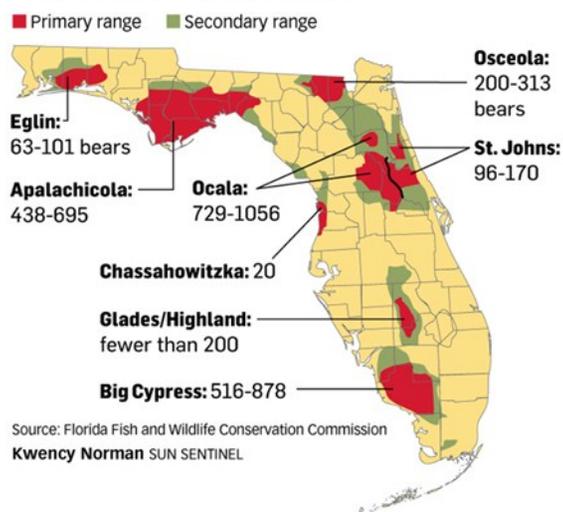


## Black bear populations



People ask why problem bears can't simply be relocated to a "wild area where they won't bother anyone." Unfortunately, areas large and remote enough for bears to avoid people are rare in Florida. Also, most relocated bears typically leave the new area, either to return to their original home or to leave an area already occupied by other bears. Some bears will wander through unfamiliar areas and cross busy roads, creating a danger to the bear and to motorists. In addition, bears remaining in the relocation area often exhibit the same, unwanted behavior, thus shifting the problem to a new location. As a result, relocation is not a desirable or effective solution to bear conflicts. Wildlife biologists can provide technical advice to residents who live in bear country to help them take actions to discourage bears from becoming a problem. The FWC is committed to addressing the safety concerns of residents and visitors while ensuring the long-term well-being of black bears.

## Did You Know?

Black bears are shy animals and generally not aggressive towards people. When a bear stands on its hind legs, it is merely trying to get a better view, rather than acting in a threatening way. Black bears may huff, snap their jaws, swat the ground or "bluff charge" when cornered, threatened or caught stealing food. Stand your ground and then slowly back away. Always respect bears – they are large and powerful wild animals and can act unpredictably. Bears used to getting food from humans may lose their natural fear of people and are more likely to damage property or become a safety threat.

# A Guide to Living with Bears



### WHO DO YOU CONTACT IF YOU SEE A FLORIDA BLACK BEAR ON THE RESERVATION?

**Contact your direct supervisor**

**You may also contact::**

**Seminole Tribe of Florida's**

**Wildlife Biologist**

**Phone: 863-902-3200 x13411**

**Cell: 954-410-7073**



## Information provided by FWC

Cover photo by Ashley Hockenberry

## Secure Common Bear Attractants

- Use electric fencing to protect gardens, compost piles, apiaries, fruit trees and livestock.
- Store garbage and recyclables in bear-resistant containers or in a secure area until the morning of pick up.
- Feed pets indoors or bring food dishes (even if empty) inside before dark.
- Store pet and livestock feed in bear-resistant containers or inside a secure area.
- Remove bird and wildlife feeders. Ensure the area is free of all seed, corn, or other wild animal feed.
- Keep gardens and fruiting trees and shrubs tidy. Remove rotten fruit and harvest ripe nuts, fruits and vegetables.
- Clean meat smokers and barbeque grills with a degreasing detergent. Properly dispose of food remnants after each use.

Learn more about black bears with the Florida Black Bear Curriculum Guide. The guide is designed to educate teachers and students in 3rd to 8th grade and offers a comprehensive series of lessons on Florida's black bear.

To get tips on how to secure bear attractants, watch videos about bears or how to install electric fencing, and learn more about bear-resistant containers, visit [MyFWC.com/Bear](http://MyFWC.com/Bear).



## If a Bear Comes into your Yard

If you encounter a black bear at close range, remain standing upright, back up slowly and speak to the bear in a calm, assertive voice.

- Do not intentionally feed or attract bears. If a bear is eating something on your property, take note of what it is and secure it after the bear has left the area.
- Never approach or surprise a bear. Keep as much distance between you and the bear as possible.
- Make sure you are in a secure area and the bear has a clear escape route to leave the area - then yell, bang pots and pans, or use an air horn to scare the bear away.
- Do not turn your back, play dead or run from a black bear. Back away slowly into a house, car or building.
- Report any bear threatening the safety of humans, pets or livestock, or causing property damage to the Tribal Wildlife Biologist.
- Warning! It is illegal to injure or kill black bears under Florida state law. If you are found guilty, you could face fines and/or jail time.

Climbing trees is a bear's natural escape route. If the bear climbs a tree, keep people and pets away. The bear will come down the tree and leave when it feels safe, usually after dark.

## The Bear Facts

Black bears are the only species of bear in Florida and once roamed the entire state.

- FWC biologists estimate there are 2,500- 3,000 black bears in Florida.
- Florida bears are generally black with a brown muzzle and may have a white chest marking called a blaze.
- Adult black bears typically weigh between 150 to 400 pounds; males are usually larger than females.
- Female bears have their first litter at about 31/2 years of age and generally have one to three cubs every other year.
- In Florida, the breeding season runs from June to August and cubs are born in late January or early February.
- Bears of all ages are excellent climbers and will climb trees when they are frightened or looking for food (e.g., acorns).
- About 80 percent of a black bear's diet comes from plants (e.g., fruits, nuts, berries), 15 percent from insects (e.g., termites, ants, yellow jackets) and 5 percent from meat (e.g., opossums, armadillos, carrion).

Florida black bear populations have been recovering from historically low numbers in most areas of the state. At the same time, the human population is rapidly expanding in and around bear range. As a result, bears and humans are encountering each other more than ever.



The mere presence of a black bear does not represent a problem. In fact, living in bear country can provide unique and rewarding experiences for residents.

While feeding bears is illegal in Florida, bears are still often fed by humans, either intentionally or unintentionally. When black bears have access to pet food, garbage, birdseed, livestock feed or other human-provided items, they quickly learn to associate people with food.