

In New York State people and black bears often find themselves living in the same areas. With frequent encounters nearly inevitable, it's good to know how to keep those encounters safe and enjoyable for you and the bears.

How to prevent bear problems

Proper storage of garbage and the removal of bird feeders during periods when bears are active are the **two most important steps** you can take to drastically reduce nuisance bear problems in your area.

- 🐾 Store garbage in cans or dumpsters and keep them in a secure place like a garage.
- 🐾 Put garbage out only on the morning of pickup. Burning and composting of garbage may *attract* bears.
- 🐾 Feed birds only from December 1 until April 1. During the rest of the year, you may be *attracting* more bears than birds.
- 🐾 Bird seed and garbage are favorite foods for bears. In many cases, bears will choose them instead of natural food sources.

The Bear Facts

- New York has a healthy population of about 8,000 black bears (*Ursus americanus*).
- The average adult male bear weighs about 300 lbs, females weigh about 160 lbs.
- Black bears are New York's second largest land mammal after the moose.
- New York State black bears are generally black in color; rarely cinnamon or blonde colors are found.
- Preferred natural foods include; nuts, roots, fruit, plants and insects. Bears will scavenge dead animals but rarely feed on live prey.

Check the DEC Web Site at www.dec.ny.gov for more information about black bears.



Living With Bears



New York State
Department of Environmental Conservation

Courtesy of The Bear Society

Bears are attracted by all types of smells.

Although bird feeders and unsecured garbage cans may start the problem, other more subtle food sources can *attract* bears.



Barbeque grills should be cleaned after every use. Remove the grease can and run the grill on "high" to burn off excess grease.



Store your grill in a secure place when not in use.



Feed family pets indoors.



Keep refrigerators and freezers in a secure place. Coolers left outside may attract bears.



If you have livestock or beehives these can be protected with electric fencing. For more information contact your regional DEC wildlife office.

Remember – bear problems are community-wide issues that can only be reduced through communication and cooperation with others in your neighborhood.



Once bears learn to associate a location with food they will keep returning and are likely to cause property damage. Bears that approach one house for food may also approach other houses.

Bears that learn to come close to people and houses are more likely to cause problems. Some may even be killed because of behavior patterns learned during these approaches.

Following the suggestions in this brochure can help reduce problems with bears. If you need more assistance with a problem bear please contact your regional New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) wildlife office.

What should you do if you see a bear?

Don't panic. Bears are more likely to be afraid of you than you are of them. Know that you have the privilege of seeing a magnificent wild creature close-up, but don't lose sight of the fact that bears are powerful animals that may defend themselves if they feel threatened.

Never approach, surround, or attempt to touch a bear. **Always** leave a clear escape route for the bear.

If you feel threatened by a bear, back away slowly, but do not run. If the bear keeps coming back or will not leave, make loud noises—yell, clap, blow car horns or air horns, or drum on nearby objects.

Bear relocation

Once a bear has become a problem, DEC is often asked to move the bear. Unfortunately, bear relocations rarely solve the problem. Relocated bears have been known to travel up to 300 miles to return to where they were caught. Animals that don't return may continue their bad behavior at the new location. Circumstances that led to the original problems must be corrected or the bear/human conflicts will persist. The simplest way to avoid problems is to remove all food sources.

