



The State of the Bears

A Briefing on Bears in Connecticut



March 2023

What DEEP is Doing Now



Education and Outreach

- Education programs with schools
- Video series: Living with Black Bears
- Numerous online webinars and in-person presentations
- Sightings, conflict data, and other helpful information shared on the DEEP website
- Social media outreach throughout bears' active season



Media Engagement

- Members of the media have followed along as biologists work with bears
- Biologists share important information through these appearances
- Issue annual press releases during bears' active season, frequently make wildlife biologists available for interviews

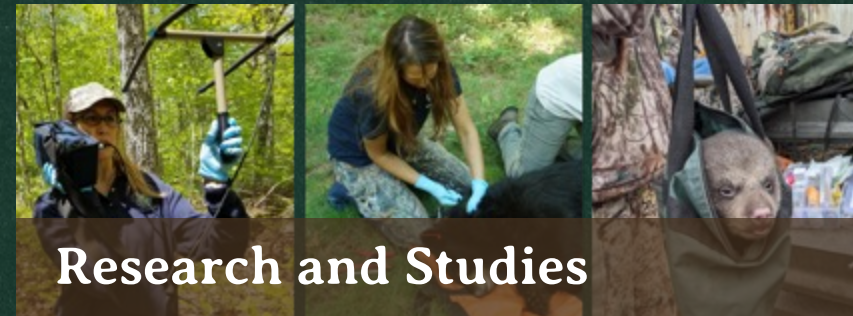


Scan to learn more about living with black bears.



Conflict Management

- Advice on bear denning near homes
- Bear traps set after damage
- Guidance on bears accessing bird feeders, trash
- Guidance for protecting agriculture and livestock

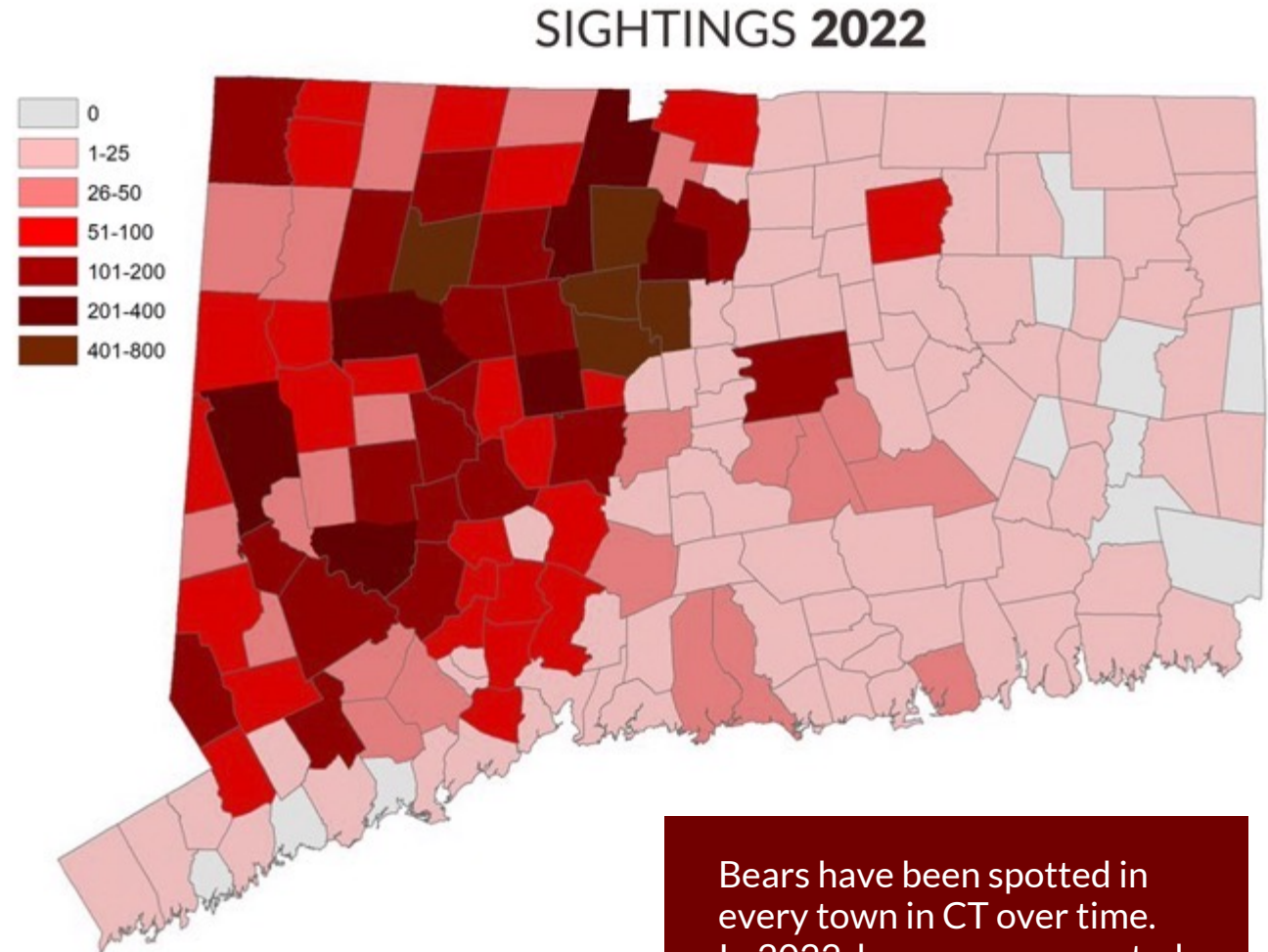


Research and Studies

- Winter den study
- Collaring bears (GPS data)
- Cubs/Reproduction
- Necropsies on dead bears
- Tagging bears

Bear Sightings

Public sightings of bears have been collected by the Wildlife Division since bears began returning to the State in the 1980's. Today, reports are used as a gauge of the population's distribution as well as a broad index of where bears are seen more often. Reports from the public can have a high degree of variability, particularly given the human population density and how novel bear sightings are to an area.



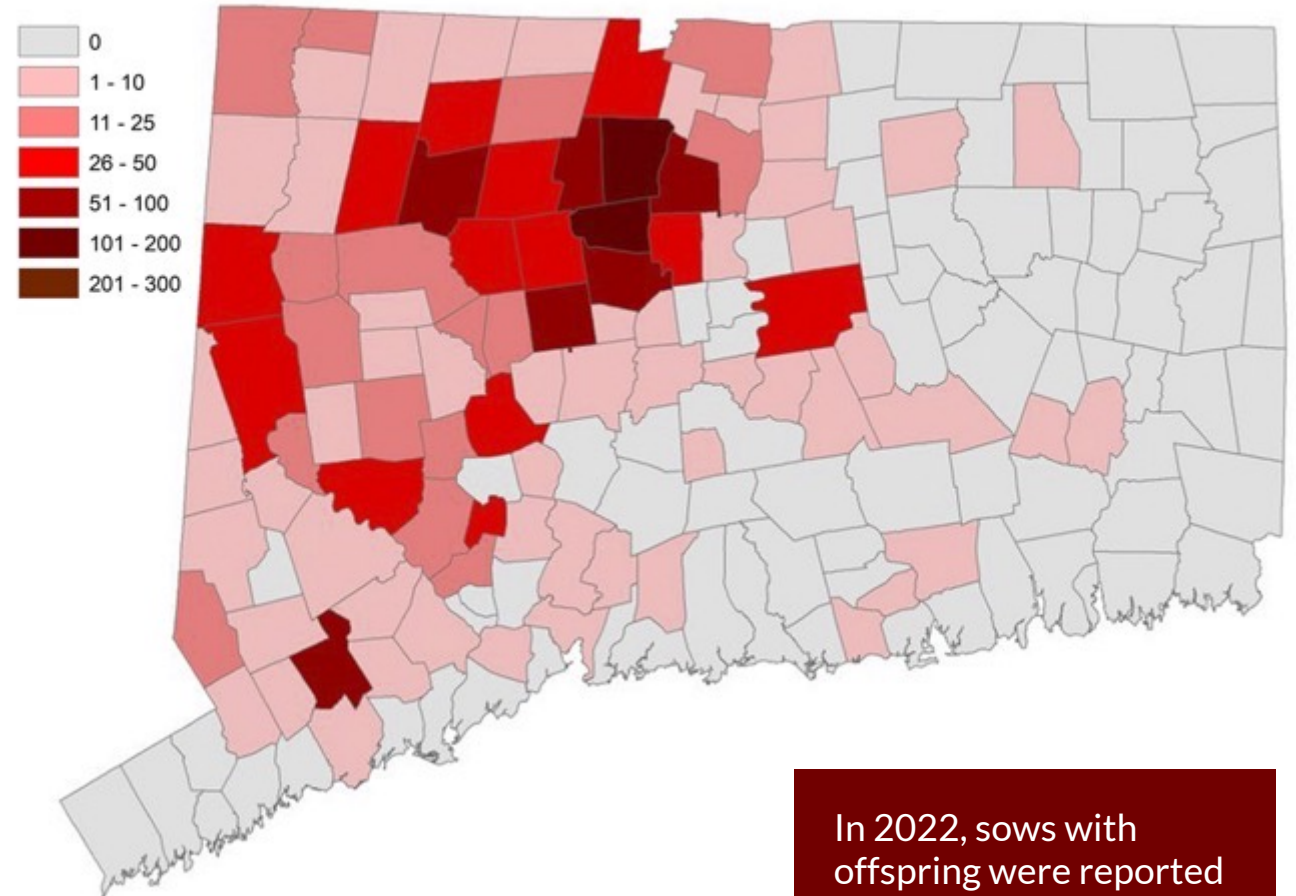
Bears have been spotted in every town in CT over time. In 2022, bears were reported from 158 of the state's 169 towns and cities.

Bear Range is Expanding

Reports of sows (female bears) with offspring provide a better representation of where the breeding population of bears are in the state. Females disperse relatively short distances when leaving their birth range compared to males. Because they disperse shorter distances than males, females are slower to spread the leading edge of black bear range in CT.

The longer, wandering dispersal of young male bears helps to explain why sightings of bears are reported across CT, but relatively few reports of sows with offspring come from outside the Northwestern quarter of the state.

SOW WITH OFFSPRING 2022

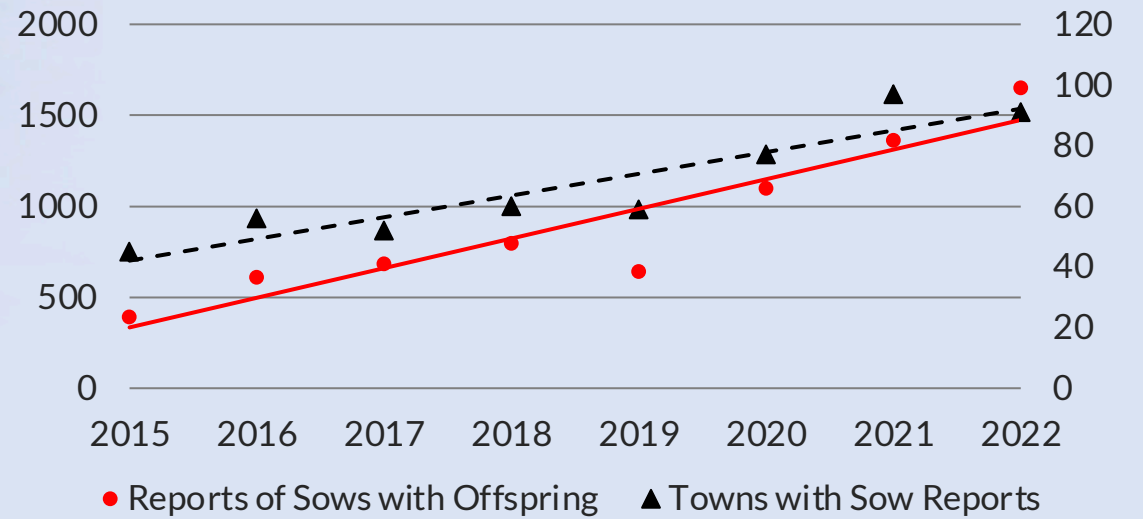


In 2022, sows with offspring were reported in over 90 towns in CT.



The breeding population of bears in CT is continuing on a long-term trend of expansion into more cities and towns. Just 7 years ago, sows were reported in less than 50 towns, while over the last two years, sows have been reported in over 90 different towns.

Sow Reports Through 2022



A black bear with two cubs in a forest. The adult bear is on the left, looking towards the camera. Two cubs are on the right, looking away. The background is a dense forest with green foliage.

Bear Population and Growth

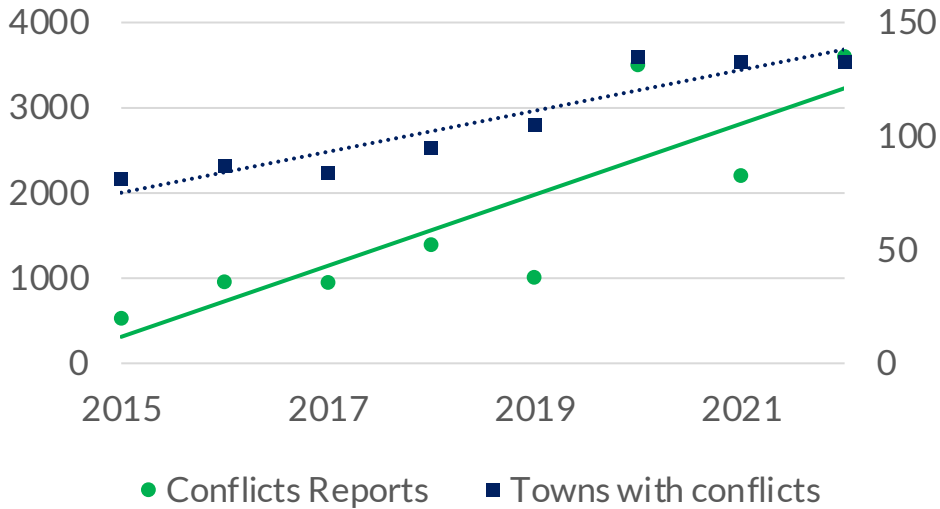
There are 1000-1200 Estimated Bears in Connecticut

	RECENT 3-YEAR AVERAGE
Offspring per sow	2.6
First year survival	81%
Bears killed by vehicles	66

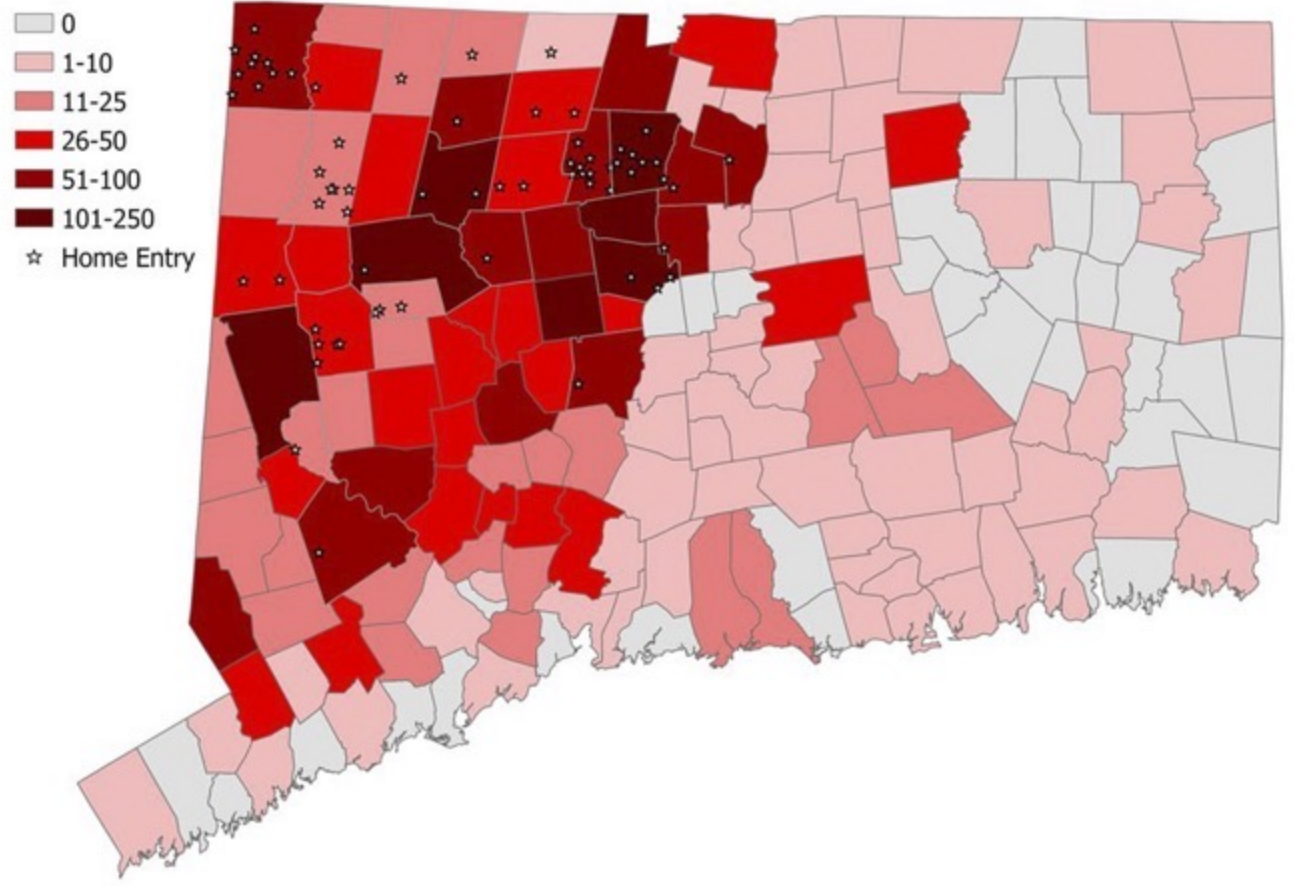
Connecticut has a high reproduction rate compared to some other areas of black bear range. This is in part because of the abundance of suitable habitat and excessive human-related food across their range. The population has a high potential for growth.

Bear Conflicts

Thousands of human-black bear conflicts are reported each year and also follow a long-term increasing trend. While greater numbers of conflicts take place in the western half of CT, residents are reporting issues with bears from all across the state. Incidences of bear entering or breaking into homes occurred in 22 different municipalities statewide.



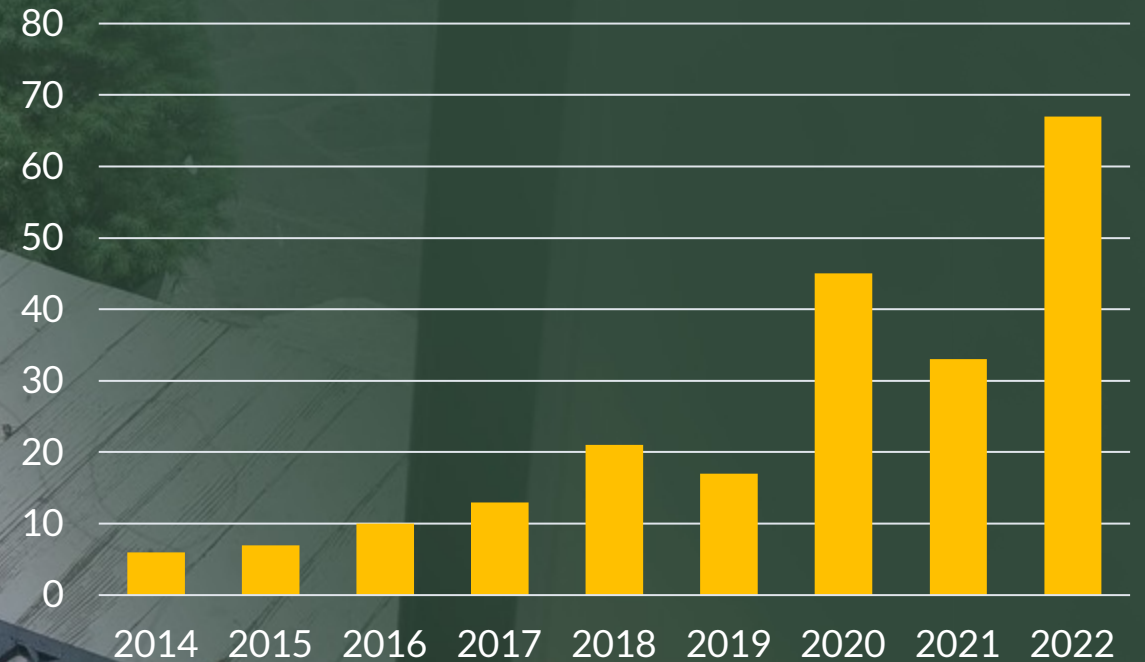
HUMAN-BLACK BEAR CONFLICTS IN 2022



Bears in Houses

Bear home entries reached a new record in 2022, with 67 incidents reported. Dozens of attempted entries also took place. Many of these incidents occurred when bears pushed through screen doors and windows, following odors from the kitchen or pantry.

Annual Reports of Bears Entering Homes 2014 to 2022

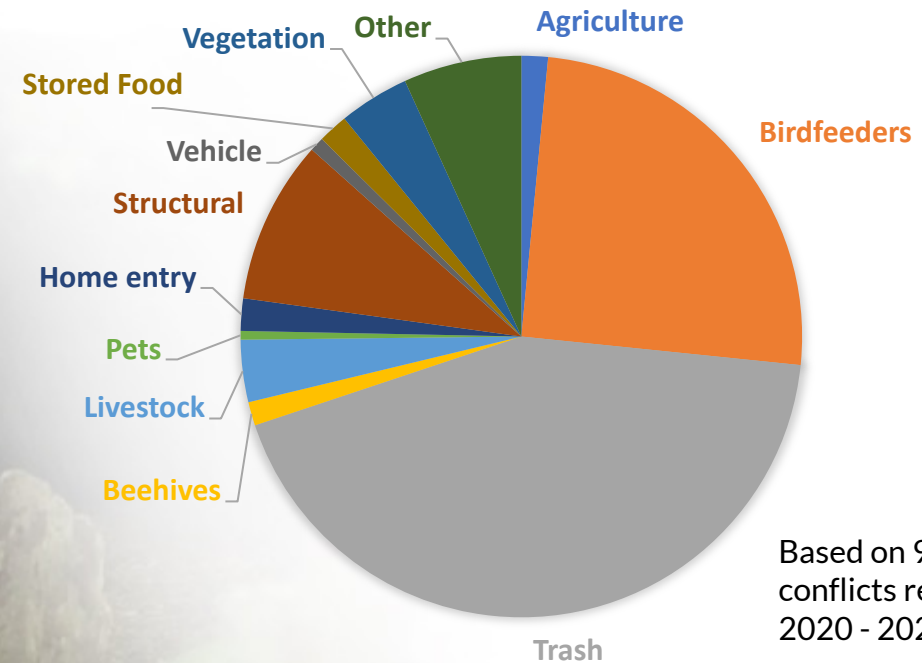


Home entries and attempted entries can cause significant damage to the home.

More than 85% of livestock conflicts in recent years involve backyard chickens.

Conflict Reports

The number of serious conflicts involving bears is rising each year. Reports of home entries, livestock attacks, apiary and other agricultural damage, damage to vehicles and structures, as well as physical altercations with pets and people are following a long-term upward trend. In 2022, CT experienced two bear attacks on humans. The vast majority of the public's bear-related issues stem from birdfeeders and trash.

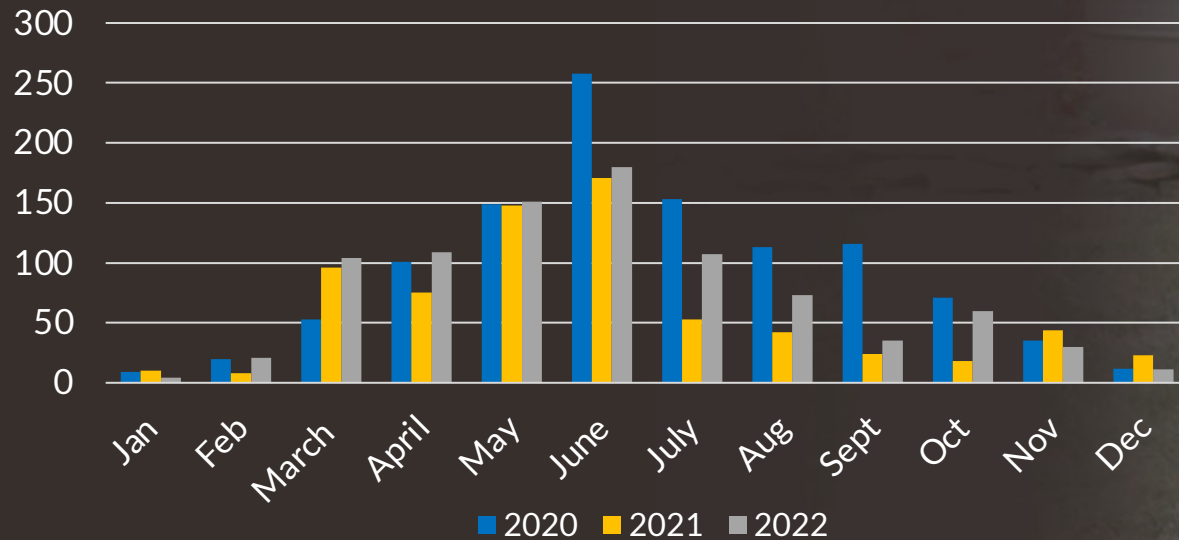


Based on 9316 conflicts reported in 2020 - 2022

Feeding Ordinances

To help curb feeding related issues with bears, some municipalities have instituted ordinances against intentionally feeding bears, which includes prohibiting bird feeders during the warmer part of the year. Ordinances have been passed in the following towns: Colebrook (2010), Hartland (2019), Barkhamsted (2020), Simsbury (2020), East Granby (2020), Granby (2021), Manchester (2021), Farmington (2021), and Salisbury (2022).

Reported Black Bear Birdfeeder Conflicts



The Best Way to Coexist

- Be Bear Aware and remember, bears can be found anywhere in our state.
- Manage your food, garbage, and other attractants with bears in mind.
- Remove all traces of bird food, including hummingbird feeders, except for during winter months.
- If you see a bear in your neighborhood, leave it alone, give it an escape route, keep dogs leashed, and don't get closer trying to get a better look or take a photo.
- Scare away bears that are loitering around your home or looking for human-related foods. Do your best to prevent troubling bear behavior before it starts.

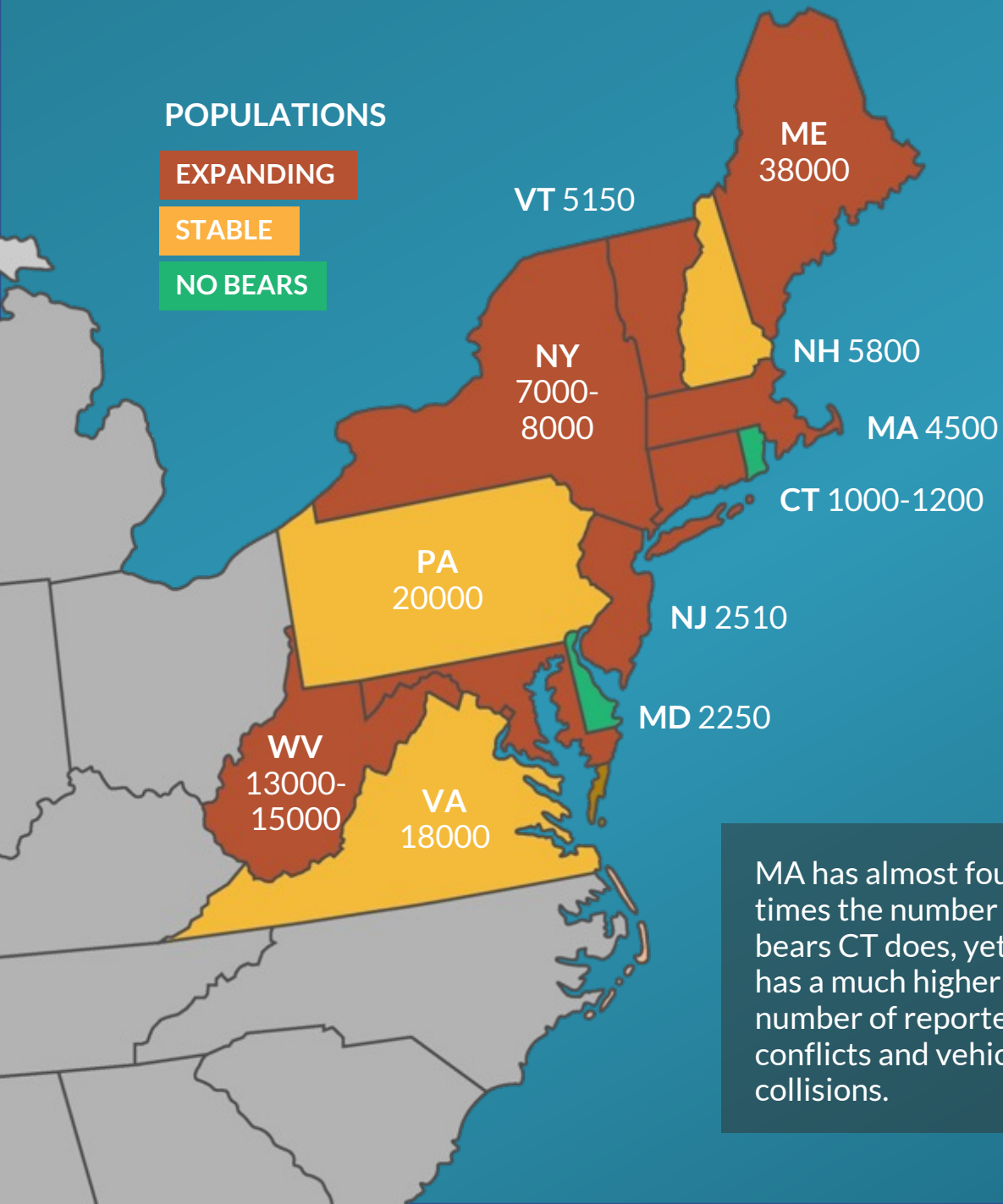


POPULATIONS

EXPANDING

STABLE

NO BEARS



MA has almost four times the number of bears CT does, yet CT has a much higher number of reported conflicts and vehicle collisions.

Other States' Populations and Conflicts

STATE	AVG. ANNUAL CONFLICTS	AVG. ANNUAL VEHICLE KILLS
Massachusetts	504	34
Maine	573	29
New Hampshire	614	59
New Jersey	1247	86
New York	1000	55
Pennsylvania	3187	414
Virginia	1895	-
Vermont	504	94
West Virginia	822	86
Maryland	54	11
Connecticut	870	40

Source: 2019 Survey of Eastern State and Provincial Black Bear Biologists, 24th Eastern Black Bear Workshop

In November 2022, NJ adopted a new Comprehensive Black Bear Management Plan (CBBMP) to control the black bear population through regulated hunting and non-lethal management measures partly in response to a rise in black bear incidents of 237% compared to the same time period in 2021. These incidents include 62 aggressive encounters with humans.

Other States' Hunting and Feeding Laws

STATE	HUNTING	AVG. HARVEST	PERCENT OF POP	FEEDING BEARS
Massachusetts	Yes	246	5.5	Legal
Maine	Yes	3003	7.9	Legal
New Hampshire	Yes	816	14.1	Unlawful
New Jersey	Yes	411	16.4	Unlawful
New York	Yes	1519	19.0-21.7	Unlawful
Pennsylvania	Yes	3354	16.8	Unlawful
Virginia	Yes	2570	14.3	Unlawful
Vermont	Yes	645	12.5	Unlawful
West Virginia	Yes	2912	19.4-22.4	Unlawful
Maryland	Yes	119	5.3	Unlawful
Connecticut	No	NA	NA	Legal

Source: 2019 Survey of Eastern State and Provincial Black Bear Biologists, 24th Eastern Black Bear Workshop