

The black bear, *Ursus americanus*, is the smallest of the three bear species found in North America. It is the only bear found in Vermont.

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department's management objective for black bears is to maintain a population that is between 4,500 and 6,000 animals. The highest numbers of bears can be found in the center spine of the Green Mountains, from Massachusetts to Canada, and in the northeastern part of Vermont.

The best habitat for black bears in Vermont is a mixture of coniferous trees, hardwoods, wetlands, and variation in terrain. Because they need dense cover to escape danger, the wary and elusive black bears prefer rough and wooded habitats. Coniferous trees provide concealment and protection from severe weather. Stands of beech and oak, along with wetlands, are important feeding areas for bears.

Live weights for adult female black bears in Vermont average between 120 and 180 pounds. In contrast, male black bears are generally larger, weighing 300-400 pounds.



Black bears have an excellent sense of smell and hearing. However, their eyesight is not as well developed.

Agency of Natural Resources
Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department
103 South Main Street, 10 South
Waterbury, VT 05671-0501
www.vtfishandwildlife.com



LIVING WITH VERMONT'S BLACK BEAR



VERMONT
FISH & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT
www.vtfishandwildlife.com
802-241-3700



Living with Vermont's Black Bears



Black bears are found in most forested portions of Vermont. They generally rely on wild foods such as berries, cherries, beechnuts, and acorns to survive. However, as humans move into bear habitat, bears can become attracted to other foods such as birdseed, garbage, and pet food. You can help the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department maintain a healthy bear population by reducing the chance you will attract bears to your property.

Bird feeders, barbecue grills, garbage, and dirty campsites can become appealing food sources. They are also deadly — the bear could be struck by a motor vehicle in a populated area, injured or shot by someone protecting their property, or have to be destroyed. When a bear is being fed (directly or indirectly), its life expectancy is likely reduced.

Black bears are normally shy and not aggressive to humans. However, a bear that has been fed by humans loses this shyness and can become a

potential danger to human safety. When this occurs, there is often little recourse except to destroy the bear.

Let's Avoid Conflict

Follow these guidelines to decrease the chance of conflicts with bears:

- ◆ Dispose of garbage frequently. Store it in clean, secure containers (top-latched, tied, or chained). Don't put garbage out at the curb the night before pickup.
- ◆ Feed pets indoors.
- ◆ Keep barbecue grills clean and stored inside.
- ◆ Don't feed birds from April 1 to December 1 if you live in an area where there are bears. If you see or suspect a bear near your home, remove your bird feeders for at least four weeks or until the bear is no longer in the area.
- ◆ If you have livestock, dispose of animal carcasses immediately by burying or incinerating.
- ◆ Support protecting and enhancing natural food sources in areas away from human habitation. For more information about how you can help enhance bear habitat, visit the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department website. Please report any black bear incidents you may have had. To report a backyard visit or damage caused by a bear, go to the Fish & Wildlife website for

Wildlife Programs and fill in the form **Black Bear Incident Reporting**.

Above all, **REMEMBER**

A FED BEAR IS A DEAD BEAR!

Visit these websites to learn more about black bears:

Be Bear Aware—

<http://www.centerforwildlifeinformation.org/BeBearAware/bebearaware.html>

Bear Wise—

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Bearwise/index.html>

Help is Available

Persons suffering bear damage should contact the nearest Vermont Fish & Wildlife office or local state game warden prior to taking any control action on their own. Fish & Wildlife personnel will recommend appropriate measures or control strategies that can lessen the problem.

Producers of bees/honey, corn, fruit orchards, and livestock interested in learning more about black bear damage, its identification, what to do if damage occurs, and where to go for assistance should contact their local Vermont Fish & Wildlife local game warden:

www.vtfishandwildlife.com/about_staff.cfm