

Summer 2004  
MyFWC.com/bear

## Summer Bear News



You live in bear country! Please take precautions to keep people, property, and bears safe.

# Bear Prepared Communities

Summer is the breeding season for bears. Female bears will breed when cubs leave home in their second summer. Summer is also a time when new cubs born over the winter are spending their first summer with their mother. She will protect them from predators and show them how to find the food, water and cover they need to survive. Because cubs learn from their mother's behavior, it is important to keep garbage and pet food secured so that problematic feeding habits are not passed on.

Cubs are more sensitive to noises and movement, and when scared or chased by a domestic pet, they may climb a tree to safety. The adult female will stay in the area or climb the tree as well. The cub will stay in the tree until it feels safe enough to come down. You can help by leaving the area around the tree as quiet as possible. Most likely mother and cub will leave after dark.

At 1½ years old, female yearlings will set up a home range near their mother, while male yearlings will travel farther (or disperse) in search of a new home. Dispersing bears are more likely to be seen in new areas.



Florida black bear

Juvenile bears face increased threats from starvation, vehicle collision, aggression from other bears, and human conflicts. Twenty percent of juvenile females and 46% of juvenile males will die before reaching adulthood at about four years of age (FWC 2003). You can help protect bears and property by following the "Bear Prepared Communities" tips below.

*The mere presence of a black bear doesn't necessarily represent a problem. If it doesn't find pet food or garbage, the bear will simply move on.*

## Don't Feed the Bears...

Bears usually avoid people, but garbage or pet food left outside can easily draw bears to your home. Once bears get hooked on human food sources, they keep coming back. It is this access to household foods that can lead to dangerous situations for people, their property and the bears.

*Remember, any food that will attract raccoons, dogs, or cats also will attract bears.*

### In order to protect your property, yourself and the bears, please remember to:

- ⇒ Store trash in a secure area until the morning of pickup
- ⇒ Bring pet food inside and store securely
- ⇒ Clean grills and store securely
- ⇒ Remove bird feeders when bears are present
- ★ A screened area is not bear proof! Bears often tear through screens to reach food, including pet foods or garbage. Be sure to store bear attractants in a secure area.

## The Bear Facts. Did you know...?

- ⇒ Bears can smell food from more than a mile away!
- ⇒ If you have a close encounter with a bear, remain standing, speak calmly and assertively and back up slowly. Never approach a bear. Be sure the bear has an escape route.
- ⇒ If a bear enters your yard and you are inside or in a secure location, it is safe to make noises to try to scare the bear away.
- ⇒ Intentional feeding of bears is against the law.

To learn more about Florida's black bears go to <http://MyFWC.com/bear>

If you have bear questions or experience bear problems, please contact the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission's Northeast Regional Office at 352-732-1225

