

MANAGEMENT TRENDS

Bears Aren't Unbearable

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New Jersey has seen a large increase in the number of Community Associations over the last several years. As a result of this expansion, more rural areas have been selected as beneficial locations for new communities. This increase in community living, primarily in more rural areas, has resulted in homeowners experiencing an increase in black bear activity and bear related incidents.

What are the bear facts?

In 2018, the NJ bear hunt was suspended on state lands to investigate the opportunity to utilize non-lethal measures; and, in 2021, bear hunting on any land ceased completely, with the expiration of the previous Comprehensive Black Bear Management Policy ("CBBMP"). As one figure from Fish and Wildlife Biologists notes, there was a population increase of 950 black bears between the region north of interstate 78 and west of Interstate 287 between 2019 and 2020.¹

According to NJ Fish and Wildlife, "Within the most densely populated state in the nation, black bears are thriving and there are now confirmed bear sightings in all 21 of New Jersey's counties."² Due to this, NJ residents saw a 237% increase in black bear related incidents from January through October 2022.³ While New Jersey did reinstate the bear hunt at the end of 2023, it's still important that residents and homeowners are educated on limiting exposure to potentially dangerous situations between themselves and black bears.

What attracts Black Bears?

The usual suspects of garbage, bird feeders and BBQ grills are of course at the forefronts of what entices a bear to come around; however, baby diapers, compost and vegetable gardens also contribute to bear sightings.



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"NJ residents saw a 237% increase in black bear related incidents from January through October 2022."

How to avoid attracting bears:

- Make sure garbage and diapers are placed within the appropriate containers and follow your communities governing documents for how it should be disposed of.
- Keep BBQ grills clean after each use.
- NJ Fish and Wildlife recommends not allowing bird feeders if you live in an area frequented by black bears. If you do allow bird feeders, they should not be allowed on any structure and should be on a free-standing wire.
- If allowed, try to compost inside your home and clean up any vegetables that are not picked after they mature.
- Don't leave food out for ANY wild animals, especially the bears!

For more information, visit:

<https://dep.nj.gov/njfw/bears/preventbear-damage/>.

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What to do if bears frequent your community:

- Use certified bear-resistance dumpsters. If used properly per manufacturer's guidelines, they can cut back tremendously on bear activity within your community. Please note that this does require community members participation to be effective.
- Enforce container guidelines. If your community has individual garbage cans, put together guidelines for when the containers can go out and when they need to be brought back in. Note that all garbage bags must be placed in a container and recycling should be free of debris.
- Install motion lights and have air horns/pot and pans readily available to scare the bears away from your area.
- Start a neighborhood watch so community members are aware of bear activity in the area.

What to do if you experience an aggressive bear:

It is important to notify NJ Fish and Wildlife if you experience any sort of aggressive bear activity within your community. Report black bear damage or nuisance behavior to the DEP's 24-hour, toll-free hotline at 1-877-WARN DEP (1-877-927-6337). ■

Sources:

1. <https://dep.nj.gov/njfw/bears/black-bear-biology-and-behavior/#:~:text=Fish%20and%20Wildlife%20biologists%20have,this%20same%20region%20of%202%2C208.>
2. <https://dep.nj.gov/njfw/bears/#:~:text=Since%20the%201980s%20the%20Garden,areas%20of%20northwestern%20New%20Jersey.>
3. <https://dep.nj.gov/njfw/bears/black-bear-management-faqs/>

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