolerate and those we won't. It's simply a matter of Bear Aware, which is a

program introduced by the DOW this year to educate us about bears' habits and behavior. Joanne will gladly describe the precautions she and Vaughn take to bear proof their home. Call her at 846-2234. I will continue to put information about bears on the bulletin board. (Take the little quiz there now.) There is excellent literature available from the DOW. Read it! Take it seriously!

All this advice seems burdensome, but it pays off. We have had bears wander through our Ranch property for ten years. Because I am fanatic about keeping it bear-proof they have, so far, only wandered the decks, sniffed the barbecue, eaten the grass and drunk from our pond. (And suffered their pictures being taken a lot.) I am prepared for a hot and thirsty bear to plunge in one day, eat the fish, and upset the lilies. When that happens I will consider it a small price to pay for the privilege of their company. "It goes with the territory."



Walt and I have been volunteers for the Division of Wildlife and have worked with Bob Holder for two years. He will be most attentive to your wildlife needs. Should you have a problem with wildlife call him at 719-680-1410. He is also listed under [points of contact](#).



Traditionally each summer at Trinidad Lake State Park during the Memorial Day, Fourth of July and Labor Day Weekend holidays, Bob gives a program on wildlife. It's Bob Holder at his best and you will have a delightful time. There is a new Wildlife Officer on duty in this District, Allan Vitt, who may very well be there and is the icing on the cake. Bob suggests you call the Park at (719) 846-6951 to confirm the program dates. Check out the Park Website [coloradoparks.org/trinidad/](http://coloradoparks.org/trinidad/) or for easier access click on Trinidad Lake State Park on Allen Beal's comprehensive Website, [www.allenbeal.com](http://www.allenbeal.com). As of this date, 17 April 2001, the summer calendar had not been posted.

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