



# Black bears *in Southern Ontario*

Black bears live in some parts of southwestern and southern Ontario. They are an important part of our ecosystem and contribute to Ontario's rich biodiversity. The presence of black bears on the landscape is an indication that our natural spaces are healthy.

Here are some facts to help you better understand black bears, why they live here and what you need to do to help keep them wild. Be safe, be responsible, be Bear Wise.



To report bear problems call:  
**1 866 514-2327**  
TTY 705 945-7641

In a life-threatening emergency, call your local police or 911.

For more information, visit our website:  
[ontario.ca/bearwise](http://ontario.ca/bearwise)

Many people do not expect to see black bears in southwestern or much of southern Ontario. Black bears are most commonly found in areas north of Highway 7 and on the Bruce Peninsula. Where there is sufficient habitat, small numbers of black bears have likely been present but gone mostly undetected.

There are a number of reasons why black bears may be seen in southern Ontario. Human development continues to expand into the natural spaces that support a variety of wildlife, including bears. People unknowingly can attract them into their communities and back yards. In addition, efforts to enlarge and connect green spaces create more suitable habitat, and black bear populations will disperse across the landscape.

Fortunately, there is a lot that we can do to help keep black bears wild and to prevent bear encounters.

### What you should know about black bears:

- Black bears prefer to avoid people.
- Black bears are highly intelligent and curious, and they learn quickly. Once they find food in yards or garbage bins, they will return until the attractant is removed or managed.
- Almost everything black bears do is related to acquiring food because their survival depends on it. Many preferred foods of black bears are only available for short periods or vary greatly in availability from year to year. Black bears hibernate because their natural foods are not available.
- Black bears mostly eat green vegetation, fruits and nuts, and get most of their food energy in the summer and fall when these natural foods are most plentiful. Late spring frosts, cool and wet springs or summers, drought and fire can all affect the supply of natural food for black bears.
- If natural foods are not readily available, black bears will travel great distances to look for other food sources.

*There's more ... see over!*



*Natural. Valued. Protected.*



## Black bears *in Southern Ontario*

### What you should know about black bears:

- As they travel in search of natural food, black bears can be drawn to human-caused, unnatural food sources. These sources include:
  - garbage, bird food (seed, suet and nectar)
  - food put outside for pets or wildlife
  - fruits, vegetables, compost and the smell of grease and food residue on barbecue grills or grease traps
  - agricultural crops, such as corn and soya, that appeal to a variety of wildlife.
- Juvenile male black bears, on their own for the first time, are often involved in human-bear conflicts. They travel greater distances away from where they were raised to find a home range. This increases the chances that they will come into conflict with humans.
- Black bears that have been attracted to areas by non-natural food sources, and have become tolerant of people, are sometimes dispatched because they are perceived as a threat to human safety and property.

### Here's why you might see or encounter a black bear:

- Suitable habitat and improving habitat connections benefit a wide range of species, including black bears. Like many other animals, black bears use these areas as a source of natural food, as travel corridors and as shelter to raise their young.
- Black bear populations in southern Ontario are sparsely distributed. In the west, they are present in the Bruce Peninsula area. In south-central Ontario, below Lake Simcoe, there are populations in the northern portions of York and Durham Regions. They also occur in the Lake Ontario region from the Port Perry area to Kingston, and in areas south of the French River as far east as Ottawa.

For more information about bears, see the following Ministry of Natural Resources fact sheets: *Bears travel far for food*; *Bears are part of our natural heritage*; *Keep bears out of your neighbourhood*; and *What to do if you see or encounter a bear on your property*.

*Natural. Valued. Protected.*