

## Living In Bear Country



**Black bears are large,  
powerful wild animals and  
should be treated with respect.**



NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF  
Fish and Wildlife

**Be alert in areas  
where bears are  
active. DO NOT  
approach any  
bear in the wild.**

New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife  
P.O. Box 400  
Trenton, NJ 08625-0400  
[www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com)

## Living In Bear Country

Since the 1980's the population of black bears in New Jersey has been steadily increasing — along with the number of New Jersey residents. As a result, bears and people are coming into contact with each other more than ever before.

The New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife has implemented a black bear management plan that not only assures the continued survival of a black bear population in New Jersey but also addresses the property damage and safety concerns of residents and agriculturists.

An important element of the management plan is the education of homeowners in bear country.

Proper solid waste management techniques have proven to be the most effective and efficient method of preventing black bear nuisance problems around homes.

Proper storage of residential garbage is the best method for prevention of nuisance problems. All garbage must be stored in airtight containers, in a secure area.

Store garbage cans against the inside walls of a garage or basement, or in a secure shed.

Wash garbage containers at least once a week with a disinfectant solution to remove any odors.

The outside feeding of dogs and cats should be done during daylight hours. All uneaten food and scraps, as well as the food bowl, should be removed immediately after feeding.

Birdfeeders should be suspended from a free hanging wire so that the bottom of the feeder is at least 8' off the ground. Feeders should be hung in daylight hours only, preferably between December 1 and April 1, when bears are least active.

In high density bear areas, crops, beehives and small livestock may be vulnerable to bear damage. Electric fencing is sometimes effective in controlling bear damage. Fencing information is available from our Wildlife Services Unit.

Black bears learn very quickly. Bears that associate food with people may become aggressive and dangerous. This may lead to personal injury, property damage and the need to destroy problem animals.

Please note that the mere presence of a black bear is not considered a problem. If you are experiencing nuisance or damage problems related to bears, please contact the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife's Wildlife Services Unit at (908) 735-8793. Sightings can also be reported to this office.



## If A Bear Comes Into Your Yard:

Remain calm. Make the bear aware of your presence.

Do not feed the bear!

Keep at least 15 feet away from the bear.

Make sure the bear has an escape route.

Yell, bang pots and pans, or use an airhorn to scare the bear away.

Note that the bear may utter a series of huffs, snap (pop) its jaws, and swat the ground. These are all warning signs that you are too close. Slowly back away.



If the bear will not leave, move to your car or a building, if available. Notify proper authorities immediately if you encounter an aggressive or non-yielding bear.

## Remember

**Use common sense in a bear encounter — never approach the animal.**

If a bear stands on its hind legs or moves closer it may be trying to get a better view or detect smells in the air. Make your presence known by clapping, talking or waving your arms.

Black bears will sometimes “bluff charge” when cornered, threatened or attempting to steal food. Stand your ground, and then slowly back away. Do not run from the bear.

If you encounter a bear at close range, remain standing upright, avoid direct eye contact, back up slowly and speak in a calm, assertive, and assuring voice.

To learn more about New Jersey's black bears, visit the Division of Fish and Wildlife's web site at [www.njfishandwildlife.com](http://www.njfishandwildlife.com).



## Black Bears In New Jersey

Black bears are the largest land mammal in the Garden State and live in forested areas throughout northern New Jersey. They are native to New Jersey, but were negatively impacted by the clearing of land for settlements, timber and farms, and by indiscriminate killing. As a result, their numbers decreased and their range was reduced to the most remote areas in the northern part of the state. The population recovered after being afforded the protection of game animal status, and habitat improved as forests matured.



### Black Bear Facts



- ❑ Black bears inhabit the forested regions of northern New Jersey. Prime habitat consists of mixed hardwood forests, dense swamps and forested wetlands.
- ❑ Black bear numbers have been increasing and their range expanding south and east since the 1980's.
- ❑ The New Jersey bear population has grown to at least 1400 in the year 2001 and it is estimated that a minimum of 350 new cubs are born each year.
- ❑ Bears are highly adaptable, living in and among human development. Home range sizes range up to 60 square miles for males and 10 square miles for females.
- ❑ Bears can live more than 20 years.

- ❑ Bears learn quickly and have excellent senses of smell and hearing.
- ❑ Black bears are omnivorous, eating plant and animal matter. They are opportunistic feeders and will supplement their diet with food derived from humans.
- ❑ Approximately 75% of a black bear's diet consists of plant material, including skunk cabbage, grasses, forbs, tubers and bulbs, soft mast (blueberries, huckleberries, raspberries, blackberries, wild cherries) and hard mast (acorns, beechnuts, hickory nuts).
- ❑ Animal matter includes bees and other insects (adult, larvae and eggs), small mammals, bird eggs, white-tailed deer fawns, road-killed deer, and carrion.
- ❑ Adult females average 185 pounds; adult males average 396 pounds.
- ❑ Breeding season runs from late May until August, peaking in June and July.
- ❑ Cubs are born in January, weigh about 8 ounces when born, are blind and covered with thin hair. Average litter size is 3, ranging from 1 to 6.
- ❑ Cubs travel with the female until she breeds again, 16-18 months later.
- ❑ Black bears den for the winter, becoming dormant to avoid periods of food shortages and severe weather. Bears do not eat, drink, urinate or defecate while denning. Den sites include rock cavities, brush piles, open nests and hollow trees.
- ❑ Black bears can run up to 35 miles per hour. Bears are strong swimmers.
- ❑ Bears are excellent climbers. Both adults and cubs will climb trees for food and to escape disturbances.