



LIVING WITH WILDLIFE

BLACK BEARS IN MASSACHUSETTS



Though Massachusetts is the third most densely-populated state in the country, black bears have been increasing in numbers and distribution since the 1970s. The statewide population of bears is estimated to be over 4,500 animals and is growing and expanding eastward. Black bears live and breed in Worcester County, northern Middlesex County, and west to the Berkshires. Bears, mostly young males and some breeding females, are living in other eastern Massachusetts communities along Route 495. Dispersing young bears and wandering males often find themselves east of Route 495.

DESCRIPTION

Black bears are black overall with a brown muzzle and sometimes a white chest patch. Their feet are large and well-padded, with moderate-sized, curved claws. Male black bears generally range in weight from 130 to 600 pounds and females from 100 to 400 pounds.

LIFE HISTORY

Black bears have good eyesight and hearing. Their extraordinary sense of smell is used both to locate food and recognize potential danger. They are excellent climbers and use trees to rest, escape threats, and

protect their young. Black bears mate between mid-June and mid-July. Depending on food availability and snow cover, bears will den between mid-November and early December and exit between early March and mid-April. Bears commonly den in brush piles, under fallen trees or jumbles of rocks, or in mountain laurel thickets. A litter of usually two or three cubs is born in the den in mid-to-late January and they remain with the sow (adult female) for about 17 months.

FOOD, HABITS, AND HABITAT

Bears are omnivores, meaning they eat both vegetation and meat. In spring, bears feed on lush, green emerging plants and are often seen in wetlands. In summer, they take advantage of ripening berries and can often be found in thick regenerating forest stands where berries are often found. Ripened corn and stands of oak, beech, and hickory trees are favored foods in the fall. Bears also feed on grubs and insects, dead animals, and occasionally young deer. Bears will visit birdfeeders, orchards, and beehives. It is not unusual for bears to use residential areas, and they are often attracted to yards by bird feeders and unsecured trash. Bears have excellent long-term memory and can remember the location of food sources years after the first visit.

TIPS FOR RESIDENTS

Bears that have been habituated (accustomed) and dependent on human-associated foods, such as bird seed, trash, and pet food, are likely to cause damage and become a nuisance. Removal of food sources and other attractants is key to preventing problems with bears.

REMOVE BIRD FEEDERS: If you live in an area with bears, it is best to not set out bird feeders. In general, most bears are denned from mid-December through February. If you choose to put out bird feeders, doing so during this time *may* decrease the chance of a bear coming to your feeder. In mild winters, some bears may be active year-round. Bring in any feeders at the first sign of bear activity.

SECURE TRASH: Put trash barrels out the morning of trash pickup, not the previous evening. Store all garbage in closed containers in a garage or outbuilding. Using double bags or sprinkling with ammonia will help reduce odors. If you compost, do not throw meat scraps, greasy, oily, or sweet materials in your compost pile. Businesses and campgrounds in bear country should invest in bear-proof dumpsters with a locking lid. Trash should always be placed inside the dumpster, and never left accessible to bears.

REMOVE OTHER ATTRACTANTS: Always feed pets indoors. Clean greasy barbecues and grills after each use. Do not leave food scraps, grease containers, or spilled grease in your yard.

PROTECT BEES AND CHICKENS: Use electric fencing to safeguard hives and coops. Electric fences are most effective when put up and continuously charged before the first damage occurs. Keep open, mowed areas on all sides of hives and coops and do not locate hives or coops in abandoned areas or close to brushy, overgrown areas.

PROTECT CROPS AND ORCHARDS: Temporary electric fencing may be used to protect corn and other crops. Seven-strand slanted non-electric fences have been used to keep bears out of orchards. Contact local bear hunters for the early September bear season to hunt the fields.

PROTECT LIVESTOCK: Avoid pasturing animals in remote areas or nearby heavy wooded cover or travel areas that bears might use. Whenever possible, pen livestock in or near the barn at night, especially pregnant females and those with small young. Avoid field birthing if possible. Do not leave carcasses of dead animals exposed in fields, pastures, or nearby areas. Consider the use of guard animals. Keep livestock feed in secured outbuildings protected by electric fencing or in bear-proof containers.

IF YOU SEE A BEAR

IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD: A bear's first response to something unusual is to leave. If a bear is feeding in an area where it doesn't belong, such as your yard, on a porch, or in a dumpster, step outside, yell, and make lots of noise. The bear will usually leave—accompanied by its young. Habituated bears may ignore minor harassment. If you continue to see bears, check your property and remove any potential food sources.

IN THE WOODS: Black bears are usually wary of people. Normal trail noise will alert bears to your presence and they will often disappear before you see them. If you see a bear, it may not immediately recognize you as a human and may be curious until it scents you. Make the animal aware of your presence by clapping, talking, or making other sounds while slowly backing away. Do not approach bears or intrude between a female bear and her cubs. Keep dogs leashed and stay a respectful distance away.

Black bears are important and valuable mammals in Massachusetts. They are big game mammals for which regulated hunting seasons and a management program have been established.

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING PROBLEMS WITH BEARS OR HAVE QUESTIONS, VISIT MASS.GOV/BEARS OR CONTACT YOUR NEAREST MASSWILDLIFE OFFICE:

Central Wildlife District, West Boylston: (508) 835-3607
Connecticut Valley Wildlife District, Belchertown: (413) 323-7632
Northeast Wildlife District, Ayer: (978) 772-2145
Southeast Wildlife District, Bourne: (508) 759-3406
Western Wildlife District, Dalton: (413) 684-1646
Field Headquarters, Westborough: (508) 389-6300

Photos courtesy of MassWildlife/Bill Byrne

MASSWILDLIFE



DIVISION OF FISHERIES & WILDLIFE

Recommendations for Human – Black Bear Encounters

Developed by the Northeast Black Bear Technical Committee

Black bears are large, strong wild animals that should be treated with respect. Seeing a black bear can be an exciting, and for some people, a nerve wracking event. Bears should always be appreciated from a distance to ensure the safety of humans and bears. These recommendations are meant to be general and cover the basic types of human-bear interactions that can occur. Encounters vary greatly, and all situations are different. Aggressive and predatory behaviors by bear are very rare, but possible, so it is wise to be aware of the bear's behavioral signals and appropriate actions to take. These recommendations are specific to North American black bears. If you live or recreate in an area where other bear species may be encountered, you should familiarize yourself with how to react in those situations, too.

In general, when you encounter a black bear you should:

- Remain calm. **DON'T** run from a bear. **DON'T** climb trees to escape a bear.
- Ensure the bear has an escape route.
- Back away when possible.
- If attacked, immediately fight back.
- **DON'T** feed bears.

A word about bear spray: Bear spray (pepper spray specifically made as a bear deterrent) can be an effective tool if you encounter an aggressive bear. In order for bear spray to be effective, you must be trained and practiced in its safe use. Be aware of local laws and regulations that may restrict the carrying or use of bear spray.

I. If you encounter a bear while in a natural setting:

A. The bear is unaware of your presence:

Your Action:

- Quietly back away from the bear and leave the area.
- DO NOT approach the bear.

B. The bear is aware of your presence and:

1. The bear is uninterested:

Your Action:

- Quietly back away from the bear and leave the area.
- DO NOT approach the bear.

2. The bear is curious:

Bear Behavior:

- The bear continues to look in your direction, smells the air, or slowly approaches.

Your Action:

- Talk in a calm voice while slowly backing away from the bear.
- DO NOT approach the bear.

3. The bear is nervous or feels threatened by your presence:

Bear Behavior:

- The bear retreats up a tree.
- The bear lowers its head with ears flattened, and sways back and forth.
- The bear makes vocalizations which can include huffing and jaw popping and/or swats at the ground or tree.
- These are common behaviors, and do not indicate the bear will attack - you have simply gotten too close.

Your Action:

- Begin repeating "Hey bear" in a calm voice.
- Back away and leave the area.

4. The bear becomes aggressive:

Bear Behavior:

- The bear approaches you.
- The bear begins to follow you.
- The bear charges.

Your Action:

- Make yourself look bigger by putting your arms above your head. Continue to repeat "Hey bear" in a calm voice. Back away and leave the area while monitoring the bear.
- If it continues to follow you, stand your ground, make yourself look bigger, shout at the bear, threaten the bear with whatever is at hand (bang a stick on the ground, clap your hands), and prepare to use bear pepper spray if it is available. If the bear stops or turns around, back away and leave the area.
- If charged, stand your ground, talk to the bear in a calm voice and use bear pepper spray when available. If the bear makes contact with you, fight back using anything you have (e.g. stick, binoculars, swinging a backpack, kicking, etc.)!

5. The bear is stalking you (predatory behavior):

Bear Behavior:

- The bear follows you as you move away
- The bear is making little noise while following you
- The bear may attempt to stay out of your sight, but continue to follow you
- The bear intently stares at you

Your Action:

- Follow the actions outlined in #4.

II. You encounter a bear in your backyard:

Encountering a bear in a backyard is a common occurrence in some areas because bears are often attracted to bird feeders, trash, pet food, etc.

Your Action:

- Back away slowly while repeating "Hey bear" in a calm voice.
- From a safe distance, make loud noises (for example shouting or banging pots and pans) to deter the bear from the area.
- Do not approach the bear.
- After the bear leaves, be sure to keep trash in a tight container or locked out building, bring in bird feeders and pet food and remove any other potential attractants.

III. You encounter a bear in a building, in a dumpster, around a corner, in your home, etc.:

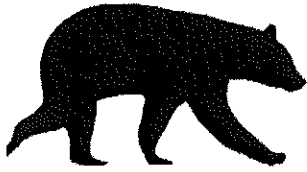
Your Action:

- Back away slowly while repeating "Hey bear" in a calm voice.
- Give the bear a clear escape route and do not corner it. If in your house or an outbuilding, do not lock the bear in a room. Instead, leave doors open as you exit the building.
- Do not approach the bear or try to force the bear out of a room.
- Contact 911 for assistance if necessary.

IV. Your dog is attacked by a bear:

Your Action:

- **DO NOT** rush to the bear and attempt to separate the bear and dog.
- Make loud noises such as shouting and clapping.
- If available, spray the bear with a hose or throw objects at the bear while remaining at a safe distance.
- Once the bear retreats retrieve your dog, back away and leave the area.
- Contact your local veterinarian or health department to be advised on rabies protocol.
- Bear-dog conflicts can be reduced by checking your yard or porch for bears before letting your dog outside, especially at night, and keeping dogs leashed and supervised when walking in areas frequented by bears. If you have questions about these recommendations, please contact your local Wildlife Authorities.



PREVENT NEGATIVE ENCOUNTERS WITH BEARS

REMOVE ALL FOOD SOURCES FROM YOUR YARD AND NEIGHBORHOOD

- NEVER intentionally feed bears
- DO NOT feed birds – All birdfeeders, suet, and spilled seed attract bears
- NEVER leave trash bags out - Store in a secure building or container and put trash out the morning of pickup
- DO NOT feed pets outside
- DO NOT use open compost
- CLEAN barbeque grills and grease traps

KEEP BEARS WILD – feeding can cause bears to lose their fear of people which can result in the bear being euthanized

IF YOU SEE A BEAR IN YOUR YARD

- HARASS the bear - bang pots and pans, blow a whistle or an air horn
- CHECK for and REMOVE food sources

IF YOU ENCOUNTER A BEAR

- Talk to the bear in a calm voice
- Back away – DO NOT run
- FIGHT BACK if a black bear makes contact with you

DOG OWNERS

- KEEP dogs leashed
- Check your yard for bears before letting your dog out
- DO NOT let dogs chase or interact with bears
- If you encounter a bear while with your dog, back away and leave the area
- The presence of a dog could trigger a bear to be aggressive

**Learn more at:
Mass.gov/Bears**



MASSWILDLIFE

For questions or to report a bear encounter contact MassWildlife at 508-389-6300

Contact the Massachusetts Environmental Police outside normal business hours and on weekends at: 1-800-632-8075

Pre-Authorized Electronic Condominium Fee Payment Agreement

Terms and Conditions

NAI Plotkin through Mutual of Omaha Bank offers your Association's Homeowners an opportunity to pay their monthly condominium fees using automated electronic payments. Preauthorized electronic payments mean that Homeowners can pay their condominium fees automatically without writing checks, thus eliminating the potential for late payments. In addition, the Association is assured prompt, predictable payments to help better meet the Association's financial obligations. This program is offered to all Homeowners regardless of where they do their banking.

This preauthorized electronic condominium fee payment service uses the Federal Reserve System's Automated Clearing House (ACH) to facilitate electronic transfers from Homeowner checking/saving accounts directly into the Association's bank account. Funds are withdrawn on the 10th day of the month or the next business day if the 10th falls on a bank holiday or weekend. The ACH withdrawal will show on the Homeowners monthly bank statement as confirmation of the transaction.

Agreement and Disclosures

Preauthorized monthly charges to your account will be processed, when due, for the amount of your regular condominium fee payment. Payments so collected will be deposited into the checking/saving account designated by your Association. There may be changes to the condominium fee amounts and/or due dates in accordance with the Governing Documents of your Association. We reserve the right to make changes in the agreement at any time. We may cancel preauthorized ACH payments at any time without cause. You may also terminate this agreement at any time by giving 15 days notice to NAI Plotkin in writing. If there are insufficient funds or your payment does not process for any reason, per the Governing Documents your account may be assessed applicable bank fees.

If you have any questions regarding the ACH service offered, please contact Renee at 413-593-5515

Please return the completed portion below with a voided check to Attn: Renee, Doverbrook Estates, 50 Doverbrook Road, Chicopee, MA 01022. Authorization must be received by the 15th day of the current month for processing to start the following month. Please retain a copy of this completed form for your own records.

I, (Name) _____, authorize NAI Plotkin to initiate ACH withdrawals from my account with (Financial Institution Name) _____ for payment of my condominium fees for (Association Name) _____ Association. I understand that ACH withdrawals will be drafted from my designated account on the 10th of the month. This authorization shall remain in effect until I, NAI Plotkin or my financial institution revokes it. I agree that I am to provide 15 days notice in writing to NAI Plotkin if I wish to cancel this service and am liable for any applicable bank fees or other fees as a result of an inability to process the withdrawal from my financial institution. I have read and understand both the Terms & Conditions and the Agreement & Disclosures. I fully understand that Mutual of Omaha or NAI Plotkin reserve the right to change, cancel or modify this program at any time.

Bank ABA Routing and/or Transit Number: _____

Account #: _____

Type of Account (Circle One): Checking Savings Other: _____

Printed Name: _____ Unit Number: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____