

## Bear Update

Rick Zanussi

McLaren Island cottagers have been plagued by a nuisance bear or bears for two years. As reported in an earlier newsletter our company was asked to assist with the problem by what turned out to be a pretty large group of affected cottagers.

Our staff spent significant numbers of hours in the woods trying to dispose of this nuisance bear. It certainly seemed, but could not be confirmed that was more than one bear involved in the over thirty bear break-ins on that island. As we are all painfully aware, MNR refuses responsibility for nuisance bears on islands.

Following days and many long nights providing vigil at various cottages, I implored the MNR for assistance. They ultimately, for the first time provided one of their bear traps to assist in this problem. That's all they provided however. No funding for the significant expense of barging this trap to and from the island, or moving it from one location to another. No funding either for the countless hours our staff spent during the initial hunt, nor for the cost of daily trips to check the trap in the morning and evening and of course refreshing the bait.

Our company owns the only aluminum work barge large enough to fit this bear trap onto. The only other option to transport it would be on one of the 100 tonne barges you see plying the waters with waste containers, excavators and materials used for septic installation. One can imagine the costs of this whole adventure are considerable.

We were successful in trapping one bear, which was ultimately barged back to mainland where we met MNR who towed the trap to the northern border of the Parry Sound District and live released it. That unfortunately was the only bear we captured. We monitored that trap daily until early November, ultimately removing it and returning it to MNR.

In the end, this sizeable cost was borne by us with no assistance from MNR, which of course came as no surprise. I have yet to work out with McLaren Island cottagers who ultimately pays what for the costs.

It should also be noted that we experienced a significant amount of sabotage of the trap. Someone would stealthfully close the trap nightly. Ultimately we were forced to hide the trap on the island, no easy thing to do with a bright green trap bigger than a small car! We even spent time hiding in the woods all night waiting to deal with the saboteur.

I am awaiting word from MNR who are convening a meeting to determine how to deal with this problem in 2012. There are many issues involved, not the least of which is why islanders must fund the costs, when the provincial Bear Wise program funds mainland property owners. I am demanding the provincial Bear Wise manager attend, but I'll wait with baited breath on that one!

There seems to be an inequity here on the Bay, and believe me it's not from lack of trying on many fronts.

Additionally, we/they/someone must design and build a smaller, lighter bear trap that can be loaded onto smaller barges. That would increase the availability of the trap to all islands in our township. MNR is looking into this possibility.

Unfortunately I can almost guarantee bear break-ins will continue in the spring on McLaren Island, and no doubt others as well. There are clearly more nuisance bears that will be back to cause more damage as they break into cottages. Remember once a bear finds a food source, that location is etched permanently in its little brain. And nuisance bears often don't differentiate between one cottage and another; they know there's food in that big box in the woods.

I again implore each and every one of you to not take bear hunting into your own hands. Dispatching or dealing with a bear is not something to take lightly. MNR's provincial Bear Wise staff can be reached at 866-514-2327. I hope you can find a moment to register your frustration. And while you're at it, ask them about prevention methods to discourage a bear in your cottage.

Look to future newsletters for updates and information on this problem.

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