

Black Bears Transiting Through Lake Ridge



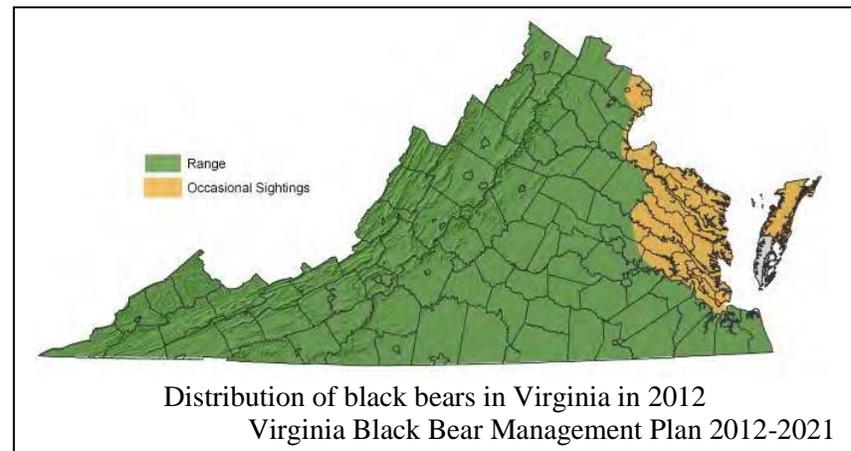
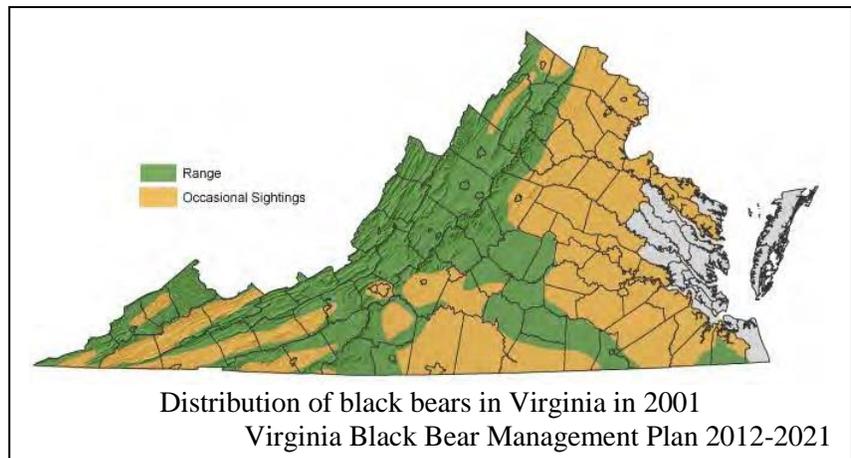
It's springtime and that usually includes a few black bear sightings in Prince William County. These are usually transients – juvenile males (16 months old) – passing through looking for a new home range after being kicked out by their mother.

Black bears are not aggressive and will normally seek to avoid human contact unless they become habituated. Mature males normally weigh 200-500 lbs; females 100 – 250 lbs. The record (North Carolina) is 880 lbs and 740 lbs in Virginia. Juveniles passing through will be less than 100 lbs.

The single item that leads to most human-bear conflicts is feeding, either deliberately or inadvertently (e.g., garbage, birdfeeders, pet food left outside). We need to ensure bears remember LRPRA as a location without any food – no reason to return.

Bears have rapidly expanded their range in Virginia (see charts) and could easily set up housekeeping near LRPRA and sortie back to known food sources, garbage, birdfeeders, etc.

Garbage, pet food, and bird feeders attract hungry bears. Bears have an acute sense of smell to find these and then remember when and where they have found them. Once a food source is found, bears



will search for similar food sources in an area. Thus one person's carelessness can introduce a problem to a whole neighborhood as the bear examines other similar sources – e.g., requiring all garbage containers to be bear-proof.

How to Bear Proof Your Trash Container: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C12bZaMHpUY>

Overflowing garbage also attracts crows, coons, opossums, rats, and coyotes.

In Virginia, both deliberate and inadvertent feeding of bears is illegal.

For more information about black bears in Virginia

1. See the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries web page:

<https://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bear/>

And

2. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries video on YouTube:

Living With Black Bears In Virginia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6LUih6YuBLY>