

Michigan Department of Natural Resources

# BEAR MANAGEMENT IN MICHIGAN

**Goal #1:** Use Hunting as the Primary Tool for Managing Bears.

**Goal #2:** Promote Bear-Related Recreation, Such as Hunting and Viewing.

**Goal #3:** Increase Public Awareness and Understanding of Bears and Bear-Related Issues.

**Goal #4:** Maintain an Active Bear Research and Monitoring Program.

**Goal #5:** Provide Bears with Appropriate Habitat.

**Goal #6:** Allow Bears to Expand Naturally into Southern Michigan in Balance with Management Capabilities and Public Acceptance.

**Goal #7:** Prevent and Resolve Negative Bear-Human Interactions.



## **Visit us on the Web at: [www.michigan.gov/dnr](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr)**

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# MANAGEMENT PLAN AT-A-GLANCE

An interactive copy of this brochure is available at:  
[www.michigan.gov/bear](http://www.michigan.gov/bear)

**Goal #1:** Use hunting as the primary tool for managing bears.

- Hunting is a priority component of scientific management that balances bear biology with public desires. Regulated hunting helps keep bear populations at acceptable levels. Staying connected with stakeholders and constituents, and setting license quotas based on appropriate population goals, will help manage a healthy bear population.



*Photo courtesy of Mr. Russ Pensyl*

**Goal #2:** Promote bear-related recreation such as hunting and viewing.

- Developing regulations, educational efforts and encouraging the retention of hunting opportunities to reduce user conflicts and increase recreational opportunities will aid in the appreciation of this unique species.



- The black bear is the only species of bear found in Michigan. Black bears can have various color phases including black, brown and cinnamon. In Michigan, the black phase is the most common. Black bears may be found almost anywhere in Michigan but are most commonly seen in the northern two-thirds of the state.

**Goal #3:** Increase public awareness and understanding of bears and bear-related issues.

- The Michigan Department of Natural Resources works with partners to develop programs, presentations, training sessions and handouts that will increase awareness and understanding of bears.



- In Michigan, adult female bears range from 100 to 250-plus pounds, while adult males weigh between 150 and 400-plus pounds. Adult black bears measure about three feet high when on all four feet and about five feet when standing upright. A bear is considered an adult when it is capable of breeding, which in Michigan is around three years of age.

## Goal #4: Maintain an active bear research and monitoring program.

■ Bear research provides important information that enhances the ability to manage bears and make informed bear management recommendations. Research focuses on bear ecology and current social issues.

■ Current bear research projects are:

- Southern Michigan bear habitat use and movements.
- Upper Peninsula predator/prey study.
- Using genetics to identify source areas for the northern Lower Peninsula black bear population.
- Evaluating long-term changes in black bear reproduction in Michigan.
- Developing effective black bear exclusion devices to protect bee hives or apiaries.

■ Monitoring Efforts:

- Mandatory registration of harvested bears.
- Annual surveys of bear hunters.
- Genetic and tetracycline-based mark and recapture estimates.



**Goal #5:** Provide bears with appropriate habitat.

- The DNR works with other agencies and private landowners to retain and improve large habitat blocks and connections between large habitat blocks for bears.



- Black bears are a wide-ranging species that prefers hardwood or conifer forests. Bears are solitary animals, but a sow and her cubs may be seen together. Male black bears live in an area about 100 square miles in size, while females live in smaller areas of 10 to 20 square miles. The size of an area a bear occupies is affected by habitat and food availability and the number of other bears in an area.

**Goal #6:** Allow bears to expand naturally into southern Michigan in balance with management capabilities and public acceptance.

- The DNR will work with residents to help explain the costs and benefits of having bears in an area and will respond to conflicts to minimize impacts. Educational programs, handouts and updates to the website will be developed to keep residents informed about bears and how to live with them.
- Southern Michigan bear population management options will be explored, but hunting will be used in some form to maintain populations at acceptable and manageable levels.



- 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.

**Goal #7:** Prevent and resolve negative bear-human interactions.

■ The DNR provides education and assistance to landowners to avoid and resolve bear problems and to maintain public support for scientific bear management. An understanding of bears and the effective prevention and resolution of bear problems helps increase appreciation of bears.

■ Although most bears are secretive and shy by nature, they will tolerate contact with people when natural food sources are scarce. Because they are large and powerful animals, they must be respected. To avoid possible confrontations and property damage from bears, the most effective and long-lasting strategy is prevention.



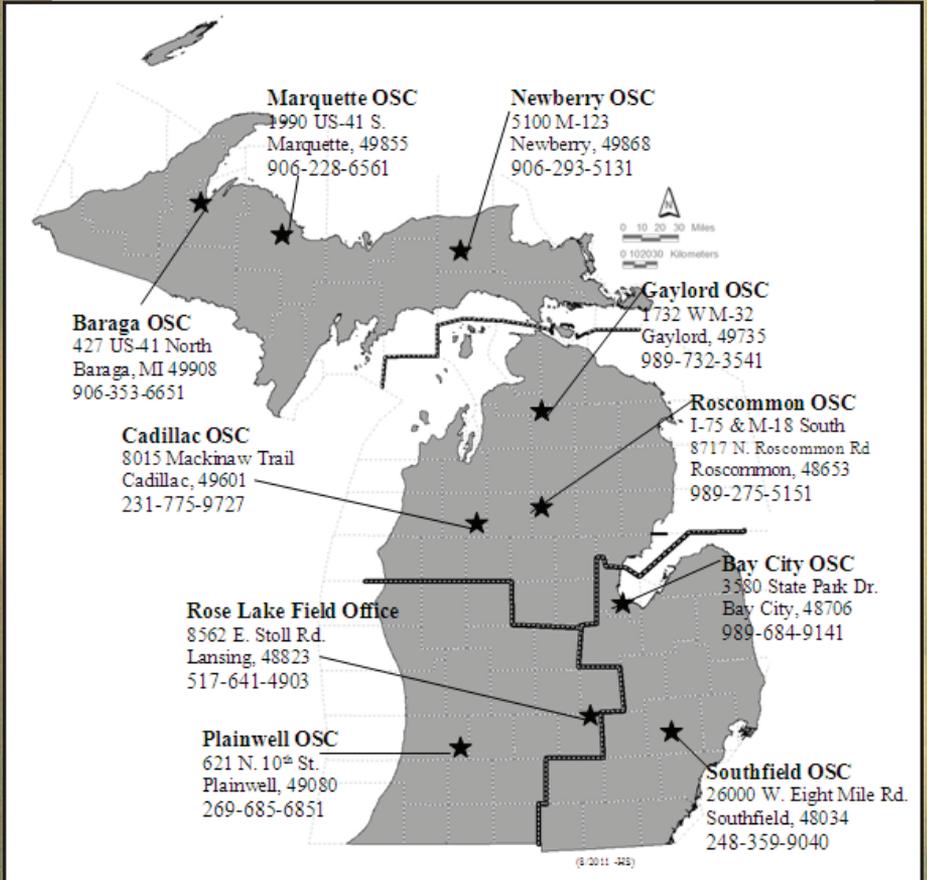
■ Black bears are considered opportunistic feeders, taking advantage of many seasonally available foods. They eat primarily plants but will also consume meat and insects. If given the chance, bears will supplement their natural diet with human garbage, pet foods, birdseed, or any foods placed to feed or attract other wildlife.

- Keeping garbage and pet food in a secured area or inside, keeping barbecue grills and picnic areas clean, and feeding birds only in winter while bears are in the dens will help reduce bears in a neighborhood or camp site. If feeding birds in spring and summer, only placing enough feed out for one day may help, but still has the potential to attract bears.



- 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.
- Always remember: people share in the responsibility of avoiding bear conflicts.

For more information on bears in your area or if you have questions or concerns, contact your local DNR Operations Service Center (OSC). OSC's are open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.



**Report All Poaching (RAP) Hotline:**  
**1-800-292-7800**

