

The Florida Black Bear.



Eliminating Food Sources for the Florida Black Bear

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- [Bear Resistant Containers](#)
- [Bears Quest for Calories](#)
- [Caddy Instructions](#)
- [Combined Retrofit Kit](#)
- [Electric Fence](#)
- [Living in Bear Country](#)
- [Unwelcome Mat Instructions](#)
- [Ways to Secure Your Trash](#)
- [Bear proof Dumpster](#)

The Florida black bear is the largest native mammal in the state of Florida. They are black with a tan muzzle and a white spot on their chest which varies from bear to bear. Males weigh about 350lbs and live to be 15 to 25 years old, while females weigh about 200lbs and live to be 30 years old. Black bears are omnivores, meaning that they eat meat as well as fruits, nuts, and seeds. Instead of hibernating, sleeping through the entire winter, Florida black bears “winter den”, sleeping for short periods of time throughout the winter months. The “Winter denning” period usually starts in late December and ends early May. Males and non-pregnant females will leave their den several times during this period to eat, while pregnant females will give birth to their cubs and go without food for 4 to 5 months. The Florida black bear is a threatened species in Florida. Black bears used to range throughout Florida, although now they occupy fragmented areas such as Hendry, Glades, and Polk County.



Credit: www.myfwc.com

Many food sources are made unintentionally available by people such as garbage, bird and wildlife feeders, barbeques, smokers, and pet food. At the moment, garbage is the biggest issue for black bears. A black bear can smell garbage up to a mile away! This can lead a black bear to track down the smell and possibly cross roads and bridges to the food source, creating a great risk to the bears and motorist. When a bear gains access from a human food source, they quickly learn to associate humans with food, therefore losing their shyness and becoming habituated. Once a bear has been used to getting a reliable food source (being food conditioned) they are likely to return to the site frequently. Black bears are strong, persistent, and are able to tear up garbage cans, coolers, grills, bird feeders, sheds, and dog houses. Once a bear has found a steady food source, they may become aggressive in order to defend it.



Credit: www.news.wfsu.org

The food source from people is a difficult cycle to break and often results in the death of a bear. 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



Credit: www.myfwc.com

- 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
- 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 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 go to www.myfwc.com

Black bears are listed as threatened and it is illegal to intentionally feed them. If you suspect anyone of feeding bears or have a nuisance bear in the area, please contact **Tribal Animal Control at the numbers listed below:**

- **For the Immokalee and Big Cypress contact: Officer Shawn Heron (863) 228-6265**

- **For the Brighton and Ft. Pierce: Officer Evelyn Tiencken (954)658-0904**
- **For the Trail contact: Officer Gus Batista (954) 347-9253**
- **If you need immediate assistance, please contact SPD at (863)983-2285**