

# Bear sightings facilitate warnings, curiosity

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The last few months have been peppered with bear sightings in and around North Asheville, according to city residents.

Near the end of the school, students at Asheville High received half an hour of free time when the school was temporarily shut down due to the presence of two bear cubs on campus.

Recently, residents at University Place Apartments on Barnard Avenue said they observed several bears digging through a dumpster in broad daylight.

However, UNC Asheville students should not be concerned about the possibility of a life-threatening encounter on their daily walk to class, according to senior and **University Place tenant Matthew Konishi**.

"There were three cubs and a mother bear. They were rooting through the trash can in front of UP and being quite blatant about it. At one point, a car drove through the parking lot. All three of the cubs bolted, and the mother retreated back to the tree line and just stared. As soon as the car was out of the sight, though, they continued going through our trash," Konishi said.

Now at an estimated 5,000 or 6,000, the black bear popu-

lation of Western North Carolina has nearly doubled in the last decade, according to the NC Wildlife Resources Commission.

"One of the most frequent calls we receive throughout the year is, 'I have a bear in my back yard, can you come get it?' We appreciate the opportunity to come out to your home and collect a 200-500 pound wild animal, but we decline. There are so many bears in our area, that it is not uncommon to sight a black bear every now and then," said **Keith Mastin, an employee at the WNC Nature Center**.

Bears that cannot find food in their own habitat are more prone to venture out of the wild and into residential areas where uncovered waste becomes a quick snack. When bears discover food that is easy to access and high in fat or calories, they become conditioned to return to that food source, according to **NC Wildlife Resources Commission Officer Mike Carraway**.

"If you live close to a bear habitat or in an area where there is bear activity, you need to put your garbage in a closed garage or storage area, or keep it in the house until you haul it off. Don't leave it outside overnight," Carraway said.

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Ricky Emmons - Staff Photographer

A black bear rummages at the WNC Nature Center, which features native plants and animals.

# Enrollment decline linked to budget, SAT scores

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Falling enrollment numbers at UNC Asheville are occurring due to budget cuts and a new focus on SAT scores, according to campus officials.

"The budget cuts have had a positive impact on the demographic of UNCA in that the cuts have allowed for smaller class size allowing each student more individual attention with their instructor," said **Archer Gravely, director of institutional research**. "Also, during a recession, it is a recurring trend that public universities

receive more applications due to the lack of jobs available and students are more likely to stay in school. UNCA is not the only University of North Carolina campus to experience enrollment flux."

540 freshmen attended UNCA this fall, down from 595 in 2010, according to institutional research.

"Personally, I believe that since the economy and world are geared more toward math, business and science careers could have something to do with the dropping admission rate since there is less emphasis on a liberal arts degree today,"

said **Sam Barbau, freshman international studies student**.

Institutional research records the mean SAT scores for the past five years for incoming classes. The score stays above 1150 cumulatively, but increases with each new class. The writing portion of the SAT score has maintained an average overall score of 560 or above. Within the UNC system the average SAT score wavers between 1070 and 1085 within the past five year trend.

"While we have experienced a decrease in enrollment of new students we have been focus- see **DECLINE** on page 4

