

Black Bears

Michigan Black Bear

[Graphic: Black Bear]

[Graphic: Michigan Department of Natural Resources Logo]

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Species: *Ursus americanus* – The black bear is the only species of bear in Michigan.

Life Span: 10 years – on average in the wild.

Home Range: Male black bears live in an area about 100 square miles or more in size, while females live in smaller areas about 10 to 20 square miles. Bears are solitary animals, but a sow and her cubs may be seen together.

Habitat: Prefers large continuous hardwood or conifer forests.

Litter Size: In Michigan, 2 to 3 cubs on average.

Appearance: Black bears can have various color phases including black (which is most common in Michigan), brown and cinnamon.

Size: In Michigan, adult female black bears range from 100 to 250 pounds, and adult males weigh between 150 to 400 pounds. Adult black bears measure about three feet high when on all fours, and are about five feet when standing upright.

[Graphic: 6 foot person standing next to three foot bear on all fours] Average size comparison.

[Graphic: Michigan Department of Natural Resources Logo]

Living with Bears

Black bears have enormous appetites and an excellent sense of smell. They are capable of remembering the locations of food sources from year to year.

Bears will travel great distances to find food. Black bears are omnivorous and opportunistic feeders, eating both plant and animal matter. Bears will eat tender vegetation, nuts, berries, and insects. Problems occur when bears attempt to feed on human foods, garbage, pet foods, or birdseed.

Black bears are generally fearful of humans and will leave if they are aware of your presence. In the rare circumstance that you encounter a bear that does not turn and leave, first try to scare it off by yelling while leaving a clear, unobstructed escape route for the bear.

If the bear stands its ground, makes threatening sounds, or bluff charges, you are too close. Take slow steps backward while continuing to talk to the bear in a stern tone. In the rare event of an attack, fight back with a backpack, stick, or your bare hands. Black bears have retreated in similar situations. DO NOT run or play dead.

For your safety, NEVER intentionally feed bears! It is critical that they retain their natural fear of humans. Remember, bears, like any wild animal, can act unpredictably and should be treated with respect and enjoyed from a distance.

Whether you welcome the black bear or not, all of us that live and recreate in bear range share the responsibility of avoiding activities that attract bears and create the potential for bear problems.

Black bears are generally fearful of humans and will leave if they are aware of your presence. If you encounter a bear, be SMART and...

- S – Stand your ground. DO NOT run or play dead.
- M – Make loud noises and back away slowly.
- A – Always provide a clear, unobstructed escape route for the bear.
- R – Rarely to bears attack, if they do, fight back.
- T – Treat bears with respect and observe them from a distance.

Preventing Conflicts With Bears At Home

[Graphic: Bird Feeder] Remove potential food sources, like bird feeders, from your yard. Do not feed the birds in the spring, summer and fall, when bears are most active.

[Graphic: Dog bone in a house] Keep pet food inside or in a secure area.

[Graphic: Trash can] Keep garbage and odor at a minimum by removing trash often and cleaning container with disinfectant.

[Graphic: Padlock] Keep garbage in a secured area or in a secured container with a metal, lockable lid until disposal.

[Graphic: Barbeque Grill] Keep grills and picnic tables clean.

[Graphic: Bee Hive] Apiaries (bee hives) fruit trees, and gardens can be protected from bears by electric fencing.

Preventing Conflicts with Bears when Camping and Hiking

- NEVER INTENTIONALLY FEED A BEAR.
- Keep a clean camp - minimize food odors and waste.
- Food and toiletries should NEVER be kept in tents.
- Store food and toiletries in air tight containers in a vehicle trunk or suspend food in burlap, plastic bags, or backpacks from trees - hang 12 feet above ground, 10 feet from trunk, and five feet from nearest branch.
- Always cook at a distance from your campsite and wash utensils shortly after eating.
- Don't sleep in clothes that have cooking odors or blood on them.
- Store waste as you would food - burning or burying waste attracts bears.
- Travel in groups and make noise when hiking.
- Carry bear spray.

Know the Laws

Excellent black bear hunting opportunities exist in Michigan. Hunting is used to maintain populations at acceptable and manageable levels. Details on season dates and locations can be found in the current Michigan Black Bear Digest, found online at Michigan.gov/DNRDigests. Black bears can only be killed by a licensed hunter or when human life is in danger.

Anyone who is experiencing problems with bears should contact the nearest DNR office and speak with a wildlife biologist or technician for further assistance.

Learn more about black bears by visiting Michigan.gov/Bear.

DNR Offices

Open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., or visit us online at Michigan.gov/DNR.

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231-775-9727

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Detroit Metro

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