

Don't Feed Wildlife

Why Not Feed Wildlife? For the Safety of People and the Welfare of Wildlife

Many people who love wildlife assume that feeding helps them to survive harsh winters. Instead, these efforts often put the animals at risk of dying or being killed. Animals that are fed grow accustomed to human activity and lose their fear of people. These wild animals may become bold and aggressive, or even dangerous to people and pets.

Even though people may feed high quality food, some animals' digestive systems cannot tolerate supplemental feeding. Additionally, Wyoming Game and Fish officers often must euthanize bears because they associate people with food or have received food rewards.

Feeding may increase mortality of animals on roads if animals are unnaturally concentrated in roadside residential areas where feed is provided.

Concentrations of deer or elk have attracted predators such as mountain lions into residential areas. "While attacks by cougars on people in Teton County have not occurred, we will assuredly invite one by bringing lions into more contact with people by feeding deer." Dr. Joel Berger, Ph.D., Wildlife Conservation Society.

Feeding Is Against Town And County Regulations

Regulations state: No person shall knowingly or intentionally provide supplemental feed attractants to the following animals, unless specifically authorized by an agency of either the State of Wyoming or the United States of America: antelope, bighorn sheep, deer, elk, moose, mountain lions, mountain goats, bobcats, black bears, grizzly bears, raccoons, foxes, lynx, wild bison, wolves and coyotes.

Supplemental attractants are defined as any human food, pet food, hay, forage product or supplement, grain, seed or birdseed, garbage, or other attractant made available to the animals mentioned above. It is important to note that this regulation permits the Wyoming Game and Fish Department to authorize feeding if department biologists determine such is advisable. Visit <http://www.tetonwyo.org> for a copy of the full amendment.

What About Feeding Birds?

The regulations do not prohibit bird feeders, but they do require people who live in Bear Conflict Priority Area 1 to hang bird feeders (including hummingbird feeders) 10 feet off the ground, four feet from anything a bear could climb or stand on and that all bird feeders have a catch basin to prevent seed from getting on the ground. These requirements are in effect from April 1 to November 30 – the time when bears are active. It is important that bird feeders be placed where bears cannot reach them because 40% – nearly half – of all bear conflicts in Teton County are related to bird feeders.