

## Black Bears in Florida

Black bears are remarkable animals that are very important for Florida ecosystems, which is why they are protected from harm under Florida law. Bears will avoid people whenever they can, but they can sometimes come into conflict with us over garbage and other attractants.

Bears have and will always be present in Florida; our goal is to prevent them from lingering in residential areas by providing technical assistance and outreach/education. The very best approach to prevent bear encounters is to secure attractants that bring bears into neighborhoods. Household garbage is extremely high in calories and provides bears with a large caloric reward for very little effort. Black bears do not view humans as prey, but can and will learn to associate humans with food if they are continually rewarded with free meals from garbage cans, dumpsters, bird feeders, or pet food bowls. Once they lose their natural fear of humans and learn to treat them as a source for a handout, they can become a nuisance and a hazard.

Bears are naturally shy of people, so scaring bears away when they are spotted will help reinforce their natural fear and let them know they are unwelcome. To scare them away make loud noises (shouting, banging pots and pans, airhorn, etc.), or use motion-activated alarms (example Critter Gitter), motion-activated water sprinklers (example Water Scarecrow), unwelcome mats, and electric fencing to keep them away from certain areas (more details in the "Scare that Bear" PDF). Marine locks can also be a great way to keep outdoor freezers and refrigerators secure. Trapping and removal of bears is a last resort; it does not become a viable option until after every effort has been made to secure the attractant. Getting in front of this situation before it becomes a nuisance issue resulting in garbage-habituated bears is the most effective approach to managing and mitigating human-wildlife conflict. Other points to consider:

- Video on Living with Bears: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pf0cL6gUuXI>
- Video on Scare the Bear: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDrO6KjfUFU>
- Video on Bear Behavior: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Js600zPkkq>
- Living with Bears information: <https://myfwc.com/wildlifehabitats/wildlife/bear/living/>
- How to retrofit a garbage can against bears: <https://myfwc.com/media/20202/combined-retrofit-kit-directions.pdf>
- Motion-activated alarm example: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tjn\\_wlZi\\_W4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tjn_wlZi_W4)
- Motion-activated sprinkler example: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jHYV6nJksw>

It is our goal to help alleviate human-bear conflicts and help residents live in concert with the growing bear population. We appreciate your cooperation and initiative in working toward an acceptable solution. Please let me know how we can provide you with any further technical or hands-on assistance and feel free to visit our website at <http://myfwc.com/bear>. If you have any questions, feel free to call me at 352-732-1225, or reply to this email. Additionally, you can report wildlife emergencies or violations 24/7 to FWC's Wildlife Alert Hotline at 1-888-404-3922.

Sincerely,

**Lauren Barth**

Wildlife Assistance Biologist, Northeast Region

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