

Living With Florida's Black Bear



WHAT IS "BE BEAR AWARE":

The new "Be Bear Aware" program teaches ways to avoid unwanted or unsafe encounters with bears. By learning how to Be Bear Aware, and teaching others what you've learned, you can help bears from becoming a problem at your home, in your neighborhood or at your campsite.

WHAT'S A "NUISANCE" BEAR:

A "nuisance" bear is one that has lost its natural fear of people. Nuisance bears get into all kinds of trouble from raiding garbage cans and eating pet food to occasionally killing livestock and causing property damage.

The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) reports that the annual number of human/bear problems has risen from one in 1978 to over 1,000 in 2000. Records have been broken for each of the last six years and are expected to continue to increase. There have been numerous cases of bears in buildings, bears attacking livestock and pets and other serious problems.

No bear attacks on humans have been documented in Florida, but as the state's human population continues to grow and encroach upon the remaining bear habitat, and as bear populations expand, confrontations are anticipated to grow in number and possibly intensity.

LIVING WITH BEARS:

As Floridians, we all have a responsibility for keeping our wildlife wild. Conflicts between humans and bears are most often created by people. The prevention of nuisance bears relies on actions taken by every person living in bear country. To control the situation, it is necessary to take personal responsibility to reduce conflicts, and prevent the loss of property and possible human death.

There are benefits to living in harmony with bears. The bear's presence (in nature) indicates the health of our natural environment. Natural areas that support bears are home for many other animal species. Steps taken to prevent bears from becoming nuisance animals also prevent other species from becoming problems (such as raccoons, skunks, fox, opossums, mice and rats), and thereby decreases human and pet exposure to diseases (e.g. rabies) and damage to crops and property.

YOU CAN HELP:

Nuisance bears are created by common mistakes that homeowners, campers and hikers innocently or unknowing make. Feeding bears either by accident or on purpose is the number one source of the problem.

If You Really Care, Don't Feed The Bears