

## With hungry bears rising early, Tahoe area residents put on alert

The **Lake Tahoe**-area bears are up early, and they're ravenous.

"They feel the warmth and come out of their dens, but there's no natural food for them yet," said **Ann Bryant**, executive director of the **BEAR League**, a Tahoe-area group that educates residents on coexisting with bears.

"The grasses, herbs and roots they like are still covered with snow, and there will be more storms," she said. "So they're looking for garbage, pet food and bird food – those are the biggest lures – and empty cabins with food in them."



DAN THRIFT / Tahoe Daily Tribune file, 1997  
A bear wanders through a South Lake Tahoe neighborhood. In recent weeks, bears have broken into 15 Tahoe-area homes.

In recent weeks, bears have broken into 15 homes, all unoccupied, in **West Lake Tahoe** and **Alpine Meadows**, Bryant said, and "there have been bear sightings everywhere."

People still putting out suet, seed and nectar for birds because of the snow cover should start bringing it in at night, she said.

The league encourages bear-proof trash containers, saying bears that become accustomed to eating trash are more likely to break into homes.

In addition to making sure no food is left outside overnight, people should chase bears away so they don't become "nuisance bears" at risk of being shot by game wardens.

"If one's on your deck or in your yard, stay inside, but yell and shout, stomp your feet, bang on the window," Bryant said. "Show them you're the bigger, meaner bear and you're protecting your food cache and your den. They understand that."

The bears' early rising is not an anomaly during a warm spring, Bryant said.

"For a good 10 years, they've been getting up a little earlier each year," she said. "We used to have more snow and more cold, so it used to be the end of March or later, but then it was the middle of March and now it starts about the first."

### ADVICE AVAILABLE

For help with a bear emergency, contact the **BEAR League's** hotline at (530) 525-PAWS (7297). Further information on bear encounters is available at the group's Web site:

[www.savebears.org](http://www.savebears.org)