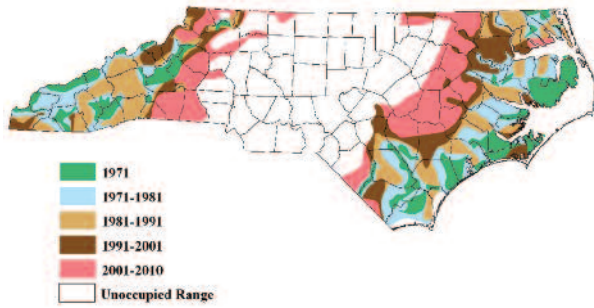


**BLACK BEAR POPULATION AND RANGE EXPANSION**



Before Europeans came to the New World, black bears lived in all forested regions of North America and were abundant in the area that would one day become North Carolina. However, like mountain lions and wolves, bears were often killed by early settlers to protect their families, crops, and livestock. In time, bears across the state were impacted by human development. By the mid-1900s, black bears were found only in the most remote mountains and coastal swamps of the Tarheel State.

Fortunately, black bear populations and range have expanded dramatically over the past 30 years. Thanks to changing human attitudes, better wildlife management and enforcement, and the ability of bears to coexist peacefully with people in most circumstances, the comeback of these animals is a true wildlife success story.



A Commission biologist weighs a bear to collect data.

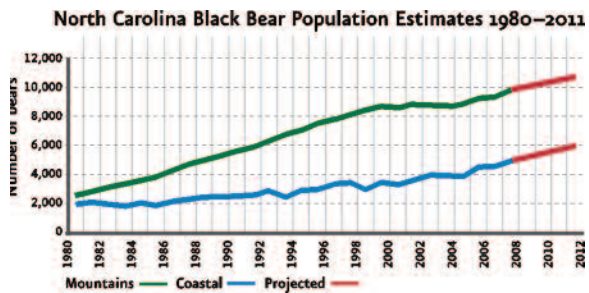


**BLACK BEAR MANAGEMENT AND RESEARCH**

While the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission and various universities have conducted research on the state's bear populations, some of our most important data on black bears come from North Carolina hunters.

Hunters are critical to program success because they provide about 90 percent of the research samples obtained from dead bears. Since data collection began in 1969, North Carolina biologists and technicians have collected information from more than 19,000 black bears killed by hunters, automobiles, and other factors.

Biologists use samples, submitted voluntarily by hunters to determine the age structure of the bear population, track bear reproduction, and to predict population levels. Thanks to the data provided by hunters, the Wildlife Commission has been able to determine that the bear populations in the Coastal and Mountain regions have steadily increased since the 1980s.



**EDUCATING NORTH CAROLINIANS ABOUT BLACK BEARS**

Want to learn more about black bears in North Carolina? Please visit the bear section on our website at [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org) to find out more about harvest levels in your areas, population surveys, bear research, and guidance on how to prevent or resolve conflicts with bears.

Want to teach children about bears and bear issues? The Wildlife Resources Commission's Interactive DVD, *The Bear Facts, The Story of a North Carolina Treasure*, Interactive Educator's Edition, is free (upon request) to any North Carolina educator. From bear history and biology, to hunting traditions and population management, to coexisting with black bears, this documentary covers bear issues throughout the state.



Our goal is to educate the public on bear safety tips, explain bear management, address human-bear interactions and clear up myths about this state treasure. We hope educators will help us expose hundreds of students in grades K-12 to *The Bear Facts*.

To request an IDVD, email [storemanager@ncwildlife.org](mailto:storemanager@ncwildlife.org).



For more information on black bears in North Carolina, please contact the Division of Wildlife Management at (919) 707-0050 or visit our website at [www.ncwildlife.org](http://www.ncwildlife.org).

The Wildlife Resources Commission is an Equal Opportunity Employer, and all wildlife programs are administered for the benefit of all North Carolina citizens without prejudice toward age, sex, race, religion or national origin. Violations of this pledge may be reported to the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission, Equal Employment Officer, Personnel Office, 1751 Varsity Drive, Raleigh, NC 27606. Telephone (919) 707-0101.

3,000 copies of this public document were printed at a cost of \$0.xx each or \$xxx.xx. Printed on recycled paper.

**MANAGEMENT OF BLACK BEARS IN NORTH CAROLINA**

*Black Bear Population and Range Expansion*



WAVERLY TRAYLOR/USFWS

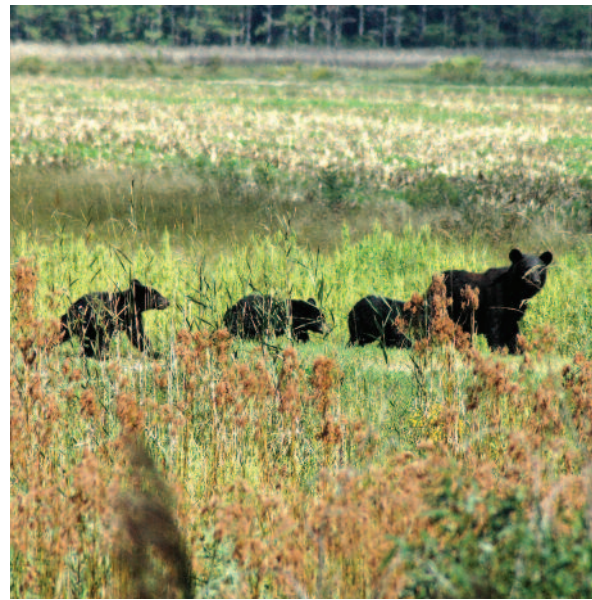


Division of Wildlife Management  
NORTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE  
RESOURCES COMMISSION

## NORTH CAROLINA BLACK BEAR HUNTING HERITAGE

The black bear hunting heritage in North Carolina dates back to early Native Americans and was quickly adopted by colonial settlers. Beginning in the 1930s, hunters and conservationists pushed for bear hunting regulations and for the creation of a state wildlife resources agency to manage wildlife and enforce wildlife laws.

Today, bear hunting continues to be an important tradition in North Carolina. In addition, regulated hunting is an effective means of managing local bear populations and reinforcing a bear's natural fear of people. Where bear hunting occurs, some problem bears are taken while others associate humans with negative consequences and learn to avoid people. As increasing numbers of people move to North Carolina, the continued success of the bear population will ultimately rely on human attitudes toward bears. North Carolina bear hunters will play a vital role in helping the Commission manage bear populations and human/bear interactions.



GARRY TUCKER/USFWS

*Keep bears wild, don't feed them.*

### PEOPLE AND BLACK BEARS

North Carolina's human population is increasing and many new homes are built in occupied bear range each year. At the same time, black bear populations are increasing and bear range is expanding into central North Carolina.

As a result, bears and people are coming into contact with each other more frequently. Many citizens of North Carolina wish to see bears continue to thrive in the state.

Black bears are an important part of North Carolina's fauna, and it is ultimately human attitudes toward bears that will determine whether bears will continue to exist in the state.

Unfortunately, bears are viewed either as dangerous animals or cuddly pets. It is best to avoid these extreme views and instead show a healthy respect for this magnificent forest animal.

By removing all attractants from your home and neighborhood, such as bird feeders, outdoor pet food, and unsecured trash, you are doing your part to ensure that bears and people can live together. Removing these items will discourage bears and other wildlife, such as raccoons and foxes, from being attracted to your home.



TOM HARRISON



ROY KORTUS

*Standard garbage container with bear-proof latches installed.*

**Contrary to popular belief, commission employees will not trap and relocate bears for the following reasons:**

- Most conflicts do not warrant trapping. For example, a bear simply being in a neighborhood is not threatening or cause for trapping.
- In most cases, people are the cause of the problem and the best long-term solution involves removal of attractants (bird feeders, unsecured garbage) rather than destruction of the bear.
- Simply catching every bear that someone sees is not an option; we have no remote places left to relocate bears where they will not come into contact with humans.
- Relocated bears often return to the place they were originally captured.
- The process of catching bears is difficult and can be more dangerous for the bear, the public, and those involved than letting the bear take its natural course.
- This would simply move the problem, rather than solve it. The solution is to modify your habits and prevent bears from being attracted to your home.



UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

*Wildlife underpass in Washington County.*

### BLACK BEARS AND HIGHWAYS

While the bear population has increased during the past 30+ years, there are concerns about how highways will impact bear populations. The leading cause of non-harvest mortality in bears is vehicular collisions; thus it is important to understand and mitigate the impacts that highways have on bear populations and on the integrity of bear habitat.

One way to mitigate highway impacts on wildlife is through the construction of wildlife underpasses, which allows wildlife to travel safely under the highway. Not only does this reduce bear-vehicle collisions, but it increases human safety. On highways that have wildlife underpasses, there is a reduction in vehicle collisions with bear and deer.

It is also helpful for the public to report collisions with bears. If you see a bear that was hit by a vehicle, please report it to the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission immediately. Call (919-707-0050), so that we can collect valuable data from the incident.



UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE

*Bear and deer safely crossing under a highway using an underpass.*