

LIVING WITH BLACK BEARS IN GREENWICH



Black bears are a seldom seen, though increasingly common, native species in Connecticut. By the mid-1800s, black bears were pushed out of the state as forested areas were cleared and converted into farmland. In recent years, much of Connecticut's farmland has been abandoned, allowing for the regeneration of forest and the return of black bears. Beginning in the 1980s, a resident black bear population had become reestablished in Connecticut. Today, the population is estimated to be around 700 individuals in Connecticut, with the highest concentration in the northwest portion of the state. In 2010, there were four reported black bear sightings in Greenwich, and sightings have been reported in town every year since.

Black bears are omnivores that primarily feed on grasses, roots, forbs, berries, acorns, insects, small mammals, and carrion. Black bear will also readily exploit man made food sources such as birdfeeders, trash cans, and compost piles. This tendency can place black bears in close proximity to humans, creating the potential for conflict. Bears that become accustomed to feeding from man made sources can become problematic as they may associate humans with food. The easiest way to avoid conflict with bears is to reduce access to food sources around people. Activities such as taking down birdfeeders from March to November, storing trashcans indoors, and completely covering up food scraps in compost piles can go a long way in preventing bear-human conflicts.

Black bears are impressive animals weighing up to 450 pounds and are capable of speeds up to 35 miles per hour. Despite their imposing physical characteristics, black bears are inherently wary of humans and attacks on humans are extremely rare. In the exceedingly rare event that you should encounter an aggressive bear, make loud noises, increase your visual profile, do not turn your back on the bear, and hold your ground should the bear charge, as it is often merely a bluff.

Black bears are magnificent, intelligent animals that deserve to coexist with humans. As bear populations continue to recover and return to their native range, there will be more human and bear encounters. A few simple preventative steps can prevent human-bear conflicts and prevent the needless removal or destruction of black bears.

Black bear DOs and DON'Ts

- **DO** report any black bear sightings to DEEP and the Greenwich Conservation Commission
- **DON'T** feed black bears!
- **DO** store your garbage cans in a garage or shed.
- **DON'T** hang bird feeders from March to November.
- **DO** make noise while hiking to announce your presence to a bear.
- **DON'T** leave pet food outdoors
- **DO** walk away slowly if you surprise a bear.
- **DON'T** approach bear cubs as the mother maybe nearby
- **DO** share this information with neighbors.



- ❖ **To report a black bear Sighting:**
<http://www.depdata.ct.gov/wildlife/sighting/bearrpt.htm>
- ❖ **Greenwich Conservation Commission**
203-622-6461
- ❖ **For *immediate* assistance with black bear**
24 DEEP Hotline: 860-424-3333
- ❖ **For emergency response**
Dial: 911