

## Your Role

**Know the facts.** Learning about bears will 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 make 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.

### **DELIBERATE & INADVERTENT FEEDING OF BEARS IS ILLEGAL**

It shall be unlawful for any person as defined in § 1-230 (Code of Virginia) to place, distribute, or allow the placement of food, minerals, carrion, trash, or similar substances to feed or attract bear. Nor, upon notification by department personnel, shall any person continue to place, distribute, or allow the placement of any food, mineral, carrion, trash, or similar substances for any purpose if the placement of these materials results in the presence of bear.

**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.

## VDGIF's Role

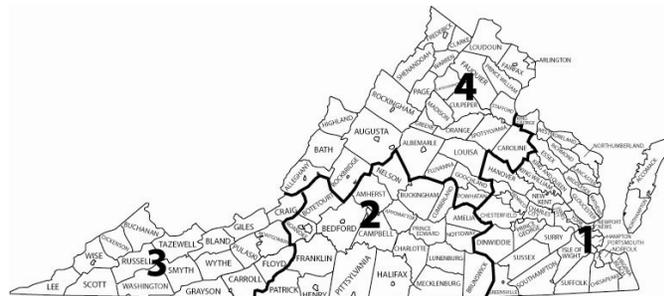
The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has established bear guidelines that promote public safety, protect property, and conserve bear populations. Whenever possible, VDGIF's approach to managing problem bears encourages the coexistence of bears and humans. The specific response to bear issues is determined by public concerns and safety, type and extent of damage, black bear biology, animal welfare, and available control methods.

When you call for assistance, a staff member will discuss the problem with you. In most cases, a telephone call will be all that is necessary to find successful solutions (usually the removal of attractants). At times, a VDGIF biologist may visit your property to discuss additional options.

### Contact us for more information

#### Wildlife Conflict Helpline (855) 571-9003

Charles City (Region 1)	(804) 829-6580
Forest (Region 2)	(434) 525-7522
Marion (Region 3)	(276) 783-4860
Verona (Region 4)	(540) 248-9360
Fredericksburg (Region 4)	(540) 899-4169



Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries 2014

## LIVING WITH BLACK BEARS IN VIRGINIA



**KEEP THEM WILD!**



### SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Black bears capture human admiration and interest like few other wildlife species. Citizens, communities, local governments, and VDGIF share the responsibility in preventing problems and keeping bears wild.

For more in-depth information on bears please visit: [www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bear/](http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bear/)

# YOU LIVE IN BEAR COUNTRY

As Virginia's black bear population grows and expands, bears are becoming an increasingly common sight across the Commonwealth. Additionally, human populations are also growing and spreading across most areas of Virginia.

Black bears and human populations commonly coexist in many parts of North America. Black bears occur throughout most of Virginia and there are increasing opportunities for people to encounter bears in their neighborhoods.

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.

What you do really matters.

We can work together to

keep bears wild! 

## SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

VDGIF will not trap or relocate a bear that is eating from your trash or bird-feeder. **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 and may learn to associate human dwellings with food. Bears are attracted to residential areas by the smell of foods people commonly put out around their homes. In reality most problems caused by bears are really "people problems". It is up to humans to change their own behaviors 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.

**If addressed promptly, problems are often quickly resolved. After a few failed attempts to find food around homes, bears will usually leave the area in search of their natural wild foods.**

If problems are ignored, property damage not only can get worse, but bears may lose their distrust of humans and come to rely solely on unnatural foods. Habituated bears can pose public safety concerns and in some unfortunate circumstances may have to be killed. The responsibility to prevent this from happening belongs to everybody.

# YOU CAN KEEP BEARS WILD

Black bears have a natural distrust of humans, are shy, and usually avoid people. However, bears may be attracted to food sources in residential areas.

- ☞ **Remove the bird feeders.** It is best not to put out food for birds from April - November. Instead, plant native seed-bearing plants or use water features to attract birds to your home.
- ☞ **Secure your garbage.** 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, or take it to the dump frequently.
- ☞ **Pick up pet food.** Feed pets only what they will eat in a single feeding or feed them indoors. Remove all uneaten food. Do not leave food out overnight.
- ☞ **Do not put meat scraps in the compost pile.** Keep compost away from house.
- ☞ **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 potential food sources.
- ☞ **Don't store food, freezers, refrigerators, or trash on porches.**
- ☞ **Use harassment techniques** in conjunction with removing the attractant to get the bear to move off your property. Paintballs are a great tool for hazing. They are nonlethal, won't harm the bear if shot at the rump, but are painful enough to get the bear moving away from homes.
- ☞ **Talk to your neighbors.** Make sure your neighbors and community administrators are aware of the ways to prevent conflicts with bears.
- ☞ **Learn about black bears!**