

## THE FOLLOWING IS AN EXERPT FROM A LETTER WRITTEN BY RICK ZANUSSI:

Let me give you a bit of background, that I hope is helpful in bringing us up to date. I was originally approached by a customer whose cottage had been broken into twice this year, and he told me of a few neighbours in his immediate area who had also suffered from a nuisance bear. I did some more investigation and found there were many more break ins spanning the last two years. I told this cottager we would commit to helping him, given our abilities as shown with prior nuisance bears, our resources and hunting expertise.

I, and licensed hunters from my staff and other non staff members began daily visits to a bait pile, strategically located in an area well travelled by all forest animals in general and very close to the many broken into cottages on McLaren, Derbeyshire and Louisa islands. We baited and sat with firearms for two weeks steady trying to dispatch this nuisance bear. We were unsuccessful. As time went on, more and more cottagers heard of our efforts and began reporting their break ins, and it was apparent that the problem was far more widespread than we originally knew. In fact these break-ins had been ongoing for two years, in an area encompassing half of McLaren Island, and many cottages on Derbeyshire and Louisa.

I ultimately spoke with two most frustrated cottagers (understandably so) and when I learned that they and others were taking up arms to "kill the bear" themselves, it was apparent that this was getting out of hand. We had our own people in the woods hunting this bear, and suddenly it was no longer safe for us to be there, knowing that cottagers were arming themselves when they knew nothing about firearms, hunting or bear behavior. If any of those had shot a bear with an inappropriate sized gun, or with the wrong shell or bullet, the results of an injured bear would not be pleasant. And similarly, that injured bear might just as well attack my staff! Neither scenario was acceptable.

MNR has refused to deal with nuisance bears on islands, for a very long time. They simply don't have the staff, vessels or provincial funding to perform these duties on islands. I offer no defense for MNR, but do try to explain why they could not be involved on islands. However, when I approached them with the situation they agreed to come to the table, and to partner with me. They supplied the bear trap, delivered it to our mainland landing, and because we are not "authorized agents" they supplied staff to be on hand whenever a trap was moved, or when we captured a bear. They have supplied bait, and their staff to transport the bear from our mainland landing to their live release area in the French River. Their local staff has been on the phone to me each and every morning, and except for the last two weekends, that has been seven days a week.

Throughout this debacle, I have encouraged all cottagers to call the Bear Wise hot line each and every time a bear break-in occurs. I think those efforts have proven the problems we are facing on these three islands. I have no doubt that local MNR are working behind the scenes trying to find resources to deal with these island issues.

Moving the trap either empty or with a bear in it is simply not something that we can do economically. It is hugely expensive to provide the resources to move it. Those costs along with the inability to predict bear movements are clearly good reasons not to simply move the trap to the most recent break in location. Bears, nuisance or otherwise have a significantly large feeding range, and move about these three islands constantly. Even a bait pile often won't draw a bear in with any certainty or frequency.

The bears can no longer access any garbage at all from the containers, as the attendant ensures all waste is in the container and there is a very large, heavy steel cover on the inlet of the container that is closed whenever the attendant is not there. However, cottagers continue to simply leave waste on the dock on Tuesdays and Thursdays when the site is not open. The bears continue to attend the waste site knowing there is still food to eat.

As well, it needs to be noted that supervising the deposit of waste at the waste sites is critically important. There is still a large percentage of people in all areas that tout proper environmental principles but do not do so when inconvenient.....I can go on forever about what some people do when they don't think anyone is watching!!!! For instance in 2008, at unsupervised sites, almost 100% of recycling waste containers were refused at the recycling company because people constantly deposited the wrong waste into containers. When a container is refused due to contamination (incorrect waste) the TOA must send another waste truck back to the Bracebridge recycling company, pick up the full recycling container, and haul it back to the approved TOA waste site just south of Pointe au Baril. A colossal expense obviously, and its results in unnecessary filling of the local waste site. The TOA sites that were manned showed a complete reversal of the rejected waste containers. So, sorry, but until people chose to walk the walk, we don't have a leg to stand on with this Ministry of The Environment requirement...

Further, I would be remiss in acknowledging to all of you the help we have received from McNabb Lumber. One of their staff, Ross Winters has spent innumerable hours with me and my staff. Ross gamely stays up all night, keeping our barbequed molasses/vanilla mix stocked, and stays awake all night long at different cottages awaiting the arrival of a nuisance bear. He then returns with me, goes home for a quick shower, and attends his regular job at McNabb the next day, obviously a little bit late. I hope all of you who need windows, doors, siding, or other material consider visiting Ross at McNabbs. The owner Gary McNabb has been most understanding when Ross falls asleep at his desk!!!

Finally, there are many things we all can do to discourage bear break-ins, even when a nuisance bear is in the area. I encourage you to call the BearWise people (866-514-2327) for a wealth of ideas. As well, many on this list have wonderful suggestions and I hope you all share your ideas with each other.

Thanks

Rick Zanussi

Permanent Island Resident, Private Contracting Business Owner, TOA Councillor, and hopefully a helpful resource for all.....