

# Black Bear Fact Sheet

from the Maryland Wildlife and Heritage Service

## How many bears are found in Maryland?

Black bears are located primarily in Garrett, Allegany, Washington and Frederick counties. Populations are highest in Garrett County, with bear numbers on the rise in the remaining areas.

The bear population size was last estimated in 2005. At that time, an extensive DNA study was completed in Garrett and Allegany counties. Based on that research and other annual population monitoring surveys, DNR currently estimates that Maryland is home to more than 600 adult and subadult bears.

## Did Maryland transplant bears to establish a bear population?

No. Maryland has never transplanted bears in an effort to establish a bear population.

## How big do bears get?

Bears are the largest mammal in Maryland. Adult bears usually weigh between 125 and 400 pounds, although bears weighing 600 pounds or more are not uncommon. Adult female black bears achieve a maximum weight of 150 to 300 pounds.

## How far do bears travel?

Bears are a wide-ranging animal. Adult females have an average home range of about 13 square miles, while adult males can cover 25 square miles or more. Young bears striking out on their own can travel 100-150 miles in search of new territory.

## What do bears eat?

Bears are opportunistic feeders, which means they will eat whatever is easily accessible. Largely vegetarian, common foods include berries, other fruits, acorns, beechnuts, hickory nuts, insects, roots, grasses, reptiles, amphibians, fish and carrion. As the opportunity arises, bears will also eat garbage, agricultural crops and bird food. Bears feed heavily during the fall months in order to increase fat reserves for the upcoming long winter.

## I want to see a bear. Can I put out food or bait to attract bears?

No! It is illegal to place food or bait out to attract bears. Attracting bears to areas near people can cause future problems. Feeding bears can create a situation that is unsafe for people and the bear.

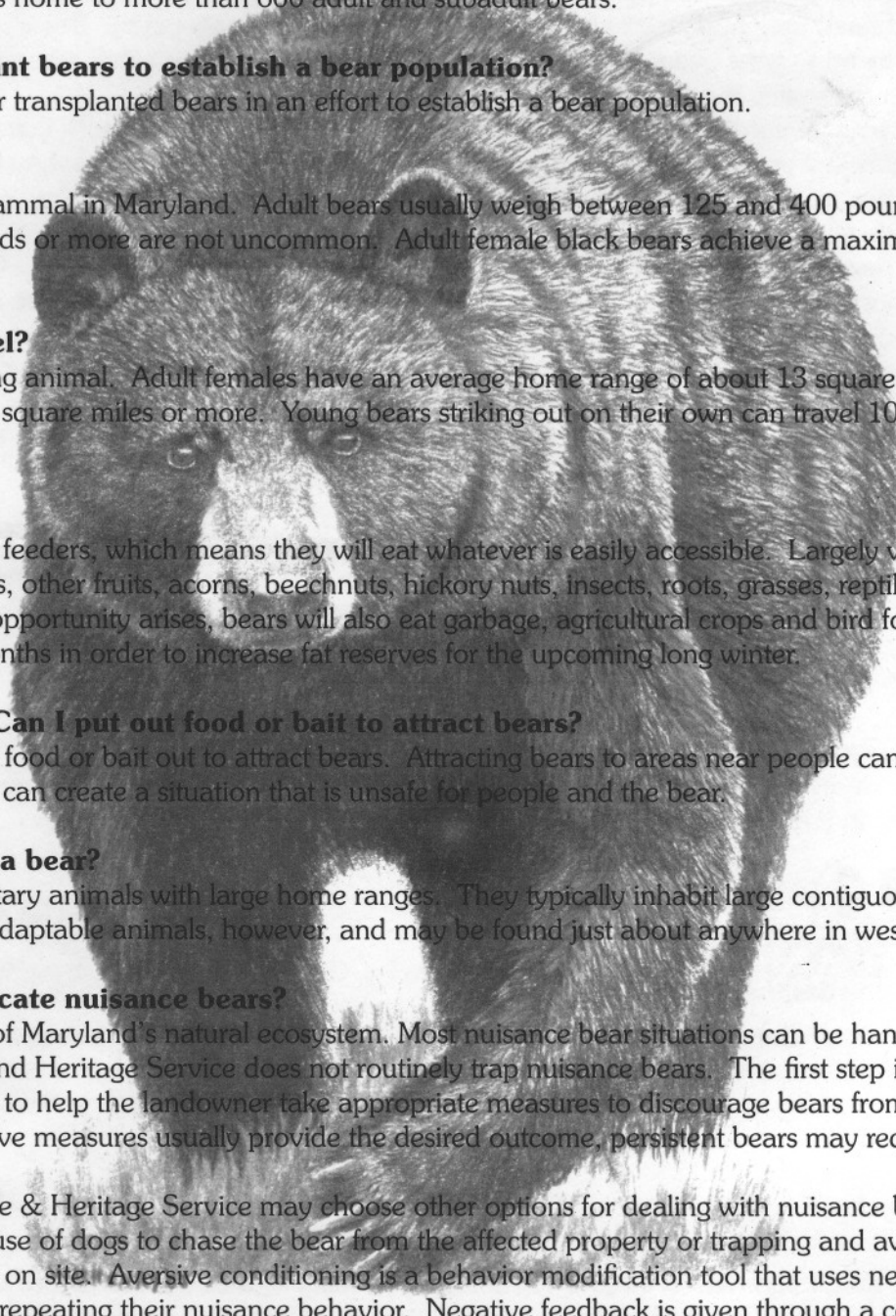
## Where can I go to see a bear?

Bears are generally solitary animals with large home ranges. They typically inhabit large contiguous tracts of forest land. They are very adaptable animals, however, and may be found just about anywhere in western Maryland.

## Why doesn't DNR relocate nuisance bears?

Black Bears are a part of Maryland's natural ecosystem. Most nuisance bear situations can be handled through education. The Wildlife and Heritage Service does not routinely trap nuisance bears. The first step in handling a nuisance bear situation is to help the landowner take appropriate measures to discourage bears from becoming a nuisance. While preventive measures usually provide the desired outcome, persistent bears may require additional measures.

At this point, the Wildlife & Heritage Service may choose other options for dealing with nuisance bears. These options may include the use of dogs to chase the bear from the affected property or trapping and aversively conditioning the nuisance bear on site. Aversive conditioning is a behavior modification tool that uses negative feedback to discourage bears from repeating their nuisance behavior. Negative feedback is given through a combination of pepper spray, nonlethal rubber projectiles fired from a shotgun, and pyrotechnic noisemakers. Trapping and relocating a bear rarely resolves a nuisance situation.



## What should I do if I encounter a bear?

- If you encounter a bear that is not aware of your presence, back away and leave the area. Give the bear plenty of room. If you spot a bear cub, remain alert. The cub's mother is sure to be near. Again, back away and leave the area.
- Should you encounter a bear at close range, speak to the bear in a calm, assertive voice. STAY CALM and don't run. Remain upright and back away from the bear. Avoid direct eye contact, as the bear may perceive this as a threat. Again, give the bear plenty of room. Don't crowd the bear's personal space.
- Black bears may exhibit some unique behaviors when they feel their personal space is being threatened. A crowded bear may huff or make a woofing noise at the threat. They may also swat the ground, pop their jaws, or even bluff charge the perceived threat. When a bear bluff charges, it may stop several yards or just a few feet short of the threat. Remember not to run. Stay calm. Remain upright and back away from the bear.
- Bears may also stand upright on their hind legs. This is not a sign of aggression. Bears usually stand upright when they are trying to get a better look at something. Bears rely heavily on their sense of smell, and may stand upright to better determine the source of a new scent.
- It is important to remember that black bear attacks are extremely rare. In Maryland, there are no known cases of a human being attacked by a black bear. By using common sense and good judgment, we can continue to appreciate the natural beauty of these forest animals at a safe distance.

## There's a bear near my house and it keeps getting in my trash and birdfeeder. What should I do?

Bears will not normally come near homes unless there is something that attracts them to the area. You should make loud noises, such as yelling at the bear or banging pots and pans together, in an effort to scare the bear away. After the bear has left, check around the house and remove anything that could be acting as an attractant. This could be bird food, hummingbird feeders, pet food, garbage, etc.

Do not leave pet food unattended. Take your trash out the morning of pick-up or use a bear proof trash container. Cleaning trash cans with ammonia can help eliminate any attraction.

## I have bear damage to my agricultural crops/livestock/beeives. What should I do?

Please contact your local Wildlife and Heritage Service office. You may be eligible for compensation for this damage. It is also possible that you could employ certain techniques to deter bear damage. Your local wildlife representative will be able to provide you with that information. In Garrett County call 301-334-4255, Allegany County call 301-777-2136, Washington and Frederick Counties call 301-842-2702.

## Can I shoot a bear if it comes near my house?

It is illegal for an individual to kill a bear unless the bear is attacking livestock or it threatens your life. Under no circumstances should you kill a bear just because it is near your house.



Martin O'Malley, Governor



John R. Griffin, Secretary of the Department of Natural Resources

Maryland Wildlife and Heritage Service  
1728 Kings Run Road  
Oakland, MD 21550  
301-334-4255  
[www.dnr.maryland.gov](http://www.dnr.maryland.gov)

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