

# Hungry brown bears terrorising Siberian villagers: official

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There are an estimated 13,000 wild bears in the Irkutsk region of Siberia, which straddles Lake Baikal, said Alexander Kayankin, an official with the region's wildlife watchdog agency

Famished brown bears are terrorising villagers in Siberia as drought and wildfires force the animals to search for food closer to built-up areas, an official told AFP Wednesday.

"Over the past two weeks, we have recorded 10 cases of hungry [bears](#) entering the outskirts of villages in the Irkutsk region," Alexander Kayankin, an official with the region's wildlife watchdog agency, part of the Russian environment ministry, told AFP.

Wildfires that ravaged some 2,000 square kilometres (750 square miles) of woodland as well as a drought have wiped out the bears' principal foods such as berries and nuts.

Kayankin said there are an estimated 13,000 [wild bears](#) in the Irkutsk region, which straddles Lake Baikal, the world's largest body of freshwater.

He said an old bear was recently "shot on the spot" as locals in a village found him looking for [food](#) in dustbins.

Authorities have sought to reassure local residents and remind them of safety guidelines in case of a bear encounter.

"Do not run away from the animal, climb up on a tree stump to show it your superiority and make a noise to scare it until it goes away", Kayankin said.

"It is useless to look him straight in the eye, as some people incorrectly claim."

Foraging bears regularly make incursions into villages and towns in Russia. In July police started patrolling a cemetery in a far eastern city and escorting mourners after two bears strayed from the woods in search of food.

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