



Agenda Item 11B – April 15th, 2015

Guidelines for the Public to Scare a Bear

FLORIDA FISH AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION COMMISSION
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These Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC) guidelines are meant to provide technical assistance to members of the public who choose to address human-bear conflicts by attempting to scare a black bear. Scaring a black bear can reinforce its natural fear of people and help keep it from lingering in neighborhoods and other areas where it is not welcome. Effectively scaring a bear also reinforces the person as the dominant in an encounter, so the bear learns to avoid people.

The black bear is protected by rule 68A-4.009 in the Florida Administrative Code. However, homeowners, landowners or lessees with landowner permission can legally scare a bear off of their property IF they follow the methods described in these guidelines. These methods do not eliminate the possibility of a bear causing personal injury or death. People should exercise extreme caution and understand that any attempt to scare a bear is done at your own risk. If you are not sure, don't attempt to scare the bear!

By choosing to scare a bear people are assuming the liability for any and all damages, costs or losses resulting from those activities explained in this document and further agree to save and hold the FWC and its employees and contractors harmless from any and all liability, costs or damage resulting from said activities.

Scaring a bear will NOT keep it from returning to an easily available food source. Before attempting to scare a bear, secure all attractants, such as trash, pet food and bird feeders. Visit MyFWC.com/Bear for information and options on securing attractants. When the food source has been removed, a bear should have no reason to linger in the area.

If after removing attractants the bear continues to return, the FWC allows members of the public to try to scare the bear. The public can scare bears using non-contact and/or contact methods. Non-contact methods rely primarily on making loud noises (such as yelling, using an air horn or whistle), or motion-activated devices like visual and audio alarms or water sprinklers, which can deter bears without anyone being present. The only contact methods the public is allowed to use to scare bears are paintball guns and slingshots. The FWC recommends using non-contact methods to scare the bear first. Often, non-contact methods are enough to deter bears that have not yet become used to people, and these actions are safer to use than contact methods.

STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO SCARING A BLACK BEAR FOR THE PUBLIC:

BEFORE attempting to scare a bear, consider whether the bear is a good candidate for scaring. A bear that comes into your yard and is able to escape using a safe, clear and visible path away from people and roads is a good candidate for scaring.

- **DO NOT** attempt to scare a bear if it is:
 - Near a road or could run toward people or traffic,
 - Up a tree or running away,
 - A cub (this can result in injury to the cub or aggression from the mother), or
 - A female bear with a cub(s) (dependent young).

- DO NOT attempt to scare a bear and CONTACT THE FWC if the bear is:
 - Highly agitated, emaciated or wounded (they can be highly unpredictable).
 - Strongly associating people with food (one that is approaching people).

BEFORE YOU START TRYING TO SCARE A BEAR, MAKE SURE YOU:

- DO NOT proceed if the situation is unsafe for people or the bear (such as a crowd of bystanders or busy roads nearby).
- DO put yourself in a safe location, such as in or near your doorway or window, car, or other sturdy structure.
- DO clearly identify that the bear has a safe and visible escape route.

If you need assistance with a human-bear conflict, please contact the nearest FWC regional office for assistance:

- Northwest - Panama City: 850-265-3676
- North Central - Lake City: 386-758-0525
- Northeast - Ocala: 352-732-1225
- Southwest - Lakeland: 863-648-3200
- South - West Palm Beach: 561-625-5122

IF YOU DECIDE TO USE A NON-CONTACT METHOD TO SCARE A BEAR:

- DO show your dominance by
 - Holding your ground at a safe distance.
 - Looking the bear in the eyes.
 - Raising your arms above your head to look larger.
- DO make loud noises (yell, whistle, air or car horn).
- NEVER leave your safe location to pursue the bear.

IF YOU DECIDE TO USE A CONTACT METHOD, SUCH AS A PAINTBALL GUN OR SLINGSHOT, TO SCARE A BEAR:

- DO NOT aim toward the bear's face, as this can result in permanent injury.
- DO aim for the shoulder or rear of the bear.
- REMEMBER paintballs and slingshots are effective at 5 to 15 yards.
- STOP as soon as the bear runs for cover, away from the area or climbs a tree.
- NEVER leave your safe location to pursue the bear.
- REMEMBER the use of paintball guns or slingshots to scare a bear is only allowed for use by adults, ages 18 and over.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Anyone can defend themselves or another person from imminent threat of injury or death posed by any wildlife species. Using bear spray is an effective way to stop an attack by a black bear. The FWC recommends carrying bear spray if you live or recreate in or near bear habitat. Visit MyFWC.com/Bear for tips on using bear spray.