

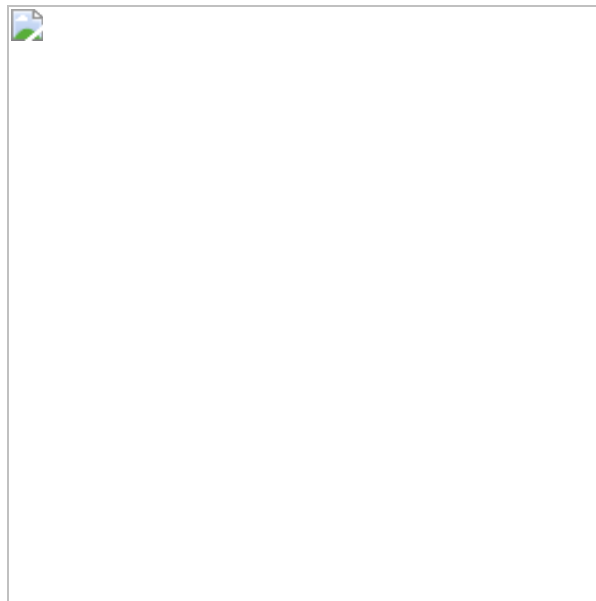
What About Bears?

Evergreen Audubon recently received an inquiry about bears – specifically, when can we start leaving bird-feeders outside safely overnight? Board member Chuck Aid responds:

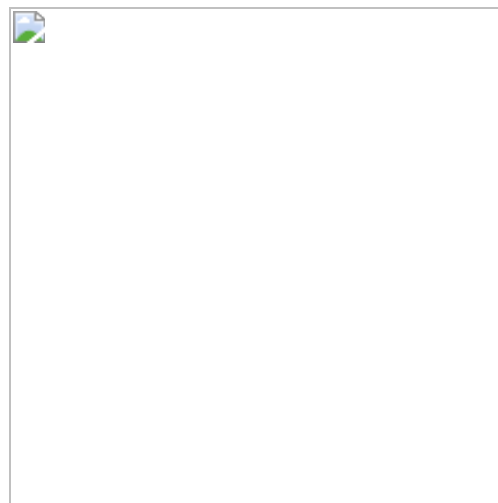
Bears go into hibernation not because of lower temperatures, but because food is not available.

In a poor food year, bears may go into hibernation as early as October; however, when food is plentiful they may not hibernate until late November. This all gets complicated when people provide food either purposefully or through neglect, for example, by putting trash cans out the evening before their scheduled trash pick-up. Bears have excellent memories and remember where they have found tasty meals in the past. They also have amazing senses of smell allowing them to detect bird feeders or nice ripe garbage from as much as five miles away. Also, remember that bears may briefly re-emerge during a warm spell in mid-winter with food on their minds.

While a general rule is that you don't have to worry about bears raiding the feeder between Thanksgiving and Easter, this is just a rough guideline. I believe that Colorado Parks and Wildlife provides information each year regarding when bears have finally gone into hibernation (www.cpw.state.co.us) but in a cursory look this morning (October 19) I couldn't find any current information.



Black Bear (c) Marilyn Rhodes



Bear at Bird Feeder (c) Colorado Parks and Wildlife