

NJ Dept. of Environmental Protection
Division of Fish and Wildlife

Bear Facts for Kids

Living with Black Bears



Black bears and people live close together in parts of New Jersey. It is important for people to do what they can to make sure that black bears stay wild and that they do not get food from people.

Bears can smell extremely well and their sense of smell may lead them into your yard in search of food. Black bears will try to eat your garbage, birdseed or pet food if it is available in your yard.



People should never feed black bears either on purpose or by accident. It is against the law, and it is dangerous!



Black bears will try to eat your garbage if you let them. At home, you and your family should keep your garbage in bear-resistant containers. Keep your garbage inside of the house, your garage or a sturdy shed. Only put your garbage outside on the morning of garbage collection. Help your family wash the garbage cans once a week with disinfectant solution to make sure they do not smell and attract bears.



Bears will also eat pet food if it is available in your yard. If you have pets, try not to feed them outside. If you do, feed them only during the day and clean up any food that they do not eat. Bring the food bowl inside after your pet is done eating.

Pets that stay outside need to be kept safe from bears. Protect them by bringing them inside at night or having your parents secure their pen with an electric fence. Also make sure you walk your dog on a leash.





Birdseed also attracts bears so you should not feed the birds if you live around black bears. If your family does feed the birds, only feed them in the winter when bears are in their dens.

Hang your birdfeeder at least 10 feet off the ground and at least 10 feet away from the tree branches so that the bear will not be able to get it.

Every day you should pick up any seeds that spill on the ground.



When you go camping in areas with black bears, make sure you keep a clean campsite. Do not keep food or things that smell like food in or near your tent, sleeping bag or backpack. Store your food items and other sweet smelling items like toothpaste, in the trunk of your car.

If you go hiking, make noises by singing or talking as you walk to alert bears to your presence. Keep your pets on a leash and be on the lookout for bears.

