

Black Bears and Iowa

At this time, Black Bears are not identified as a wildlife species to manage, and therefore not protected in Iowa Code. Iowa does not currently have a breeding population of black bears. However, neighboring states of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Missouri do have breeding populations of black bears. So, it is very possible that Iowa will get an occasional bear wandering in from a neighboring state. The following information explains the status of black bears in our neighboring states that have breeding populations.

Wisconsin DNR - Black Bear Management

Wisconsin is home to a thriving black bear population estimated at more than 23,000. The black bear's primary range is located in the far northern third of the state. However, bear numbers in recent years have expanded south as well. In fact, due to a growing population, bears are becoming much more common in the lower two-thirds of the state than ever before.

Wisconsin's bear population is managed primarily through hunting, offering hunters a quality experience while being managed under a strict quota/permit issuance system designed to ensure the long-term future of the population. In recent years, anywhere from 100,000 to 140,000 hunters apply for roughly 11,000 - 13,000 total bear harvest permits in Wisconsin.

Minnesota DNR - Black Bear Management

Black bears are one of Minnesota's iconic species. They're the only bear species that inhabits the state today.

Bears live in forests, swamps and other areas with dense cover but will wander into clearings to feed. They are found mainly in the northern third of Minnesota, but range as far south as the interface between the forest and agricultural zones, where they utilize corn and other crops for subsistence.

DNR manages Minnesota's black bear population by providing quality bear habitat, conducting research to increase knowledge of bear biology, educating the public on how to live with bears, assisting people with bear problems and controlling the bear population with hunting seasons.

There are roughly 13,000 - 17,000 black bears currently in Minnesota. Sport hunting is their main source of mortality. Minnesota hunters harvest an average of about 2,000 - 3,000 black bears annually. Bear hunting license sales are restricted in most of the range to maintain a desired harvest and population size.



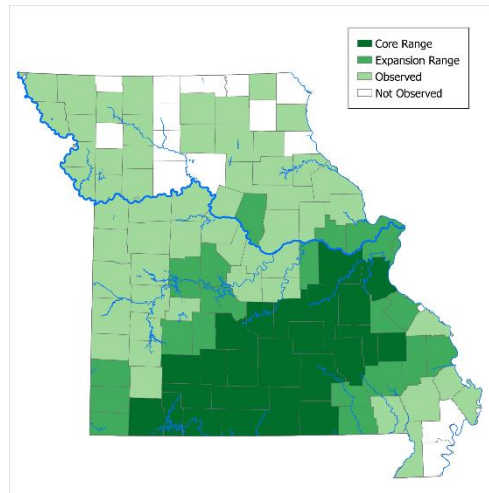
Missouri Dept of Conservation - Black Bear Management

The Missouri Department of Conservation is charged with the "control, management, restoration, conservation and regulation" of the state's wildlife and this includes the black bear (*Ursus americanus*). Sightings of sows with cubs, nuisance complaints, and other incidents involving black bears in Missouri have increased significantly over the past 10-15 years suggesting that bear populations are increasing in the state. In an effort to proactively address bear issues, resource personnel from the Missouri Department of Conservation, United States Forest Service, Missouri Department of Natural Resources, and the National Park Service outlined goals and strategies to ensure that bears are managed in ways that minimize conflicts with humans while encouraging population expansion into compatible habitats.

As part of the bear management goals, the Missouri Dept of Conservation has implemented a highly regulated fall black bear hunting season in recent years.

Most black bears are south of the Missouri River, although some have been reported in a few northern counties. This is the only species of bear found in Missouri.

Distribution in Missouri:



Black Bear Depredation and Encounters in Iowa

If you see a black bear, or find sign (tracks or scat), you can contact your local Iowa DNR Wildlife or Law Enforcement Staff to report this animal's presence. If the bear is causing conflicts with humans, livestock, pets, or bee hives then measures can be taken to deal with the situation. Human safety will always be the first concern, however respect for that animal receiving the attention from the public and how it is handled is also a primary concern.

Even though the black bear is not currently managed in Iowa with wildlife management laws or a regulated season, the Iowa DNR's Law Enforcement and Wildlife personnel will continue to play a lead role in public reports of black bears. However, in cases where human safety or livestock depredation are a concern, we will work closely with the following partners: USDA Wildlife Services, Iowa Dept. of Ag & Lands Stewardship - State Veterinarians (IDALS), local Police Departments, County Sheriffs, and other officials as needed.

Black bears have no legal status in Iowa Code, thus they are not protected by any Iowa laws at this time. Therefore, it is legal for Black Bears to be harvested by any method or means possible. However, the Iowa DNR does not promote harvesting black bears if they are not exhibiting a direct threat to human safety or livestock.

