

## Will all nuisance bears reported to the Game Commission be captured?

Removing attractants, such as bird feeders or unsecured garbage, is typically the first step in resolving a nuisance bear problem. Trapping and/or relocating a bear is reserved for situations where a bear cannot leave, or when problems persist after food attractants have been removed.



During this study, Conservation Officers will set traps more readily in order to capture bears for radio-collaring. However, once an adequate number of bears have been radio-collared, and in areas of the state where this study is not occurring, trapping will be a last-resort option to resolve human-bear conflicts.

## What should I do if I see a marked bear?

We will be marking all captured bears with ear-tags, and bears that weigh more than 100 pounds will be fitted with radio-collars. These marked bears are more recognizable than unmarked bears. However, marking does not imply that a bear has caused more problems to homeowners than an unmarked bear. Homeowners do not need to report sightings of marked bears unless they are causing nuisance problems.

## How we'll use this information

We intend to use information from this study to better understand bear movements and behaviors in suburban environments so that we can identify and implement management and education strategies that will reduce human-bear conflicts and human safety concerns in these areas.



## Comments or questions

Please contact us if you have questions or need additional information about this research project. You may direct your comments by email to: [pgccomments@state.pa.us](mailto:pgccomments@state.pa.us)

Or by contacting one of the following Game Commission offices:

Northwest Region Office (814) 432-3187  
Southwest Region Office (724) 238-9523  
Northcentral Region Office (570) 398-4744  
Southcentral Region Office (814) 643-1831  
Northeast Region Office (570) 675-1143  
Southeast Region Office (610) 926-3136  
Harrisburg Headquarters (717) 787-4250

## Black Bear Research in Your Neighborhood

Movements, habitat use, and travel patterns of black bears in suburban Pennsylvania



The Pennsylvania Game Commission is conducting a new black bear research project in selected suburban areas of the state.

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## Bears in the suburbs: what's the problem and why study them?

Pennsylvania's black bear population is larger and more widely distributed than in the past. Bears are now resident in at least 55 counties, but sightings are possible in all counties. Continued expansion of residential development into areas occupied by black bears and wandering young adult bears in search of a place to settle have resulted in more frequent sightings and encounters between people and bears. Unfortunately, some of these encounters result in nuisance and property damage problems as well as safety concerns.



The Pennsylvania Game Commission is the state agency responsible for managing Pennsylvania's wildlife resources. Part of that responsibility includes regulating the size of wildlife populations, providing for regulated recreational use and addressing problems that result from wildlife-human encounters. The Game Commission is legislatively mandated to use hunting as a primary management means.

The Game Commission strives to educate people about how to minimize problems with black bears in their backyards. Fortunately most bears pose a minimum problem or risk. We provide self-help information through our website ([www.pgc.state.pa.us](http://www.pgc.state.pa.us)), brochures, newspaper articles, videos, and presentations at schools or other civic and community gatherings. If the situation warrants we also provide on-site assistance by Wildlife Conservation Officers.

Our principal method for managing or reducing bear population numbers is regulated hunting. Bears have fairly large home ranges, even around suburban areas, but their availability to hunting in these environments is not well understood. We know that approximately 20 percent of bears that we capture and mark in nuisance situations are harvested, but we do not know if all suburban bears have the same chance of being harvested, or if those that are harvested spend much time in suburban areas.

If bears in suburban environments have low risk of harvest (e.g., they stay close to occupied homes and move little), lengthening the hunting season may do little to remove more problem bears from these areas. Timing of hunting seasons may also be important if travel patterns change seasonally. Understanding the movement patterns of suburban bears will provide for better, more informed decisions about the use of hunting to manage human-bear conflicts.

Areas that have a high number of human-bear conflicts may not have a high number of bears, although this is often the assumption made by people who want bear numbers reduced. Documenting bear movements will help us determine how many complaints from how large of an area are attributable to a single bear. In some cases, it may be more responsible to eliminate the "right" bear than to reduce overall numbers.



## What we plan to do

Black bears will be captured, ear-tagged, and fitted with specially designed radio-collars that use advanced technology to record their location several times a day for 25 months. Bears will be captured during April-September of 2010 and 2011 in 3 selected study areas in northeast, northcentral and southwest Pennsylvania. We expect to radio-collar 17 bears in each study area.



Trapping will primarily occur at residences that report sightings of bears or nuisance bear problems. Biologists will monitor bear movements and survival until the collars are removed in April 2013.

## Will "nuisance" bears be relocated?

In the interest of public safety, we will not release bears that pose an imminent threat to landowners or others in the community. Bears that do not pose a threat will be released. In order for us to learn more about movement patterns of bears living in suburban areas, bears that are released will not be relocated long distances after capture. Some bears may be released at the actual capture site.