

## **FLORIDA**

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Eight black bear populations occur in Florida, isolated from each other by habitat loss. Statewide population size is estimated at 1000-1500 bears. The Florida black bear is listed as a threatened species by the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission and is a candidate for federal listing as a threatened species.

A new Florida black bear coordinator position was created and has been filled by Terry DeBruyn. John Wooding has left the Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission to pursue his Ph.D. and his position remains unfilled.

### **HARVESTS**

The black bear traditionally was a game animal in Florida. The 1993-1994 season marked the last year of legal bear hunting in Florida. Hunters killed 62 during that final season.

### **MANAGEMENT**

The implementation of the commission's Management Plan for Black Bears in Florida is continuing. Strategies include conserving habitat and minimizing human induced mortality. The objective is to protect up to 1 million acres in each of the eight populations.

### **RESEARCH**

Two studies are underway. The first focuses on the ecology and population dynamics of black bears on Eglin Air Force Base in the Florida panhandle, and is a cooperative effort between the U.S. Air Force, the University of Florida, and the University of Tennessee. The second focuses on the population ecology of black bears in the Okefenokee Swamp -Osceola Ecosystem in northeast Florida and is being conducted by the University of Tennessee.

The study to determine the feasibility of stocking black bears in the Big Bend Region of Florida has been completed. No breeding populations of black bears were found in the region. The 3 yearling female black bears that were released established normal home ranges within the region. Based on this study, it was recommended that efforts should be directed to stocking more black bears in the Big Bend.

### **RECENT LITERATURE**

Maehr, D.S. 1996. Comparative Ecology of Bobcats, Black Bear, and Florida Panther in South Florida. Ph.D Dissertation, Univ. of Florida, Gainesville, Florida. 374pp.

Wooding, J.B., and J.C. Roof. 1996. Feasibility of Stocking Black Bears in the Big Bend Region. Annual Report. Fla. Game and Freshwater Fish Commission, Tallahassee.