A bear walks into a Connecticut liquor store — and fortunately no one gets hurt

By Steve Annear  |  GLOBE STAFF  |  AUGUST 14, 2018

When the employees at Crazy Bruce's Liquors retell the story, it sounds like a setup for a corny dad joke.

But it was no laughing matter, at least at first: A bear walked into the foyer of the Bristol, Conn., liquor store on Monday afternoon, after slipping past the automatic door at the front entrance.

June Curtin, the store's manager, said she was upstairs in her office when she...
heard a scream from below. She jumped up from her seat and peered out through the office window, which overlooks the store.

There, roaming in the vestibule, was a black bear, she said.

“I was thinking, ‘Is this really happening? Is there a bear in here?’” she said in a telephone interview Tuesday. “It was very scary.”

Curtin said an employee who was downstairs was quick on his feet and managed to lock a second door that led from the foyer into the liquor store, leaving the bear in an enclosed space without access to the main floor.

But as the confused bear paced near the doorway, a customer strolled through the front entrance — and walked right past the animal without noticing it.

“He was looking straight on and never saw the bear,” Curtin said. “The manager was yelling, ‘There’s a bear there, get into the store!’ ”

The worker opened the second door and got the unwitting customer safely inside.

“When he got into the store and the door was closed, the customer looked back out and he couldn’t believe it,” Curtin said. “The bear was right to his right.”

Crazy Bruce’s Liquors posted a video to Facebook on Monday of the incident, making light of what had happened since no one was hurt and no damage was done to the store.

“The BEAR necessities! I guess our four legged friends enjoy Crazy Bruce’s too,” the company wrote on Facebook. “Our Bristol store had quite the visitor today!!!”

In the video, which was captured on a surveillance camera set up above the store’s entrance, the bear can be seen sauntering from the parking lot toward a row of...
shops at the plaza.

The animal then strolls down the sidewalk in the direction of the liquor store, taking stock of nearby vehicles that seemed to slow down so that the drivers could gawk at what was happening.

As the bear gets closer to the liquor store’s entrance, it picks up the pace and begins to trot.

Once by the store, it does a quick spin, and then triggers the sensor to the automated door, slinking inside and disappearing from view.

A few seconds later, the unwitting customer can be seen heading in through the liquor store’s door.

A second video of the bear, obtained by NBC Connecticut, shows the animal inside the foyer from a different angle.

In that video, an employee suddenly notices the bear’s presence and races toward the second door to lock it. The customer walks in while the bear’s back is turned. The employee briefly unlocks the second door into the store, and ushers the man to safety.

Eventually, Curtin said, the bear again triggered the sensor to open the door leading back outside. The animal escaped and ran across busy Route 6 toward the woods, she said.

Workers at the store contacted police, who in turn notified animal control, according to Curtin.

The Connecticut State Environmental Conservation Police responded to the scene, but by that time, the bear was long gone, a spokesman for the Department of
Energy and Environmental Protection said.

“The bear was last seen on Route 6. No further action was taken,” the department said in a statement.

According to environmental officials, black bear sightings in Bristol are common. Between August 15, 2017, and August 12, 2018, there have been 153 black bear sightings in Bristol, the agency said.

For Curtin, she’s just glad that nobody — including the bear — was hurt.

“It turned out OK. It could have been so much worse. But like I said, the manager at the time who was closest to the door did the right thing to get it locked,” said Curtin. “We’re all laughing now. But everyone was really lucky that nothing serious happened.”

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