

Issue Brief

Connecticut's Black Bear Population (*Ursus americanus*)

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How many and where do black bears live in Connecticut?

According to the [Department of Energy and Environmental Protection](#) (DEEP), Connecticut's resident black bear population is both increasing and expanding.

The population, including juveniles, is estimated at about 1,000 to 1,200. And although most black bears inhabit the northwest quarter of the state, the population is expanding into suitable habitat in eastern Connecticut.

Under what circumstances may someone legally kill a bear in Connecticut?

It is illegal to hunt or trap bears in Connecticut ([Conn. Agencies Regs. § 26-66-3\(f\)](#)). However, a person may kill a bear in self-defense if he or she reasonably believes it is going to kill or seriously injure someone. DEEP would investigate the circumstances to determine if the killing was justified.

Additionally, state law allows (1) farmers or farm workers to pursue, trap, and kill a bear that damages property on land used for agriculture ([CGS § 26-72](#)) and (2) DEEP to kill a bear if there is a public health or safety threat ([CGS § 26-3](#)).

Black Bear Sightings

DEEP tracks black bear activity in the state and maintains a [record](#) of reported bear sightings it receives each year. As of November 10, 2022, there were 10,163 reported bear sightings in 2022.

In 2021, there was at least one reported sighting in 155 of the state's 169 towns. The table below shows the towns with the five most reported sightings that year.

Towns With the Most Black Bear Sightings (2021)*

Town	Reports
Avon	634
Simsbury	622
Farmington	403
Granby	374
West Hartford	330

*Note: The number of sightings is much greater than the estimated number of bears because each bear may be spotted several times as it travels.

Black bears are increasing in numbers and being seen more frequently in Connecticut. They are rarely aggressive towards humans but can create a variety of problems. In particular, bears that are fed ... can become habituated and lose their fear of humans.

~DEEP, [Be Bear Aware](#)

Connecticut Legislative Proposals Concerning Black Bear Management, 2013-2022

Year	Bill Number	General Concept	Last Action
2013	HB 6654	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires DEEP to (1) sell bear hunt lottery permits for \$10 each and (2) charge \$200 per bear hunt license Specifies that DEEP designates the manner of the hunt, but the location must coincide with deer management zones 	Referred from the House to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, which voted out a substitute without the bear hunt provisions
2016	HB 5315 , as amended by House "A"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows DEEP to adopt regulations to ban or restrict feeding bears on property not owned by the state Provides warnings and educational materials for first-time, de minimis violations, other violations are infractions 	House Passed, as amended by House "A"
2017	SB 522 , as amended by Senate "A" and "B"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorizes regulations on hunting black bear in Litchfield County, subject to certain restrictions Requires a report from DEEP on the number of (1) issued black bear hunting licenses and (2) bears killed by hunting 	Senate amended the bill with Senate "D," which struck the bear hunt provisions
	SB 832	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On private property: (1) prohibits feeding, attracting, or enticing certain animals, including black bears, and (2) allows for regulations on unintentional feeding 	Public Hearing
2018	HB 5358	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorizes regulations on hunting black bear in Litchfield County, subject to certain restrictions Requires a report from DEEP on the number of (1) issued black bear hunting licenses and (2) bear taken by hunting 	Vote failed in Environment Committee
	HB 5469	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increases the penalties for illegally taking bear 	Public Hearing
2019	SB 586	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expands the circumstances under which DEEP may issue permits to landowners or lessees for taking nuisance wildlife by including when there is unreasonable damage to livestock, poultry, or bees, instead of only agricultural crops 	Vote failed in Senate
	SB 894	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires DEEP to report to the Environment Committee on the best nonlethal management practices to deter black bear from habituating in areas densely populated by people 	Senate passed
2022	SB 244	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expands the circumstances under which DEEP may issue permits to landowners or lessees for taking nuisance wildlife by including when there is unreasonable damage to livestock, poultry, or bees, instead of only agricultural crops 	Vote failed in Environment Committee

What steps can someone take to prevent interactions with bears near their home?

DEEP [provides](#) the following "dos" and "don'ts" for preventing bear interactions at a person's home:

Remove birdfeeders/bird food from late March through November
 Eliminate food attractants by placing trash cans in a garage or shed
 Store garbage in secure, airtight containers
 Add ammonia to trash to make it unpalatable
 Clean and store grills safely away after use



Feed bears (intentionally or accidentally)
 Leave pet food outdoors or feed pets outside
 Add meat or sweets to a compost pile
 Approach a bear in your yard



**Learn
More**

DEEP provides more information about black bears.

UConn [Research Guide](#) on Connecticut's Black Bear Population

"Feeding Black Bears on Private Property," OLR Report [2018-R-0274](#)

"Penalty for Hunting Black Bear," OLR Report [2018-R-0338](#)



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