

## Bears

### Protect Yourself, the Community, and Bears – from the Bears

As a mountain community, Serene Lakes has a problem of bears foraging for food. If they find ready access to food (in the form of garbage), they will make Serene Lakes part of their regular foraging pattern. Indeed, this situation occurred in August of 2005, when a bear and her cub “adopted” Serene Lakes after feeding on garbage at over a dozen homes. In the ensuing weeks, they then broke into one home, two garages, and three storage sheds before moving on to a better berry patch.

Local area experts have advised us that our bear problem will only worsen unless we eliminate readily available sources of food. In other mountain communities, including Tahoe Donner and Squaw Valley, circumstances of easy access to garbage have deteriorated into incidents of bears regularly breaking into garages and homes in search of more food. When this happens, it is not only frightening and costly to the homeowner; it places the bear in great peril of being put down. Contrary to popular belief, there is no bear relocation program in California. The Tahoe Bear League has a phrase that says it all, “A fed bear is a dead bear.”

The solution lies in ensuring that our garbage is not readily accessible to the bears. Specifically, we must all refrain from placing our garbage cans outside overnight. There are several options that homeowners have to achieve this goal:

- Don't put your garbage outside until the morning of pick-up (Monday for Serene Lakes).
- Take your trash with you if you cannot be here Monday morning. Or ask a neighbor to put it out for you.
- Hire a service firm to take out the garbage on Monday morning. Such services are provided for a reasonable fee by Three Sheets to the Wind (530-426-3762, email: [3sheets@ratpunk.com](mailto:3sheets@ratpunk.com)) and by Campbell's Cabin Care (530-426-1809).
- Install a bear-proof garbage enclosure, which can be serviced by Tahoe Truckee Sierra Disposal (530-583-0148) on a weekly or as-requested basis.

Placer County maintains an updated list of approved enclosures at [www.placer.ca.gov/hhs/hhs-sub/enviro/bear-resistant.htm](http://www.placer.ca.gov/hhs/hhs-sub/enviro/bear-resistant.htm). The Bear League also posts a list of their recommended containers at [www.savebears.com](http://www.savebears.com). The cost for a two-can enclosure is typically: \$600 for the enclosure, \$50 for delivery on site, and \$200 for installation (if you don't want to do it yourself).

Placer County, in response to this growing problem, enacted an ordinance in 2001 to prevent the access of bears to garbage in the portions of the county

above 5,000 feet in elevation. The ordinance requires the installation of a bear-resistant enclosure by homeowners for new homes, for major remodels, and in circumstances where the homeowner's storage site is "determined to be a bear access problem." A copy of the ordinance can be accessed on the same web page as the list of Placer County approved enclosures mentioned above.

In concert with this ordinance, any resident can file an anonymous complaint concerning a neighbor who is storing garbage in a manner accessible to bears. After two such verified incidents in a twelve-month period, the county will typically require the offending homeowner to install a bear-proof garbage enclosure. To understand your responsibilities under these regulations, or to file a complaint, contact Lindsay Cunningham (530-581-6240) of the Placer County Division of Environmental Health.

For our part, SLPOA has undertaken a general education and information program to increase community awareness of this issue. This includes sending informational reminder letters to homeowners who are observed to be providing inappropriate access to their garbage by bears.

We are also seeking community participation and support. If you observe a neighbor who is leaving garbage (food garbage, not just trash) out improperly, you can help us remind them of their responsibilities by taping our informational flyer to the lid of the offending can. Just click on this link, [Please Don't Feed the Bears](#), to access a copy of the flier.

We are struggling to keep this community clean of debris and safe from bear/human conflicts. We need the cooperation of everyone in our community to effectively address this problem.

SLPOA Bear Committee