

## Eliminating Food Sources for the Florida Black Bear

The Florida black bear is the largest native mammal in the state of Florida and a threatened species. Black bears are omnivores, meaning that they eat meat as well as fruits, nuts, and seeds.

Many food sources are made unintentionally available by people such as garbage, bird and wildlife feeders, barbecues, smokers, and pet food. At the moment, garbage is the biggest issue for black bears.

Once a bear has found a food source, they will forage there until the food source has been removed. It may take up to several weeks for the bear to stop visiting the food source and move on. The best way to prevent bears from entering your property is to make it "food free". Here are some different ways to assist you in eliminating or removing food sources that attract bears:



- 🍯 Secure garbage indoors or in a bear-resistant container
- 🍯 Take garbage out in the morning for pick-up and not the night before
- 🍯 Feed pets indoors. Do not leave food bowls outside
- 🍯 Clean grills and smokers. Store them in a secure place
- 🍯 Remove bird and wildlife feeders. Food plots can be used as wildlife feeders if necessary. Plans to secure wildlife feeders can be found at [www.myfwc.com](http://www.myfwc.com)
- 🍯 Protect gardens, prairies, composts, and livestock with electric fences
- 🍯 Pick ripe fruit from trees and bushes and remove fallen fruit from the ground

Black bears are listed as threatened and it is illegal to intentionally feed them. If you suspect anyone of feeding bears, please contact the Environmental Resource Management Department (ERMD) at (863)902-3200.

Black bears pose very little threat to human safety, but it is best to be safe. If you see a black bear use the following guidelines to stay safe:

- 🍯 Stay calm and walk backwards to the closest building or vehicle
- 🍯 Bring children and pets inside
- 🍯 Banging pots or making loud noises (e.g., an air horn or whistling) will encourage the bear to leave
- 🍯 If the bear is able to get food (like garbage or bird food), remove it and secure it once the bear has left the premises
- 🍯 If the bear is in a tree, leave it alone, it will most likely leave once it feels safe

For additional information please call STOF ERMD.