



# Louisiana Black Bear

*Ursus americanus luteolus*



*Photos courtesy of Steve Uffmann*

*The Louisiana black bear has a rather large head, is blunt in profile, has relatively small eyes and a broad nose pad. It is large, shy and bulky. Its tail is very short and inconspicuous. It usually keeps to itself except when in the family unit of mother and cubs.*

## **Age and Growth**

The average lifespan of the black bear is 10 years but they can live upward of 30 years in the wild. The average weight of the adult male is 250-400 pounds and the adult female 120-200 pounds. However, an adult male can weigh more than 500 pounds.

## **Behavior**

Louisiana black bears generally shy away from people and human occupied areas. They are a true opportunist, so tend to explore any and all interesting smells in their search for food. Bears have home ranges, where they share space with other bears of both sexes, just not at the same time. Bears generally move through their home range alone, except for females with cubs or breeding pairs. They are most active at dawn and dusk, but can be seen at any time.

## **Diet**

Black bears are best described as opportunistic omnivorous feeders, meaning they eat almost anything available. Their diets vary seasonally and include primarily vegetation during the spring, fruits and grains in the summer and hard mast, such as acorns and pecans, during the fall.

## Reproduction

Black bears breed during the summer months and may be observed in pairs during this period. Bears increase their movement during breeding season. Males may fight for dominance or mating rights and follow females throughout their range. Females produce one to four cubs, with an average of two, every other year in January or February. Cubs emerge from the den in the spring with the mother, staying with her for about 17 months.



## Habitat/Range in Louisiana

The black bear occurs primarily in the forested wetlands of the Mississippi Alluvial Valley. However, bears have been sighted in almost every parish in Louisiana. Range expansion into upland areas, including piney woods habitat, is occurring west and east of the Mississippi River.

## Interacting With A Bear

Though the black bear will normally avoid contact with humans, there are actions to take if you feel threatened. If a bear persistently follows or approaches, turn and face the bear. Raise your arms over your head to make yourself appear larger. Stand your ground and gather your group together. If the bear gets closer, talk loudly and firmly to deter its approach. Throw non-food items like rocks at the bear. Don't run and don't turn away from the bear. Leave the area as soon as the bear leaves.

## What Can You Do To Help?

Though it may sound like a cliché, the best practice is don't feed the bears. One way to do that is to secure garbage in areas where black bears are known to roam. Store all garbage in a secure shed or bear-proof container. Keep your garbage can clean by washing with bleach or ammonia. Rinse food and drink containers before throwing away or recycling. Instead of leaving garbage out overnight, put it out for pick up in the morning.



## LDWF Louisiana Black Bear Management Practices

Black bear management in Louisiana is focused on conservation and development of habitat required by black bears and the reduction of human/bear conflicts. Research is directed at gathering of data to assess and monitor bear populations, productivity, population viability and public opinion regarding bears and bear management.

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**Other Resources:** [www.facebook.com/LDWF-black-bear-program](https://www.facebook.com/LDWF-black-bear-program)  
[www.bearwise.org](http://www.bearwise.org)  
[www.blackbearinfo.com](http://www.blackbearinfo.com)  
[www.fws.gov/southeast](http://www.fws.gov/southeast)



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