



A FED BEAR IS A DEAD BEAR



www.georgiawildlife.com

Georgia Black Bear Information

Information found here includes the following:

- *Black Bear Fact Sheet
- *News Release: Black Bear Awareness 101
- *Black Bear Photos
- *Black Bear Range Map

Media requiring assistance related to black bears (including use of the above image) can contact the Public Affairs Office at 770-918-6400.

The Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Wildlife Resources Division
BLACK BEAR FACT SHEET

HISTORY

The Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) symbolizes the wild qualities of the state. Prior to the eighteenth century, bears were common in Georgia. However, habitat loss, unrestricted hunting, and overall degradation of habitat due to human development contributed to a serious population decline. Thanks to sound wildlife management practices, bears have recovered to the present population of approximately 2,200 statewide.

RANGE

Black bears can typically be found in three distinct regions in Georgia, although they will range over larger areas in search of food. They can be found in the North Georgia mountains, along the Ocmulgee River drainage system in the central part of the state and in the Okefenokee Swamp in the southeast. Young male bears often will roam large areas until they are able to establish their own territory.

HABITAT

Bears typically live in swamps and forested areas, especially mature mixed pine stands that offer a plentiful supply of natural foods and trees and thickets that they can escape to for security. Standing, hollow trees are common den sites for Georgia bears. However, brush piles, rock crevices or other places that offer protection may be used.

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

The typical life span of a bear is about 8 to 15 years. Wild bears tend to live 23 percent longer than "garbage" bears (those that exist on unnatural foods). Adult bears are generally up to six feet in length and about three feet high at the shoulder. Female adult bears can weigh up to 300 pounds and attain breeding status about 3.5 - 4.5 years of age. Adult males can weigh over 500 pounds and may breed as early as 1.5 years of age. Bears have poor eyesight but an excellent sense of smell. They are good tree climbers, can swim well and are able to run at speeds of up to 30 miles per hour. Female bears become sexually mature at two to five years of age. The breeding season is in July and cubs are born in the den in late January or February. Bear cubs weigh about eight ounces when born, are relatively undeveloped and entirely dependent on the mother. Cubs stay with their mother throughout the first year, den with her during the following winter and stay with her until she finally drives them away the following spring. Due to this extended care for their young, females only produce a litter every two years.

DIET

Bears are considered omnivorous, meaning their diet consists of whatever is readily available at that time of year. Diets vary according to what part of the state the bear calls home. However, the majority of their natural diet consists

of berries, fruits, acorns, grasses and animal matter, including insects or mammals-even deer. When houses, camps or recreation areas are located within range, bears are naturally attracted to the smells associated with cooking and garbage disposal. Other non-natural attractants include pet food, birdseed, suet, compost piles, gardens, beehives and cornfields. Bears can become attracted to human food when their natural diet sources are scarce. Non-natural type foods are typically easier to obtain and associated with humans, therefore luring bears away from natural food sources and dissolving the bear's natural fear of humans. A bear typically will remain in an area where food can be found until that food supply is gone or until other measures are taken.

NUISANCE

WRD Game Management offices receive numerous bear nuisance calls every year. Typically, the caller expects WRD to capture and relocate the bear. This is usually not the best solution for residents or bears as other bears may move into the "abandoned" territory or the relocated bear, trying to find its way back, is commonly hit by a car. In addition, relocated bears will typically enter into territory conflicts with other bears, resulting in injury or death of one or both bears.

For each nuisance situation, a WRD associate evaluates why the bear is causing problems. Most problems can be resolved through simple actions such as taking down bird feeders, taking in pet food, or storing garbage in an area unavailable to bears like a garage. Removing or making attractants unavailable to bears is a critical step in resolving bear/human conflicts. It is equally important for people to be patient. It may take several days for the bear to learn that it is no longer going to be provided with a free meal. In most cases, the bear will simply move on when the food source is no longer present. Installation of an electric fence may be necessary when beeyards and gardens are involved. When camping or hiking, store food items in a vehicle or hoist food packs into the air away from the trunks of trees. If left alone, young bears searching for territory will usually find their way back to a more traditional range. Capture and relocation is a last resort and only warranted if a bear persists in being a nuisance and presents a safety threat to residents or major property damage is likely.

BEAR/HUMAN CONFLICTS

There are no recorded bear attacks on humans in Georgia, and no fatalities. There have only been two documented fatal black bear attacks in the Southeastern United States.





FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

BLACK BEAR AWARENESS 101 Keep Food Unavailable to Avoid Keeping Bears in Area

SOCIAL CIRCLE, Ga. - Black bears spark a wide array of human emotions. Curiosity and awe come to mind for some; caution and fear emerge for others. When observed in human development areas, panic sometimes proves the most common reaction. During spring and summer, the likelihood of bear sightings increases, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources' Wildlife Resources Division encourages residents to educate themselves in order to avoid panic and to peacefully co-exist with these magnificent animals.

As the human population continues to grow and expand, and as we settle into areas shared by a variety of wildlife species, including the black bear, it is only natural that we increasingly observe these animals in urban settings.

"A black bear sighting is something that few people ever forget - especially when it is in your backyard. Human populations have grown and expanded into areas traditionally inhabited by bears and when conflicts arise, it is unfortunately the bear that is perceived as a threat or nuisance," says Wildlife Resources Division Assistant Game Management Chief John W. Bowers.

"We encourage all Georgia citizens, especially those in known bear areas, to educate themselves about bears and bear behavior, be responsible and help prevent conflicts from occurring," says Bowers. Black bears are most commonly found in three areas of the state - the north Georgia mountains, the Ocmuglee River drainage system in central Georgia and the Okefenokee Swamp in the southeast. However, black bears can and do range over larger areas in search of food, especially in the spring, when natural food sources are scarce. Young male bears are also known to roam larger areas in an effort to establish their own territory.

Because black bears are omnivorous, their diet consists of whatever food is readily available at any given time of year. Thus, black bears are reasonably attracted to the scents of human food, pet food, bird seed, beehives and even compost piles, especially in springtime, when natural food source availability is low. When bears can easily obtain such non-natural food sources, they begin to associate humans with food and as a result, lose their innate fear of humans. Wildlife Resources Division biologists encourage residents to heed the following tips in an effort to minimize bear attractants and lessen the likelihood of nuisance bears:

- NEVER, under any circumstances, feed a bear. Such activity is unlawful.
- Keep items, such as grills, pet food or bird feeders off-limits to bears. Clean and store grills when not in use, keep pet food indoors and take bird feeders down if bears are in the area.

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- Make sure trashcans are bear-proof or kept indoors.
- When camping or picnicking, keep your site clean. Never leave food or coolers unattended. Never keep food in or near your tent. Store food in properly sealed containers and whenever possible, store these containers in a vehicle. If camping in backcountry areas, hang packs or food bags at least ten feet off the ground and at least four feet from the trunk of a tree.

"The division receives numerous calls each year regarding bear sightings and requests for bear relocation," says Bowers. "Relocation is seldom a solution. For example, relocated bears often attempt to return to the same territory, other bears may move into the vacated area and adult male bears often kill other bears, especially young males, when relocated into new territory. Therefore, relocation should only be considered in extreme cases."

Residents initially should alert Wildlife Resources Division officials of the bear's presence, and take the actions previously described to resolve nuisance bear problems. Most often, if residents remove the attractant, the bear will move on and not return. However, if the bear persists for several days, residents should contact the nearest Wildlife Resources Division Game Management office.

Though the American black bear (*Ursus americanus*) is now considered the most common bear in North America and the only bear found in Georgia, at one point the species was nearly eradicated from the state due to poaching and habitat loss. Yet, because of sound wildlife management practices, Georgia's current black bear population is estimated between 2,300 and 2,500.

For more information regarding black bears, visit www.georgiawildlife.com, contact a Wildlife Resources Division Game Management office or call (770) 918-6416. The public also can visit their local library to check out a copy of an informational DVD entitled, "Where Bears Belong: Black Bears in Georgia."

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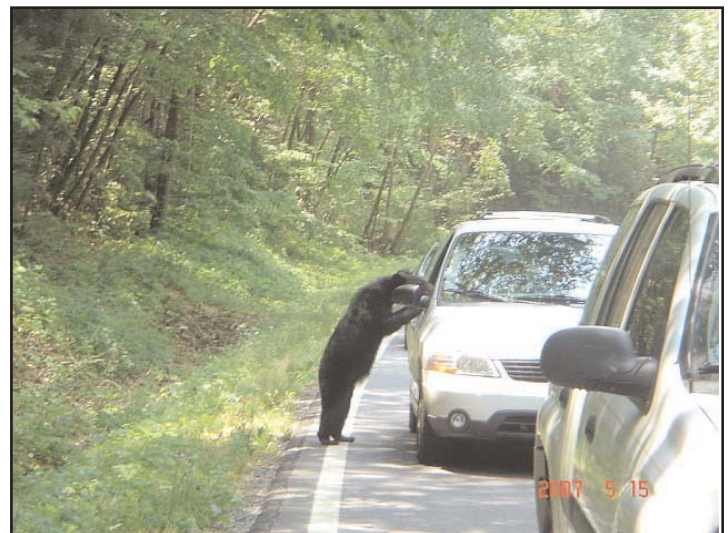
Black Bear Photos



Tagged bear with radio collar

This bear (seen in photo to the right) clearly connected the link between people and food. Due to its inability to stay away from people and because people continued to feed it, it had to be destroyed.

**Please don't feed bears.
A fed bear is a dead bear.**



Contact Melissa Cummings (melissa.cummings@dnr.state.ga.us or 770-918-6788) or Jennifer Barnes (jennifer.barnes@dnr.state.ga.us 770-918-6795) with the WRD Public Affairs Office if you need electronic copies of any of the above images.

Black Bear Range Map

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