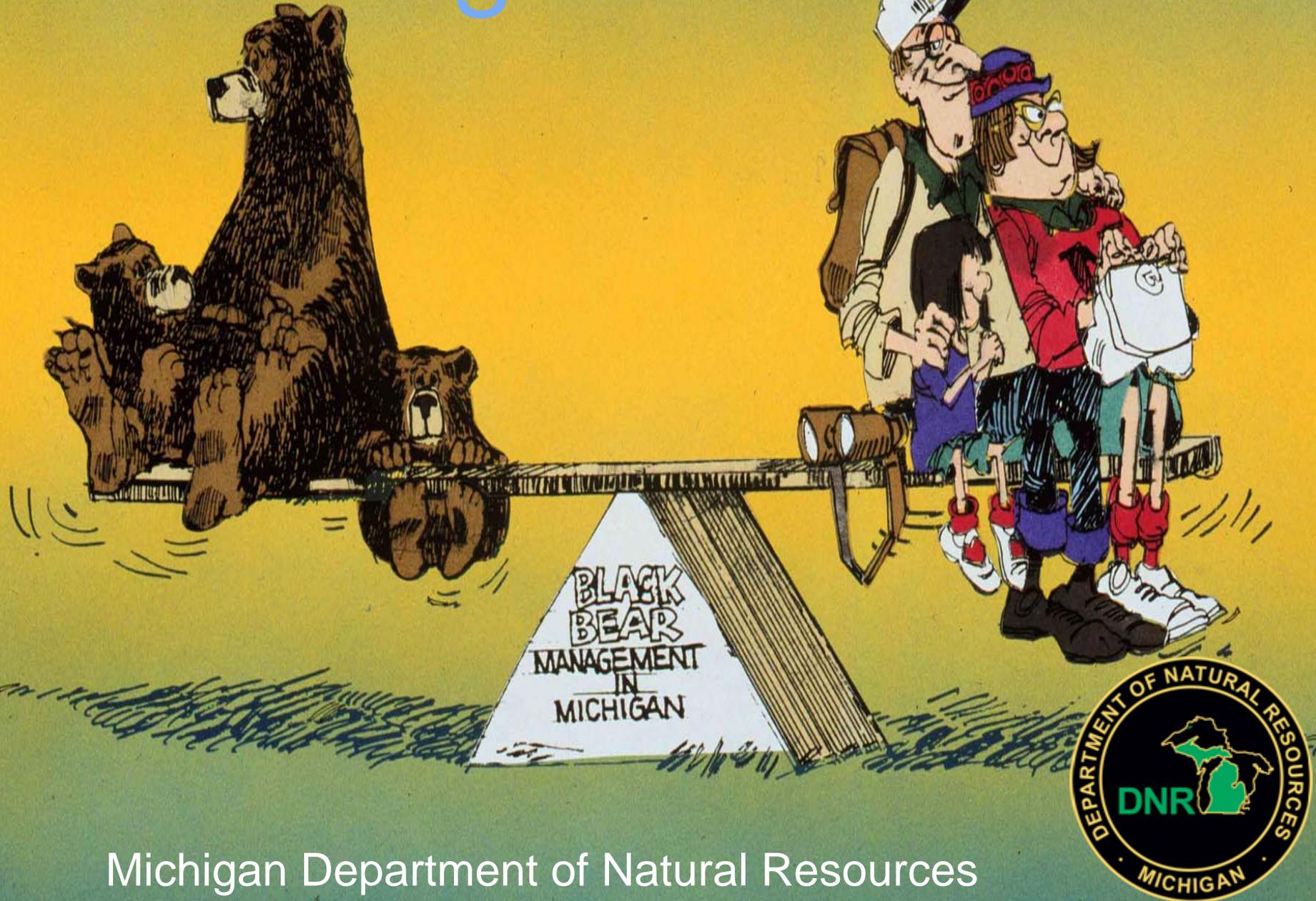


Living With Bears



Michigan Department of Natural Resources

Living With Bears Overview

- *Black Bear Life History*
 - Behavior
 - Reproduction
 - Home range
 - Habitat
 - Preferred food
- *Problem Bear Management*
 - DNR Responsibilities
 - Bear encounter information
 - How to prevent bear problems at your home
 - Preventing bear problems while camping
 - How you can help
 - Where to learn more

Photos courtesy of:
Colorado Division of Wildlife (CDOW)
Richard P. Smith
John Scholl



Black Bear Life History



Black bears spend the winter in a den, often constructed underground. Baby bears, called cubs, are born in the den in January and February.



Some Michigan bears use a simple exposed ground nest.



Bears are not true hibernators because they only drop their body temperature by a few degrees, where as a hibernating animal's body temperature is almost the same as their surroundings. Bears are easily awakened and capable of fleeing immediately if they feel threatened during their denning period.



An adult female typically has two to four cubs every other year. The average age when a female first reproduces in Michigan is 3 years. Cubs are totally dependent on their mother for the first few months.

The cubs stay with their mother until they are 15-18 months old, and then leave to find a new home.





Bears can be active 24 hours a day, but are most active at dawn and dusk.

Black bears are good tree climbers. This is often their first response when they feel threatened.

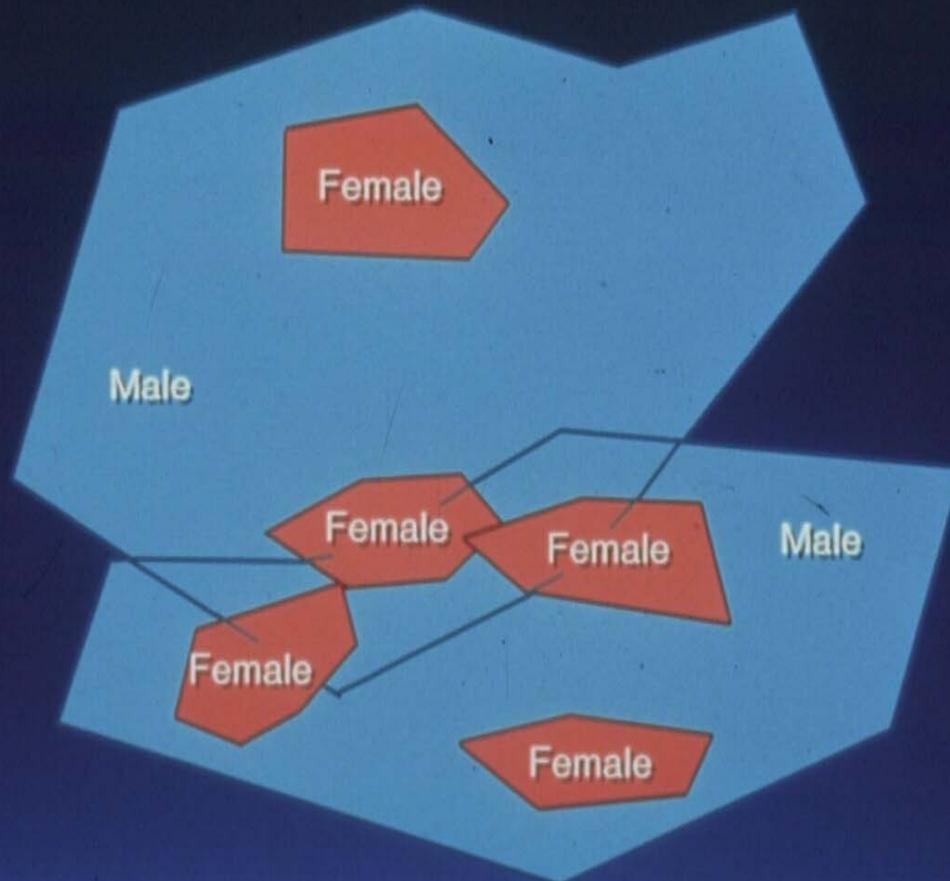


Bears have relatively good eyesight, but they mostly rely on their excellent sense of smell.



Black bears have large home ranges. Males home range is between about 100-300 square miles in Michigan. Females have a home range from 10-50 square miles.

Home Range Relationships



In Michigan, bears tend to use a mixture of vegetation cover types including deciduous lowland forests and coniferous swamps, both mature and young upland forests as well as forest openings consisting of grasses and forbs.



Black bears are omnivorous and opportunistic feeders.

Bears consume a variety of foods such as sedges, fruits, berries, nuts, insects, larvae, and small mammals.





Bears will also feed on agricultural crops (e.g. grains and fruits), as well as bird feed, garbage, and destroy bee hives for honey.

Pet food and livestock feed are sometimes eaten by bears, especially when readily available or in years when natural food supplies are poor.



Some bears work hard to get a snack...









Sometimes bears and people have conflicts. People often call these problem or nuisance bears. This large male is raiding a dumpster.

Problem Bear Management



The Michigan DNR has guidelines for problem bear management that categorize bear problems based on bear behavior, and outlines the appropriate responses.



Problem Bear Management Options

- Public education can prevent bear problems from occurring
- Removal of food attractants will often solve existing bear problems
- Trapping and relocation or euthanization for habituated bears or bears in special circumstances.





People often want to live trap and relocate problem bears. Relocation of problem bears is a last resort. It frequently fails to solve the problem-because the bear either comes back or gets in trouble again in the new neighborhood.



Most bear problems start with bears that hang around human areas looking for food.

As they become habituated or used to people, they may get into garbage, pet food, and other human food sources.





Backyard bird feeders are a special favorite!





Once bears become habituated to people, they may break into vehicles, sheds, cabins, and even homes looking for food. Although this is rare, it is a potentially dangerous situation!

Habituated bears may also enter tents and campsites to find food.



Are Black Bears Dangerous?



Most black bears are actually quite timid.

On very rare occasions, a black bear may attack someone. These bears are often habituated bears who have lost their fear of people.



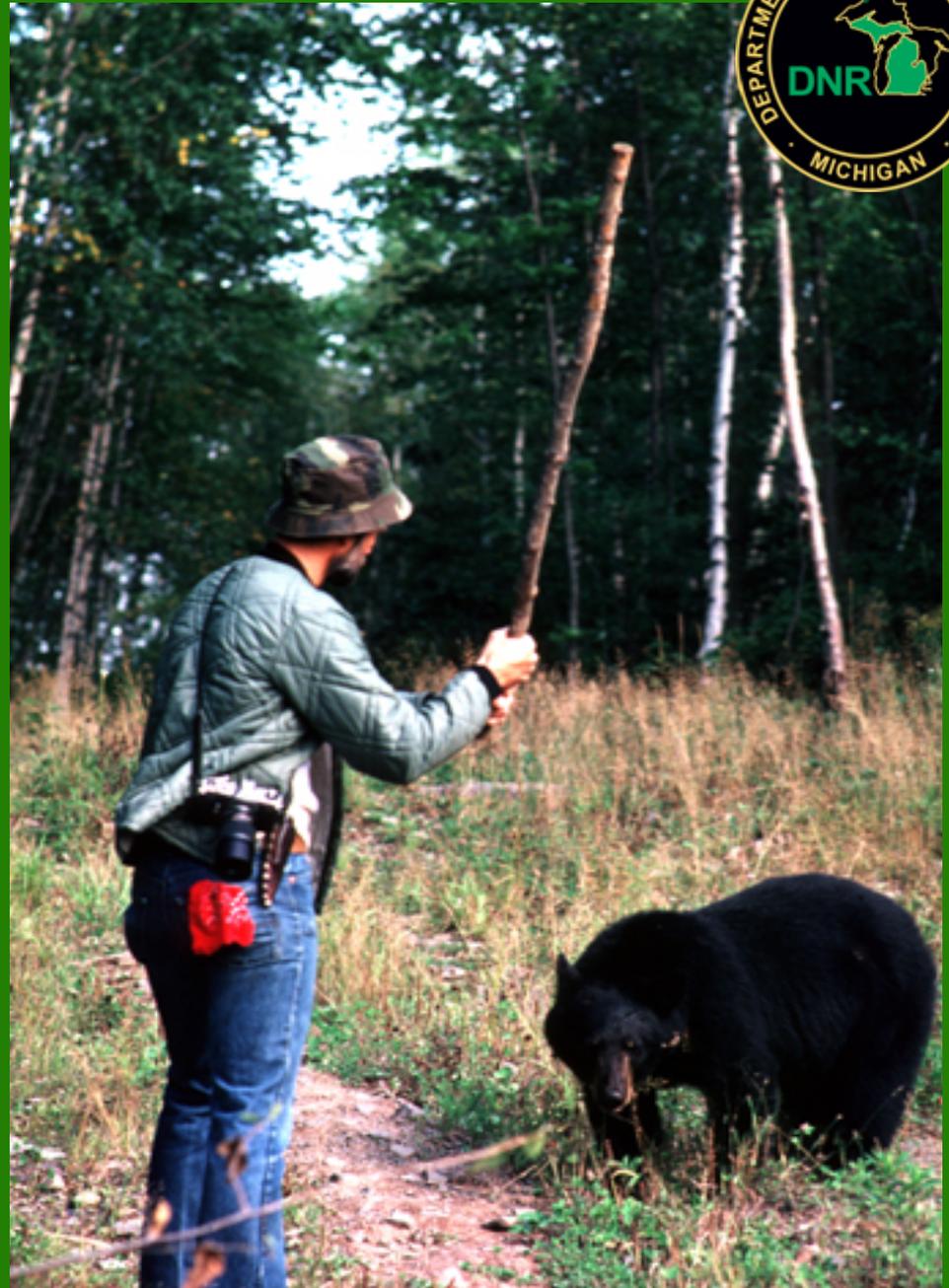
Basic DO'S and DON'TS of a Bear Encounter

DO travel in small groups and make noise!

DO stand your ground and then slowly back away

DO make yourself look bigger and talk to the bear in a firm tone of voice

DO fight back if actually attacked

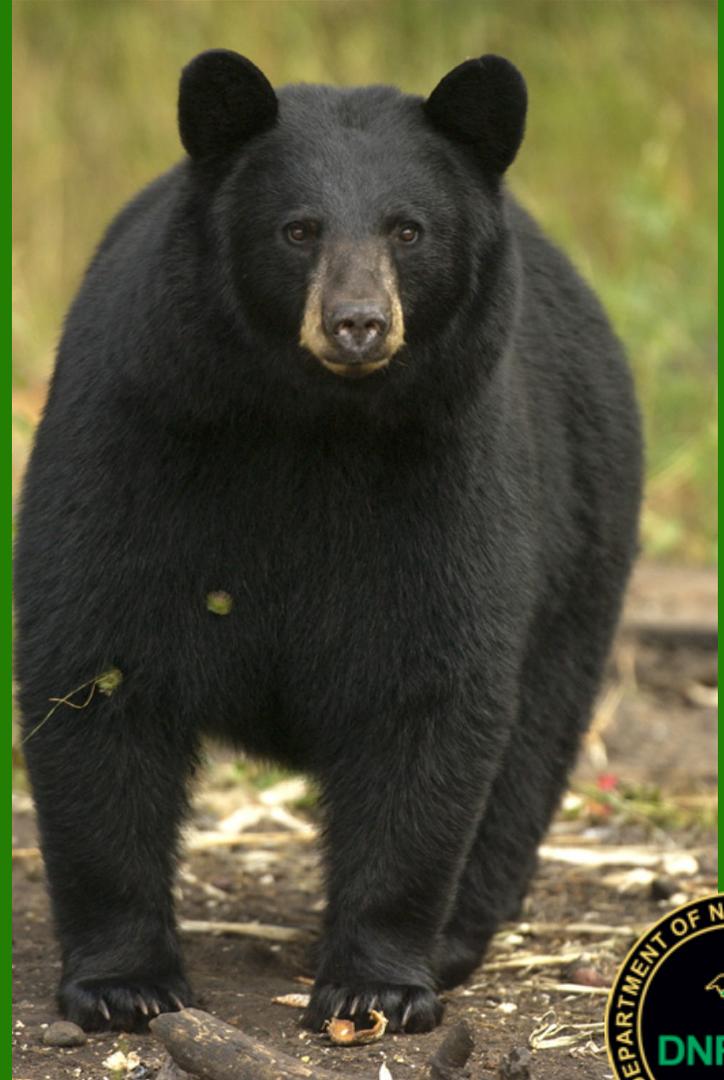


Basic DO'S and DON'TS of a Bear Encounter

Do carry pepper spray.
Studies have shown pepper spray to stop attacks about 65% of the time.

DON'T show fear or run

DON'T play dead





**NEVER APPROACH A BEAR CLOSELY
OR TRY TO HAND FEED OR TOUCH IT!**

Not only is it dangerous for you, it is just as dangerous for the bear. A fed bear most often eventually ends up being a dead bear!



Like all large wild animals, black bears are potentially dangerous and should always be treated with **RESPECT!**



How Can You Help Prevent Bear Problems at Home?

- Remove food attractants such as bird feeders and pet food around your home during summer
- Clean your outdoor grill after use
- Store garbage properly in bear-resistant or bear proof containers or in a locked shed, etc.
- Have garbage picked up regularly and keep garbage secured until the morning of pickup





Bear resistant cans are available to private citizens through several companies. Although a little more expensive than conventional garbage containers, they reduce problems and ultimately save bear lives.

How Can I Prevent Bear Problems When Camping?

- Keep a clean camp and store garbage in bear-resistant containers or in your vehicle. Don't burn or bury garbage-this attracts bears!
- Don't sleep in clothes that have cooking odors or blood on them
- Keep food and toiletries in air-tight containers and lock in your car or a bear-resistant locker, or hang in a tree or between two trees away from your sleeping area



Never keep food or toiletries in your tent when camping in BEAR COUNTRY!



Bear resistant refuse containers such as these are found in many parks and roadside areas. Please use them!





Campgrounds and parks with a history of bear activity are sometimes upgraded to more bear resistant types of facilities.

Some parks and residential areas with major bear problems have bear-proof dumpsters. Although expensive, these types are very effective.



What Can I Do to Help?

- Help educate the public and your neighbors about living in bear country and how to prevent bear problems.
- Never feed or approach bears!!!
- Know what to do and what not to do in a bear encounter.

Education is the Key!



Where Can I Learn More?

Information on the internet:

- Michigan DNR website www.michigan.gov/bear
- Bear Aware Program www.bebearaware.org
- Massachusetts Dept of Fish and Wildlife website
http://www.mass.gov/dfwele/dfw/wildlife/facts/mammals/bear/black_bear_home.htm



Information on preventing damage to bee hives, crops and livestock is available from the DNR.



To Report Bear Problems Anywhere in Michigan or Bear Sightings in Southern Michigan

- Call 24-hour DNR Report All Poaching hotline 1-800-292-7800
- During normal business hours (Monday to Friday) contact any local office of the Michigan DNR
- In an emergency, dial 911

