

- Keep pet food inside. Avoid feeding pets outside. Remove and store pet dishes after feeding.
- Remove grease, sauces, and charred food from barbeque grills or pits after every use. Grill foods on aluminum foil making clean up easier. Store grills in a secure location such as a garage or outside building.
- Compost heaps should be kept away from your home. Avoid composting meat products, and sweets.
- Although it may be tempting to feed scraps to a bear that wanders near your home, don't risk it. This practice only strengthens a bears association of humans and food and it's illegal. These situations generally lead to bears that lose their natural fear of humans and can lead to property destruction or personal injury. When the situation escalates to that point, the bear may need to be destroyed. Remember: *A FED BEAR IS A DEAD BEAR!*



*For more information on how to discourage nuisance bears or anyone experiencing bear problems should contact their local DNR District Office.*

<http://wv.dnr.gov/Wildlife/Contact.shtm>

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West Virginia Division of  
Natural Resources

Wildlife Resources Section

Curtis I. Taylor

Chief

State Capitol

Building 3, Room 812

Charleston WV 25305

(304) 558-2771



## Nuisance Black Bears In West Virginia

### Preventing Potential Conflicts



West Virginia University Extension Service

West Virginia University  
Division of Forestry  
Wildlife & Fisheries Resources

West Virginia Division of Natural Resources

## The Bear Facts

Once decimated throughout the state of West Virginia, the black bear, *Ursus americanus*, has made an amazing recovery. Forest regeneration and proper wildlife management have ensured the future prosperity of this majestic game animal. The black bear is a species that best reflects the *wild and wonderful* beauty of our state and encounters with this animal are a memorable occasion.

However, housing developments encroaching into forested habitat and a mounting bear population have resulted in animals venturing into residential areas with increasing regularity. Unfortunately, these encounters may involve negative interactions between bear and people. Often, these troublesome interactions occur when bears are drawn to human food sources. Gaining access to food has led to positive reinforcements with humans and their property, and remains the root cause of nuisance activity.

### Questions and Answers

#### Are black bears dangerous?

Black bears are naturally fearful of humans and often retreat during close encounters. However, any wild animal has the potential to inflict injuries on people. Most injuries result from careless activities such as hand feeding bears or being too close when animals are feeding on human food sources. During rare instances when confronted by a bear that does not retreat, slowly backing away from the animal will likely alleviate any physical confrontation.

#### What is nuisance activity?

Nuisance activity may take many forms depending on an individual's perceived idea of a bear problem.

Generally, nuisance complaints arise when damage occurs to personal property such as garbage containers, bird feeders, or agricultural products. Observing a bear in your yard is not cause for alarm, since the animal is likely just passing through as it navigates across its natural homerange.



#### When does most nuisance activity occur?

Nuisance activity is generally considered a temporary problem occurring in early spring and summer months. When emerging from dens, nutritious natural foods are often unavailable causing bears to traverse over considerable distances searching for suitable forage. Also, young males leave their mothers in search of new territories which often leads to extensive roaming. During this period, bears are more likely to supplement their natural diet with high calorie human foods such as garbage and agricultural crops until suitable mast (fruit and nuts) production occurs in the fall.

#### Who is responsible for black bear management in West Virginia?

The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources is responsible for protecting and managing all wildlife species. To ensure the prosperity of West Virginia's official State Animal, the agency seeks to educate the public concerning nuisance activity and measures intended to prevent negative interactions between bear and people.

#### What nuisance bear management strategies does the Division of Natural Resources employ?

Current strategies for controlling such activities include translocations, aversive conditioning, and euthanasia. Translocations involve the capture and subsequent removal of the animal to another location where they are less likely to engage in further nuisance activity. Aversive conditioning involves the use of rubber buckshot and aerial shell crackers to discourage animals from returning to a site. Third time offenders are often destroyed.

#### How can nuisance activity best be discouraged?

Minimize potential sources of food or attractive odors.

- Do not leave garbage outside. Store your garbage in a secure location such as inside your garage or in a bear proof container. Reduce garbage odors by rinsing cans and wrappers prior to disposal. Keep meat scraps frozen until pickup day. Clean garbage cans or containers frequently with bleach, ammonia, or lime.
- Remove bird feeders (seed and/or suet) in the spring. Refrain from hanging feeders until December. If hummingbird feeders are used, remove and store them inside each evening. Do not place food outside to attract squirrels, deer, or other wildlife.