YOUR ROLE

KNOW THE FACTS.

Learning about bears will help prevent negative interactions and dispel unfounded fears. Distinguishing nervous behaviors *(like huffing or jaw popping)* from inquisitive ones *(like standing up to get a good whiff of something interesting)* can help keep encounters positive.

PREVENTION AND COOPERATION.

You can help manage the bear population by keeping your property clear of food attractants and communicating with your neighbors to resolve community bear concerns. **It is illegal to deliberately or inadvertently feed bears.**

RESPECT THE BEAR'S SPACE.

If you see a bear, enjoy watching from a distance. If you come into close contact, back away slowly and remember that bears have a natural distrust of humans and will run when given a safe escape route. If it is up a tree, leave it alone. Keep people and pets away from the tree to allow the bear to leave your property.

LET THE BEAR KNOW IT IS NOT WELCOME.

Often a bear in your yard is just passing through and, if it finds no food, will simply move on. Don't allow the bear to feel comfortable in your yard. After ensuring the bear has an escape route, make lots of noise to encourage it to leave. Remove any non-natural foods that attracted the bear.

REPORT UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS OR DAMAGE.

If you experience a bear problem after taking appropriate steps of prevention, you may seek additional assistance by contacting the Wildlife Conflict Helpline.

What you do really matters.
KEEP BEARS WILD!

DGIF'S ROLE

The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has established bear guidelines that promote public safety, protect property, and conserve bear populations.

Whenever possible, DGIF's approach to managing problem bears encourages the **coexistence of bears and humans**. The specific response to bear issues is determined by public concerns and safety, type and extent of damage, black bear biology, animal welfare, and available control methods.

If you are having a bear-related problem, **a telephone call will often be all that is needed to find successful solutions** *(usually the removal of attractants)*. In more unusual circumstances, a DGIF biologist may visit your property to discuss additional options.

Wildlife Conflict Helpline:
(855) 571-9003

LEARN MORE ONLINE!

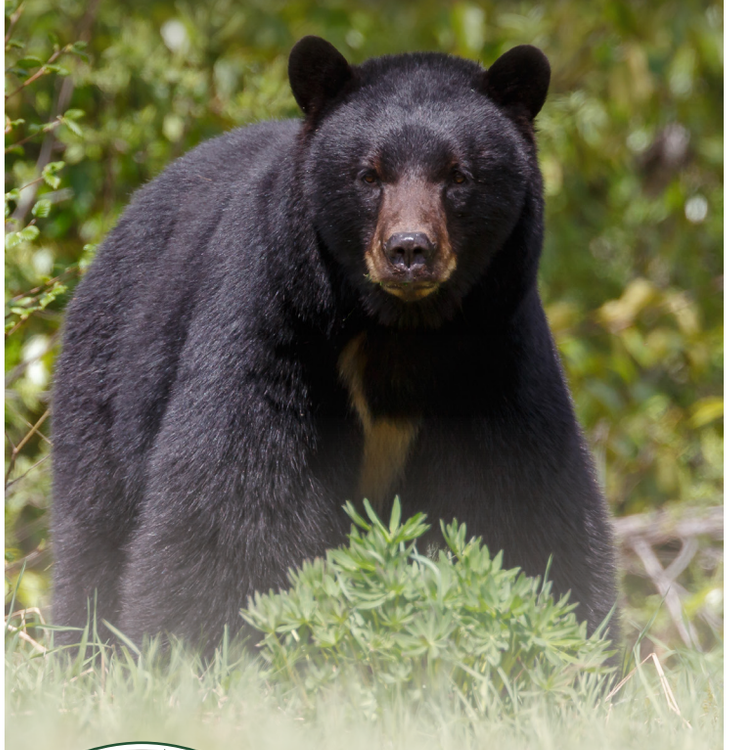
Want to learn more about what it takes to be bear aware and help prevent problems between people and bears?

We've got DIY guides, videos about bears in Virginia, and more! Just visit **dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bear**.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

LIVING WITH BLACK BEARS IN VIRGINIA

Black bears capture human admiration and interest like few other wildlife species. We all share the responsibility in preventing problems and *keeping bears wild.*



DEPARTMENT OF
GAME & INLAND FISHERIES
CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

YOU LIVE IN BEAR COUNTRY.

Black bears are present throughout most of Virginia, with increasing opportunities for sightings or encounters.

When natural foods are scarce, bears will venture into neighborhoods in search of easily accessible foods like bird seed, garbage, and pet food. Many people enjoy the opportunity to see bears in the wild. However, **when human-related foods become available to bears, problems may occur.**

Residents and visitors to Virginia can minimize negative interactions with bears by following some simple guidelines.

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

DGIF will not trap or relocate a bear that is eating from your trash or birdfeeder. It is your responsibility to remove the attractants from your property once a bear discovers the food source. If needed, we can help you identify the attractant so it can be removed and offer advice for deterring bears from your property.

RESIDENTIAL PROBLEMS:

Bears are highly adaptable, intelligent animals who can easily learn to associate human dwellings with food. In reality, most problems caused by bears are really "people problems". It is up to you to change your behavior to avoid conflicts.

- ***The most common food attractants*** *are bird feeders, garbage, beehives, and pet food. Grills, livestock feeds, and compost can also attract bears.*
- ***Residential bear problems may occur at any time of year,*** *but are more common when natural food supplies are limited, usually in the spring or in years when natural nut and berry production is low.*
- ***Most common bear problems have simple solutions.*** *Typical problems involve turned over garbage containers, trash littered across the yard, damaged birdfeeders, or bears coming onto porches to eat pet food or get into coolers. However, bears that learn to associate food with people can cause property damage in their search for food around houses.*

Luckily, if addressed promptly, problems are often quickly resolved. After a few failed attempts to find food around homes, bears will usually leave the area to continue their search.

If you don't take steps to discourage a bear from revisiting your property, they may come around so often that they lose their distrust of humans. These bears can pose public safety concerns and in some unfortunate circumstances may have to be killed.

YOU CAN KEEP BEARS WILD.

Black bears have a natural distrust of humans, are shy, and usually avoid people. But, it is our job to **follow these simple steps to further discourage them:**

- ***Remove bird feeders.*** *It is best not to put out food for birds from April – November. Instead, plant native seed-bearing plants or use water fountains.*
- ***Store garbage indoors, in a shed, garage, or in a bear-proof container.*** *Put garbage out on the morning of pickup, not the night before.*
- ***Pick up pet food.*** *Do not leave food out overnight.*
- *Do not put* ***meat scraps in the compost pile.***
- ***Pick up and remove ripe fruit*** *from fruit trees and surrounding grounds.*
- ***Clean the grill often****. Do not dump drippings in your yard. Run the grill an extra 5 minutes to burn off grease.*
- ***Install electric fencing*** *to protect beehives, dumpsters, gardens, compost piles, or other food sources.*
- ***Don't store food, refrigerators, or trash on porches.***
- ***Use harassment techniques****. Paintballs won't harm the bear if shot at the rump, and should get the bear to leave.*
- ***Talk to your neighbors.*** *Make sure your neighbors and community administrators are aware of the ways to prevent conflicts with bears.*