

# Schreiber and Terrace Bay buy live bear traps

by Darren MacDonald  
The News

Schreiber and Terrace Bay townships have purchased live bear traps to help them cope with their respective bear problems.

The number of traps in the area has increased to three in the last week, including the live trap the local Ministry of Natural Resources office already has.

"It's going to make everyone's job a lot easier," says MNR Conservation Officer Paul Dennis. "It's going to make things easier for the police, who are primarily responsible for public safety, and obviously we're happy because we're able to save wildlife."

The live traps cost \$2,500 each, and are made by a Thunder Bay man named David Johnston.

In setting the cage, the trap door is opened upward and is fastened onto a hook. The trap is then baited and is left in an area where a bear is known to frequent.

Once lured inside, the bear hits a coffee can hanging inside, which has also been baited. The coffee can is suspended from a rope, and once the bear pulls downward on it, the door slams shut, trapping the bear inside.

The bear is then painted to identify it in case it comes back, and is transported away from the area and set free.

"The trap door is quite dangerous, and could seriously hurt someone if they were playing around it," says Terrace Bay Police Chief Wes Fenton.

"Once the schools open, we're planning on bringing the trap to the school to educate the kids on the danger."

The trap door is made of heavy metal, and it swings down with enough force that it could hurt anyone standing in its way.

Since the traps are new to the police forces, both the OPP and Terrace Bay Police are working out a protocol with

the MNR which will outline policies concerning the use of the traps.

"We're drafting a policy which will give the officers a clear direction as to the steps available to us in looking after the bear problem," says Paul Dennis. "(The protocol) will cover things like trap sharing, trap location and trap priorities."

Dennis estimates the MNR has received 80-90 reports of bear sightings so far this year, including 28 reports in one day. In all, they've trapped nine bears this year, including four at Neys Provincial Park and one at the construction camp near Jackfish.

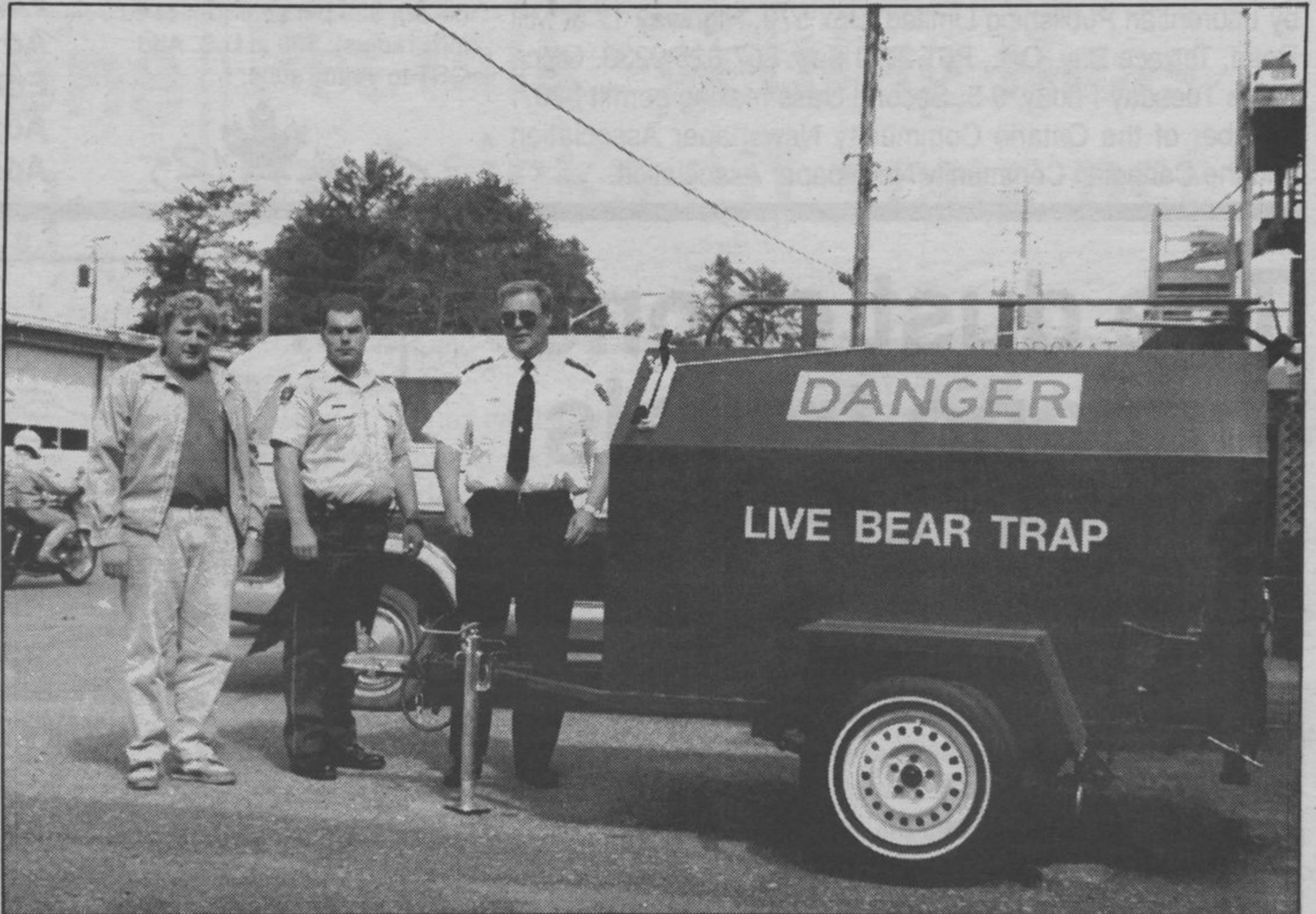
"They're doing exactly what a person would do if they were starving," he says. "They're taking risks. For the bear, coming into town to raid someone's garbage is a risk."

The bears are terrified when they first come into town, Dennis says, but each time after that, they lose a little bit more of their fear.

"And so on, until the bear becomes habituated," he says. "And at that point, they lose their fear of humans and that bear becomes a problem."

Dennis says that bears can be broken down into roughly three categories: when they first come to town, they travel only at night, and are easily scared away.

Once they become used to being in town, however, they are much more bold. They will look for garbage in broad day-



From left: Terrace Bay Reeve Jim Ziegler, Const. Dwight Lundgren and Terrace Bay Police Chief Wes Fenton beside Terrace Bay's new live trap.

light and aren't easily scared away.

In very rare cases, the bear becomes aggressive, actually entering buildings in search of garbage.

"But to put a perspective on this, since we've been keeping records in Ontario only seven people have been killed by bears," he says. "And all of those deaths occurred in three incidents. . . . So it's about a zillion times more likely you'll be struck by lightning than attacked by a bear."

Dennis says he'd like people to take a more tolerant, though cautious, attitude toward bears.

"We live in Northern Ontario, so the bears live in our backyard, or we live in theirs, depending on your point of view," he says. "People should be cautious, but not necessarily alarmed if they see

a bear. And the police want to know about bears that are showing bold or aggressive tendencies."

August will be the worst month for bears, but as berries become available in September and October, Dennis says the problem should level off.

Until then, keeping your garbage indoors until garbage

day will help ease the problem.

Also, never feed a bear, and don't try and shoot a bear yourself.

"Not only is it illegal to discharge a firearm in town, but you risk wounding the bear," he says. "And a wounded bear is going to be scared, and it's going to be angry."

## Thank You

The Terrace Bay Ladies Sloupitch would like to thank the following people and organizations for making our tournament a success:

Ronkainen's Pharmacy, Robinson's, Superior Jewellers, Nugget Foods, The Print Shop, Photo Prints, Strawberry Bouquet, Shamrock Shears, The Bakery, Moonlite Lounge, A & W, the Rec Centre, Moose Lodge, Jamie Speer, Jim Kraeding, Mike Stasula, Linda Orlesky, Bill Roen Sr., Bill Roen Jr., Trevor Mikus. 50/50 draw winner was Rob Barclay of Thunder Bay.

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