



Milt Fox

Discouraging bears at home

Properly storing or securing residential garbage and other attractants is a proven method of discouraging bears and preventing bear problems around homes, farms and neighborhoods.

The following items attract bears and should be protected by an electric fence, wildlife resistant containers or stored in a secure place, such as a garage or sturdy shed:

- Trash and recycling containers
- Bird and squirrel feeders
- Game feeders
- Pet foods and bowls
- Barbeque grills and smokers
- Pets and small livestock
- Livestock feed
- Compost piles
- Beehives
- Fruit and nut-bearing trees and shrubs

Help conserve black bears by purchasing a **Conserve Wildlife license plate** at your local tax collector's office or online at BuyAPlate.com.

Secure common bear attractants

- Use electric fencing to protect gardens, compost piles, apiaries and livestock.
- Store garbage and recyclables in bear-resistant containers or in a secure area until morning of pick up.
- Feed pets indoors or bring food dishes inside before dark. Store pet and livestock feed in bear-resistant containers.
- Remove bird and wildlife feeders. Ensure the area is free of all seed, corn or other wild animal feed.
- Keep orchards and gardens tidy. Remove rotten fruit and harvest all nuts, fruits and vegetables when ripe.
- Clean meat smokers and barbeque grills with a degreasing detergent. Properly dispose of food remnants after each use.

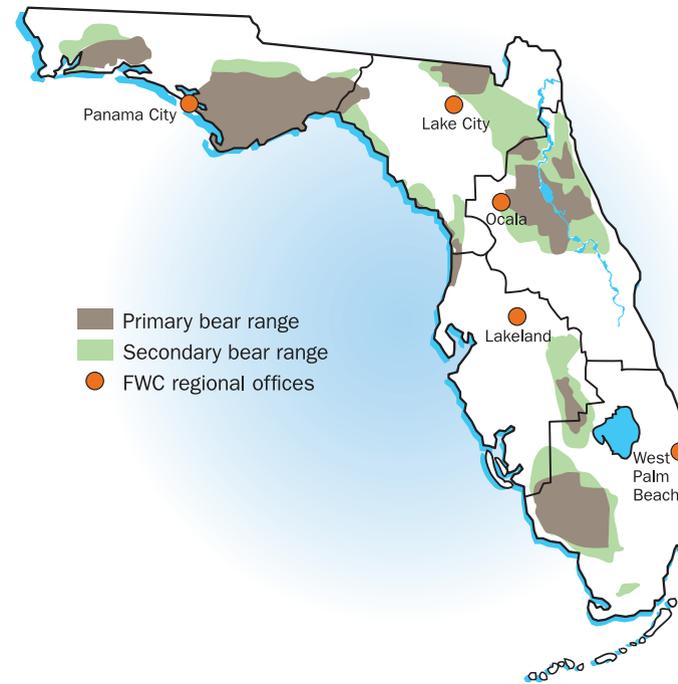
Learn more about black bears with the Florida Black Bear Curriculum Guide. The guide is designed to educate teachers and students in grades 3-8 and offers a comprehensive series of lessons on Florida's black bear.

To learn more about black bears and for tips on how to reduce bear attractants, as well as instructions for electric fencing, suggestions for bear-resistant containers, information about the Conserve Wildlife license tag or the curriculum guide, visit MyFWC.com/bear.



Jessica Tice

Bear ranges in Florida



If you are experiencing bear problems, please contact the nearest FWC regional office.

North Central, Lake City	386-758-0525
Northeast, Ocala	352-732-1225
Northwest, Panama City	850-265-3676
South, West Palm Beach	561-625-5122
Southwest, Lakeland	863-648-3200

If you suspect illegal activity, call FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at 1-888-404-3922.

Cover photo by Ashley Hockenberry



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

MyFWC.com

printed on recycled paper

A guide to living in bear country



Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission

MyFWC.com



Ashley Hockenberry

If you live in Florida, you should know

Black bears are at a crossroads in the Sunshine State. Since the 1980s, Florida's bear population has been increasing in most areas of the state while the human population is rapidly expanding. As a result, bears and humans are encountering each other more than ever.

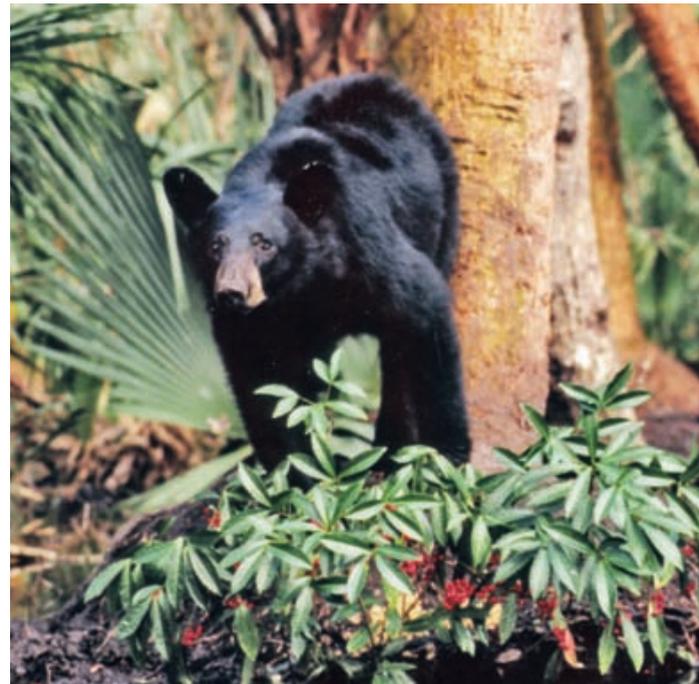
Calls to the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) about black bear and human encounters have increased from 1,000 in 2001 to over 2,500 in 2008. The most common calls refer to bear sightings and bears in garbage.

The mere presence of a black bear does not represent a problem. In fact, living in bear country can provide unique and rewarding experiences for residents.

However, when black bears have access to pet food, garbage, birdseed, livestock feed or other sources of food, they quickly learn to associate people with food. Bears often are fed by humans, either intentionally or unintentionally. Once they become

more comfortable around people, that familiarity may become a problem for both people and bears. Those bears are often killed, either by vehicle collisions, illegal shooting or as a result of bear management actions.

People ask why problem bears can't simply be relocated to a "wilderness area where they won't bother anyone." Unfortunately, areas that are large and remote enough for bears to avoid people are rare in Florida. Relocated bears typically leave the new area, either to return to their original home or to leave an area already occupied by other bears. Some bears will wander through unfamiliar areas and cross busy roads, creating a danger to the bear and to motorists. In addition, bears that do remain in the relocation area often exhibit the same behavior, which just shifts the problem to a new location. As a result, relocation is not a desirable or effective solution to bear conflicts. Wildlife biologists can provide technical advice to residents who live in bear country to help them take actions that will discourage bears from becoming a problem. The FWC is committed to ensuring the long-term well-being of the black bear, while addressing the property damage and safety concerns of residents and visitors.



Charles Towne



Ashley Hockenberry

If a bear comes into your yard

If you encounter a bear at close range, remain standing upright, back up slowly and speak to the bear in a calm, assertive voice.

- Do not intentionally feed or attract bears. If a bear is eating something on your property, take note of what it is and secure it after the bear has left the area.
- Never approach or surprise a bear. Keep as much distance between you and the bear as possible.
- Make sure you are in a secure area, and the bear has a clear escape route to leave the area; then yell, bang pots and pans or use an air horn to scare the bear away.
- Do not turn your back, play dead, or run from the bear. Back away slowly into a house, car or building.
- Report any bear that is threatening the safety of humans, pets or livestock, or causing property damage, to the FWC (see back panel).

Climbing trees is a bear's natural escape route.

If the bear climbs a tree, keep people and pets away. When things quiet down, the bear will come down the tree and leave. This usually happens after dark, when the bear feels safe.

It is illegal to intentionally place food or garbage out that attracts bears and causes conflicts. Anything that attracts dogs, cats or raccoons also will attract bears!

Did you know?

Black bears are shy animals and generally not aggressive towards people. When a bear stands on its hind legs, it is merely trying to get a better view, rather than acting in a threatening way. A bear may huff, snap its jaws and swat the ground if it feels threatened.

Black bears might "bluff charge" when cornered, threatened or stealing food. Stand your ground and then slowly back away. Always respect bears – they are large and powerful wild animals.

The bear facts

Black bears are the only species of bear in Florida and they once roamed the state's entire 34.5 million acres.

- FWC biologists estimate there are 2,500-3,000 black bears in Florida.
- Florida bears are black with a brown muzzle and may have a white chest marking called a blaze.
- Adult black bears weigh 150-400 pounds; males are usually larger than females. The largest male bear on record in Florida weighed 624 pounds; the largest female weighed 342 pounds.
- Female bears have their first litter at about 3½ years of age and generally have one to three cubs every other year.
- In Florida the breeding season runs from June to August and cubs are born about seven months later, in late January or early February.
- Bears of all ages are excellent climbers and will climb trees when they are frightened.
- About 80 percent of a black bear's diet comes from plants (e.g., fruits, nuts, berries), 15 percent from insects and 5 percent from meat.



Ashley Hockenberry