



New Hampshire's Black Bear

The American black bear (*Ursus americanus*), which has made a remarkable recovery from record low numbers in the mid-1800s, is now common throughout New Hampshire. The statewide bear population is estimated at 5,600, and regional densities average 0.6 bears/mi².



Although black bears are generally shy and usually avoid humans, they are opportunistic and will seek out human-related foods, particularly when natural foods are limited. Minimizing conflicts between bears and people is critically important and a high priority for wildlife managers. Maintaining a strong and sustainable bear population into the future will depend on a public that is motivated to be responsible and proactive in securing food attractants.

Bears are part of our native heritage and, for many, serve as a symbol of wildness and an indicator of quality, diverse habitat. Bears are highly intelligent, resourceful, and very effective at locating high-quality food resources. A black bear sighting typically leaves wildlife watchers and tourists fascinated, particularly when they are from areas where bears are less common. From an ecological standpoint, bears serve important roles. As an opportunistic feeder, they help clean up carcasses of animals that die due to various causes. As an animal that feeds on a tremendous diversity of tree and shrub species, they serve as a significant seed disperser. Bears fill an essential niche and they are an important component of our landscape.

IF YOU ENCOUNTER A BEAR

In Your Backyard:



- From a comfortable distance, make loud noises by shouting, banging pots and pans, or using an air horn to deter the bear from the area.
- When the bear leaves, remove potential attractants such as garbage, bird seed, or pet food.
- Ask neighbors to remove attractants.

At a Close Distance or in a Confined Area:



- Begin repeating "hey bear" in a calm voice, maintain eye contact, and slowly back away. Do not run or climb trees.
- Give the bear a clear escape route (do not corner it).

Remember, conflicts with bears are a community issue. It is important to work together to remove bear attractants.



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BLACK BEARS

HOW TO AVOID CONFLICTS, PROTECT YOUR PROPERTY, AND KEEP BEARS WILD



While hundreds of bear conflicts are reported each year, most can be prevented by simply removing or securing common bear attractants.



BIRD SEED

1 REMOVE & STORE

- Only feed birds when bears are inactive, generally between December 1 and April 1
- Dispose of unused seed
- Store feeders indoors

2 SECURE & CLEAN

- Clean up all bird seed by April 1. Visit bearwise.org for feeder-free ways to attract birds year round



GARBAGE

- Store garbage cans in a building, or secure them with an electric fence
- Take garbage to curb on morning of pickup

- Keep outbuildings and garage doors closed at all times
- Use bear-resistant dumpsters or garbage cans
- Dumpster lids/doors should be kept closed and latched
- Use airtight garbage cans and ammonia to control odor when storing in an outbuilding



GRILLS

- Store grill inside when not in use

- Burn off food residue
- Keep grease trap clean



POULTRY & LIVESTOCK

- Do not allow animals to range free

- Protect poultry and livestock with an electric fence



PET & LIVESTOCK FOOD

- Store livestock and pet food inside
- Feed pets inside

If you feed your pets or livestock outside:

- Clean dishes daily
- Remove leftover food daily

For more information on black bears in New Hampshire, please visit us online at wildnh.com.

Visit bearwise.org for printable resources and practical ways to keep people, animals, and property safe and bears wild.

