

THE PROBLEM

There have been reports of increased sightings and incidents with black bears. However, success in preventing human interactions with black bears depends on people changing their own behavior. Most interactions occur because bears are smart, opportunistic feeders who can smell food a mile away. It is critical for CT residents not to unintentionally lure bears to their yards with their bird feeders, trash, and other food attractants, especially in the fall when bears are going through hyperphagia, the period before hibernation when they must gain 20-40 pounds a week. Problematic human behavior results in bears becoming human food-conditioned and human-habituated (becoming too comfortable around people). **The simple answer is to change problematic human behavior AND to remove food attractants.**

HUNTING DOESN'T WORK

Researchers in other states have found that hunts do not eliminate nuisance complaints because bears killed deep in the woods are not the same bears who people complain about in more developed areas -- where hunting wouldn't even be safe.

Current state statute already allows the DEEP commissioner to kill a bear if there is a public health or safety threat (CGS26-3). This makes a trophy hunt unnecessary.

PUBLIC EDUCATION WORKS

In 2014, Yosemite National Park reported a 92% decrease in human-bear conflicts due to public education and garbage/food containment programs. This is just one example of how communities can resolve bear issues. Effective community-based solutions should emphasize:

- ❖ The vital role of black bears to our local ecology;
- ❖ Not feeding bears intentionally or unintentionally;
- ❖ Removing food attractants (garbage, bird feeders from March through November, pet food, etc.);
- ❖ Protecting beehives, chickens and livestock with electric barriers and other deterrents;



Black bears only reproduce every 2-3 years. Cubs stay with their mother for 2 years and don't begin mating until age 5.

- ❖ Waiting to put garbage cans out until the morning of pick-up and using bear-proof containers and dumpsters.
- ❖ Making bears uncomfortable in your yard with aversive conditioning. Making loud noises with an air horn, hand clapping or yelling will teach bears to associate humans with danger and leave the area and avoid it in the future;
- ❖ Posting signs on state hiking trails, advising hikers of what to do in case of bear encounters;
- ❖ Keeping dogs supervised and leashed while hiking.

The CT Coalition to Protect Black Bears supports legislation that promotes effective and non-lethal strategies to prevent problems with black bears.

PEOPLE WANT HUMANE SOLUTIONS!

The recent American Wildlife Values Study found that the people of Connecticut desire humane solutions, and also found CT DEEP's culture to be misaligned with the values of the people of Connecticut. See <https://sites/warnercnr.colostate.edu/wildlifevalues>.

Most incidents with bears are driven by habituation and human food sources, and public education is critical to reversing that trend.

FAST FACTS

❖ **Scientific studies show that hunting pressure does not reduce human-bear conflicts.**

Human-bear conflicts are more closely correlated with food availability, according to various scientific studies. For example, Obbard et al wrote: "We found no significant correlations between harvest and subsequent human-bear conflicts [HBC]. Although it may be intuitive to assume that harvesting more bears should reduce HBC, empirical support for this assumption is lacking despite considerable research (Garshelis 1989, Treves and Karanth 2003, Huygens et al. 2004, Tavss 2005, Treves 2009, Howe et al. 2010, Treves et al. 2010)."

M.E. Obbard et al. (2014) Relationships among food availability, harvest, and human-bear conflict at landscape scales in Ontario Canada. Urus 25(2): 98-110.

❖ **Hunts may INCREASE human-bear interactions:** A recent study (2022) found that even with significant hunting harvests, "...there was no concomitant reduction in interactions or incidents and, in fact, these were higher in areas with the new spring season relative to control areas."

Joseph Northrup et al., Experimental Test of the Efficacy of Hunting for Controlling Human-Wildlife Conflict, 6th International Human-Bear Conflict Workshop (Lake Tahoe, NV: humanbearconflicts.org, 2022).

❖ **Bear populations are self-regulating:** If a female bear is not able to gain roughly 150 pounds within four months of fertilization, her pregnancy naturally terminates.



The highest number of bear incidents in CT are issues with bird feeders and trash cans – which underscores that these problems are preventable.



MORE INFORMATION

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