



LIVING WITH BLACK BEARS

KNOW

Know about bears and bear issues

- **LEARN ABOUT BEARS** - It may seem academic, but there's a practical reason for people who live around bears to know more about them. Learning about bears and bear behavior allows us all to better understand bears and prevent and respond to bear issues.
- **SHARING INFORMATION** - Learning something for oneself is useful, but only the first step. Share useful information about bears, how to prevent bear issues, and what to do/who to call in the event of a bear issue with your friends, family, and neighbors.

PREVENT

Stop bear issues before they start

- **DON'T FEED BEARS** - **Never** feed bears directly or deliberately leave food out for bears or other animals. Nuisance bear issues, from the most minor to the most severe, almost always begin over food. It is for this reason that feeding bears is illegal.
- **SECURE ALL TRASH** - Limit bear access to garbage. Store trash securely in garbage bins and store bins in secure areas. Always bag garbage, completely close and never overfill cans esp. those with food, diapers, or other smelly trash. Use latches if possible.
- **CLEAN, TREAT & TIME TRASH** - Wash out your recyclables, disposable food containers. Bag and treat trash with a half cup of ammonia, pepper, or mothballs to deter bears if bears become issue. If possible, keep trash in a shed/garage until morning of pickup.
- **SECURE GRILLS, FOOD** - Clean grills after use to control smell. Troops training in the field and campers should keep their areas clean, securing food in coolers, in vehicles, bear canisters or roped up in bear bags in trees where bears can't reach food.
- **SECURE PET FOOD, BIRDSEED** - Do not leave out open pet food. Feed pets indoors. NYSDEC discourages summer bird-feeding but advises homeowners who do to feed to keep seed, feeders off ground. Store all pet food, birdseed securely indoors.

RESPOND

How to respond if you encounter a bear

- **STAY CALM** - Black bears are cautious and normally very shy of people. Bears almost always flee. Do not panic and run. Bears may chase running animals or people. Do not approach or corner a bear. Bears may react aggressively. Just stay calm.
- **STAY AWAY** - Stay or get to a safe distance away from the bear. If a bear does not leave, get inside or put a barrier - (trees, rock, fence, etc.) between you and the bear. If you see a treed bear or responders (MPs, NRB) dealing with a bear, please stay back.
- **BE LOUD** - If a bear is getting too close to you, your camp or home, make loud noises as you move back. Clap your hands, yell, whistle, bang pots together, etc. This will usually enough to scare away a bear. This also lets other people in the area know.
- **BE BIG** - In the very rare event you can neither leave nor scare the bear with noise alone, make yourself seem big. If in a group, stand together. If alone, raise your arms. Don't look the bear in its eyes. A bear may interpret eye contact as a challenge.
- **KEEP WATCH** - If possible, keep an eye on the bear from a building, vehicle or safe distance away. Do not follow or approach bear. If you're out in the woods and encounter a bear, watch to make sure it leaves and keep an eye out in case it returns.
- **REPORT ISSUE** - Report bear issues to local wildlife responders as soon as possible so that we can best respond for the sake of human and animal safety. Even if the individual bear has already left the area reporting lets responders track ongoing issues.

REPORT

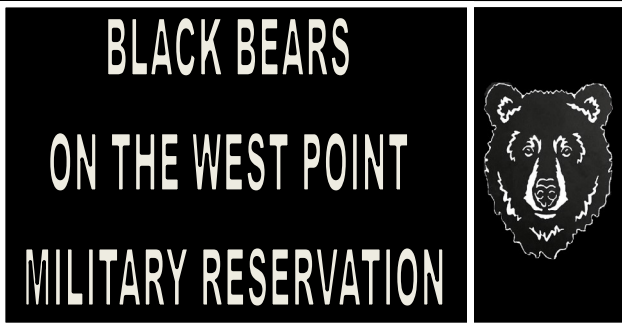
Know when and what to report and who to contact

- **WHEN TO REPORT:** Call right away If you see a bear 1) near where people are 2) is being fed or baited. 3) hurt, sick or dead. 4) has been harvested illegally.
- **WHAT TO REPORT:** Include: 1) when & 2) where bear issue happened, 3) what bear did and 4) where bear is (if known), 5) your name and phone number
- **CONTACT:** West Point Game Wardens via the Military Police Sgt's Desk at: 845-938-3333 (anytime); Natural Resources: 845-938-2314, -7122. (M-F, 0745-1630).



**KNOW. PREVENT.
RESPOND. REPORT.**

BE BEAR SMART.



BLACK BEARS AT WEST POINT

Few, if any, animals at West Point evoke a greater mix of emotions than bears. Their imposing size and power scare us. Their dog-like faces and human-like personalities entertain us. Their elusiveness, remarkable senses, and physical abilities impress us. And nuisance bears certainly enrage and frustrate those of us they inconvenience. These feelings are, while not all desirable, understandable. So what can we do about black bears in our area?

This brochure seeks to inform readers about black bears and nuisance black bear issues. This, we hope, will in turn lead to less fear and frustration, greater respect and better decision-making when it comes to bears and interactions with them. Interactions include trash management, bear encounter response, etc. What follows in this brochure is a brief description of the species in addition to some useful information on living with bears.

While we hope it informs and prepares its readers, this brochure is by no means a comprehensive guide. For more, visit NYSDEC website: www.dec.ny.gov.



AMERICAN BLACK BEAR

(Ursus americanus)

Description

- Black bears are the largest animal in our area, growing to over 600 lbs., but adult males average 300 lbs. and adult females around 200 lbs.
- Black bears have a wide geographic range and are found from Alaska and N. Canada, t/o the US south to S. Mexico, incl. t/o New York State.
- Black bears, as their name suggests, normally have black or very dark brown fur. Eastern black bears, like those here, may also have a white chest blaze.
- Black bears have erect, round ears, a long brown narrow muzzle, sharp curved claws and a very short tail.
- Young adult bears can be parsed from old bears by the proportions of their ears to their head size and of their head size to overall body size.
- Bears, because of their size and power, are thought of as naturally aggressive but black bears are shy, secretive animals that usually flee from people.

Ecology & Range

- Black bears have a wide geographic range and are found from Alaska and N. Canada, throughout the US south to S. Mexico, incl. t/o New York State.
- Black bears live solitary, long-lived lives (into 20s often, rarely to 30s/40s) preferring access to wooded areas with an abundance of food and cover.
- Females (sows) have litters of 1-6 cubs, with 2-3 being the average. Cubs den with mom for a winter and then become independent around a year and half old.
- Black bears have large home ranges. Females range up to 10-20 sq. miles and males range 20-60 sq miles, up to and even over 100 sq. miles in some areas.
- Black bears are normally most active in early morning and late evening hours, but it is possible to see a bear active at any time of the day or night.

Hibernation

- Hibernation is a period of inactivity and low metabolism in some warm-blooded animals in winter when food is scarce. Bears are famous hibernators.
- In fall, bears feed heavily to boost their fat reserves. They then den under trees, boulders, burrows or logs and sleep for the next 4-6 months.
- Hibernating bears efficiently use energy by slowing their breathing, heartbeat, and metabolism. They also slightly drop their body temperature.

Diet

- Black bears are omnivores. Their diet incl. leaves, grass, berries, nuts, and seeds. They also dig for grubs, scavenge carcasses and prey on animals.
- Bears, if attracted, will raid human areas for food incl. trash, crops, birdseed, honey and pet food. This brings them into conflict with humans.

Senses & Physical Abilities

- Black bears are endowed with some amazing senses incl. good eyesight, great hearing, and an incredible sense of smell, ranging up to a mile.
- The long curved claws black bears have make them adept tree climbers. Despite their size, they are capable of running over 30 MPH and are also good swimmers.

Harvesting: Black bears are protected in New York as a big game species. They may be hunted during in season per NYS Regulations. For more information, go to the NYSDEC website at: www.dec.ny.gov.

Mandatory Harvest Check: Bear taken at West Point in Regular Season must be processed by Natural Resources staff. All hunting is coordinated via and all harvests in any season are reported at : www.westpoint.isportsman.net

Q&A: BLACK BEAR FAQs, BROWN BEARS

Q: Is a black bear with cubs more likely to attack?
Actually, no. A mother black bear is more likely to tree her cubs. Black bear attacks are incredibly rare.

Q: Why can't nuisance black bears just be killed?
A: Destroying a bear is an absolute last resort as a management strategy and doesn't fix the true problem.

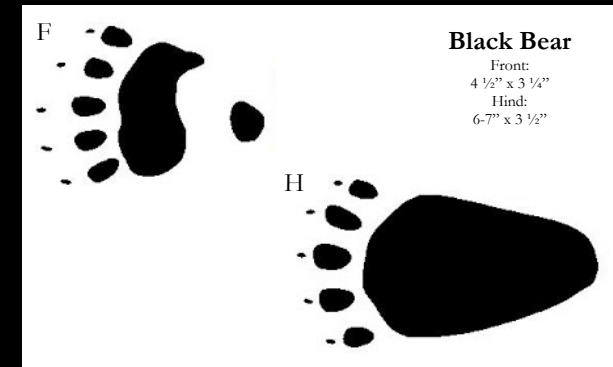
Q: Why can't nuisance black bears just be moved?
A: Bear relocations rarely work out. Bears will travel long distances to return to their home range.

Q: What good are black bears to nature?
A: Black bears help spread and sow plant seeds, and sometimes prey on and scavenge animals, and recycle nutrients.

Q: What good are black bears to people?
A: Beyond the above ecological roles, bears also have historical, cultural, recreational, and educational value to people.

Q: Are there brown bears here?
A: No. There are no brown (aka grizzly) bears in New York. In the U.S., they only live in five states out west - AK, ID, MT, WA, & WY.

KNOW YOUR TRACKS



BLACK BEARS & MAN

History

- Black bears are native to this region, but in the late 1800s, unrestricted hunting and habitat loss led to a drastic decrease in bears across the state.
- Since the mid-1900s, hunting regulations and state land preservation has helped black bear populations to greatly recover and expand in range in recent years.

Nuisance Bears

- Nuisance bears are bears that enter human areas to raid trash and birdfeeders for food. They alarm people, damage property, and drag trash about.
- Inexperienced, juvenile bears are more likely to be nuisance offenders than experienced older bears but bears of any age can become nuisance bears.
- Spring and summer, especially during droughts are the periods of greatest nuisance bear activity but nuisance bears can show up any time of year.