

## Black bear reported at Island Lake Conservation Area

Credit Valley Conservation (CVC) is advising area residents and visitors to Island Lake Conservation Area in Orangeville that a black bear has been reported on the big island by Bob's Bridges (part of the Vicki Barron Lakeside Trail) inside the conservation area.

CVC is coordinating with police and conservation officers, and have posted warnings at all entrances to the conservation area. CVC advises that, until further notice, all visitors are to stay away from the lands and waters making up the eastern arm of the Island Lake Conservation Area (any area east of Hurontario Street North). People are also asked to notify conservation area staff if a bear is observed anywhere in or near the site by calling 519-941-6329.

Bears are complex, intelligent animals and no two encounters are alike. If you encounter a black bear, there is no single strategy that will work in each situation, but you can minimize your risk by following these guidelines provided by Parks Canada:

? Keep calm. Think ahead; your brain is your best defense against a bear attack. Plan how to respond if you encounter a bear.

? Don't run. Bears can easily outrun you. By running you may trigger an attack. Make yourself less vulnerable. Pick up small children and stay in a group.

? Give the bear space. Back away slowly and talk in a soft voice. Do not approach the bear or make direct eye contact.

? Leave the area or make a wide detour. If you cannot leave, wait until the bear moves out of the way and ensure that it has an escape route.

? The bear may approach you or rear up on its hind legs. Bears are often curious. If one stands on its hind legs, it is most likely trying to catch your scent; this is not necessarily a sign of aggression. Back away slowly and talk in a soft voice.

? Do not drop objects, clothing or food to distract the bear. If the bear receives food, it will have been rewarded for its aggressive behaviour, thereby increasing the likelihood that it will repeat that behaviour again.

? Watch for aggressive behaviours. A bear may display aggression by swinging its head from side to side; making vocalizations such as huffs, snorts, whoops, or moans; displaying teeth or claws; jaw popping; swatting at the ground; staring with eye contact; panting; or laying its ears back. These behaviours usually indicate that the bear is stressed, acting defensively and asking for more space.

Attacks rarely follow. This is the most common kind of black bear aggressive encounter.

The public is asked to report all bear sightings at or near the conservation area to conservation area staff at 519-941-6329.