



ESJ/AFB

## Secure your garbage

- Store garbage in a secure area, such as a sturdy shed or garage, until the morning of pickup, or
- Build a small shed to store trash cans. Be sure there are no gaps along the shed's edges and use screws. If the shed is curbside, call your waste service provider to ensure it will still service your trash cans, or
- Modify your regular trash can to make it bear-resistant by adding hardware. To be successful, the lid must not be flexible and the can must not collapse when you stand on its side. Call your waste service provider to ensure it will service a modified trash can, or
- Request a commercially manufactured bear-resistant trash can from your waste service provider. If they do not provide these cans, you can special order one from a hardware store, but ensure your waste service provider will service it.



**Funds from Florida's "Conserve Wildlife" license plate help conserve bears and reduce human-bear conflicts. Buy one today through your local tax collector's office or online at [BuyAPlate.com](http://BuyAPlate.com).**



MILLIE FOX

## How FWC responds to conflicts

The FWC addresses human-bear conflicts in a variety of ways, including providing technical assistance over the phone, conducting an in-person visit with the resident, using deterrents (such as an electric fence), attempting to scare the bear away, or, in rare cases, attempting to trap the bear.

While most conflicts can be avoided by securing attractants, biologists assess each situation on a case-by-case basis and use FWC policies and guidelines to help decide on the most appropriate response.

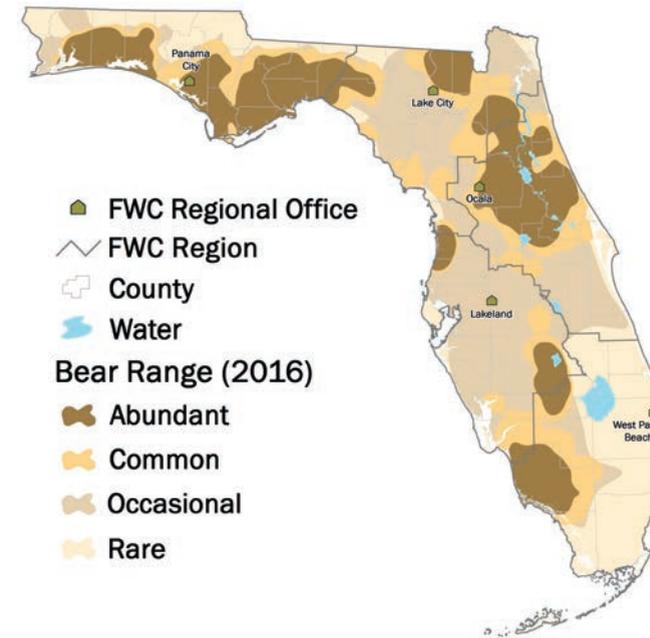
The earlier the FWC is notified, the more response options are available.

The longer a conflict situation continues, the more likely the bear will develop behaviors that present a risk to public safety, such as entering a dwelling, harming a leashed dog or injuring a person.

Once this happens, it is too late to try to change the bear's behavior and it must be humanely killed.

**Warning! It is illegal to take, possess, injure, shoot, collect or sell black bears under Florida state law unless authorized by an FWC-issued permit. If you are found guilty, you could face fines and/or jail time.**

## Where bears live in Florida



If you are experiencing bear conflicts, please contact the nearest FWC regional office. The sooner the FWC knows about bear activity, the more options are available to prevent a bear from becoming a public safety risk.

<b>North Central</b>	<b>Lake City</b>	<b>(386) 758-0525</b>
<b>Northeast</b>	<b>Ocala</b>	<b>(352) 732-1225</b>
<b>Northwest</b>	<b>Panama City</b>	<b>(850) 265-3676</b>
<b>South</b>	<b>West Palm Beach</b>	<b>(561) 625-5122</b>
<b>Southwest</b>	<b>Lakeland</b>	<b>(863) 648-3200</b>

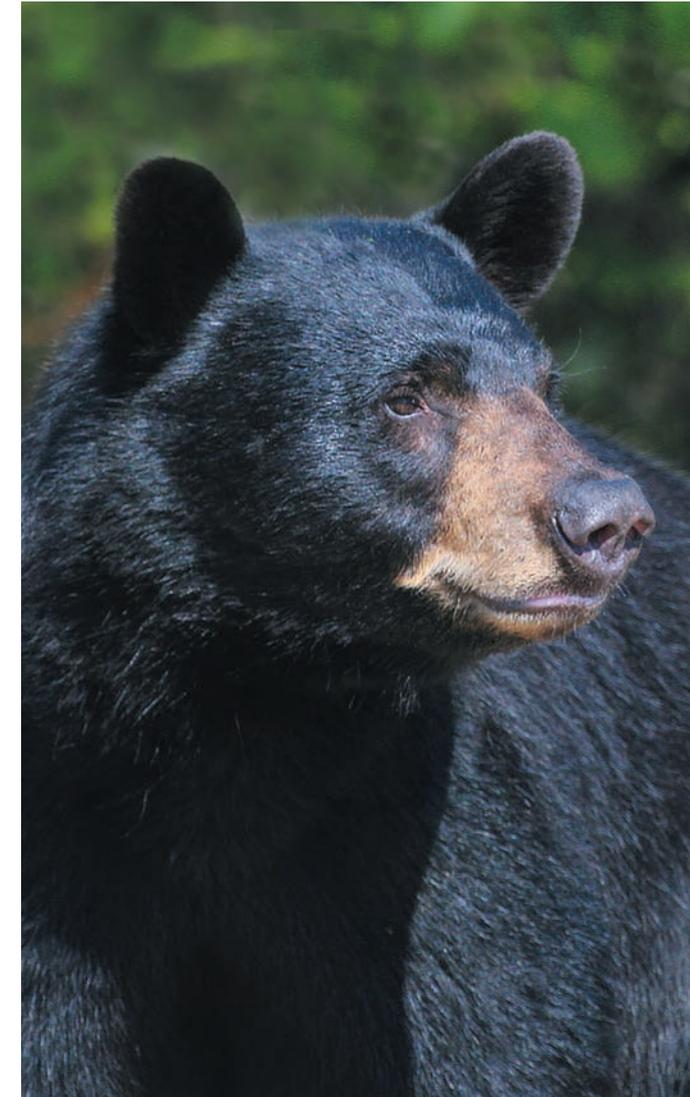
**In an emergency or if you suspect illegal activity, call the Wildlife Alert Hotline at 888-404-FWCC (3922).**

Follow us on:



Florida Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission  
[MyFWC.com/Bear](http://MyFWC.com/Bear)

# A guide to living in bear country



Ashley Hockenberry



Florida Fish and Wildlife  
Conservation Commission  
[MyFWC.com/Bear](http://MyFWC.com/Bear)



Ashley Hookerberry

## The bear facts

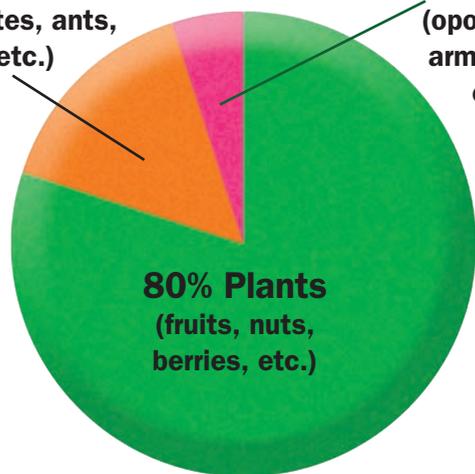
- Black bears are the only species of bear in Florida.
- Biologists estimate approximately 4,000 black bears roam Florida today, compared to as few as 300 bears in the 1970s.
- Bears can pick up scents from over a mile away: that's seven times better than a bloodhound and the best of any land mammal.
- Adult bears typically weigh between 150 to 400 pounds, with males often twice the size of females.
- Females have their first litter around 3 years of age, with one to three cubs born every other year.
- Breeding occurs from June to August, with cubs born around February 1.
- On average, females range over 15 square miles and males range over 60 square miles.

## A bear's diet

**15% Insects**  
(termites, ants, bees, etc.)

**5% Meat**  
(opossums, armadillos, carrion, etc.)

**80% Plants**  
(fruits, nuts, berries, etc.)



**It is illegal to put out food or garbage that attracts bears and causes conflicts.**

**Anything that attracts dogs, cats or raccoons also attracts bears!**

## Bear behavior and you

Black bears are shy and generally not aggressive. When seen near homes or workplaces, bears are often just passing through. When frightened, bears typically run away or climb a tree. If a bear is in a tree, it is either feeding or trying to escape danger. Keep people and pets away, and the bear will leave on its own, usually after dark.

When a bear stands on its hind legs, it is trying to get a better view or scent. Black bears may huff, snap their jaws, swat the ground or “bluff charge” when cornered, threatened or defending food or young. If this happens, stop, hold your ground and then slowly back away.

Remember bears are large, powerful, wild animals that can act unpredictably and become dangerous. Bears who receive food from people may lose their natural fear of them and are more likely to damage property or become a public safety risk. NEVER 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.



**Learn all about Florida's bears and being BearWise at [MyFWC.com/BearWise](http://MyFWC.com/BearWise).**



## BearWise tips:

- Never approach a bear. Keep as much distance between you and the bear as possible.
- If a bear changes its behavior because you're there, you are too close.
- If you encounter a bear at close range, stand with arms raised, back up slowly and speak to the bear in a calm, assertive voice.
- Do not turn your back, play dead or run from a black bear.
- Make sure you are in a secure area, such as a car or building, and the bear has a clear escape route, then scare the bear away with loud noises, like yelling, blowing a whistle, or using an air or car horn.
- Install a motion-activated device, such as flood lights, a water sprinkler or audio alarm, to scare a bear away from a location when you are not present.
- Report any bear threatening the safety of people, pets or livestock, or causing property damage, to the FWC (see back cover).
- Walk dogs on a non-retractable leash and be aware of your surroundings. Dogs can trigger defensive behaviors from bears.

**Encourage your school system to use the *Florida Black Bear Curriculum Guide*. The guide is designed for grades 3 to 8 and is correlated to state education standards.**



## Avoid attracting bears

Bears do not hang around people if they do not find food. Properly storing or securing garbage and other attractants is a proven method of preventing bear conflicts. However, it takes a community-wide effort to keep bears wild and away from neighborhoods.

- Use electric fencing to protect gardens, garbage, compost piles, beehives, fruit trees and livestock.



John Bailey

- Keep garage doors closed when not in use.
- Feed pets indoors or bring food dishes (even empty ones) inside at night.
- Store pet and livestock feed in bear-resistant containers or inside a secure area.
- Remove or modify bird and wildlife feeders and ensure the ground is free of all feed debris.
- Properly harvest ripe nuts, fruits, and vegetables and remove rotten fruits and vegetables.
- Create an “unwelcome” mat by driving finishing nails, heads up, into a sheet of anchored plywood to keep bears away from a specific area, such as under a window, door or fence.
- Keep outdoor refrigerators and freezers in a secure location or lock up with super-adhesive anchors, like Marine Locks™.
- Clean meat smokers and barbecue grills with a degreasing detergent and store in a secure area. Dispose of food remnants/grease after each use.

**A screened-in porch will not keep bears out!**