

Bears, trash, people a growing problem in Incline

By Jim Carlton, Wall Street Journal

INCLINE VILLAGE — When Brent and Benét Terry moved into their new home in this upscale Lake Tahoe community recently, they were surprised to meet one of the neighbors: a black bear that had taken up residence in a culvert across the street.

“He’s a pretty good-sized boy,” said Brent Terry, a 61-year-old retired airline pilot. “I’m surprised he can even get in there.”

Incline Village is crawling with bears. As of early this month, there were 66 reported sightings this year in the town of some 9,000 people — up 38 percent from all of last year—and the animals are wreaking havoc. Homes and cars have been broken into and innumerable garbage bins and dumpsters pawed through.

The bears’ attraction to garbage appears to be the crux of the problem, most residents agree. But they are divided over both the proposed long-term solution — a mandate to use more-expensive bear-proof garbage containers — and whether to handle their burly neighbors with tough love or lethal force.

Nevada wildlife officials and private bear-removal services advocate trapping and relocating the animals, frightening them with aversion techniques and, as a last resort, killing them. Bear-friendly activists endorse scaring off bears by yelling and rattling cans of rocks, but not killing them.

“The bears are dying for the transgressions of people,” said Ann Bryant, executive director of BEAR League, a bear-friendly group whose mission is “helping bears and people live peacefully in this world together.”

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