

VIRGINIA'S BEARS:

forest, field &
front porch?



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What Kind of Bears Are In Virginia?



.....Black Bears!

What Kind of Bears Are In Virginia?



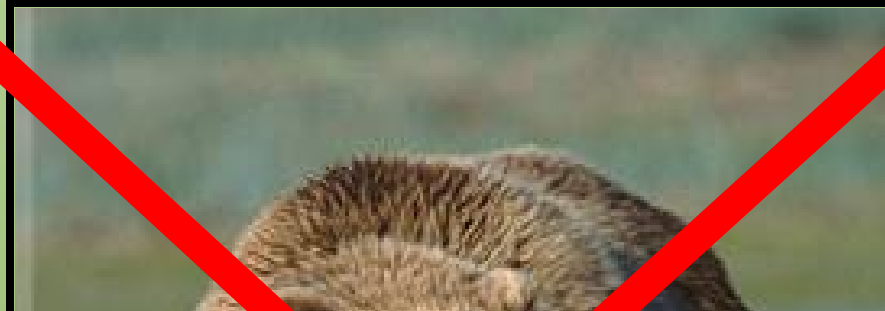
Brown Bear

What Kind of Bears Are In Virginia?



Brown Bear

What Kind of Bears Are In Virginia?



In a 2010 survey, Only 58% of Virginians correctly named black bears as the only species of bear living in Virginia.



Brown Bear

Black Bears are Black..



Black Bears are also Blond and Brown (Cinnamon)...





Ghost
bear
or
Spirit
bear

and can even be Blue!



**Glacier
bear**

Weight

Males (boars)

adult weight
200-500
pounds

Females (sows)

adult weight
100-250
pounds



Large, Non-retractable Claws



Climbing trees

Digging up insects

Defense

Senses

Nearsighted

**Keen sense of
smell/hearing**

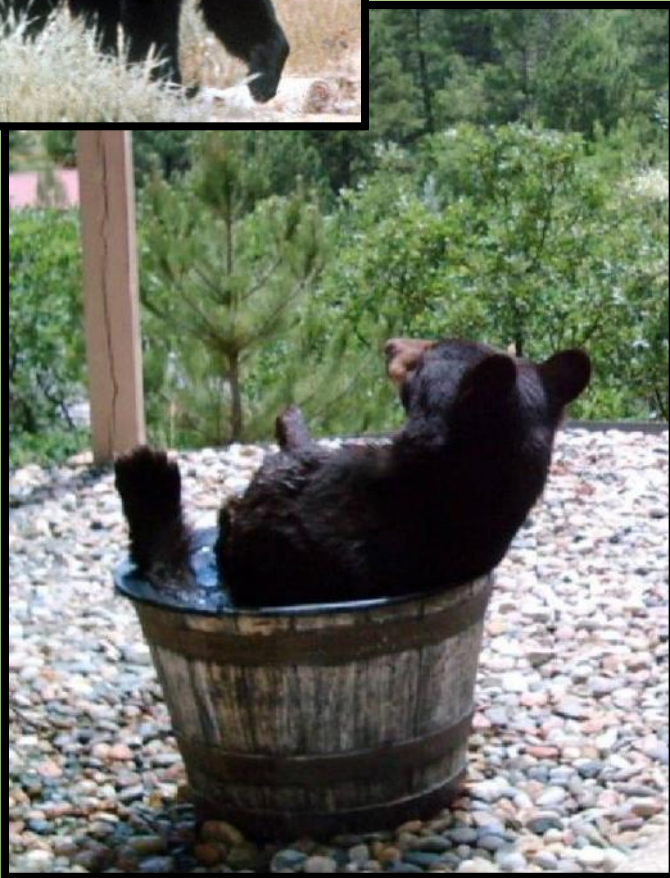
Bears can see in color:

This helps them find insects and small colorful berries while foraging.

Bears stand on their hind legs to get a better view and to smell and "taste" the air



Behaviors



Solitary most of the time.

Active at dawn and dusk

Omnivorous and opportunistic

What Bears Eat



- ~75% of the bear's diet consists of vegetative matter; berries, nuts, grasses, and fruits
- ~25% consists of insects, larvae, carrion, small animals, and fish.



Although they are not particularly good hunters, they have been known to prey on small to medium-sized mammals such as rodents and deer fawns.



What Bears Eat

Spring

Grasses/Forbes

Insects/Larvae

Skunk Cabbage

Squaw Root



Tearing apart stump to get at ant larvae



Squaw Root

Summer/Fall

**Berries (blue-,
huckle-, black-,
wild straw-)**

Hard mast

Dogwood

Wild Grapes

Serviceberry

Mountain-ash

Hawthorn

Chokecherry

Pokeberry

Sassafras

Winter “Hibernation”

Not True Hibernators : body temperature comes within $\sim 2^{\circ}\text{F}$ of surrounding temperature

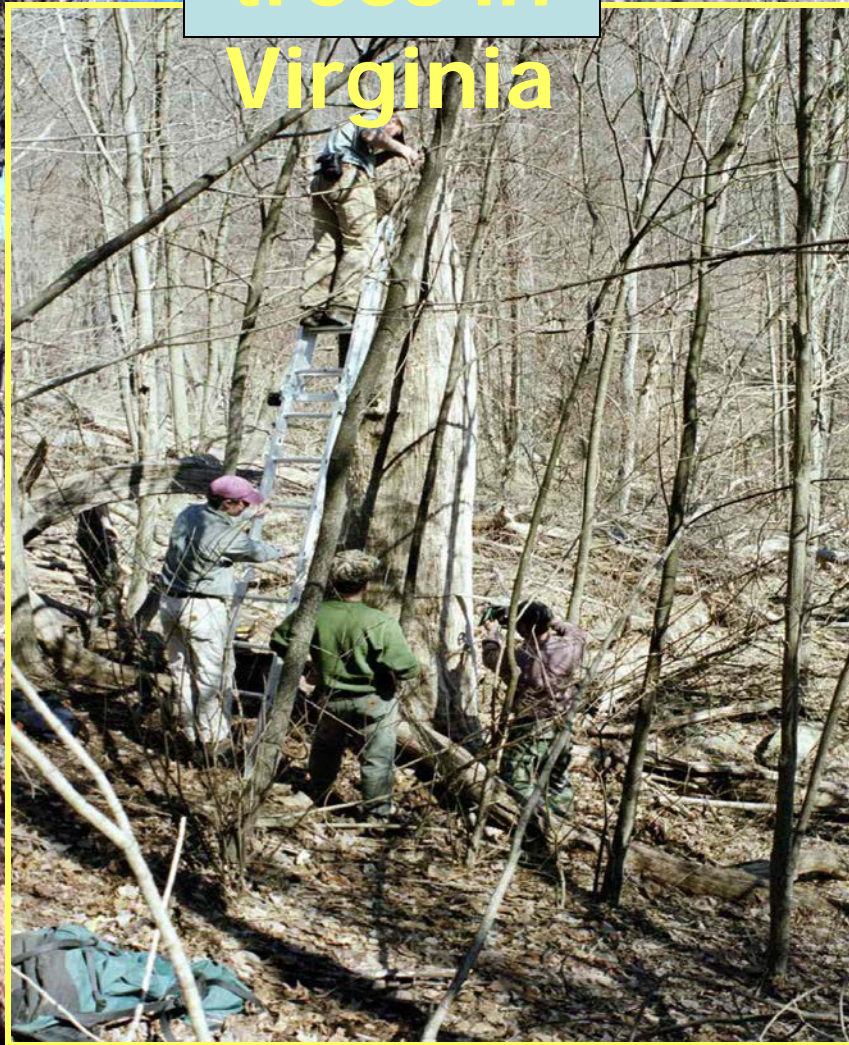
Bear body temperature only falls $9\text{-}14^{\circ}\text{F}$

- Do not eat, drink, urinate or defecate
- Respiration/heart rates decrease
- May lose 30% body weight
- Easily aroused from slumber

True hibernator



Most
bears
den in
trees in
Virginia



One of the tallest
dens – about 65 ft
high



Reproduction

- Sexually mature ~ age 3.5
- Reproduce every 2 years
- Breed late June - August
- Fertilized egg “floats” until December (delayed implantation), thus short gestation period



Reproduction

- Cubs born mid-late January in den ($\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ lbs)
- Litter size ~ 2.5 , range 1-4
- Born blind and helpless
- Rely on their mother through the next denning season



1 day old cub



5 day old cub

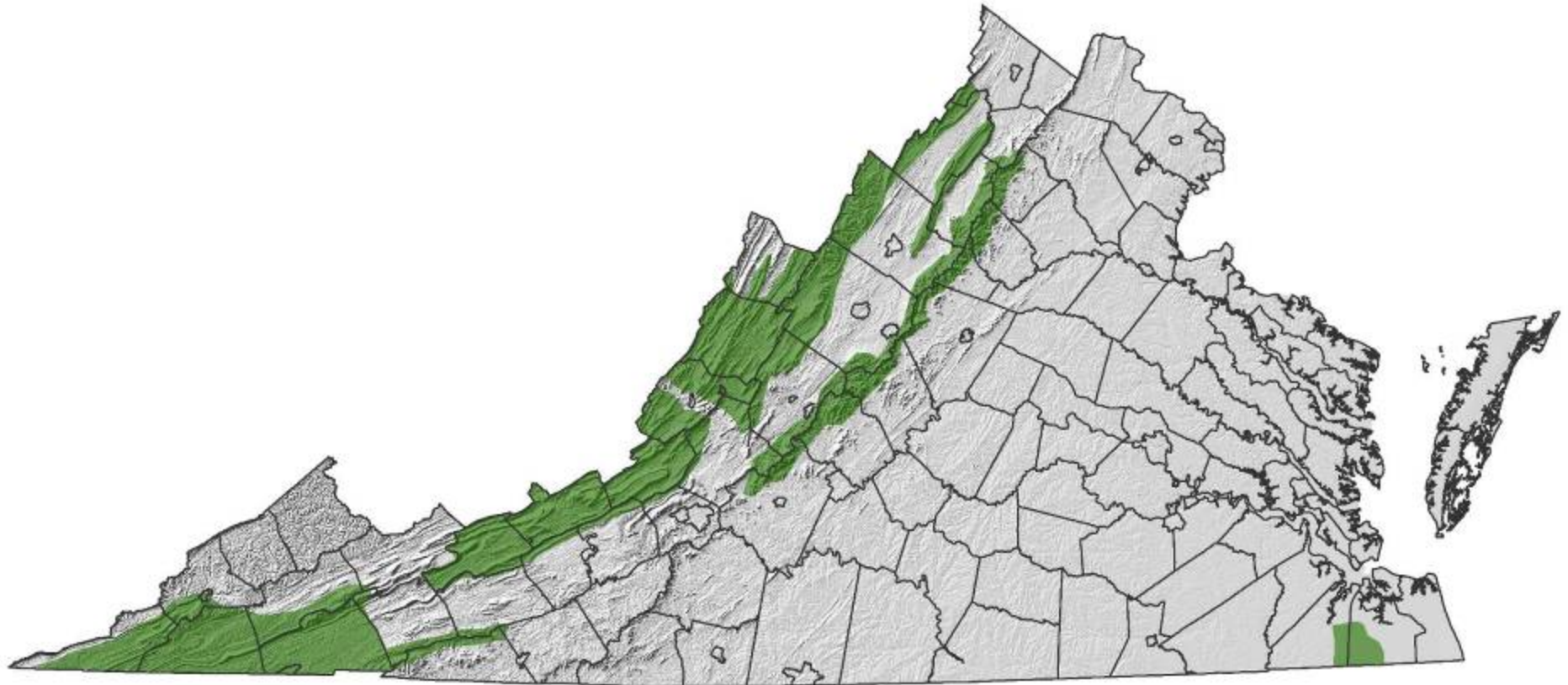


Population Declines

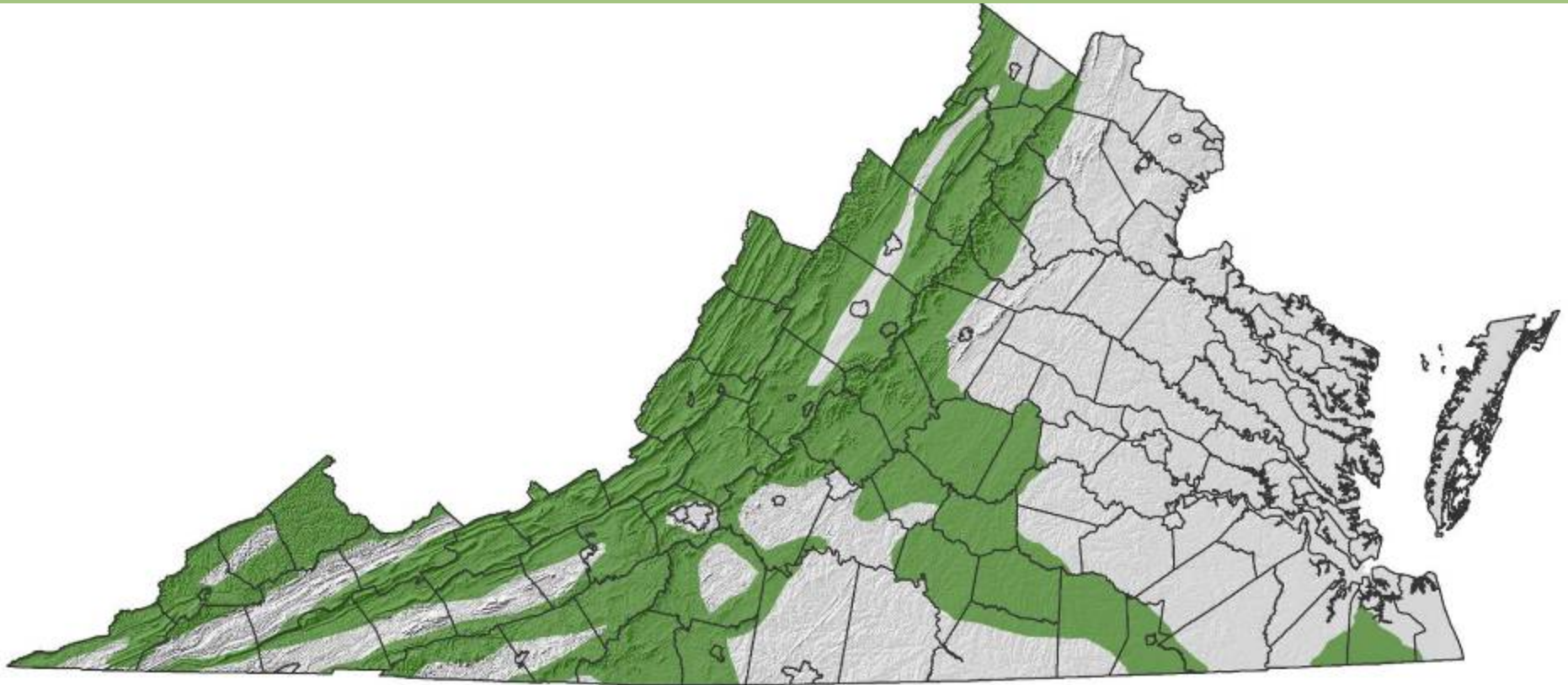
- Pre 20th Century - limited info.
- Early 1600's, Colonial times - abundant statewide
- 1739 bears only in western mountains and swamps
- By 1900 - near extinction in VA
 - extensive deforestation = little habitat left for bears
 - Unregulated hunting



1950's Occupied Black Bear Range



1990's Occupied Black Bear Range



Present Occupied Black Bear Range

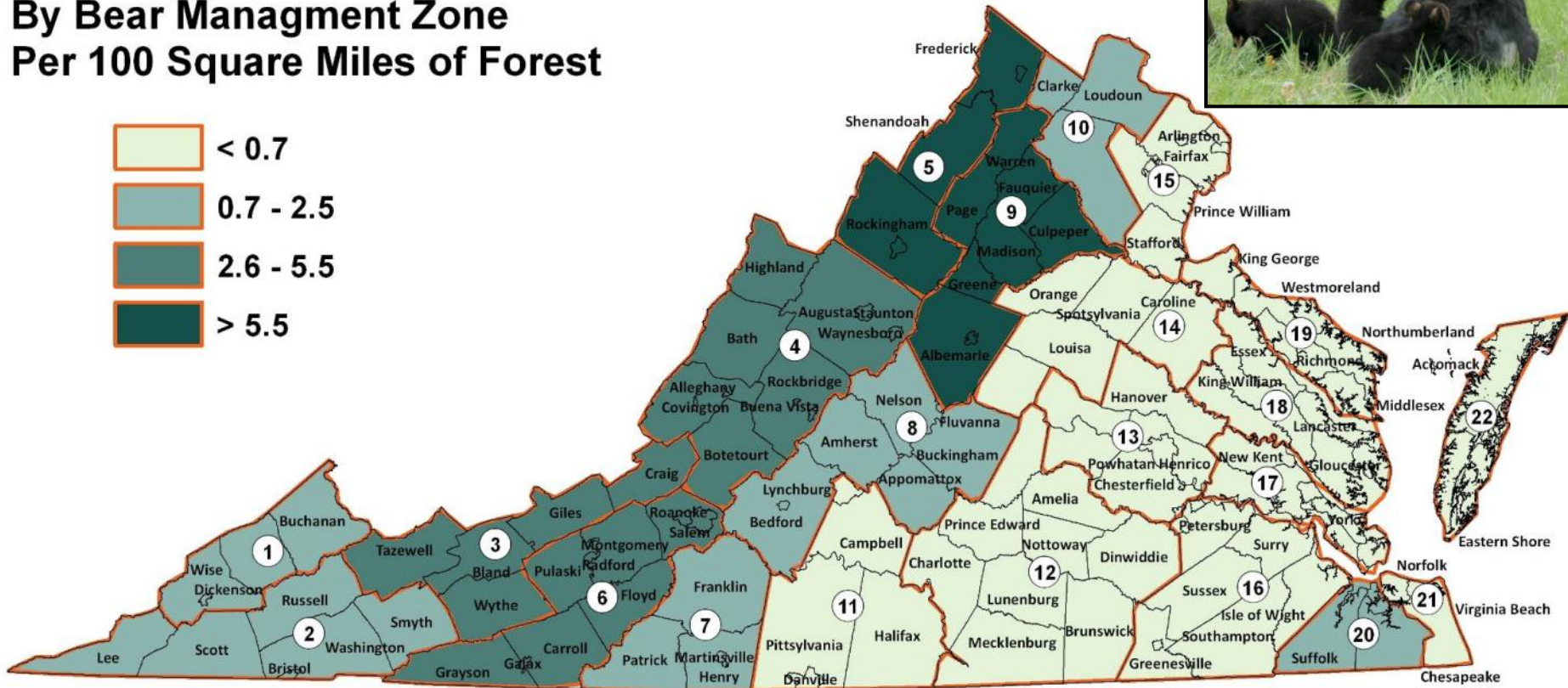
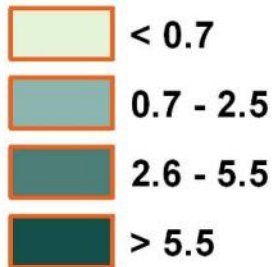
You live in bear country!



Population Density

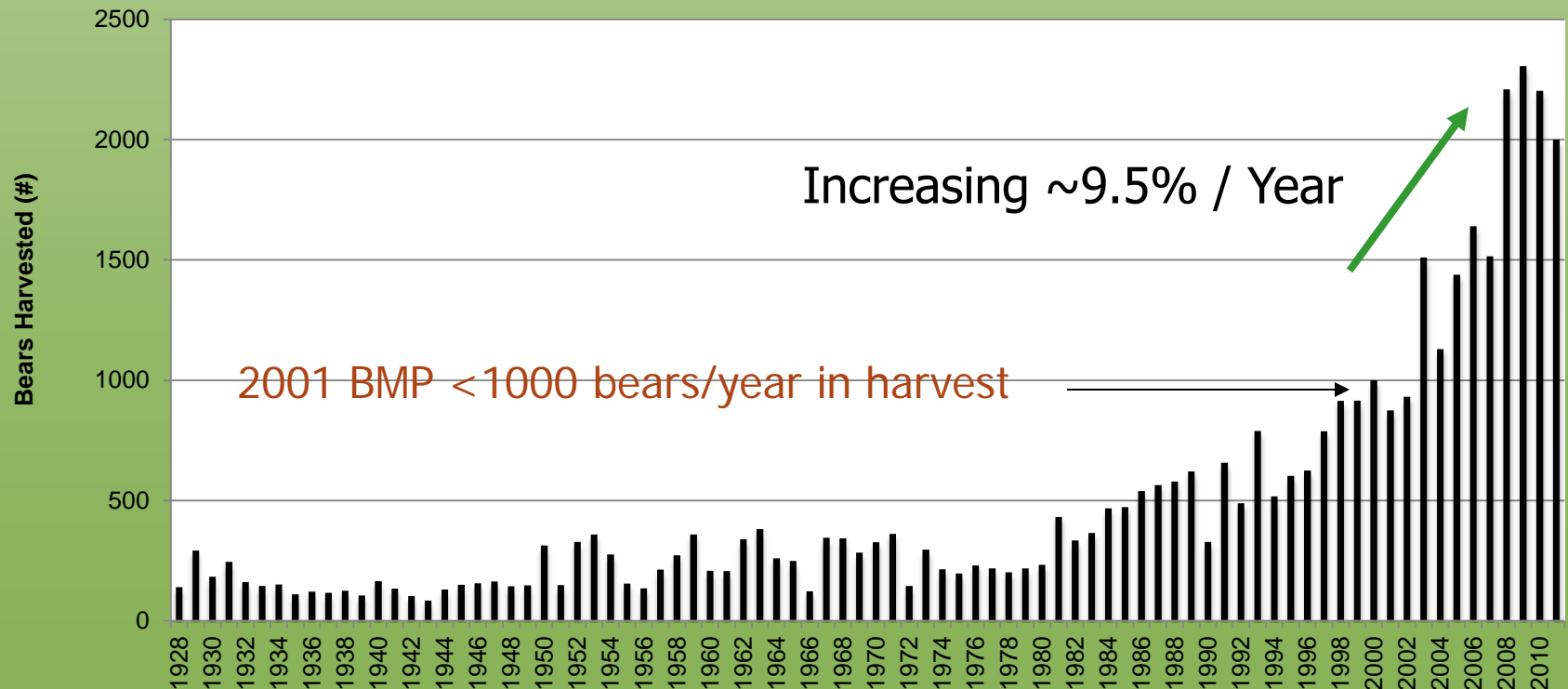


Average Number of Bears in Archery Harvest
By Bear Management Zone
Per 100 Square Miles of Forest



Bear Population

- Multi-year trends in harvest data generally correspond to overall population trends.
- **Since 2001, the statewide bear population has been increasing at about 9.5% annually.**



Mortality

- 20-25% cub mortality rate during the first year
 - Cub losses due to predation or separation from the female.
- Adult mortality low (<2% annually)
 - No natural predators
 - Relatively unaffected by parasites and diseases
 - Can live to be 30 years old
- Mortality related to human activity has the greatest impact on black bear survival in Virginia

Black Bear MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Population Management:

Designed to increase, decrease, or stabilize population levels in a given area.



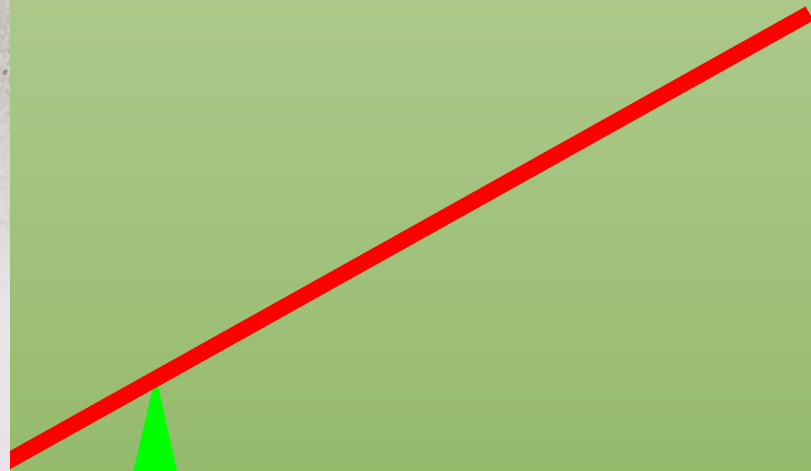
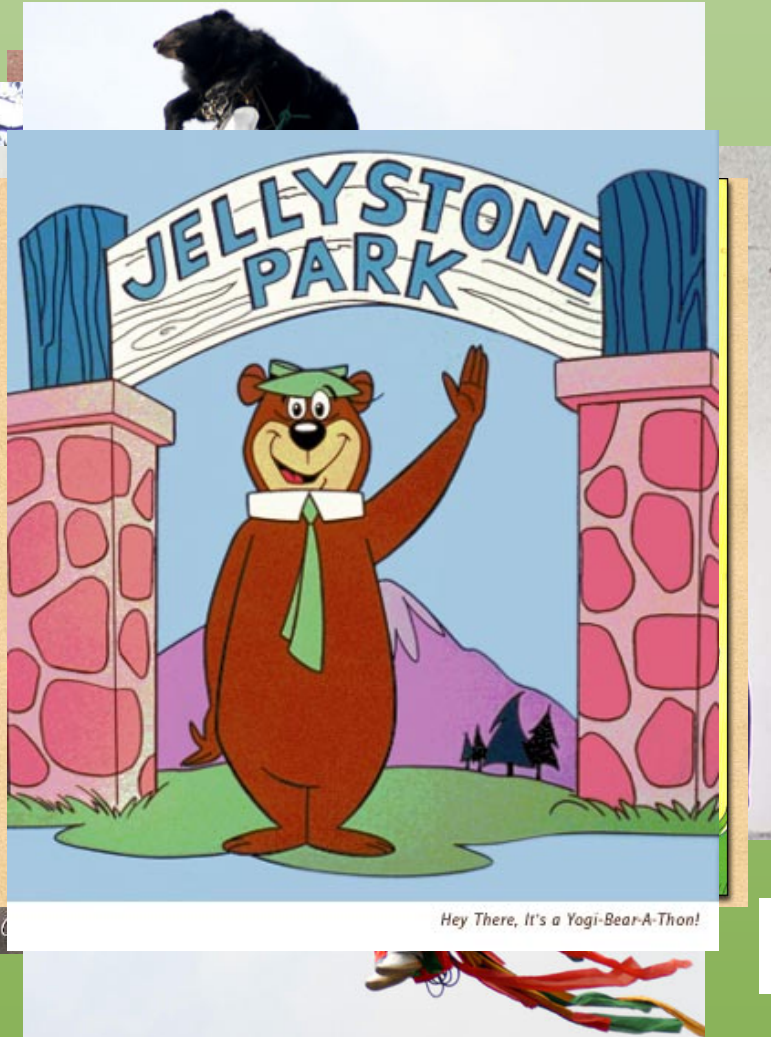
Human-Bear Problem Management:

More specifically target
human-bear problems

Bear seasons in Virginia involve archery, firearms and hunting with hounds.



Balancing Image



IMAGE

Balancing Image



IMAGE

Balancing Image

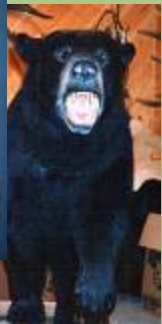


IMAGE

“I’m Afraid to Go Outside”

In this part of the black bear range:

- Bears do not exhibit predatory behavior
- In Virginia there has **never** been an unprovoked attack on a person
- Many people are afraid of being killed by a bear, but according to the National Center for Health Statistics, for every person killed by a black bear in North America, 60 are killed by domestic dogs, 180 by bees and 350 by lightning.



TRUE OR FALSE?

One of the most dangerous encounters is getting between a mother black bear and her cubs

FALSE



**If attack is imminent, have
a good shovel!**



Nuisance Bear Management

Before 1930-1931, nuisance bears were responsibility of landowner



- In 1969, VDGIF began moving nuisance bears
- Since 1980, average > 50 bears relocated annually
 - Very few in last few years (8-9 per year)
- Kill permits issued when necessary



50% of bear calls involve trash



9 different bears feeding
in trash



Steel Proof & Animal Resistant Cans
1-800-VEL-TRASH







Take Down Birdfeeders April 1st – December 1st



Electrified Bird Feeders



The bird feeder in the photos to the left has been electrified to discourage bears. Jamie Jonkel of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks helped develop the design for use as an aversive conditioning tool to teach bears not to visit bird feeders.

The bird feeder is suspended high above the ground, preferably at least 10 feet, and above a welded wire cattle panel. The wire panel on the ground has been connected to the grounding system of the energizer. Insulated cable (shown here with black coating) is used to connect the energizer (not shown here) to the feeder.



Birds that land on the feeder are not shocked because they are not grounded. Bears are shocked however when they stand on the grounded wire panel and touch their tongues or noses to the feeder!

Electrified bird feeders can be made out of steel or aluminum—aluminum feeders are much lighter weight and therefore easier to hang and re-fill.

NOTE: DO NOT PAINT electric bird feeders because this will lower the conductivity of the feeder.



30% of Bear Complaints are Birdfeeder Related

Feed your pets, not bears!

Feed pets only what they will eat.

Remove bowl soon after they finish.

Do not leave food out overnight.

Store pet food in secure location.



Protect Your Bees



Temporary or permanent electric fencing

Bear Proof Home and Neighborhood

- Talk to your neighbors
 - It only takes one....
- Screen-porches should not be used for storage
- Remove fruit producing plants from around your home
- Keep garages closed at night
- Secure outbuildings
- Paintball guns
- Talk with your community leaders about bear proof trash disposal and pickup options



Nuisance Bear Management Options

Non-Lethal Options

- Education
- Exclusion
- Repellants (noise, guard animals)
- Aversive Conditioning (harassment, pepper spray, etc)



Nuisance Bear Management Options

Lethal Options

- **Kill Permits**

- Code authorizes for damage to crops, livestock or property related to agricultural production

- **Euthanasia**

- High public safety risk
- Repeat offenders
- Last option



Never Feed Bears!



In VA, it is illegal to deliberately feed bears on public or private lands.

Even the inadvertent feeding of bears is illegal.

4 VAC 15-40-282

...unlawful for any person to place or distribute food, minerals, carrion, or similar substances to feed or attract bear.

Nor...shall any person continue to place or distribute any food ...substances for any purpose if the placement of these materials results in the presence of bear in such numbers ... to cause annoyance or inconvenience to any person, cause property damage, or endanger any person or wildlife.

More Information



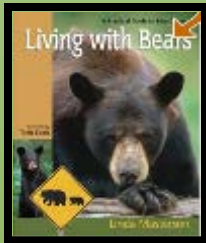
Black Bear Management Plan and other bear info

www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/bear/



Get Bear Smart Society

www.bearsmart.com



Living with Bears: A Practical Guide to Bear Country

Linda Masterson, 2006



North American Bear Center

www.bear.org



Living with Wildlife Foundation

<http://www.lwwf.org/>

QUESTIONS?

