

Keeping People Safe and Bears Wild

As black bears slowly return to Connecticut to their native habitat, it's natural that bear sightings will increase. Conflicts may arise when wild bears make a habit of foraging in areas where human-provided food is readily available. Yet solutions exist to avoid these problematic encounters, as proven by "Bearsmart" programs around the country which focus on community-based attractant removal and public education.

Hunting CT's bears is unsafe, unnecessary, and won't help reduce interactions

- A bear killed far away in the woods is unlikely the same bear on your property or in your neighborhood.
- Hunting isn't even safe in residential areas where most interactions occur.
- Studies show that 1) hunting does not reduce human-bear conflicts;ⁱ 2) human-bear conflicts decline when attractants are removed, not after bears are killed; 3) **the people of Connecticut want humane resolutions to conflicts with wildlife**; 4) DEEP's culture is misaligned with this public value (American Wildlife Values Studyⁱⁱ).
- It's counterproductive to kill bears in their natural habitat exhibiting normal behaviors (i.e., eating native foods far from human neighborhoods) and teaching their cubs to do the same.
- CT law already allows qualified state agents to capture or kill a bear when there is a public health or safety threat.
- A hunt will lead to more orphaned cubs unable to fend for themselves.

Fortunately, there are proven strategies that keep bears wild and people safe!

Success in preventing incidents with black bears depends on *human behavior*:

- Never intentionally feed bears.
- If you live in an area with bears, look into a bear-resistant trash can. Or, store your trash cans in a garage or shed and bring your garbage to the curb on the morning of pick up.
- Remove bird feeders from March through November. Bird baths, flowering plants, and nesting boxes are examples of other ways to attract birds without enticing bears.
- Don't leave unsecured food attractants around your home, including garbage, pet food, and greasy outdoor grills.
- Make bears feel unwelcome by making loud noises with an air horn, hand-clapping or yelling.
- **A negative experience (aversive conditioning) plus no food will teach bears to avoid that area.**
- Protect beehives, chicken coops and similar attractants with electric barriers.
- Keep pets in enclosed areas, and when hiking, keep dogs on a leash.
- If you do see a bear from afar, enjoy the moment! Never approach a bear, not even to get a photo.
- If the bear is acting aggressively, don't run; make yourself tall and large, and back away slowly.
- Keep bear spray on hand if you live or hike in bear territory.

The CT Coalition to Protect Bears is dedicated to ongoing educational outreach and legislative advocacy. Our goal is to promote proven non-lethal strategies that allow people and Connecticut's native black bears to co-exist peacefully.

The CT Coalition to Protect Bears opposes hunting of our state's small bear population. We support a feeding ban, humane and responsible rehabilitation policies for orphaned bear cubs, and state grants to help municipalities and farmers mitigate human-bear conflicts.

ⁱ "We found no significant correlations between harvest and subsequent HBC [human-bear conflicts]. Although it may be intuitive to assume that harvesting more bears should reduce HBC, empirical support for this assumption is lacking despite considerable research (Garshelis 1989, Treves and Karanth 2003, Huygens et al. 2004, Tavss 2005, Treves 2009, Howe et al. 2010, Treves et al. 2010)." --Obbard et al. (2014) Relationships among food availability, harvest, and human-bear conflict at landscape scales in Ontario Canada. *Urus* 25(2): 98-110

ⁱⁱ A recent, large study found DEEP's culture to be misaligned with the values of the people of Connecticut. See American Wildlife Values study: <https://sites.warnercnr.colostate.edu/wildlifevalues/>. Connecticut-specific information can be found in Connecticut's state report (<https://content.warnercnr.colostate.edu/AWV/CT-WildlifeValuesReport.pdf>) and the Culture Memo (<https://content.warnercnr.colostate.edu/AWV/CT-AgencyCultureMemo.pdf>).