



# State of New Jersey

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DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

NATURAL & HISTORIC RESOURCES

DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE

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VISIT OUR WEBSITE [WWW.NJFISHANDWILDLIFE.COM](http://WWW.NJFISHANDWILDLIFE.COM)

CHRIS CHRISTIE

*Governor*

KIM GUADAGNO

*Lt. Governor*

BOB MARTIN

*Commissioner*

August 1, 2017

Honorable Michael Giordano Jr  
263 Somerset Street  
North Plainfield, NJ 07060-4895

Dear Mayor:

Even though bear complaints and sightings are down significantly this year due to management efforts in the form of expanded hunting, New Jersey's black bears are currently searching for food in preparation for the winter, and there may be encounters with residents and nuisance complaints. I am writing to request your assistance in distributing important public-safety information and to let you know how we can help your police officers respond to complaints.

As part of an on-going public-education effort, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) prepared the enclosed one-page flier, "Be a Good Neighbor – Be Bear Aware," to help your residents learn more about living safely near black bears. By outlining simple steps for discouraging nuisance bears in your communities, this public-safety flier can minimize the potential for conflicts between people and bears, and reduce the number of incidents that must be handled by your police department or DEP staff.

**I am asking your municipality to help DEP distribute this public-safety flier by duplicating it and enclosing it in your next direct mailing to all residents, and by putting the link to this information on your township website. <http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/bearfacts.htm>.**

Though the majority of New Jersey's black bears live in the northwestern portion of the state, sightings have been reported throughout the State, so residents in every community can benefit from the safety information in the flier. And folks visiting the many parks, wildlife management areas, and other open spaces in bear country will benefit from knowing how to react to an encounter with a black bear.

The flier reminds residents that feeding bears – intentionally or unintentionally by carelessly leaving out food or garbage – is dangerous both for people and bears. Legislation enacted in 2004 prohibits bear feeding, and it is a significant tool in our efforts to avoid problems between people and bears. We recognize that enforcing this bear-feeding ban may present a considerable challenge to some municipal police departments. However, we also know that feeding black bears has serious consequences; bears that learn to associate people with food are more likely to become a nuisance. Bears that pose a public-safety threat will be euthanized.



Working together, DEP and municipal police departments have been able to respond quickly to residents' complaints about nuisance bears, protecting residents from possible injury and averting property damage. Since November 2000, more than 1,380 local and State law enforcement officers, and State, county and municipal park rangers have completed DEP's Black Bear Response Training Course, taught by our state-certified firearms instructors and bear research/control biologists.

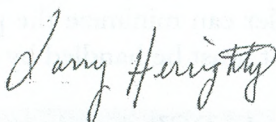
We strongly encourage all sworn law enforcement officers with firearms qualifications certified by the New Jersey Police Training Commission to take this valuable training course. Your police officers will learn how to use conditioning to discourage nuisance bears from interacting with people and to humanely euthanize a bear that presents a serious threat to public safety and property. Officers interested in the training can register by calling Lt. Tom O'Rourke at 609-947-8680, or 609-259-2120.

DEP will continue responding to Category I and some Category II bear complaints in your municipality, including setting traps for bears that break into homes or vehicles, approach people to within 10 feet, kill pets or protected livestock, and some bears in urban areas that are unable to leave the area. Bear complaints that local police are unable to handle should be referred to DEP's Action Hotline at (877) 927-6337. We will prioritize our field responses based upon the level of risk to public safety, the probability of capturing the bear safely, and available DEP personnel. Whenever appropriate, we will advise police already on the scene on how to handle the situation.

After business hours and on weekends, a DEP duty officer will be available through the hotline to provide guidance to responding local officers and to make the decision on whether an on-site response by a DEP person is warranted. Police departments that do not require DEP assistance are asked to report bear-related activity by calling (908) 735-8793 or by faxing a bear incident report form to (908)735-6161.

During the past several years, we have worked closely with municipalities to protect New Jersey's residents and our wildlife, and I greatly appreciate your assistance in continuing this successful partnership.

Sincerely,



Larry Herrighty  
Director

Enclosure



## Did You Know?

- ❖ Black bears are usually solitary animals that are most active at dawn and dusk.
- ❖ Black bears have excellent senses of smell and hearing.
- ❖ Black bears can run up to 35 miles per hour. They are strong swimmers and excellent climbers. Both adults and cubs will climb trees for food and to escape disturbances.
- ❖ Black bears eat both plants and animals. Their diet mostly consists of skunk cabbage, berries, wild cherries, acorns and beechnuts. They also eat insects, small mammals and dead animals.
- ❖ Black bears are opportunistic feeders and will supplement their diet with food or garbage left out by people.
- ❖ Adult females average 185 pounds; adult males average 400 pounds.
- ❖ Not all black bears are black. Across North America, they can be brown, cinnamon, blonde, white and even gray-blue! Fifteen percent of New Jersey's bears have a white chest blaze.
- ❖ Black bears are not true hibernators. In their winter den, they enter a period of dormancy, called torpor, to avoid severe weather and food shortages. Den sites include rock cavities, brush piles, open ground nests and hollow trees. Bears may leave their den if disturbed or in search of food on mild winter days.
- ❖ Breeding season runs from late May until August. The average litter size is three cubs weighing about 8 to 16 ounces each. Cubs remain with their mother until she breeds again.

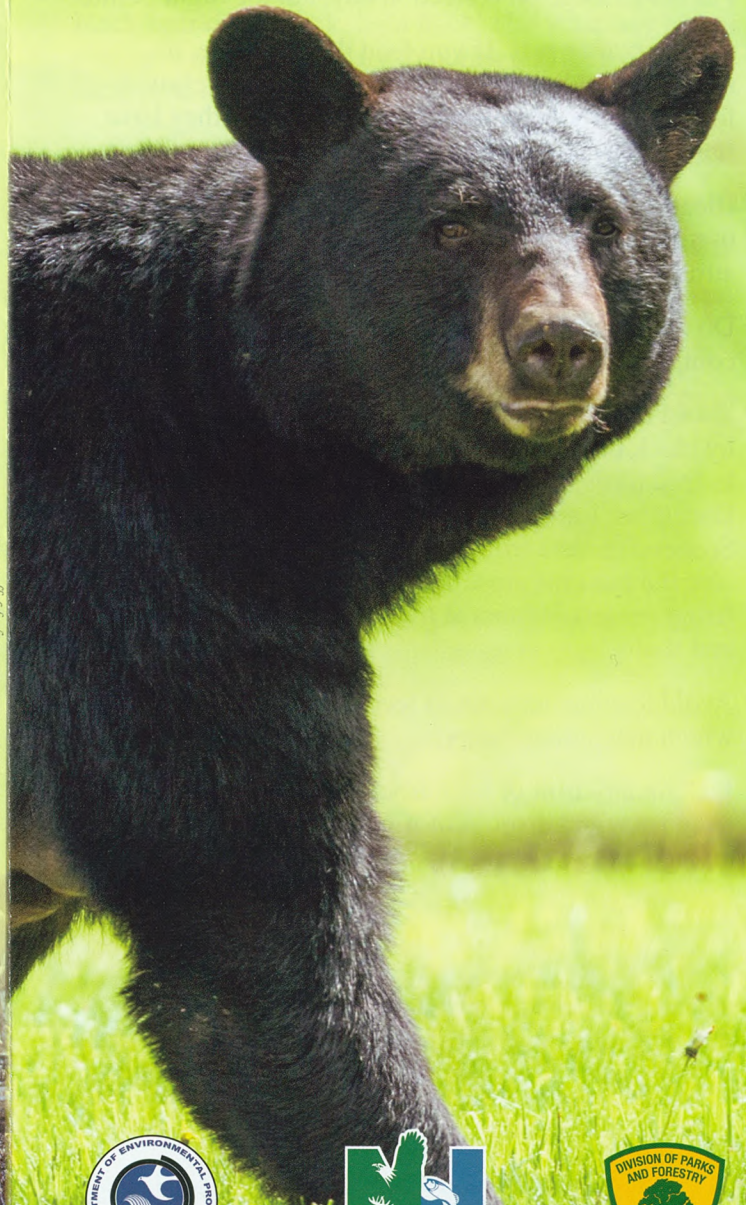


New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife

**Remember: Immediately notify local police or the DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife at 1 (877) WARN DEP; if you encounter an aggressive bear.**

# Know the BEAR FACTS

## Black Bears in New Jersey



Front Cover Photo Courtesy of Jeff Craven



New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife



# Know the Bear Facts

Native to New Jersey, black bears are the largest land mammal in the Garden State. Their prime habitat consists of mixed hardwood forests, dense swamps and forested wetlands. Nearly wiped out a century ago by habitat destruction and indiscriminate killing, black bears today are thriving, particularly in the northwestern area of the state. Their range is expanding south and east and black bears have been sighted in all of New Jersey's 21 counties.

The mere presence of a black bear is not considered a problem. Generally, bears tend to be wary of humans. Residents may observe bears near their homes. It is important not to leave out any food that may encourage bears to linger in residential areas.

Black bears learn very quickly. Bears that are fed intentionally – or unintentionally by carelessly leaving out food or garbage – will associate food with people. These bears can become a nuisance or aggressive and may have to be destroyed.

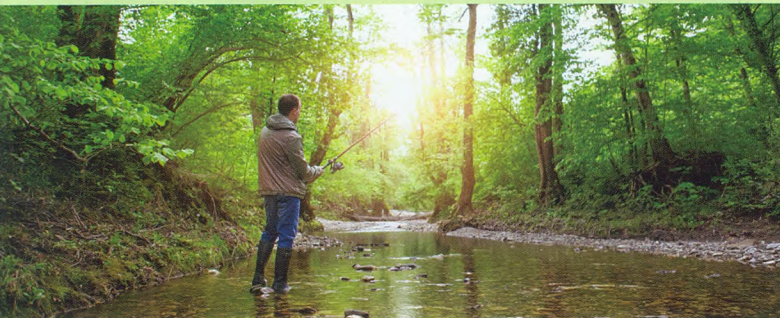
You can help to prevent problems with black bears by following some simple tips when at home, camping, hunting, fishing, hiking or whenever outdoors in areas with large black bear populations.



*Photo Courtesy of Jeff Crown*

## When Hiking and Fishing... (For more information see “If You Encounter a Bear...”)

- Normal noise made walking on a trail should alert a bear to your presence, prompting it to leave before you see it.
- Use caution in areas where bears are likely to venture, such as berry patches.
- Never leave fish entrails on shorelines of lakes or streams. Sink entrails in deep water.
- If you see a bear, use common sense. Never approach the animal; observe it only from a distance.
- If you see a bear, make it aware of your presence by clapping, talking, singing or making other noise.
- If you encounter a bear at close range, remain standing, avoid direct eye contact, back up slowly and speak in a calm, assertive voice.



**Remember: Never feed bears!**  
**It's illegal in New Jersey, and it's dangerous.**

Report black bear damage or nuisance behavior to local police or to the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection's Division of Fish and Wildlife at **1 (877) WARN DEP (1-877-927-6337)**.

For more information on New Jersey's black bears, visit **[www.NJFishandWildlife.com](http://www.NJFishandWildlife.com)**



# If You Encounter a Bear...

- Do not feed or approach the bear! Bears are wild animals and their behavior can be unpredictable.
- Remain calm and make the bear aware of your presence by speaking in a loud, assertive voice, singing, clapping your hands or making other noises.
- Keep your distance and make sure the bear has an escape route.
- Avoid direct eye contact, which may be perceived by a bear as a challenge. Never run from a bear. Instead, slowly back away. If you are with someone else, stay together in a group.
- To scare the bear away, make loud noises by yelling, banging pots and pans, knocking rocks together or using an airhorn. Make yourself look as big as possible by waving your arms. If you are with someone else, stand close together with your arms raised above your head.
- The bear may utter a series of huffs, swat the ground and make popping sounds by snapping its jaws. These are warning signs that you are too close. Slowly back away, avoid direct eye contact and do not run.
- If a bear stands on its hind legs or moves closer, it may be trying to get a better view or detect scents in the air. It usually is not a threatening behavior.
- Black bears will sometimes “bluff charge” when cornered, threatened or attempting to steal food. Stand your ground, avoid direct eye contact and then slowly back away. Do not run.
- If the bear will not leave, slowly back away and head for nearby shelter. DO NOT RUN and do not turn away from the bear.



**ATTENTION!**

**BEARS ARE ACTIVE IN THIS AREA.  
DO NOT APPROACH THEM!**



- If the bear approaches you or persistently follows you, stand your ground and make yourself look as big as possible and yell in a loud assertive voice, then slowly back away. Toss non-food objects such as rocks or stout sticks at the bear. If people are nearby, call to them for assistance. Notify the police if the bear continues to approach.
- Black bear attacks are rare, however they do occur. If a black bear does attack, fight back! Use whatever means you have available and try to punch and kick it in the face, nose and eyes if possible.

**Remember: Immediately notify local police or the DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife at 1 (877) WARN DEP, if you encounter an aggressive bear.**

## Bear Facts for Camping

To fully enjoy your outdoor experience when camping, follow these common-sense safety tips:

- Keep a clean camp. Bears have an acute sense of smell. Food, and all items that come in contact with food, gives off odors that can attract bears.
- Store food immediately in airtight containers after every use. Coolers are not airtight and bears often associate them with food. Keep coolers locked in a trunk or concealed in the vehicle's cab.
- Do not eat or cook in your tent. Never store food items or scented toiletries, such as soap, deodorant or toothpaste in tents, sleeping bags or backpacks.
- Avoid having leftover food by cooking only as much as you will eat at a meal.



Photo Courtesy of Monica Duffy



# Bear Facts for Homeowners

- ☞ Taking steps to avoid attracting bears with food or garbage is the best way to prevent black bears from becoming a nuisance near your home.
- ☞ For the best protection, use certified, bear-resistant garbage containers if you live in an area frequented by black bears. Otherwise, store all garbage in containers with tight-fitting lids and place them within a secure location where bears are unlikely to see or smell them, like the inside walls of your garage or in the basement.
- ☞ Wash garbage containers frequently with a disinfectant solution to remove odors.
- ☞ Put out garbage on collection day, not the night before.
- ☞ Clean up after pets. If you feed them outside, do so during daylight hours only. Pick up any leftover food and remove bowls immediately after they have finished.
- ☞ Clean outdoor grills and utensils thoroughly after each use and store grills securely. Grease and food residue attract bears.
- ☞ Do not place meat, dairy or any sweet foods in compost piles.
- ☞ Avoid feeding birds if you live in an area frequented by black bears. Birdseed attracts bears. If you choose to feed birds, do so during daylight hours only between December 1 and April 1, when bears are least active. Suspend feeders from a free-hanging wire, making sure the bottoms are at least 10 feet off the ground. Bring feeders indoors at night. Clean up spilled seeds and shells.
- ☞ Avoid leaving corn out to feed deer or other wildlife, which may attract bears.
- ☞ Pick up any fruit or nuts around homes that fall from trees and dispose of it in bear-resistant garbage containers.

- Clean grills and all utensils thoroughly. Never put food or food residue in campfires or fire pits.
- Place garbage in airtight containers or bear-resistant dumpsters. Do not burn garbage or bury it.
- Keep dogs on a leash and remove leftover food after your dog has finished eating.
- Never attempt to feed or approach a bear. It is very dangerous and may result in personal harm or harm to others.



- ☞ Consider installing electric fencing to protect crops, beehives, livestock, orchards, gardens, compost piles and standard dumpsters if you live in an area frequented by black bears. In order to be effective, fencing must be properly installed, baited and maintained.
- ☞ Families who live in areas frequented by black bears should have a "Bear Plan" in place for children, with an escape route and planned use of whistles and air horns.

**Remember: One person feeding bears can create problems for the entire neighborhood.**



## Business Owners...

Trash in dumpsters can attract bears, which may cause an unsafe environment and create an unintentional means of feeding bears. Use certified bear-resistant garbage dumpsters, which offer the best protection. Otherwise, contact your sanitation department to request a bear-resistant dumpster, preferably with metal lids.

- Report all bear damage and nuisance incidents immediately to your camp office, local police or the DEP's Division of Fish and Wildlife at **1 (877) WARN DEP.**

**Remember: Keep a clean campsite to prevent attracting bears while camping.**