



Connecticut's Black Bear Population (*Ursus americanus*)

How many black bears live in Connecticut?

According to the [Department of Energy and Environmental Protection](#) (DEEP), Connecticut's resident black bear population is both increasing and expanding its territory.

DEEP estimates the black bear population, including juveniles, to be between 1,000 and 1,200. And although most black bears inhabit the northwest quarter of the state, the population is expanding into suitable habitat throughout Connecticut.

Under what circumstances may someone legally kill a bear in Connecticut?

It is illegal to hunt or trap bears in Connecticut ([Conn. Agencies Regs. § 26-66-3\(f\)](#)). However, a person may use deadly physical force against a bear if he or she reasonably believes it is (1) inflicting, or about to inflict, great bodily harm to someone; (2) injuring or killing his or her controlled pet; or (3) entering a building occupied by people ([CGS § 26-80a\(c\)](#), as amended by [PA 23-77](#)).

Additionally, state law allows (1) farmers or farm workers to pursue, trap, and kill a bear that damages property on land used for agriculture ([CGS § 26-72](#)) and (2) DEEP to kill a bear if there is a public health or safety threat ([CGS § 26-3](#)).

Black Bear Sightings

DEEP tracks black bear activity in the state and maintains a [record](#) of reported bear sightings it receives each year. As of September 27, 2024, there were 9,827 reported bear sightings in 2024.

In 2023, there was at least one reported sighting in 165 of the state's 169 towns. The table below shows the towns with the five most reported sightings that year.

Towns With the Most Reported Sightings (2023)*

| Town | Reports |
|---------------|---------|
| Simsbury | 636 |
| Avon | 607 |
| West Hartford | 435 |
| Bristol | 346 |
| Farmington | 342 |

**Note: The number of sightings is much greater than the estimated number of bears since each bear may be spotted and reported several times as it travels.*

It also lets farmers who experience crop, livestock, or apiary damage from nuisance wildlife (including bear) get a permit from DEEP to take (e.g., kill) the wildlife if reasonable nonlethal methods (e.g., electric fencing, fortified structures) failed to prevent damage ([CGS 26-47\(e\)](#), as amended by [PA 23-77](#)).

Connecticut Legislative Proposals About Taking or Feeding Black Bear, 2013-2024

| Year | Bill Number | General Concept | Last Action |
|------|---|---|--|
| 2013 | HB 6654 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires DEEP to (1) sell bear hunt lottery permits for \$10 each and (2) charge \$200 per bear hunt license Specifies that DEEP designates the manner of the hunt, but the location must coincide with deer management zones | Referred from the House to the Finance, Revenue and Bonding Committee, which voted out a substitute without the bear hunt provisions |
| 2016 | HB 5315 , as amended by House "A" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows DEEP to adopt regulations to ban or restrict feeding bears on property not owned by the state Provides warnings and educational materials for first-time, de minimis violations, other violations are infractions | House passed, as amended by House "A" |
| 2017 | SB 522 , as amended by Senate "A" and "B" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorizes regulations on hunting black bear in Litchfield County, subject to certain restrictions Requires a report from DEEP on the number of (1) issued black bear hunting licenses and (2) bears killed by hunting | Senate amended the bill with Senate "D," which struck the bear hunt provisions |
| | SB 832 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> On private property: (1) prohibits feeding, attracting, or enticing certain animals, including black bears; and (2) allows for regulations on unintentional feeding | Public Hearing |
| 2018 | HB 5358 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorizes regulations on hunting black bear in Litchfield County, subject to certain restrictions Requires a report from DEEP on the number of (1) issued black bear hunting licenses and (2) bear taken by hunting | Vote failed in Environment Committee |
| 2019 | SB 586 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expands the circumstances under which DEEP may issue permits to landowners or lessees for taking nuisance wildlife by including when there is unreasonable damage to livestock, poultry, or bees, instead of only agricultural crops | Vote failed in Senate |
| 2022 | SB 244 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expands the circumstances under which DEEP may issue permits to landowners or lessees for taking nuisance wildlife by including when there is unreasonable damage to livestock, poultry, or bees, instead of only agricultural crops | Vote failed in Environment Committee |
| 2023 | SB 1148 , as amended by Senate "A" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Authorizes deadly physical force against a bear in certain circumstances Allows farmers to get a permit from DEEP to take a bear that threatens or damages crops, livestock, or apiaries Prohibits intentionally feeding black bears on land not owned by the state | Enacted as PA 23-77 |

What steps can someone take to prevent interactions with bears near their home?

DEEP [provides](#) the following "Dos" and "Don'ts" for preventing bear interactions at a person's home:

Remove birdfeeders/bird food from late March through November
 Eliminate food attractants by placing trash cans in a garage or shed
 Store garbage in secure, airtight containers
 Add ammonia to trash to make it unpalatable
 Clean and store grills safely away after use



Feed bears (intentionally or accidentally)
 Leave pet food outdoors or feed pets outside
 Add meat or sweets to a compost pile
 Approach a bear in your yard



**Learn
More**

DEEP's website with [Black Bear Law FAQs](#) (about PA 23-77)

UConn [Research Guide](#) on Connecticut's Black Bear Population

[The State of the Bears](#) - A Briefing on Bears in the State of Connecticut (February 2024)

"Penalty for Hunting Black Bear," OLR Report [2018-R-0338](#)

