



# The State of the Bears

*A Briefing on Bears in Connecticut*

MARCH 2025

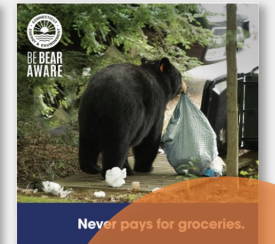
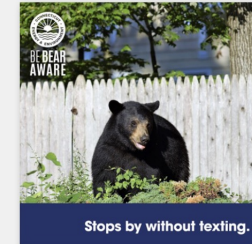
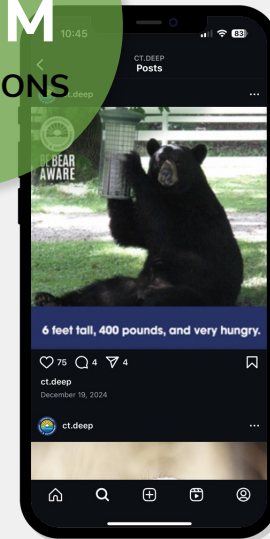


# Be Bear Aware Public Awareness Campaign

In 2024, DEEP built on the success of its strategic outreach and education initiatives to reduce human-bear conflicts, reaching new heights with the Fall 2024 Be Bear Aware campaign. Running from June 17 through September 30, the campaign delivered over **10.2 million impressions** across multiple channels. This year's effort emphasized addressing food habituation and empowering residents to create bear-safe environments. As bear populations continue to grow and conflicts rise, DEEP looks forward to continuing and expanding our public outreach to encourage all Connecticut residents to stay vigilant, take preventive actions, and help keep both communities and bears safe.



OVER  
**10.2 M**  
IMPRESSIONS



OVER  
**64,767**  
CLICKS



# What DEEP Is Doing Now



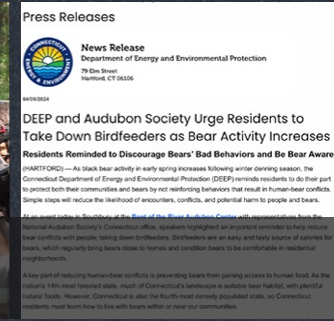
## Education and Outreach

- Education programs with schools, numerous webinars, and in-person presentations in communities
- Video series: Living with Black Bears
- Working with legislators and communities to reduce bear-human conflicts
- Sightings, conflict data, and other helpful info shared on DEEP's website
- Public awareness campaigns 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
- Annual press releases are issued when bears are most active; wildlife biologists are frequently available for interviews
- Partner with Audubon CT to encourage bird feeder removal in the spring

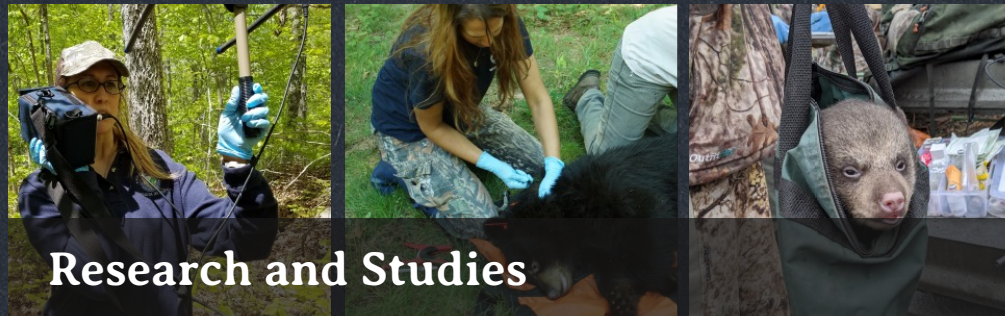


Scan to learn more about living with black bears.



## Conflict Management

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



## Research and Studies

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

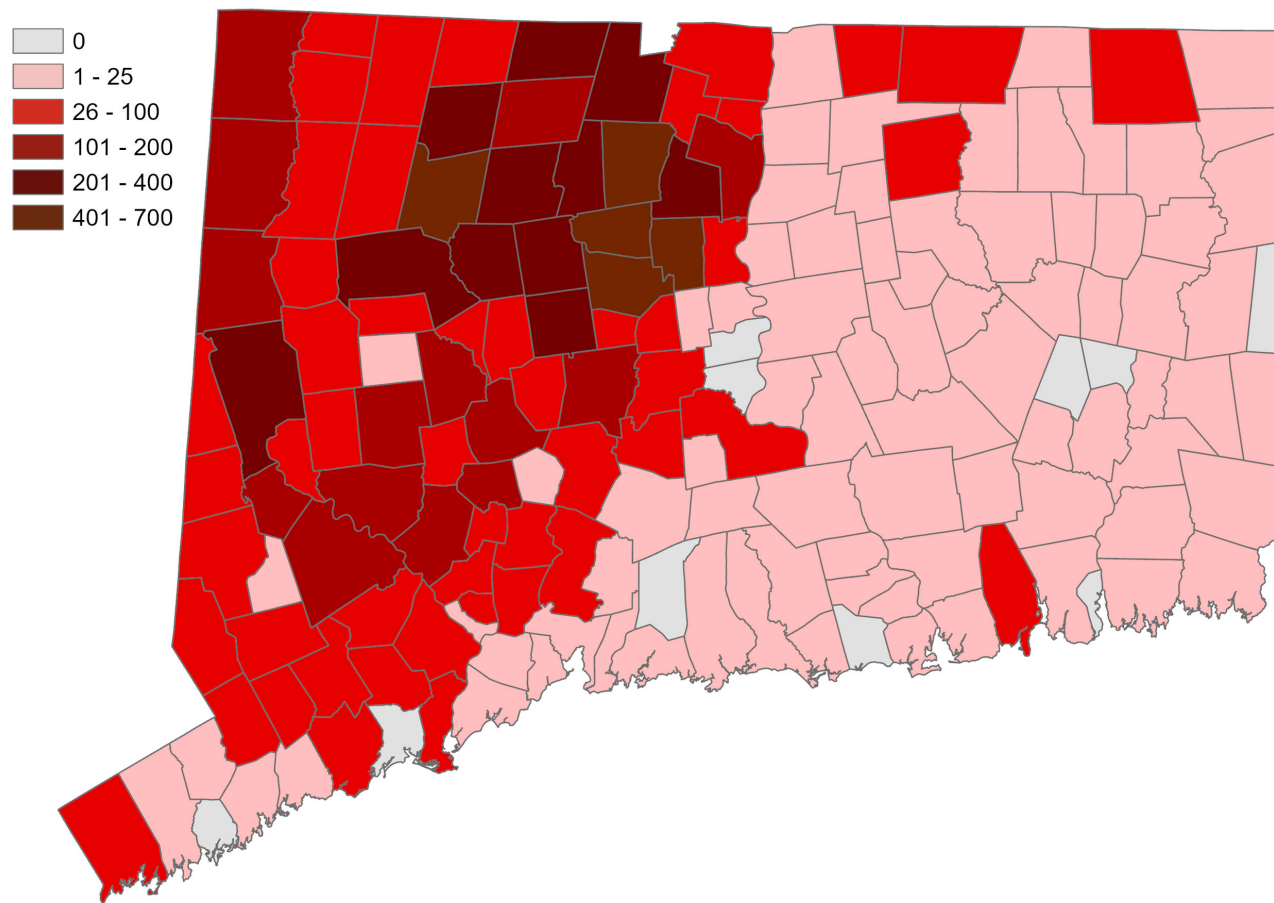


# Bear Sightings

Public sightings of bears have been collected by the Wildlife Division since bears began returning to the State in the 1980s. 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 in recent years. In 2024, bears were reported from 159 of the State's 169 towns and cities.

## SIGHTINGS 2024

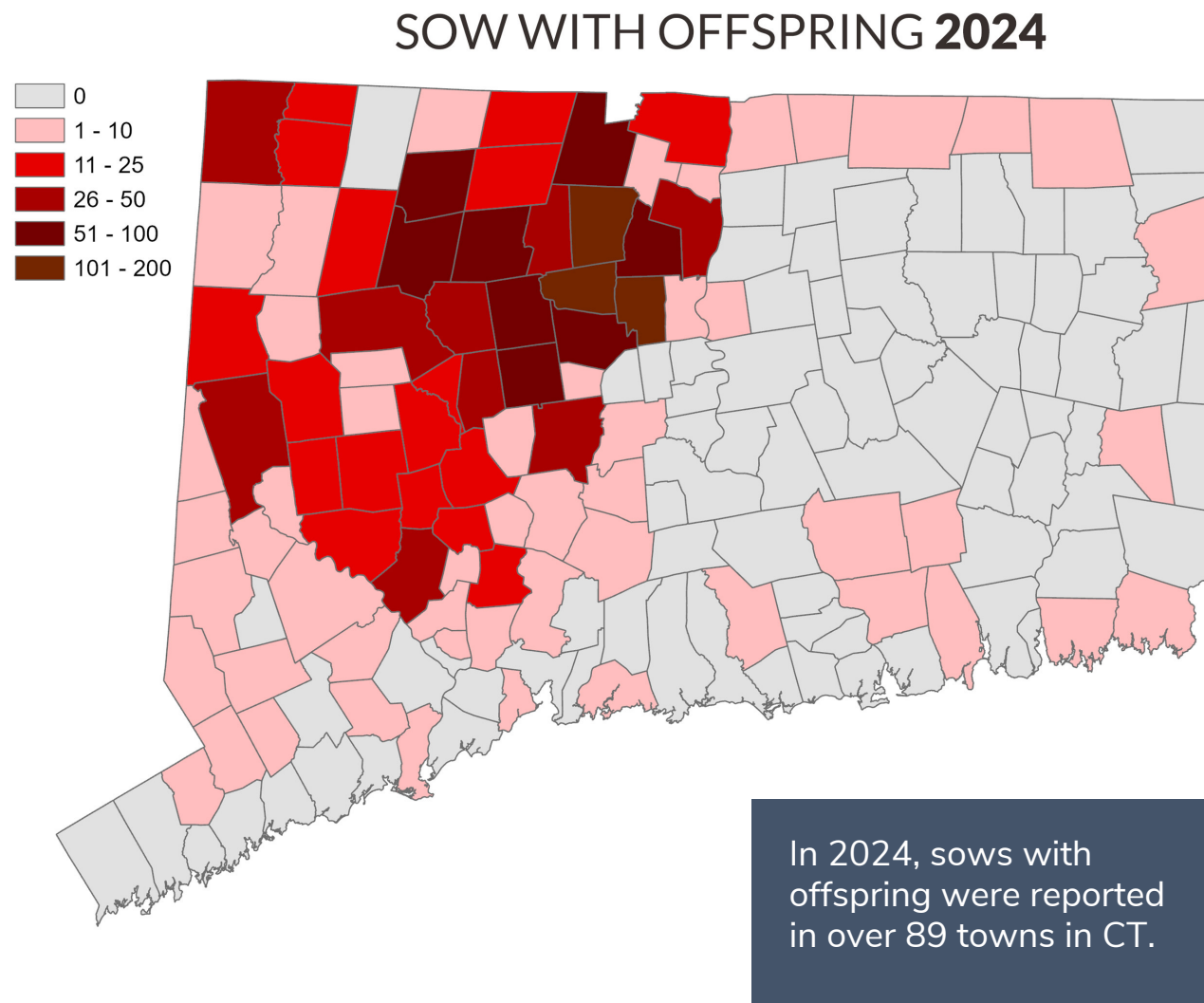




# Bear Range Is Expanding

Reports of sows (female bears) with offspring provide a better representation of where the breeding populations 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.

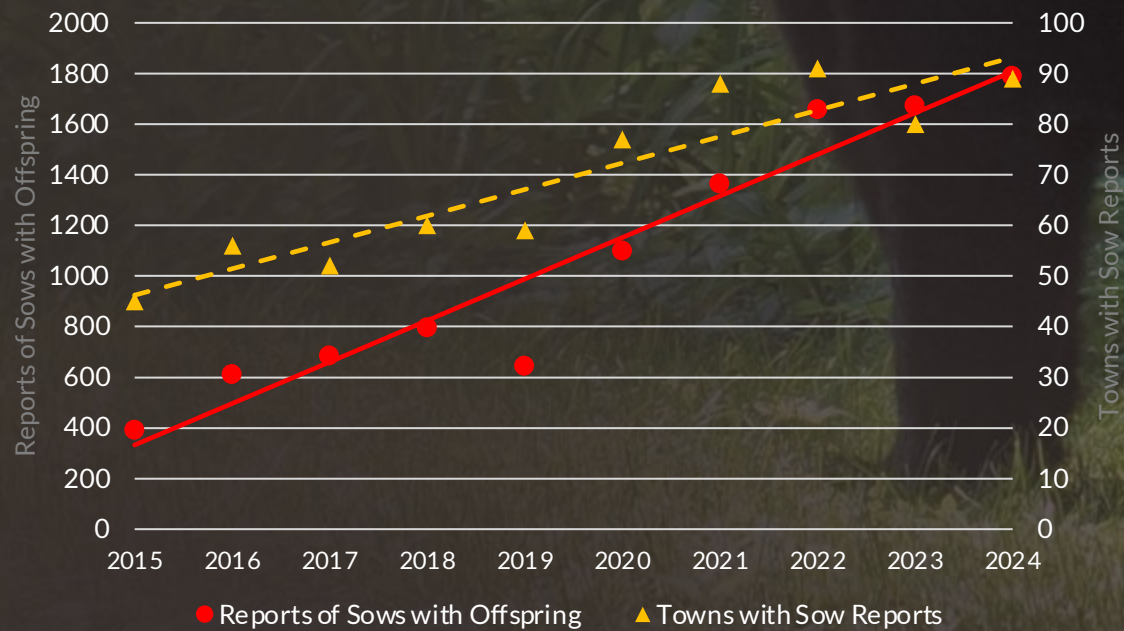
The longer, wandering dispersal of young male bears helps to explain why sightings of bears are reported across CT, but relatively few reports of sows with offspring come from outside the western half of the state.





The breeding population of bears in CT is continuing on a long-term trend of expansion into more cities and towns. Over the last three years, sows with offspring have been reported in 117 different municipalities.

## Sow Reports through 2024







# Bear Population and Growth

Connecticut's estimated bear population is between 1,000-1,200.

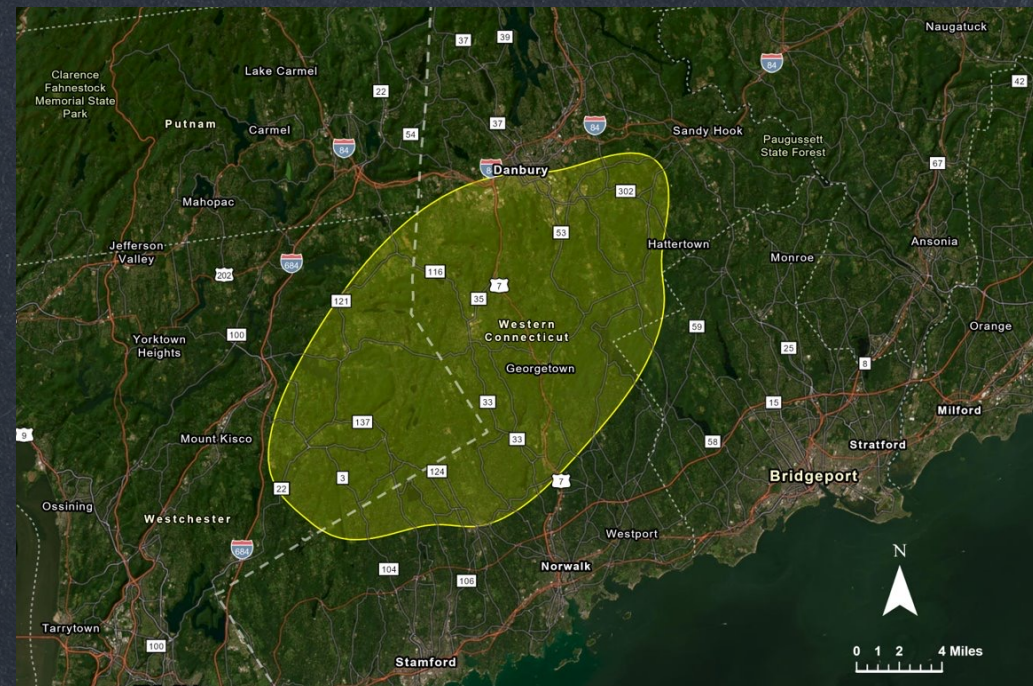
	RECENT 3-YEAR AVERAGE
Offspring per sow	2.5
First year survival	82%
Bears killed by vehicles	65

DEEP's long-term research has shown that Connecticut's bear population has a high potential for growth. This is in part because of the abundance of suitable habitat and excessive human-related food across their range.



# Bear Home Ranges

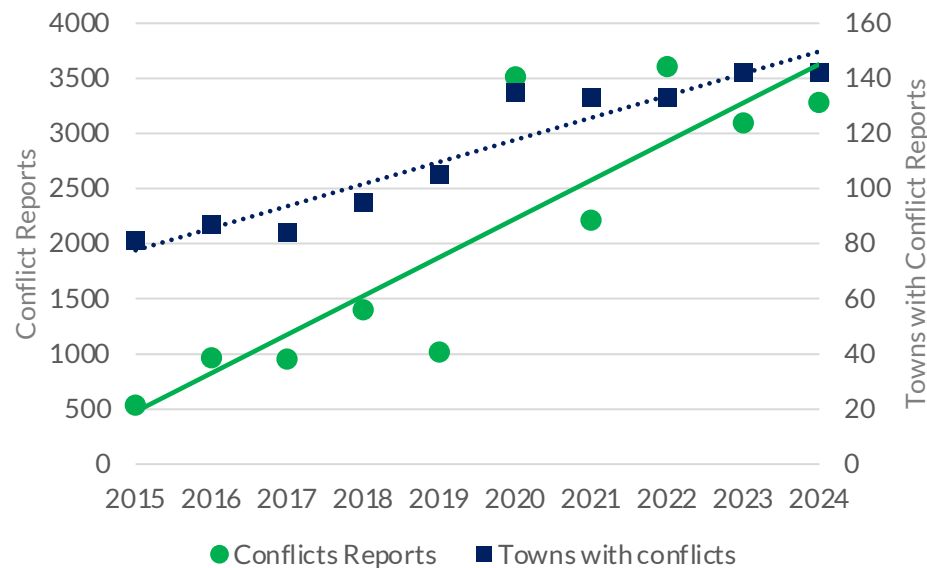
- Black bears don't "live" in any one place throughout the year, despite how often you may see the same ones.
- Most bears in Connecticut use an area that overlaps with several municipalities. These large home ranges can include rural, suburban, and urban communities.
- These maps illustrate home ranges of two GPS-collared female bears monitored by CT DEEP, one in northern Hartford County and the other in Fairfield County. The typical home range of a male bear greatly exceeds the size of a female's range.
- Home ranges can overlap. Bears share ranges more when they have abundant food supplies—including easy access to human-sourced food.



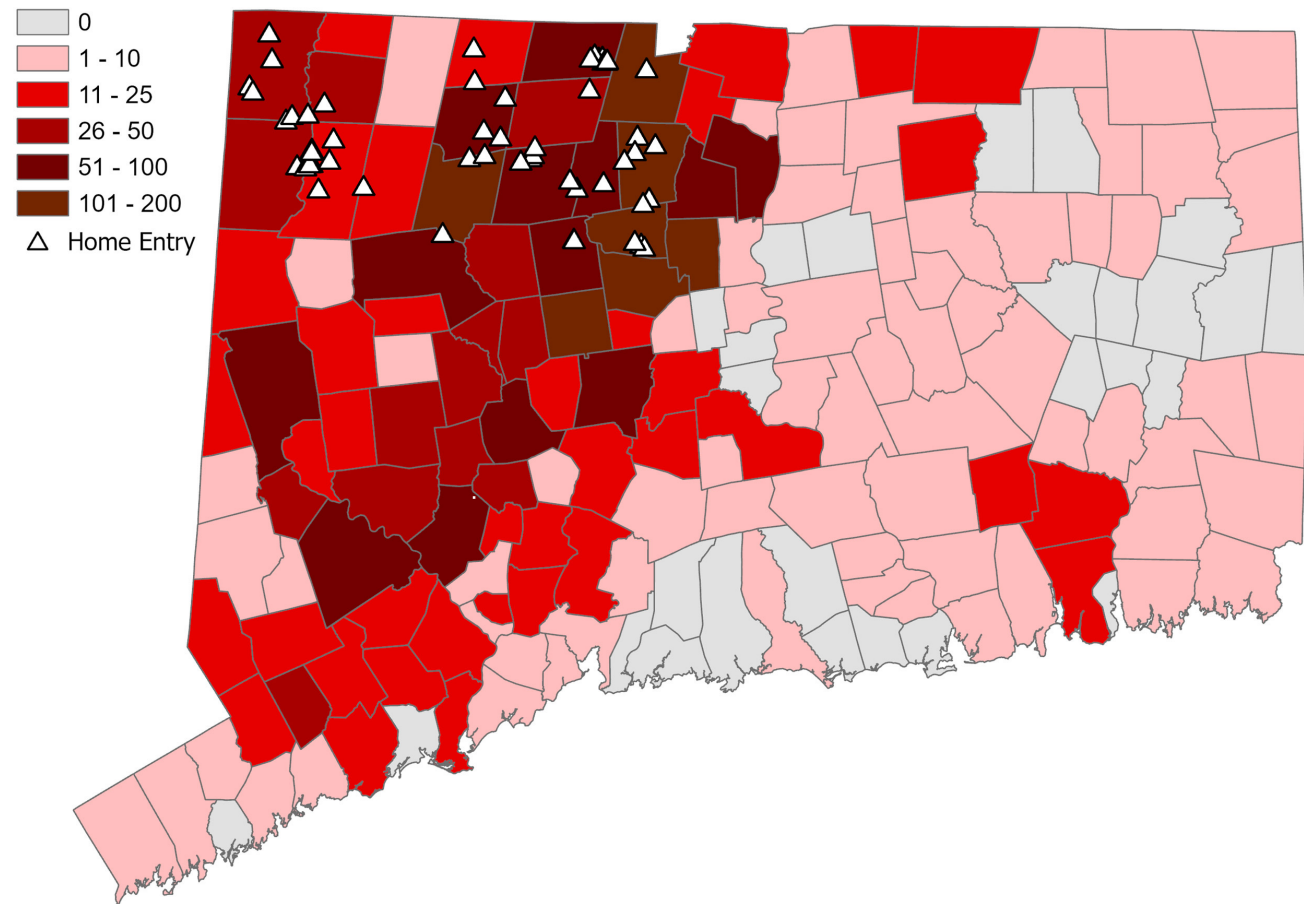


# Bear Conflicts

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 report issues with bears all across the state. Incidences of bears entering or breaking into homes occurred in 16 different municipalities statewide in 2024.



## HUMAN-BLACK BEAR CONFLICTS IN 2024



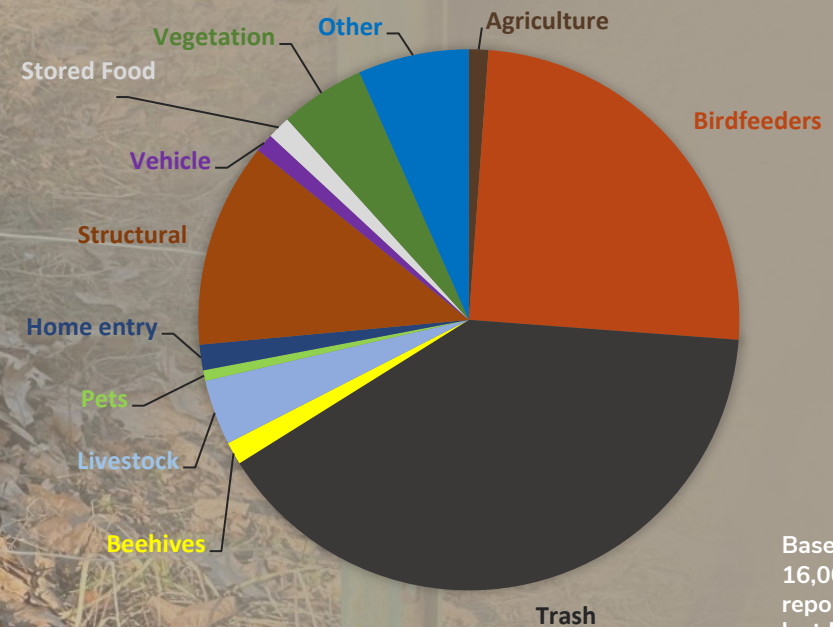


More than 85% of livestock conflicts in recent years involve backyard chickens.

# Conflict Reports

The number of serious conflicts involving bears also is rising. 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 2024, CT experienced two bear attacks on humans. The vast majority of the public's bear-related issues stem from birdfeeders and trash.

Human-Bear Conflict Types 2020-2024



Based on over 16,000 conflicts reported over the last 5 years.



# Agricultural Bear Damage Permit Program



## Legislation & Purpose

- Public Act 23-77 passed in 2023.
- Permits allow farmers to address bear damage to crops, livestock, or apiaries when non-lethal options fail.
- Agriculture bear damage makes up a small percentage of bear conflicts yet often represents significant economic impacts for farmers.

## Program Launch

- DEEP introduced the program in summer 2024.
- Biologists complete site visit to document damage and make recommendations.
- Biologists provide guidance on non-lethal methods, which must be tried before a permit is issued.
- Permit application available on the [Agricultural Bear Damage website](#).

## Program Impact & Outlook

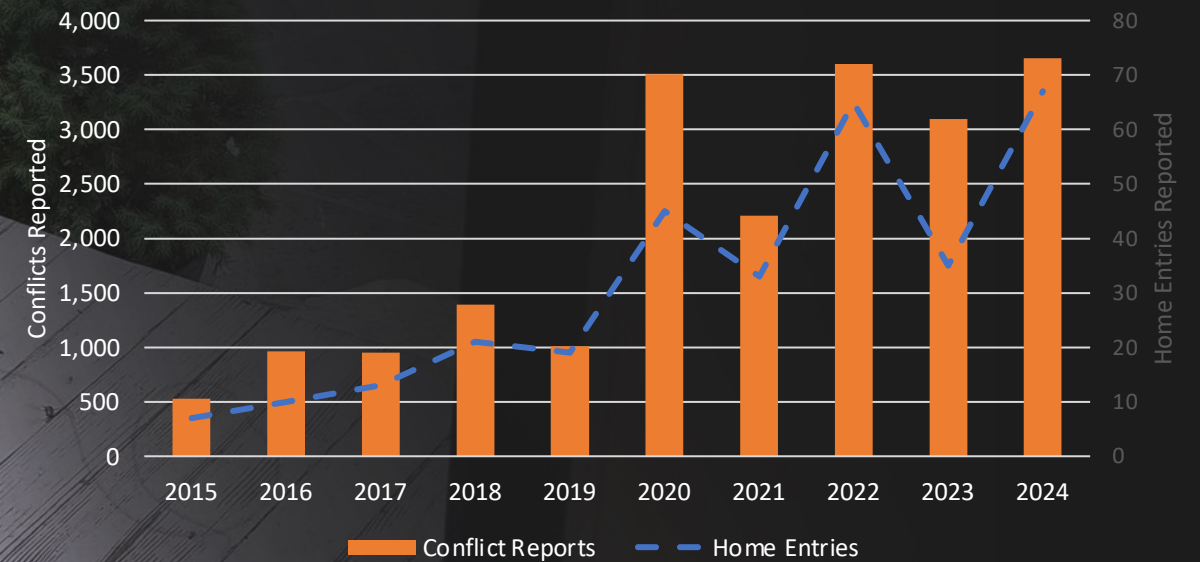
- 15 bears were removed under the program in 2024.
- Increased demand is expected as program awareness grows.
- CT may experience higher demand for permits than other states with established hunting seasons.



# Bears in Houses

Bears entered homes at least 67 times across Connecticut in 2024. Reports of entries to garages, screen porches, and similar locations are often incorrectly reported as “home entries,” and totals change as staff investigate incidents. Dozens of attempted entries also took place. Many of these incidents occurred when bears pushed through screen doors and windows.

Conflicts and Home Entries Reported to DEEP 2015-2024



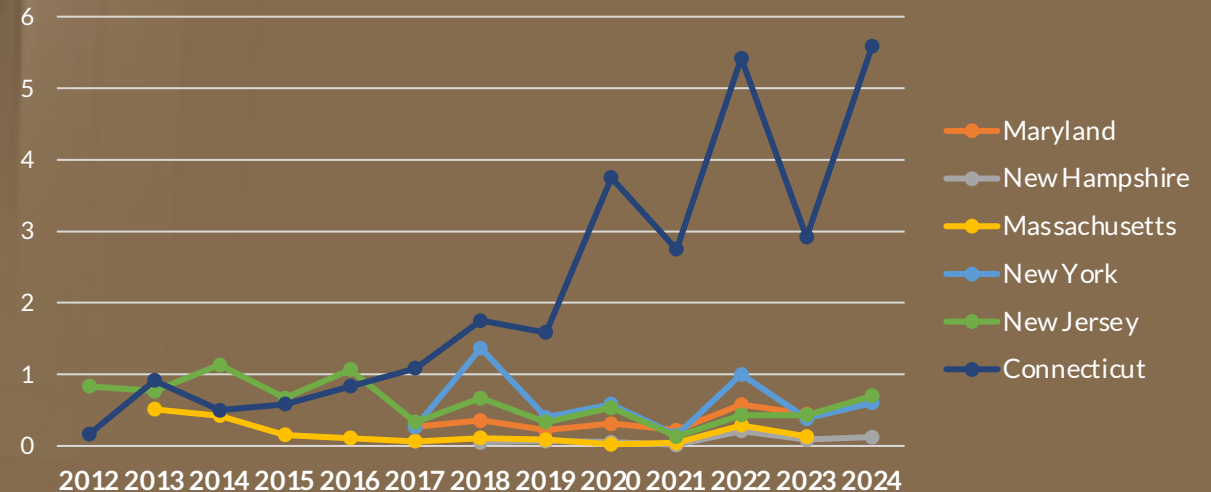
Home entries and attempted entries can cause significant damage to the home.



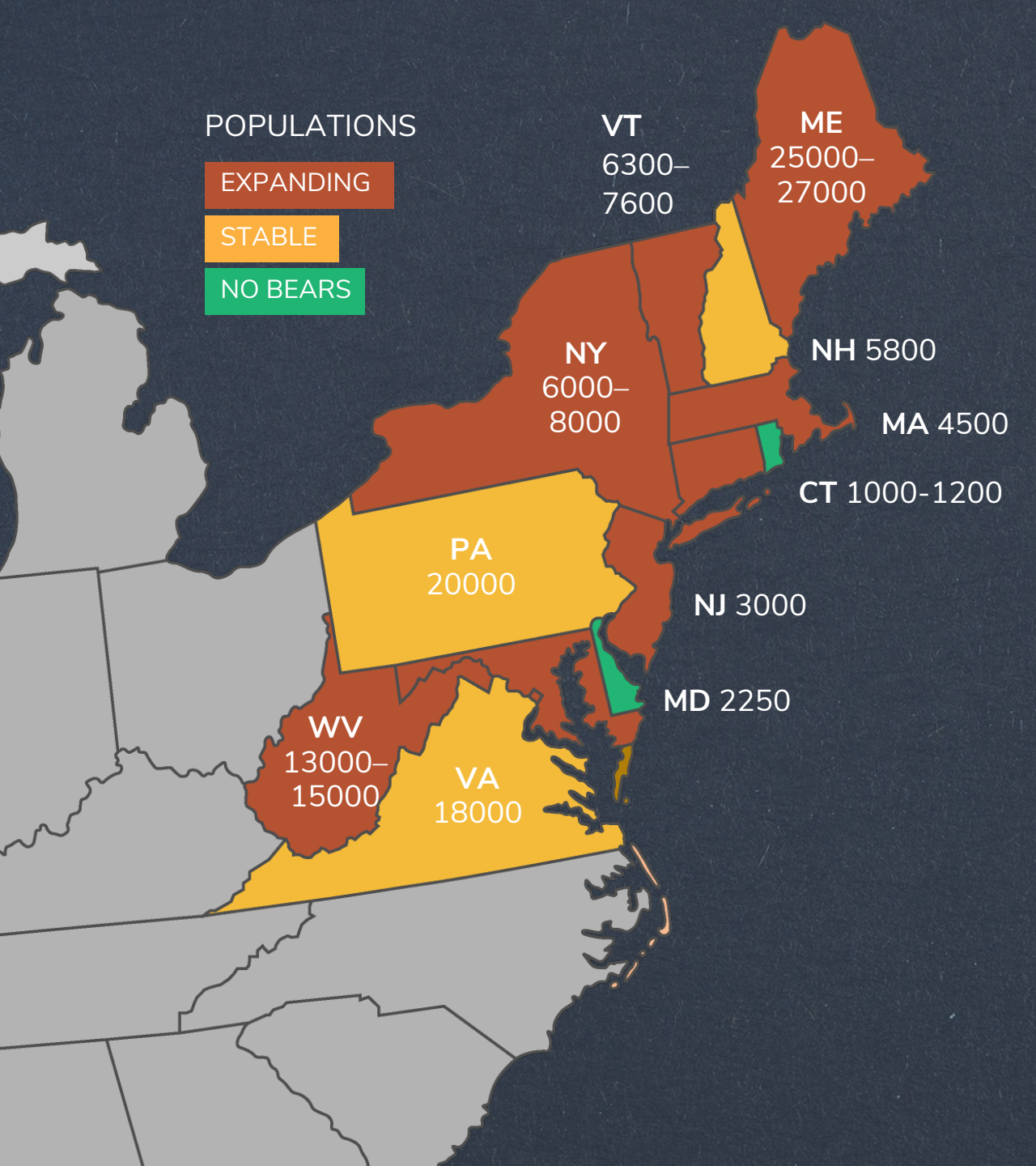
# Conflicts and Home Entries Reported to DEEP

While bear home entries occur throughout the species' extensive range in the Northeast, these events are far more common in CT. Scaled for each state's estimated bear population size, CT's home entries far exceed those of neighboring states. MA and NY, each with about 4500 and 7000 bears, respectively, see less than 1 home entry per 100 bears each year. Whereas over the last 6 years, CT has averaged 3.7 home entries per 100 bears each year.

Reported Home Entries Per 100 Bears







# Other States' Populations and Conflicts

STATE	ANNUAL CONFLICTS (2023)
Massachusetts	645
Maine	228
New Hampshire	485
New Jersey	1091
New York	1194
Vermont	912
West Virginia	1227
Connecticut	3093

\* Based on reports to Northeast Assoc. of Fish & Wildlife Agencies.

MA has more than two times the number of bears CT does, yet CT has a much higher number of reported conflicts.



# Other States' Hunting and Feeding Laws

STATE	HUNTING	AVG HARVEST	PERCENT OF POP	FEEDING BEARS
Massachusetts	Yes	245	5%	Legal
Maine	Yes	3272	12–13%	Legal
New Hampshire	Yes	712	12%	Unlawful
New Jersey	Yes	473	16%	Unlawful
New York	Yes	1356	17–23%	Unlawful
Pennsylvania	Yes	2640	15%	Unlawful
Vermont	Yes	837	11–13%	Unlawful
West Virginia	Yes	2830	19%	Unlawful
Maryland	Yes	103	5%	Unlawful
Connecticut	No	NA	NA	Unlawful

In 2023, several new bear-related laws were enacted in Connecticut. Intentional feeding of bears is now prohibited, and farmers may seek permits to address excessive bear damage to crops or livestock.



**Scan to learn more about new bear laws.**

\* Based on 2023 harvest data; 2024 data are being finalized.





# The Best Way to Coexist

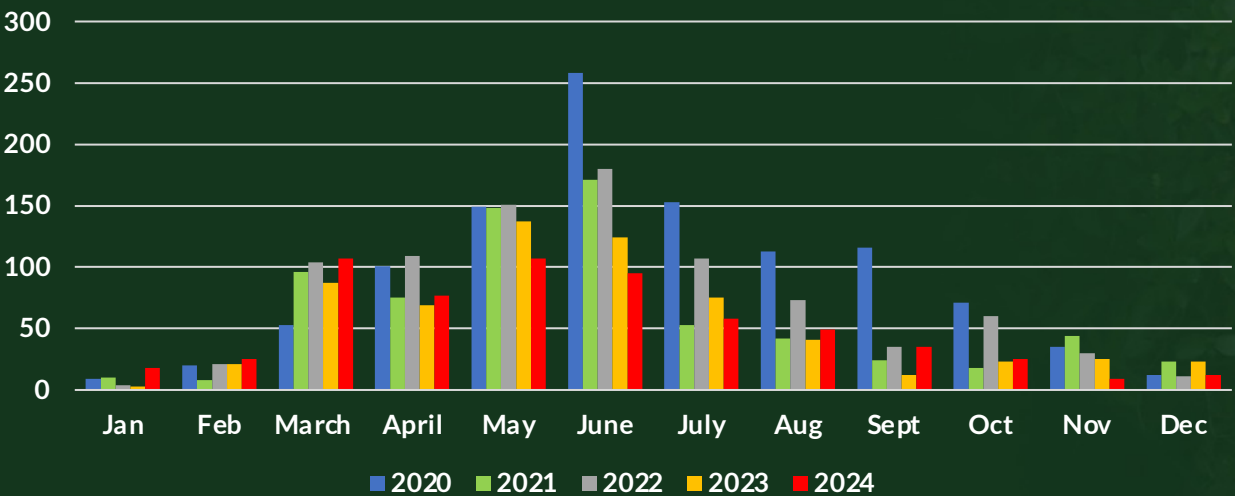
- **Be Bear Aware** and remember, bears can be found anywhere in our state.
- **Manage your food, garbage, and other attractants** with bears in mind. Bear-resistant trash cans are successfully used by more residents each year; talk to your trash hauler to see if they are available in your area.
- **Remove all traces of bird food**, including hummingbird feeders.
- **Use suitable electric fencing** to exclude opportunistic bears from damaging livestock, beehives, fruit trees, and more.
- **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.



# Feeding Ordinances

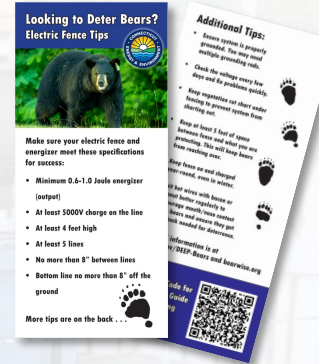
To help curb feeding related issues with bears, some municipalities have instituted ordinances against intentionally and unintentionally feeding bears, which includes prohibiting bird feeders during the warmer part of the year. Ordinances have been passed in the following towns: Colebrook (2010), Hartland (2019), Barkhamsted (2020), Simsbury (2020), East Granby (2020), Granby (2021), Manchester (2021), Farmington (2021), Salisbury (2022), and North Canaan (2022). Even with a statewide ban on intentionally feeding dangerous wildlife, municipal ordinances will still play a role in addressing the needs of a local community. For example, local ordinances may prohibit specific behaviors like feeding birds or require the use of bear-resistant trash cans.

**Black Bear Birdfeeder Conflicts Reported to CT DEEP  
2020–2024**





# Being BearWise



DEEP published informational cards on how to protect livestock, apiaries, and poultry using electric fencing. These cards provide fence setup tips and system specifications that are effective in deterring bears. In response to strong demand for these resources, we increased production and distribution to local retailers in 2024.

[Download Electric Fence Tips](#)



BearWise® is a program that provides sound information and smart solutions that help homeowners, businesses, and communities coexist with bears. Connecticut is a member state of this national program to help people live responsibly with black bears.

[Visit Bearwise](#)





**For more information visit:**

**[portal.ct.gov/DEEP](https://portal.ct.gov/DEEP)**

**Connecticut** Department of Energy & Environmental Protection