

Government Facts

Minister's announcement:

<http://news.ontario.ca/mnr/en/2013/11/ontario-proposing-a-black-bear-management-pilot-in-north.html>

Ontario Proposing a Black Bear Management Pilot in North

Government Committed to Sustainable Bear Management, Public Safety

November 14, 2013 11:00 a.m.

Ministry of Natural Resources

Ontario is proposing a pilot program that will enhance public safety while offering an effective response to nuisance bear issues in the north.

Ontario has proposed a two-year bear management pilot program in wildlife management units 13, 14, 29, 30, 36, 39, 41 and 42, all of which have reported high levels of nuisance bear activity. Communities in and around these units include Timmins, Thunder Bay, Sudbury, Sault Ste. Marie and North Bay. A limited bear hunt open to Ontario residents only would take place from May 1 to June 15, 2014 and 2015.

Under the proposed pilot, hunting bear cubs or females with cubs would be illegal. The province will monitor and evaluate the success of this pilot project on an ongoing basis.

In order to participate, municipal councils would have to pass a resolution agreeing to opt into the program. Ontario will continue to work with municipalities on [ways to limit human-bear interactions](#).

We will work together as One Ontario to build a successful, compassionate and united province where everyone has the opportunity to connect, contribute and enjoy a high quality of life.

Quick Facts

- Ontario is home to a healthy and sustainable black bear population with up to 105,000 black bears living in the province.
 - Currently across Canada, each province and territory with black bears has a spring and fall bear hunt except Nova Scotia and Ontario, which only have fall hunts.
 - The public will be invited to comment on the two-year pilot project through Ontario's Environmental Registry in 2014.
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Government Facts about bear hunting and related issues:

Information was taken from the Ministry's document titled, "Backgrounder on Black Bears in Ontario, OMNR June 2009". The web site is as follows:

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/stdprodconsume/groups/lr/@mnr/@fw/documents/document/274503.pdf>

Importance of black bears (pgs 1 and 2):

"Black bears are a natural part of forested habitats and an integral component of healthy ecosystems. The presence of black bears is an indication of reasonably functioning terrestrial and watershed ecosystems. A landscape that can support the habitat requirements of one of the largest terrestrial [omnivores] can support a variety of other plant and animal species.

"As omnivorous carnivores, black bears use a variety of natural foods that allow them to live and thrive over a wide range of climatic and habitat types (Kolenosky and Strathearn 1987a). Black bears are primarily inhabitants of forested areas where they are best able to meet their needs for cover, food and security from predators including other bears (Nuisance Bear Review Committee 2003).

"Black bears have relatively short, unspecialized digestive systems, much like humans. Vegetation is the principal component of their diet, but they also consume some animal protein through scavenging and predation on insects, mammals and fish. Bears can be a predator of young and adult large mammals such as moose and white-tailed deer.

"Their navigational skills, memory and intelligence allow them to migrate more than 100 km to blueberry patches in the summer (Obbard and Kolenosky 1994) or to oak and beech stands in the fall (Kolenosky and Strathearn 1987a), and to return to their home range in a matter of days after being relocated great distances (Rogers 1986, Landriault 1998).

"Black bears have a fascinating life history. Despite feeding selectively on easy to digest foods, they are able to nearly double their body weight during the 4-5 months of summer and fall. The stored fat sustains them up to 6 months of hibernation. Adult females have a delayed implantation reproductive system that allows the delay of active gestation until the fall, dependent on body condition. During the winter months in the dens, female black bears give birth and nurse a litter of cubs fueled by stored fat. The ability to avoid the build up of toxic compounds (e.g., urea) in their bodies and the loss in bone mass while in hibernation are phenomena still being studied for possible medical applications."

Economics of bear hunting (pg 3):

- In 2002, resident hunters spent \$8.9 million dollars on bear hunting including equipment, travel and accommodation.

- In the same year non-resident hunters spent \$18.1 million.
- In 2007/08, the sale of bear hunting licenses, export permits, Crown land fees etc brought an additional \$2.44 million through black bear hunting.
- In 2007, 550 bear tourists operators provided services to non-resident hunters.

Harvest Mortality (pgs 11 & 12):

- Provincial harvest of black bears is said to be sustainable at 10%.
- The population is conservatively estimated at 75,000 to 100,000 black bears.
- The harvest by hunters/trappers is 6 to 8% of the population but the harvest is not consistent across the province.
- Since 2004, the MNR has allowed for a second black bear seal to be used within the WMUs. In 2007 134 were purchased.
- An estimated average of 6,783 bears was harvested annually between 1990 and 1998. On average 60% or 4005 bears were taken in the spring and 40% or 2,688 were taken in the fall. Approximately 76% of the hunt was by non-resident hunters.
- Since 1999, the annual average number of bears killed was 5,253 with 66% taken by non-resident hunters. It should be noted that in 2007 the number of bears killed jumped to 6204.

Licenses (pg 12):

- A total of 23,321 licenses were sold in 2007 (the last available data year for this report), 15,000 were to resident hunters and 7,500 to non-resident hunters.

Hunting success rates (pg 13):

- Non-resident hunters generally had higher success rates than resident hunters, with a 17% success rate for residents and a 57% success rate for non-residents.
- Non-resident hunters are required to use the services of a tourist operator licensed by the MNR to provide bear hunting services.

Method of hunting (pg 13):

Resident Hunters: 66% still hunting
 32.8% baiting
 27% stalking
 21% road driving
 9% dogs

Non-resident hunter: 93% baiting
 9% still hunting
 5% stalking
 3% dogs

2% road driving

Type of firearm (pgs 13 to 14):

- Rifle: 92% for resident hunters
56% for non-resident hunters
- Archery: 16% for resident hunters
39% for non-resident hunters

Trappers (pg 14):

- In 2006/07, trappers reported taking 63 bears .

Black Bear Occurances as collected through BIRTA (pg 18):

- Stats show increased occurrences in 2005 and 2007 which mirror droughts and failed crops.

Orphaned Cubs (pg 18):

- 32 – 1999, 20 – 2000, 195 – 2001, 24 – 2002, 93 – 2003, 17 – 2004, 63 – 2005, 16 – 2006, 99 – 2007.
- Reasons for orphaning include females killed in defence of property; by cars or trains; and as a result of increased female vulnerability to baiting with failed crop years.

Assessment of bears killed during the hunt (pgs 29 & 30):

- 1990 to 1998 – Female bears comprised an average of 34% of the bears killed with the range between 32% and 39%.
 - 1999 to 2007 – Female bears comprised an average of 35% of the bears killed with the range from 32% to 40%.
 - Research shows that no more than 40% of the bears killed should be female and no more than 20% should be adult female.
 - Between 2005 and 2007, an average of 2,598 teeth were collected from hunters or 44% of the bears killed.
 - The number of adult female bears killed: Between 1990 and 1998 adult female bears comprised 12 to 16% of the bears killed. Between 1999 and 2007 adult female bears comprised 12 to 22% of the bears killed.
 - High %s of females taken coincided with the poor food years of 1995, 2001 and 2007.
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Auditor General's 2007 Annual Report

3.06 Fish and Wildlife Program:

http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/reports_en/en07/306en07.pdf

In 2007, Ontario's Auditor General audited the OMNR's black bear management programme, highlighted serious concerns and made recommendations. In 2009, the Auditor General did a follow up evaluation. See both below.

- Black bear population - 75,000 to 100,000
- 1996 the Fish and Wildlife Special Purposes Account was established by the Harris government. In 2006/07 \$74.2 million dollars was allocated to the Fish and Wildlife Programme with \$59.5 million from the SPA and \$145.7 million from the general coffers (pg 130)
- the bear harvest should be no more than 1 bear per 50 square k in the north and 1 bear per 25 k in the south. Adult females but be limited to 20% of the number of bears killed during the hunt.

Findings:

- Despite the cancellation of the spring hunt to protect females with cubs, the auditor found that of the 76 BMAs that had data available, some management units exceeded the allowable harvest of adult females between the years 1987 and 2004. And for 15 of the 18 years at least 10 BMAs exceeded harvest guidelines, in one case double the guidelines.
- Main harvest information is collected through mail in surveys which dropped below 50% between 2000 and 2004. In 2005 the survey was made mandatory and the response rate jumped to 60%. However, the determination as to the number of bears allowed to be killed by hunters is based on incomplete information. (pg 145)
- In addition the Ministry failed to take corrective action when harvest guidelines were exceeded. Even though the Ministry entered into informal discussions with the operators, there was little improvement regarding taking more bears than allowed. (pg 145)
- The Auditor writes, "At the districts, we visited numerous operators who harvested bears from 2001 to 2006 in excess of the sustainable guidelines." (pg 145)

Auditor's Recommendations (pg 145):

To ensure that black bear populations are maintained at sustainable levels in all areas of the province, the Ministry of Natural Resources should:

- consider sanctions against bear hunters who fail to respond to the mandatory provincial mail-in surveys, which are needed to obtain accurate data to use in setting sustainability guidelines; and
- take corrective action against tourist outfitters who continually exceed the sustainability guidelines for the maximum bear harvest.

Auditor's status report – 2009:

http://www.auditor.on.ca/en/reports_en/en09/406en09.pdf

Status – (pgs 377 and 378):

The Ministry informed us that it has chosen to promote and educate bear hunters on the importance of reporting rather than take sanctions against those who fail to report. In this regard, the Ministry is educating bear hunters about the importance of

resource stewardship and the responsibility and importance of responding to provincial mail-in surveys. In addition, the Ministry prepared a draft Framework for Enhanced Black Bear Management in Ontario that provides enhanced public awareness and understanding of bear management and of the importance of hunter reporting for sustainable bear-population management.

At the time of our follow-up, the Ministry was developing a new guideline for population objectives and harvest management that will include appropriate and consistent measures to deal with outfitters who continually exceed the harvest of black bears as noted in the sustainability guideline.

2012 Report of Ontario's Environmental Commissioner:

http://www.eco.on.ca/uploads/Reports-Annual/2012_13/13ar.pdf

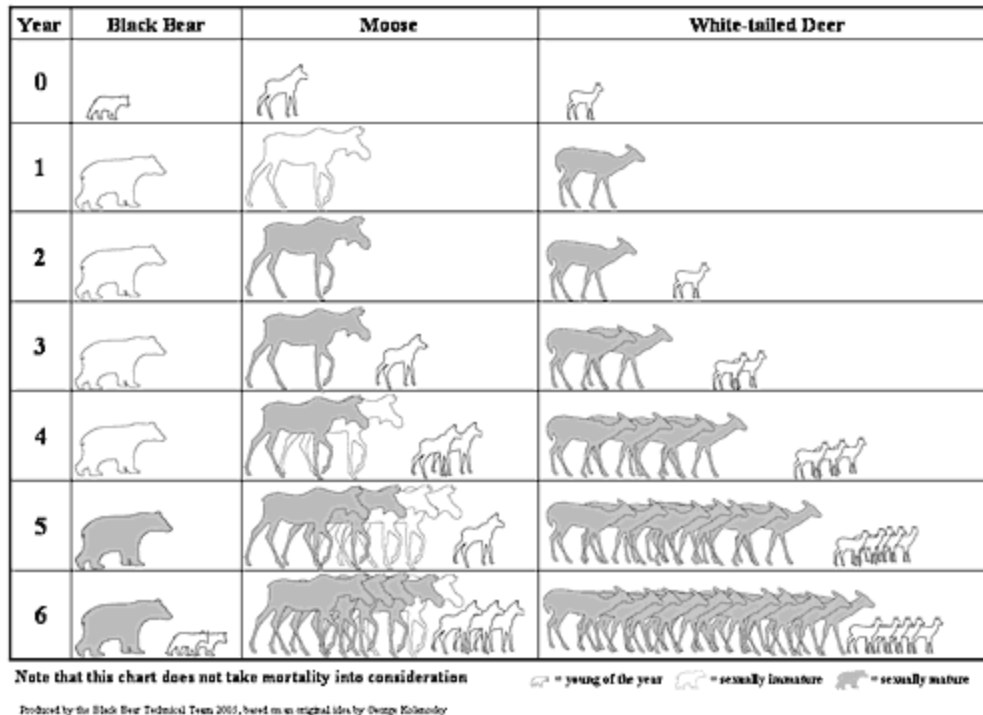
Program Changes (pg 47):

In spring 2012, a transformation initiative made changes to MNR's Bear Wise program, the ministry's public awareness, reporting and response program for reducing human-bear conflicts. Without consulting the public, MNR reduced the number of staff working on the program and announced that it would no longer provide assistance in cases of site-specific conflicts with bears, nor would it trap and relocate problem bears. By default, the Ontario Provincial Police and local police departments often have become responsible for confronting bears that wander into urban/suburban areas; where problem bears may have been relocated in the past, they are often shot today

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources - Bear Populations:

Ontario's black bear population has remained stable and is estimated to be between 75,000 and 100,000 bears. This number is repeated consistently throughout the MNR web site.

General Comparison of Reproductive Potential of Big Game Species in Ontario



http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Bearwise/2ColumnSubPage/STEL02_167697.html

Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources:

Ontario's Black Bear Population -The Number of Bears (see pdf):
<http://www.ontla.on.ca/library/repository/mon/17000/272840.pdf>

Prior to the cancellation of the spring hunt, the bear population in Ontario was assumed to be relatively stable with estimates from 75,000 to 100,000 bears. There is now the perception that the number of bears has increased considerably in recent years.

The average annual bear harvest prior to the cancellation was approximately 6,400 bears, spring and fall combined. In the years following the cancellation of the spring bear hunt, the average annual harvest has been in the order of 4,900 bears. The difference of 1,500 fewer bears harvested represents a decrease in harvest of about 1.5% of the total population. If all of the 1,500 bears that were not harvested in each year were able to survive to this day, then it is possible to estimate that there has been roughly a 7.5% increase in the Ontario black bear population in the past 5 years.

Assuming that there were 100,000 bears, a 7.5% increase would result in a population of 107,500. If there has been a population increase, it would be spread over the entire range where black bear are hunted in Ontario. However, realistically not all of the 1,500 bears that were not harvested each year would survive. As well, the shooting of many nuisance bears goes unreported. An increase of 7.5% in the bear population is possible, but extremely unlikely.

Bear Populations in Ontario:

Outdoor Canada

2012 hunting forecast: Ontario

<http://outdoorcanada.ca/23315/uncategorized/2012-hunting-forecast-ontario>

By **Bob Sexton**

Bears: Bear densities appear stable throughout southern Ontario. The Great Lakes/St. Lawrence region and the areas around Parry Sound, Bancroft, Pembroke and Kemptville provide the best hunting opportunities. Overall success rates last year were 48 per cent for non-residents and 18 per cent for residents. The bear population in northwestern Ontario is primarily stable. Black bear productivity is greatest in the boreal units in the southern portion of the region. In 2011, most black bears hunted in northeastern Ontario came from WMUs 21B, 28, 29, 40, 41 and 42.

Evaluation of Ontario's Provincial Bear Wise Program, January 2009:

http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/stdprodconsume/groups/lr/@mnr/@bearwise/documents/document/stdprod_068391.pdf

SECTION 1 – SUMMARY (pg 5)

In January, 2008 Minister Cansfield directed that Ontario's Bear Wise Program be evaluated to determine what was working well and what aspects of the program should be changed. The Minister wanted broad consultation with partners and clients of the program to ensure their opinion was heard and their ideas considered.

Through a series of meetings, written submissions and workshops, feedback was obtained from more than 188 individuals representing more than 25 different organizations and the general public. There is over whelming support for the program in general, particularly in the areas of response and community funding.

However, feedback also suggested that changes could be made to all aspects of

the program to enhance client services, reporting a bear occurrence, external communications, communication products and response capabilities by Ministry of Natural Resources' (MNR) staff.

Internally, MNR staff also had many suggestions to enhance operations and internal communications. This evaluation offers 10 major recommendations with actions for program change (Section 4) and 71 suggestions to improve operations and communications (Appendices 1 and 2).

Ontario's Bear Wise Program originated from recommendations made by the Nuisance Bear Review Committee in their 2003 report to then MNR Minister Ramsay. Minister Ramsay accepted the recommendation that the Ministry of Natural Resources will play the lead role in managing nuisance bears in collaboration with municipalities, police services, aboriginal and unorganized communities, stakeholders and individuals.

The result was Bear Wise and the program was implemented in April, 2004. The purpose of Bear Wise was to develop a program that would provide for MNR, along with municipalities, police services, unorganized communities, aboriginal communities, individuals and stakeholders that would deliver a coordinated nuisance bear program that contributed to human safety and reduce human – bear conflicts. The corner stones of the program are:

1. A reporting system that allows citizens and police to report problem bear incidents around the clock 7 days a week. Information is inputted into a tracking system called BIRTA (Bear Information Reporting & Tracking Application) and forwarded electronically to corresponding district for follow up.
2. A response program for managing human-black bear conflict. The program includes trap, transfer, aversion conditioning, relocation, chemical immobilization and dispatch of problem bears where necessary. The program also provides advice and support through follow up phone calls and face to face response.
3. An education and awareness program to educate people about the known and preventable causes of human-bear conflict and asking people to take steps to avoid attracting bears. Messaging is supported through a variety of educational products and communication efforts which attempt to give people with a better understanding of bear ecology and a greater knowledge of actions to reduce or avoid human – bear conflicts.
4. A prevention program to assist and support communities in efforts to reduce human – bear conflicts by reducing and managing attractants and managing greenspaces. The program also includes a community funding initiative to provide communities with improved capacity to manage attractants.

The 10 major recommendations are (pgs 3 and 4):

1. Amend contract with Provincial Call Unit (PCU) to provide for immediate pick up of calls to the bear reporting line.

2. **Communicate existing customer service standards to clients and partners and create new standards to establish program clarity. Review and amend MOU and protocols with Police Services to ensure clarity of interpretation.**
 3. **Further develop local protocols to notify partners (police services, municipalities & service providers) of bear trap locations, & hot spots and other pertinent information that is relevant to reducing human-bear conflicts.**
 4. **In order to address repeat offenders, MNR should prepare wording for a municipal by-law and provide to all municipalities for their consideration.**
 5. **Redefine eligibility criteria for community funding and offer cost sharing options.**
 6. **Pursue cooperative opportunities with other OPS Ministries.**
 7. **Review and consider re-distribution of existing Bear Wise allocations to Districts.**
 8. **Replace Bear Incident Reporting and Tracking Application (BIRTA) with an application that better suits the needs of the program. Until the new program is operational, districts are encouraged to use of an Excel spreadsheet for tracking and data queries.**
 9. **Communication products and process of delivery should be refined to reflect client and partner suggestions for improvement. Include tougher messaging when appropriate. Enhance communication with and participation from Ontario Parks.**
 10. **Enhance visual identity of MNR staff involved in Bear Wise response.**
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Measures to deal with human/wildlife interactions with bears:

This study below was cited by the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunter who simplistically claimed that the "Ministry of Natural Resources [M.N.R.] published information states that trapping/relocation as a nuisance bear management tool has a failure rate of 80% for adult bears.."

<http://www.ofah.org/news/Why-the-spring-bear-hunt-must-be-reinstated>. Of course, as the study sows, the situation is significantly more nuisance.

Landriault, L.J., Obbard, M.E., and Rettie, W.J., Nuisance Black Bears and What to do With Them, NEST Technical Note TN-017, December 2000.

Here is what the study shows: - the percentage of black bears that can successfully be relocated (pg 13):

- 70% of juvenile male black bears;
- 40% of juvenile female black bears; and
- 20% of adult bears of either sex.

Adult bears may return "home" from distances up to 200k.

Section of relocation from the study (pg 13):

"Relocation as a nuisance bear management tool has been shown to have variable degrees of success. Although approximately 70 percent of juvenile males can be successfully relocated, success

is 40 percent for juvenile females and 20 percent for adult bears of either sex. Increasing the relocation distance is unlikely to increase the relocation success of adult bears; they commonly return home from distances up to 200 km and may travel at a rate of more than 18 km per day.

It is difficult to determine how many animals repeat their nuisance behaviour after a relocation experience. Repeated nuisance behaviour was confirmed in 24 percent of bears that were studied near Sudbury. Based on information from ear-tagged animals in Chapleau, Parry Sound, and Sudbury, the number of repeat offenders lies between 10 percent and 60 percent.

Because of the perceived danger to the public posed by adult male bears, they should be relocated as far as possible from the capture site and from other populated areas. Relocated bears rarely remain near the release site.

Adult females will begin to make their way home shortly (within hours) after release. Adult females are very persistent in returning to their original range, and will return even if relocated with cubs. If a lactating female is captured without her cubs, she should be released near the capture site if it does not pose a threat to human safety.

If cubs are captured after the mother has been relocated they should not be relocated to the mother's release site. Local MNR offices can provide advice on handling orphaned cubs. In some cases the mother may return to the capture site to find them.

Juvenile bears (less than four years old) should be relocated a minimum of 60 km (straight line) from the capture area. Female black bears tend to remain near their birth site throughout their life, so juvenile females (like adult females) are likely to return to the capture area.

Juvenile males generally disperse from their mother's home range naturally, which accounts for their low return rate following relocation.

In all relocations, ensure that there are no populated areas between the capture and the release sites."

Reference Material:

1. Evaluation of lethal versus non-lethal programmes in managing human bear conflicts: Travss, Edward A., PhD, Correlation of reduction in nuisance black bear complaints with implementation of (a) a non-violet program and (b) a hunt, Final Report, Presented at 9/21/05 New Jersey Public Hearing on the Comprehensive Black Baer Management Policy, Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology, Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey. (see attached pdf)
2. Framework for Enhanced Black Bear Management in Ontario, OMNR June 2009.
3. Backgrounder on Black Bears in Ontario, OMNR June 2009
4. Landriault, L.J., Obbard, M.E., and Rettie, W.J., Nuisance Black Bears and What to do With Them, NEST Technical Note TN-017 December 2000.

5. **Ontario Auditor's Report for 2007 – Chapter 3, Section 3.06 Fish and Wildlife Program, pgs 130 to 149.**
6. **Ontario Auditor's Report for 2009, Status Update, pgs 377 to 378.**
7. **Evaluation of Ontario's Provincial Bear Wise Program, January 2009.**
8. **Wildl. Soc. Bull. 14:76-80, 1986, EFFECTS OF TRANSLOCATION DISTANCE ON FREQUENCY OF RETURN BY ADULT BLACK BEARS, LYNN L. ROGERS, U.S. Forest Service, North Central Forest and Range Experiment Station, 1992 Folwell Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55108**
http://www.bearstudy.org/website/images/stories/Publications/Effects_of_Translocation_Distance_on_Frequency_of_Return_by_Adult_Black_Bears.pdf