

9-2004

Bear Facts, 2004

Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife

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Recommended Citation

Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, "Bear Facts, 2004" (2004). *Public Information and Education Documents*. 3.
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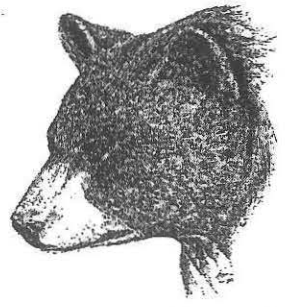
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MAINE DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES AND WILDLIFE



BEAR FACTS

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Black Bears Are Thriving in Maine

- Black bears are widely distributed in Maine.
- Approximately 23,000 bears occur statewide.
- Maine's bear population has increased 28% since 1990.
- Maine has the largest bear population in the eastern United States and one of the largest in the continental U.S.
- IFW receives about 300 nuisance bear complaints each year.

Maine Has a "State of the Art" Bear Management Program

- Maine has one of the most extensive, comprehensive, and longest standing bear studies in North America. It is based on wildlife management's most current, scientific methods.
- More than 2,000 bears have been captured and marked since 1975.
- Between 40 and 78 radio-collared bears are tracked annually; 40-50 den sites are visited each winter.
- IFW collects detailed information on bear survival, birth rates, behavior, and animal condition.
- Information gathered from this study allows IFW to adjust the bear harvest to levels that achieve bear population objectives and ensure the conservation of Maine's black bears.
- IFW has monitored bear harvests since 1969.

Public Input Determines Black Bear Management Objectives

- In 1999, a public working group representing landowners, forest industry, sportsmen, environmentalists, etc., developed the following management objectives for 2000 through 2015:
 1. Stabilize the bear population at 23,000 bears through annual hunting and trapping harvests.
 2. Promote traditional hunting and trapping methods.
 3. Promote public tolerance of bears in Maine.

Regulated Hunting is the Primary Tool to Achieve Publics' Goals and Objectives

- To achieve publicly derived bear population objectives, we will need to harvest about 3,500-4,000 bears annually.
- From 1999-2003, Maine's bear harvest has averaged 3,750.
- Hunting season and methods are tightly regulated, and the bear harvest is closely monitored.
- Bear harvest by methods since 1999:

Bait	78%	Incidental to deer hunting	6%
Hounds	10%	Method unreported	4%
Trapping	2%		
- Success rate of bear hunters is about 25% each year. By contrast, in 2003, moose hunters averaged an 80% success rate, and 34% of turkey hunters and 18% of deer hunters were successful.
- In almost all forms of hunting, hunters select sites with natural foods, and use lures, scents, decoys, and manual and electronic calls to attract their quarry. Aspects of all of these techniques are inherent in all hunting and have been a part of hunting since its beginnings.
- Other bear hunting methods used in states that have restricted the use of bait and/or dogs may be unworkable and are likely impractical in Maine because of our terrain and thick vegetation.
- Hunting bear over bait is the most effective way to hunt bear in Maine and the most effective way for IFW to achieve bear population objectives.

FEB 03 2005