



FWC: As autumn approaches, bears across Florida become more active

News Release

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The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) is asking Floridians to be more aware of what they can do to help prevent bear conflicts as fall approaches. During autumn months, bear appetites increase as the animals begin a natural process of putting on fat for the winter. In order to be prepared for winter, bears require around 20,000 calories a day and will eat anything that's convenient. Getting food from a garbage can is more appealing than foraging in the woods because it can provide bears more calories in a shorter amount of time. This draws more bears into areas where people live and work, which can be potentially dangerous. Floridians should be extra vigilant in securing potential food sources around their homes and businesses. [Final Florida black bear population estimates](#)  recently released show that Florida's bear population is robust and widespread.

FWC Executive Director Nick Wiley said, "As autumn arrives, Florida's large black bear population becomes much more active. An increased number of bears looking for food in areas where people live and work can potentially lead to more conflicts. FWC is continuing to partner with local communities on measures to reduce bear conflicts, but Floridians should understand the steps they can take to keep themselves and their neighbors safe."

The FWC is currently accepting proposals from counties and other local governments so the agency can effectively distribute state funding for reducing bear conflicts in Florida communities. The \$825,000 in funding, \$500,000 invested by Gov. Scott and the Florida Legislature and \$325,000 through the Fish & Wildlife Foundation of Florida with proceeds from the "Conserve Wildlife" license plate, will be dedicated to programs that are committed to taking a BearWise approach and can demonstrate a measurable reduction in human-bear interactions.

Last week, the FWC and one of the nation's leading bear scientists, Dr. Joseph D. Clark of the U.S. Geological Survey and the University of Tennessee, released the final modeling results estimating Florida's black bear population. Data collected by FWC staff and partners in 2014 and 2015, and analyzed by Dr. Clark's team, have confirmed that Florida's bear population is robust and widespread. The final estimates indicate that Florida's statewide bear population now stands at 4,030, up from a few hundred bears in the 1970s.

To keep bears away from your home and neighborhood, follow these simple tips:

- Secure household garbage in a sturdy shed, garage or a [wildlife resistant container](#). 
- Put household garbage out on morning of pickup rather than the night before.
- Secure commercial garbage in [bear resistant dumpsters](#). 
- Protect gardens, bee yards, compost and livestock with [electric fencing](#). 
- Encourage your homeowners association or local government to institute ordinances to require trash be secured from bears.
- Feed pets indoors or bring in dishes after feeding.
- Clean grills and store them in a secure place.
- Remove wildlife feeders or make them [bear resistant](#). 
- Pick ripe fruit from trees and remove fallen fruit from the ground.

It is illegal in Florida to intentionally feed bears or leave out food or garbage that will attract bears and cause human-bear conflicts.

If you see or suspect that someone is feeding or attracting bears, please call the FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at 1-888-404-FWCC (3922).

Go to [MyFWC.com/Bear](https://myfwc.com/Bear) to learn more about [living in bear country](#).