

Beware of hungry bears!

LANSING --Each spring as hibernating bears leave their winter dens and resume daily activity, wildlife officials in northern Michigan receive many phone calls about bears hanging around and even destroying man-made food sources such as bird feeders, trash cans and grills, and this year has been no exception, according to the Department of Natural Resources.

“At this time of year, bears are on the move and are looking for food,” said DNR bear specialist Adam Bump. “They’re hungry after spending months hibernating, and will often resort to finding food in unnatural places, such as residential back yards.”

Bird seed is especially attractive to bears because it is a high-energy food and relatively easy to find. Once bird feeders are discovered, bears will keep coming back until the seed is gone or the feeders have been removed.

“The majority of complaints we receive about nuisance bears this time of year involve a food source. The easiest thing people can do to avoid creating a problem is to temporarily take in their bird feeders, and store other attractants, like grills, trash cans and pet food, in a garage or storage shed,” Bump said. “Once the woods green up, bears tend

to move on to find more natural sources of food, as long as they haven’t become habituated to the bird seed or garbage cans.”

Bears can become habituated to man-made food sources, which can create an unsafe situation for the bear, and a nuisance situation for landowners if they have a bear continuously visiting their yard during the day and repeatedly destroying private property in search of food.

DNR Wildlife Division staff members are unable to respond directly to each nuisance bear complaint, and instead ask that landowners do their part to help reduce potential food sources in their yards first before calling for further assistance. The trapping of nuisance bears is only authorized by DNR wildlife officials in cases of significant property damage or threats to human safety.

Anyone experiencing problems with nuisance bears, who has taken the appropriate action to remove food sources for a period of two to three weeks but has not seen results, should contact the nearest DNR office and speak with a wildlife biologist or technician for further assistance.

For more information, go to www.michigan.gov/bear.