



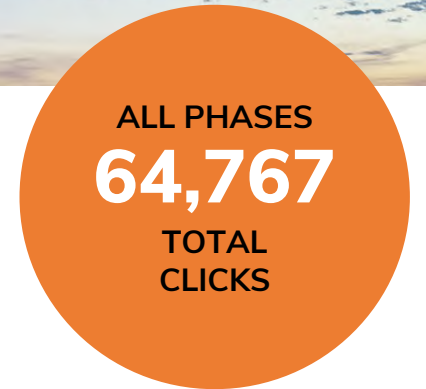
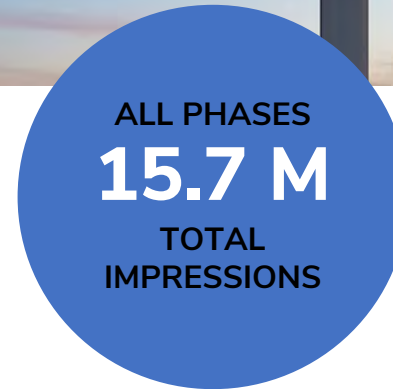
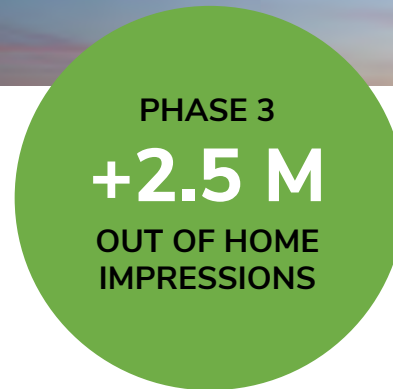
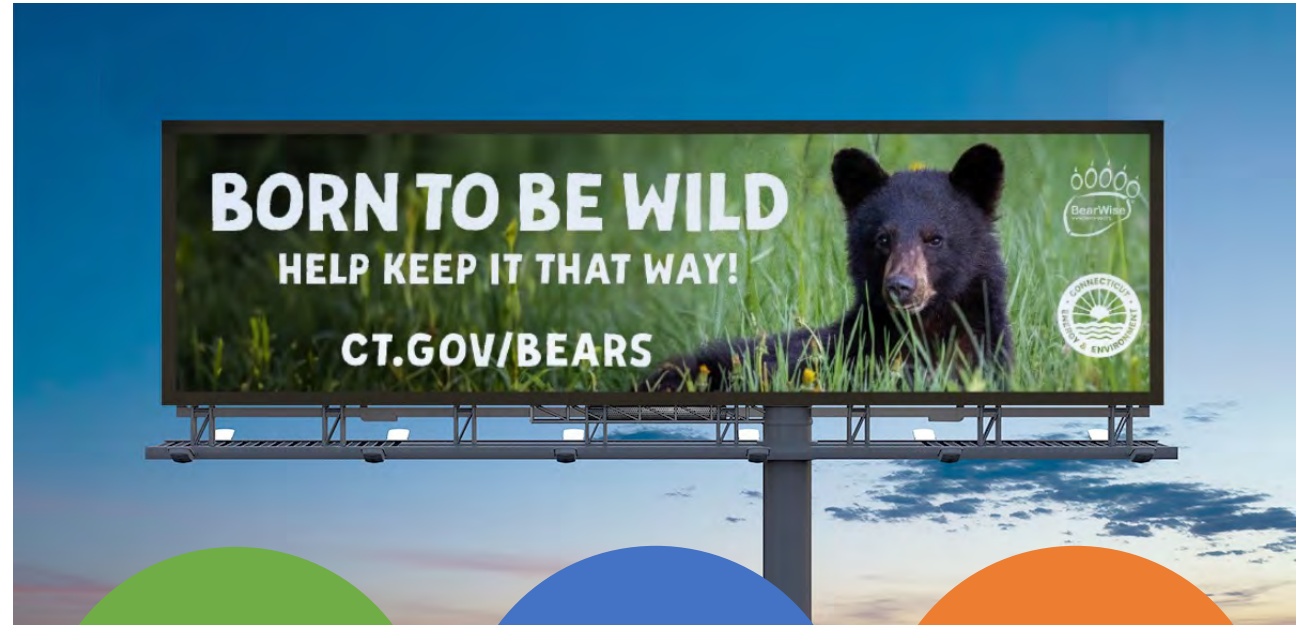
The State of the Bears

A Briefing on Bears in Connecticut

MARCH 2026

Be BearWise Public Awareness Campaign

In 2025, DEEP continued building on the success of its Be BearWise public awareness campaign with a third phase of outreach focused on reinforcing key prevention messages during the late fall period. This phase generated **more than 2.5 million out-of-home impressions statewide**, further expanding the campaign's reach and reinforcing practical steps residents can take to reduce bear conflicts. Across all three campaign phases since late 2023, the Be BearWise initiative has generated **over 15.7 million impressions and 64,767 clicks**, helping raise awareness about CT's growing bear population and the importance of securing common attractants such as trash, bird feeders, and livestock feed.

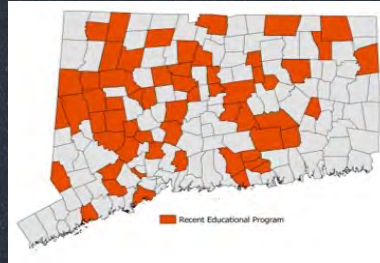


What DEEP Is Doing Now

OUTREACH AND EDUCATION



E-Fence Workshops



Presentations



Media Engagement



Marketing Campaign



Scan to learn more about living with black bears.

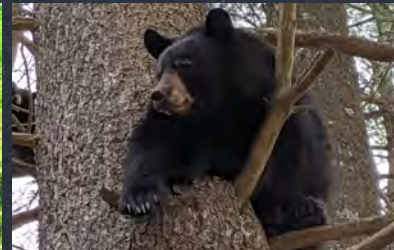
CONFLICT MANAGEMENT



Setting Traps



Technical Assistance



Public Concerns



Public Safety

RESEARCH



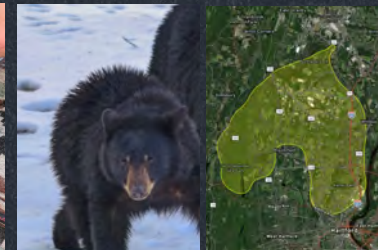
Tagging & Collaring



Tracking



Reproduction



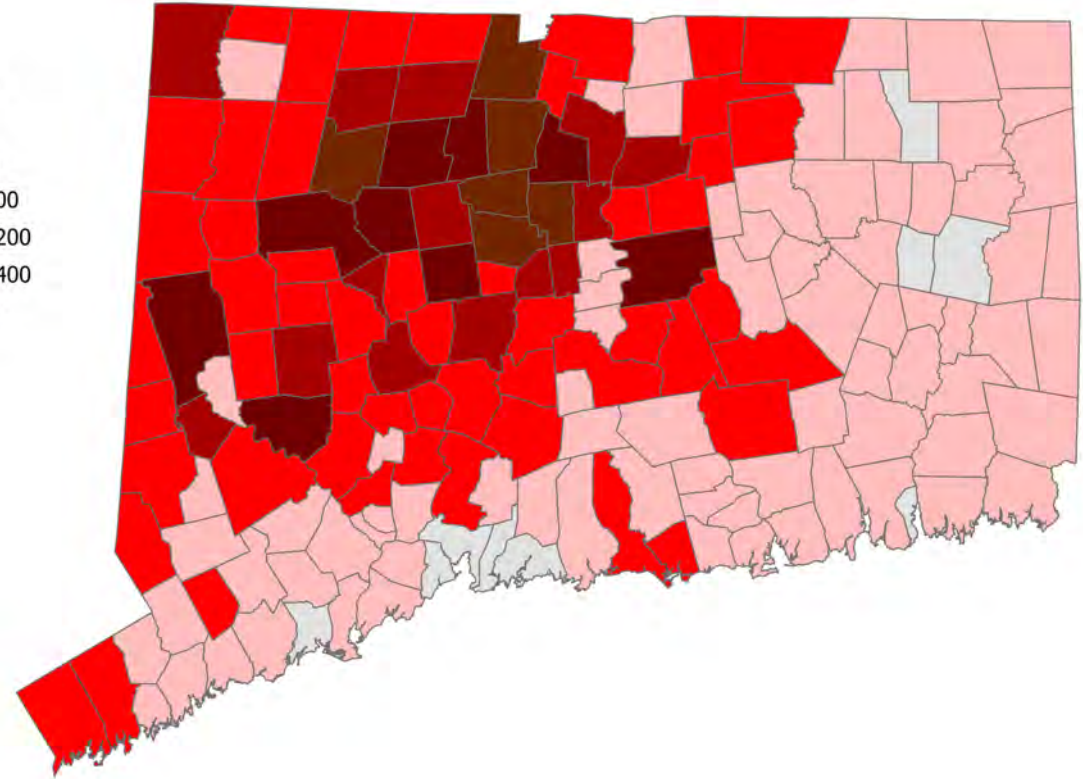
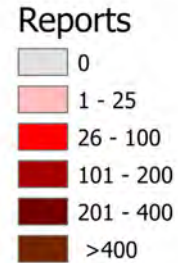
Range & Habitat

Human-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 broadly show where bears are seen more often. Reports vary widely depending on how many people are in an area and how novel bear sightings are in a given town.

Bear sightings are not used to estimate population size. The thousands of sightings reported help DEEP understand how bears are distributed across the state. Notable increases in sighting were reported in Glastonbury, East of the Connecticut River, an area where sightings rarely have been reported in past years.

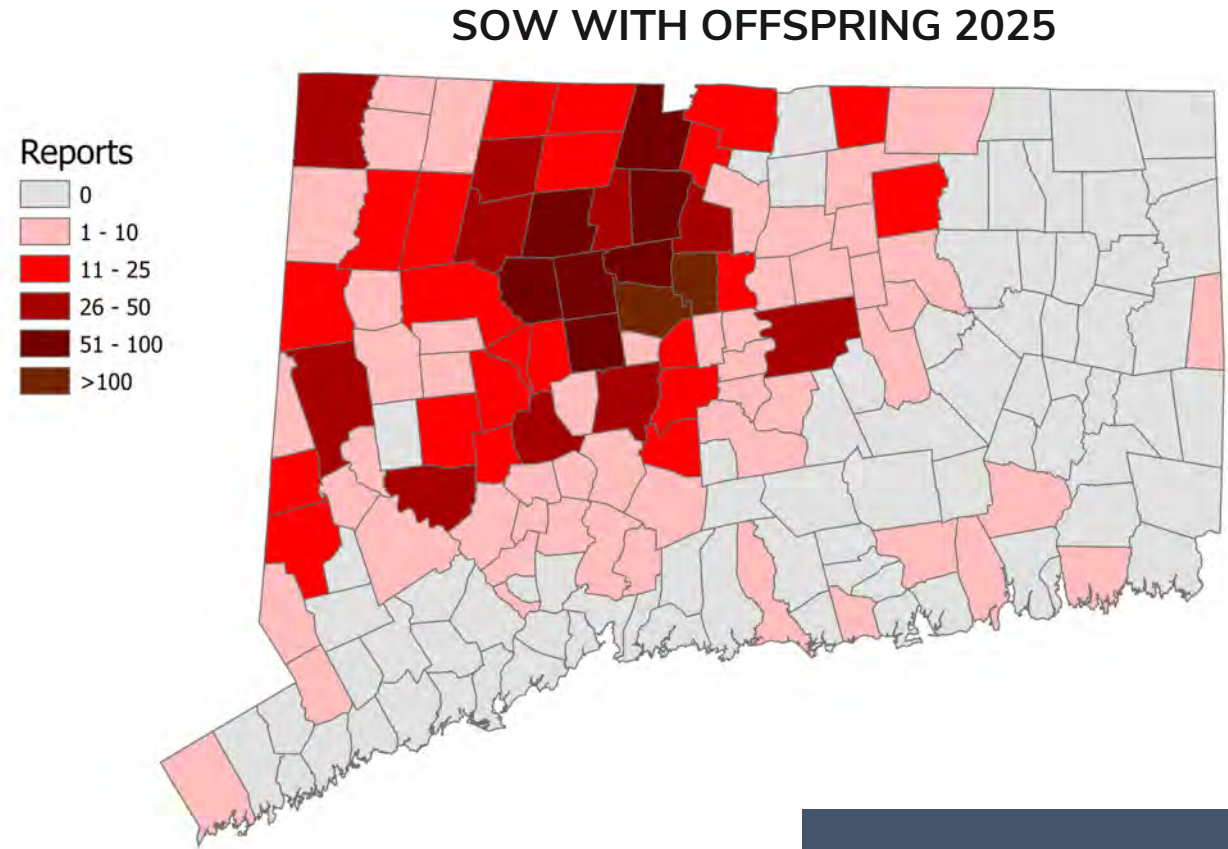
BEAR SIGHTINGS 2025



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 females disperse shorter distances than males, the core breeding range of bears expands slowly.

The longer, wandering dispersal of young male bears helps to explain why sightings of bears are reported across CT. Relatively few reports of sows with offspring come from Eastern CT, indicating that the majority of the breeding bear populations reside in Western CT.

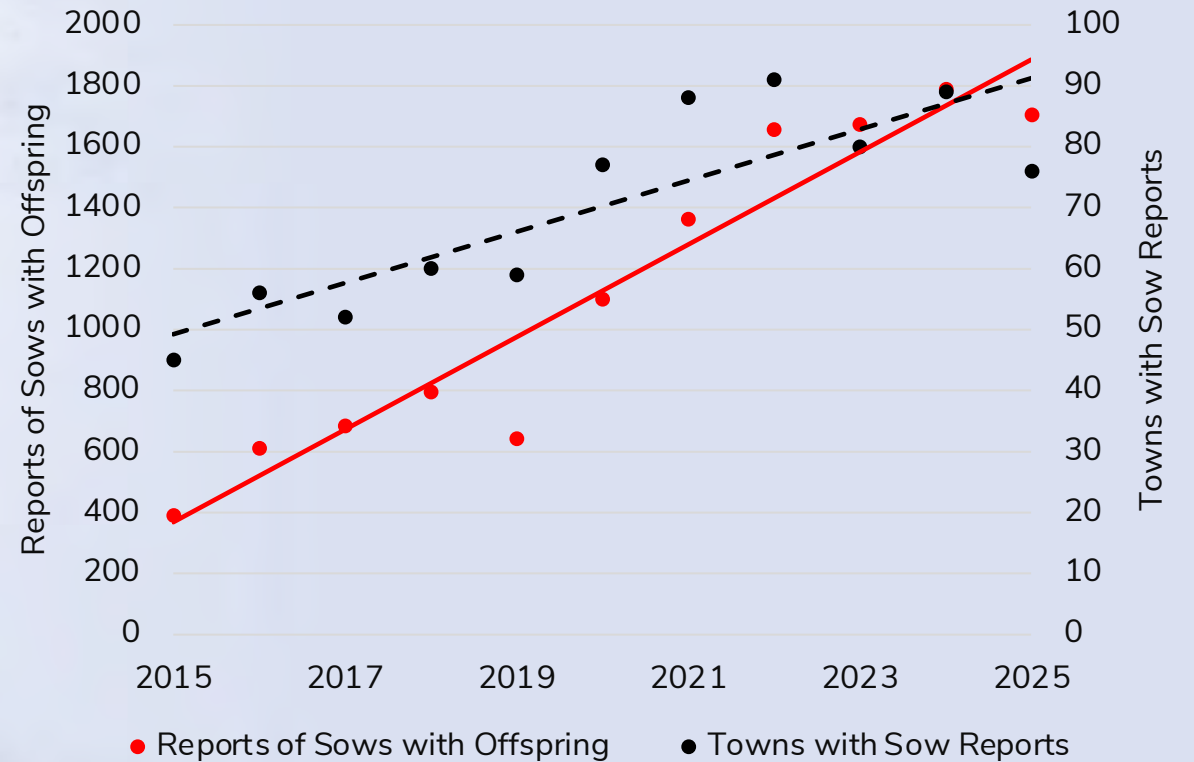


In 2025, sows with offspring were reported in 79 towns across CT.



Sow Reports through 2025

The breeding population of bears in CT is continuing a long-term trend of expansion into more cities and towns. Over the last three years, sows with offspring have been reported in 138 different municipalities.



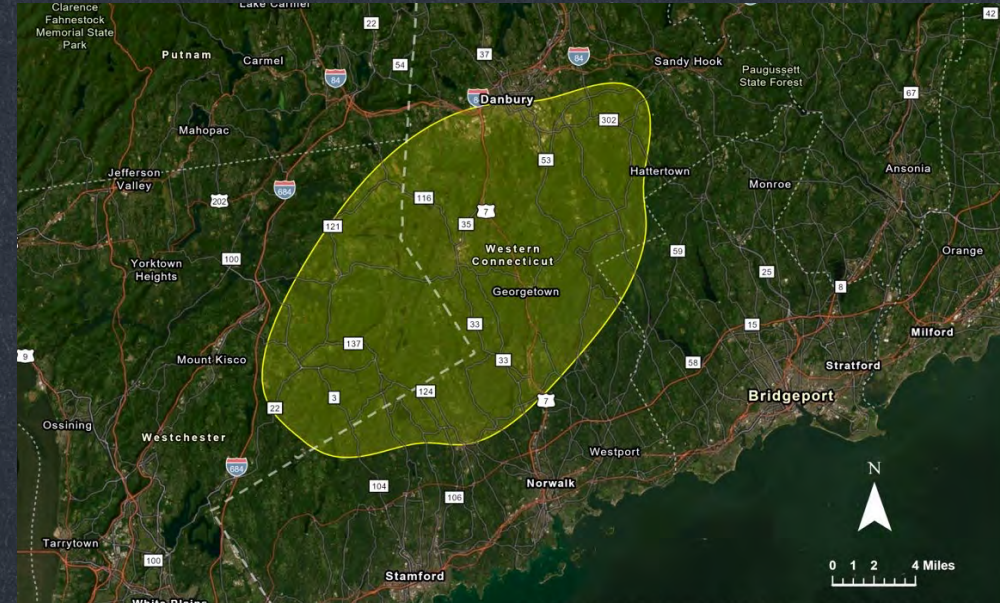


Bear Population and Growth

Based on collaborative DEEP-UConn research conducted more than a decade ago, there are currently an estimated 1,000-1,200 black bears in CT. DEEP plans to update this information by conducting additional research on population size and density in 2026.

RECENT 3-YEAR AVERAGE	
Offspring per sow	2.5
First year survival	73%
Bears killed by vehicles	69

Bear Home Ranges



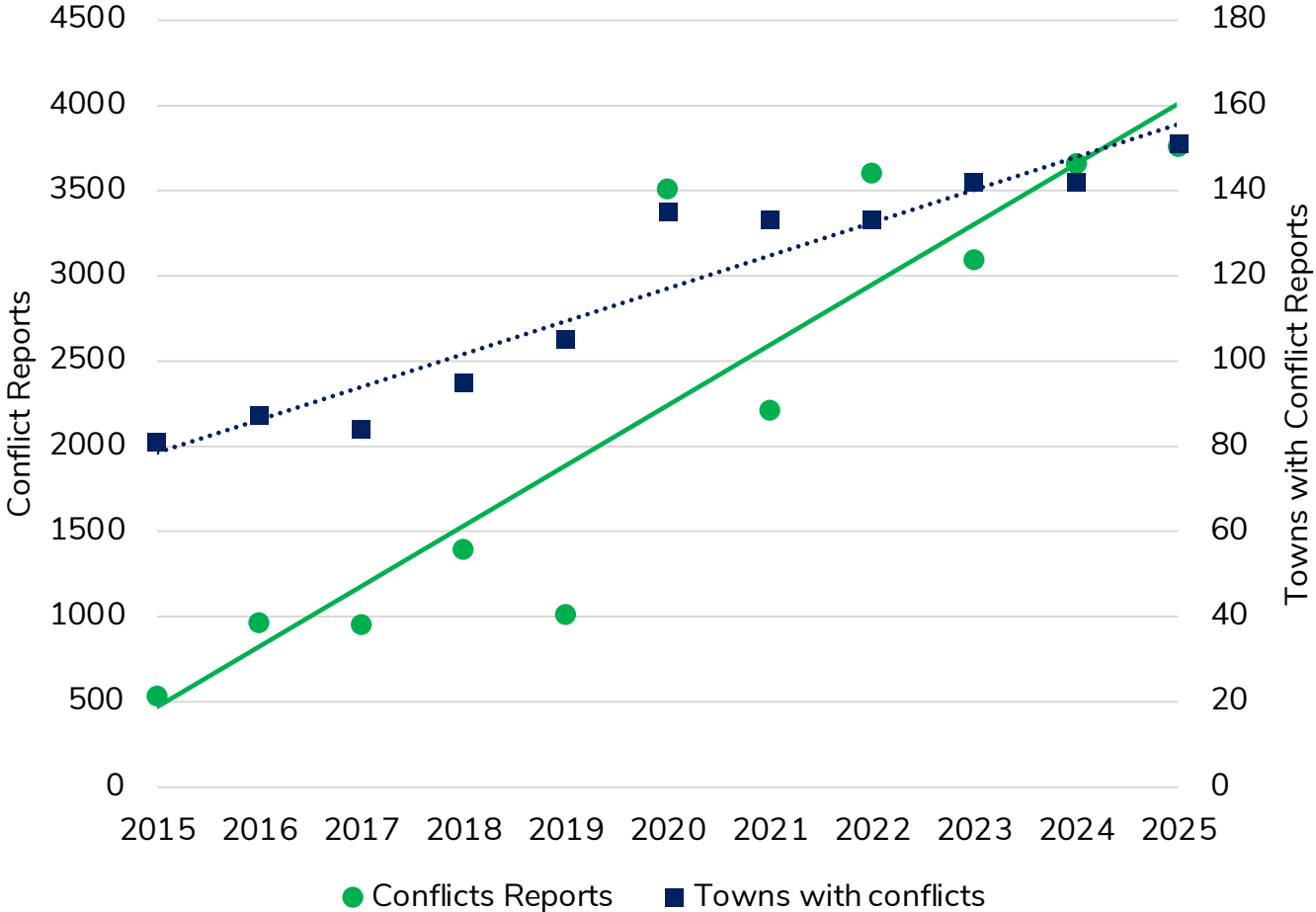
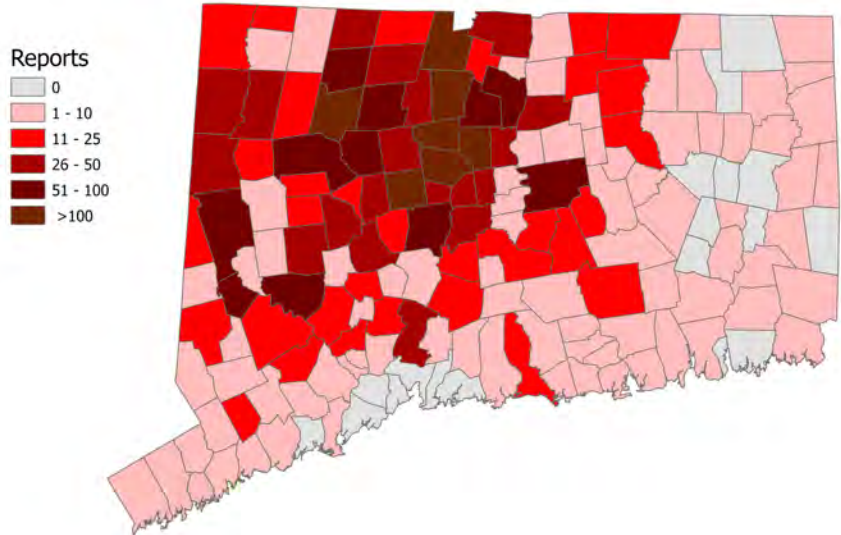
Black bears don't "live" in any one place throughout the year, despite how often you may see the same bears in the same places. Most bears in CT use an area that overlaps with several municipalities. These large home ranges can include rural, suburban, and urban communities.

These maps illustrate home ranges of two GPS-collared female bears monitored by 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 there is abundant food - particularly easy access to food sources provided by humans.

Bear Conflicts

Thousands of human-bear conflicts are reported each year and follow a long-term increasing trend. While greater numbers of conflicts take place in the western half of CT, residents report issues with bears across the state. Incidences of bears entering or breaking into homes occurred in 18 different municipalities statewide in 2025.

HUMAN-BLACK BEAR CONFLICTS 2025

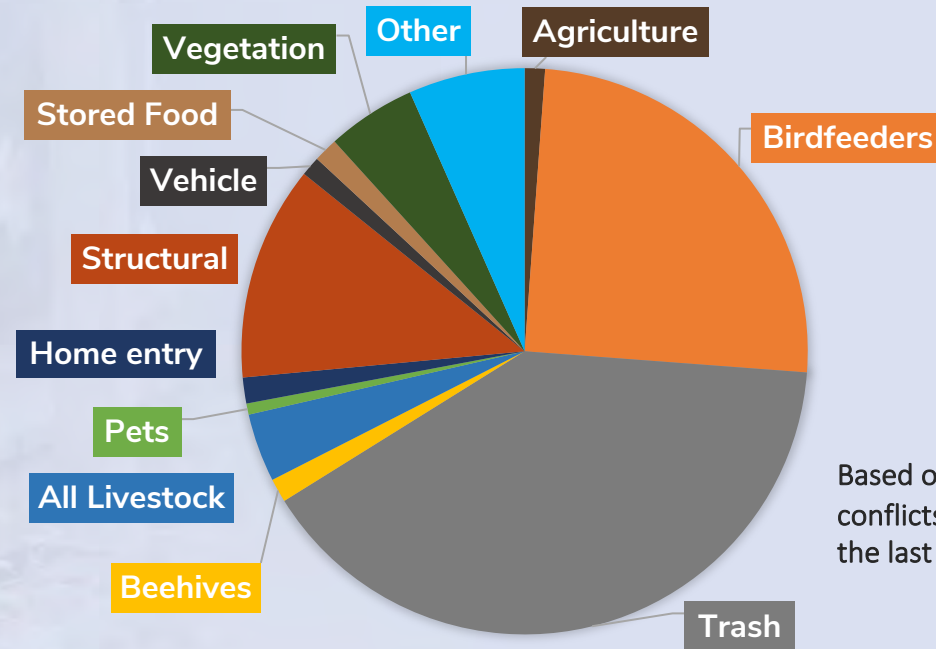


More than 85% of livestock conflicts in recent years involve backyard chickens.

Conflict Reports

The number of serious conflicts involving bears is also rising. Reports of home entries, livestock attacks, beehives 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 2025, CT experienced three bear attacks on humans. The vast majority of the public's bear-related issues stem from birdfeeders and trash.

HUMAN-BEAR CONFLICT TYPES 2020-2025



Based on over 19,000 conflicts reported over the last 6 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

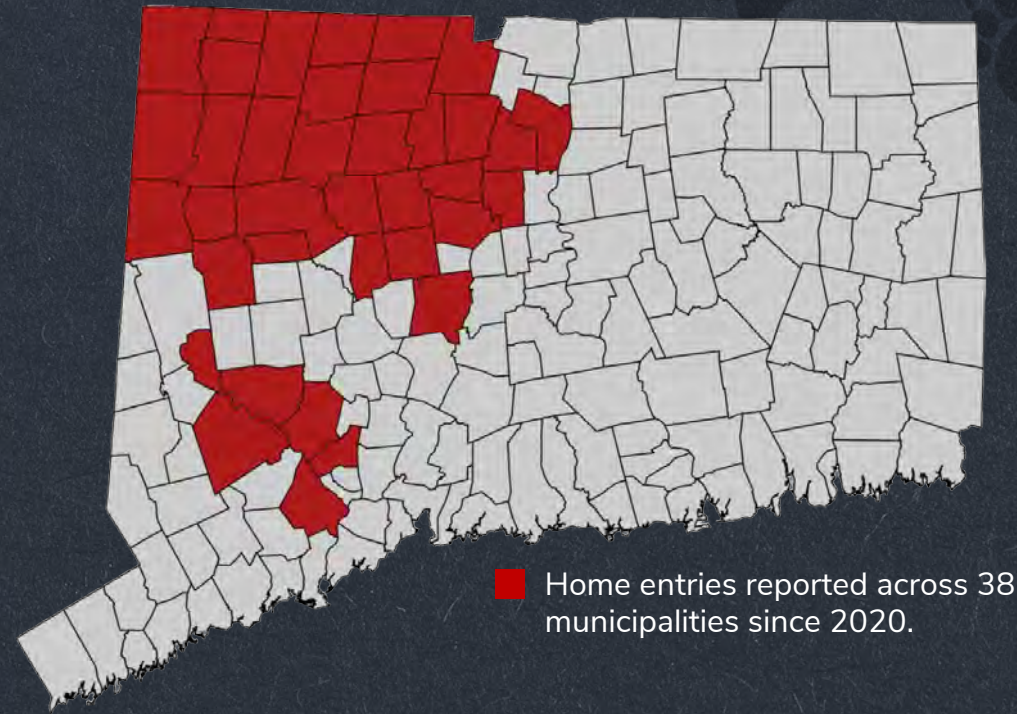
- 13 bears were removed under the program in 2025.
- Increased demand is expected as program awareness grows.

Bears in Houses

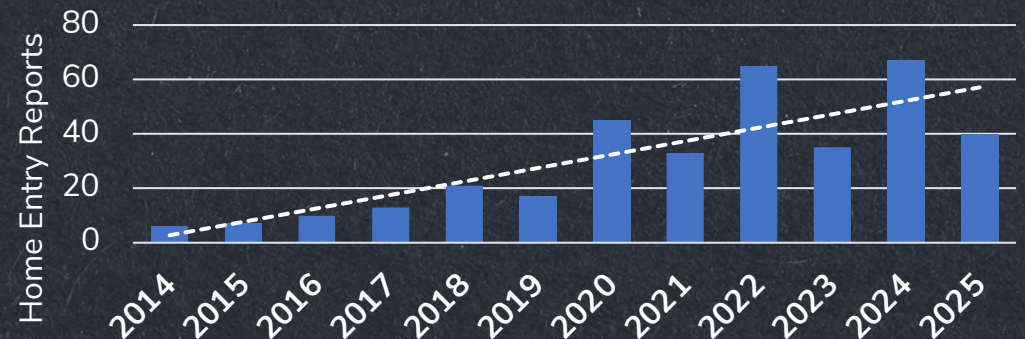
Over the last 6 years, 265 reports of bears entering homes have been investigated and verified by DEEP staff. Dozens of attempted entries also took place. Many of these incidents occurred when bears pushed through screen doors and windows. Over that period these events have occurred in 38 different municipalities.



Despite year-year fluctuations, the trend in annual reports of bears entering homes shows an overall increase over the past decade.



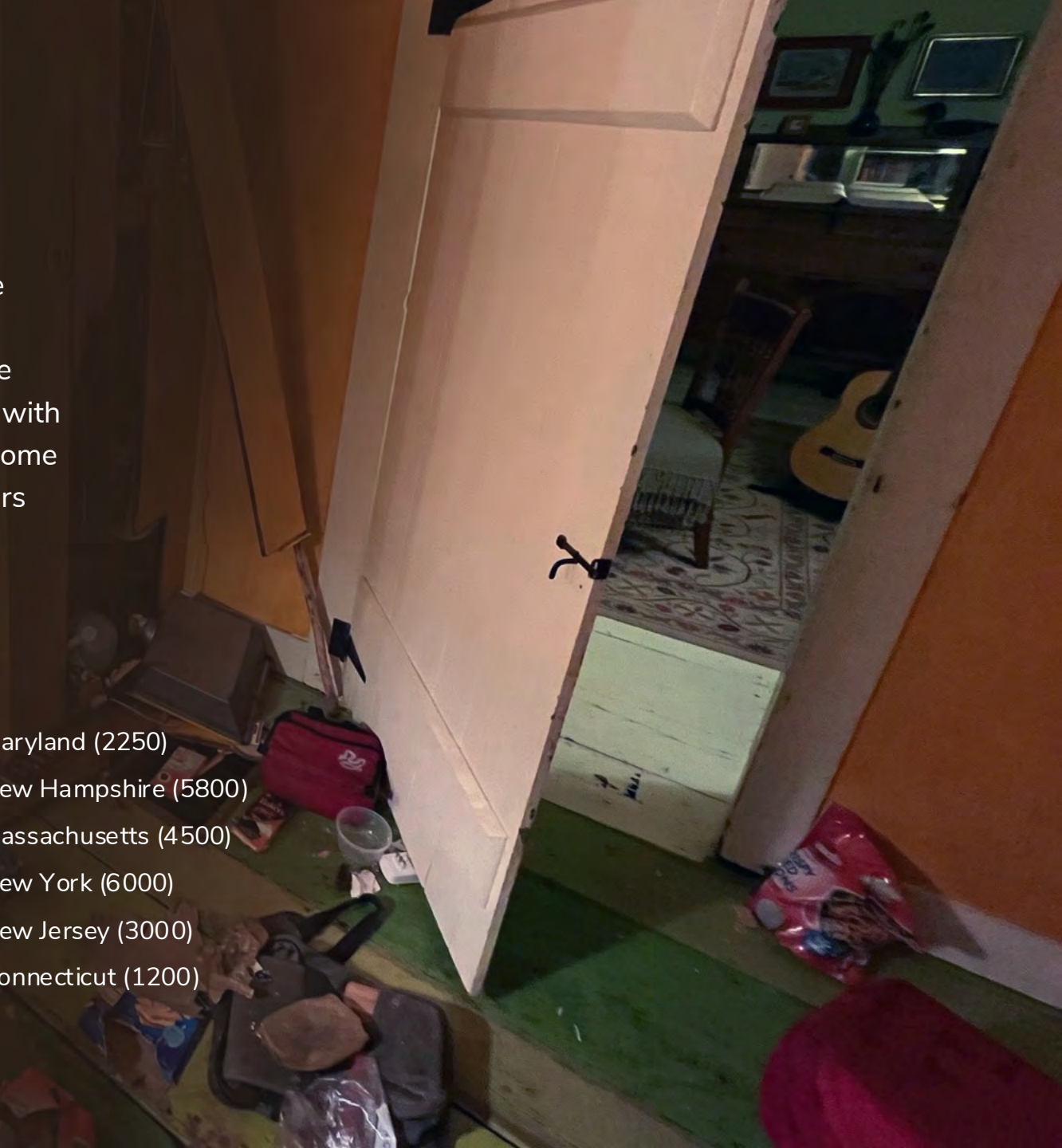
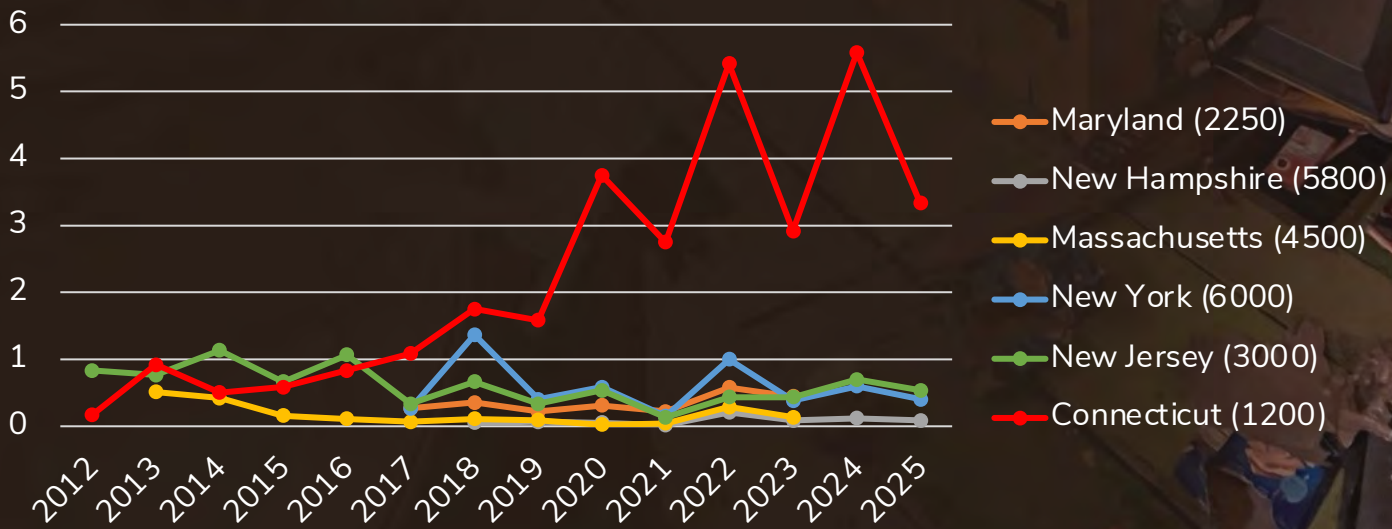
Annual Reports of Bears Entering Homes
2014 - 2025

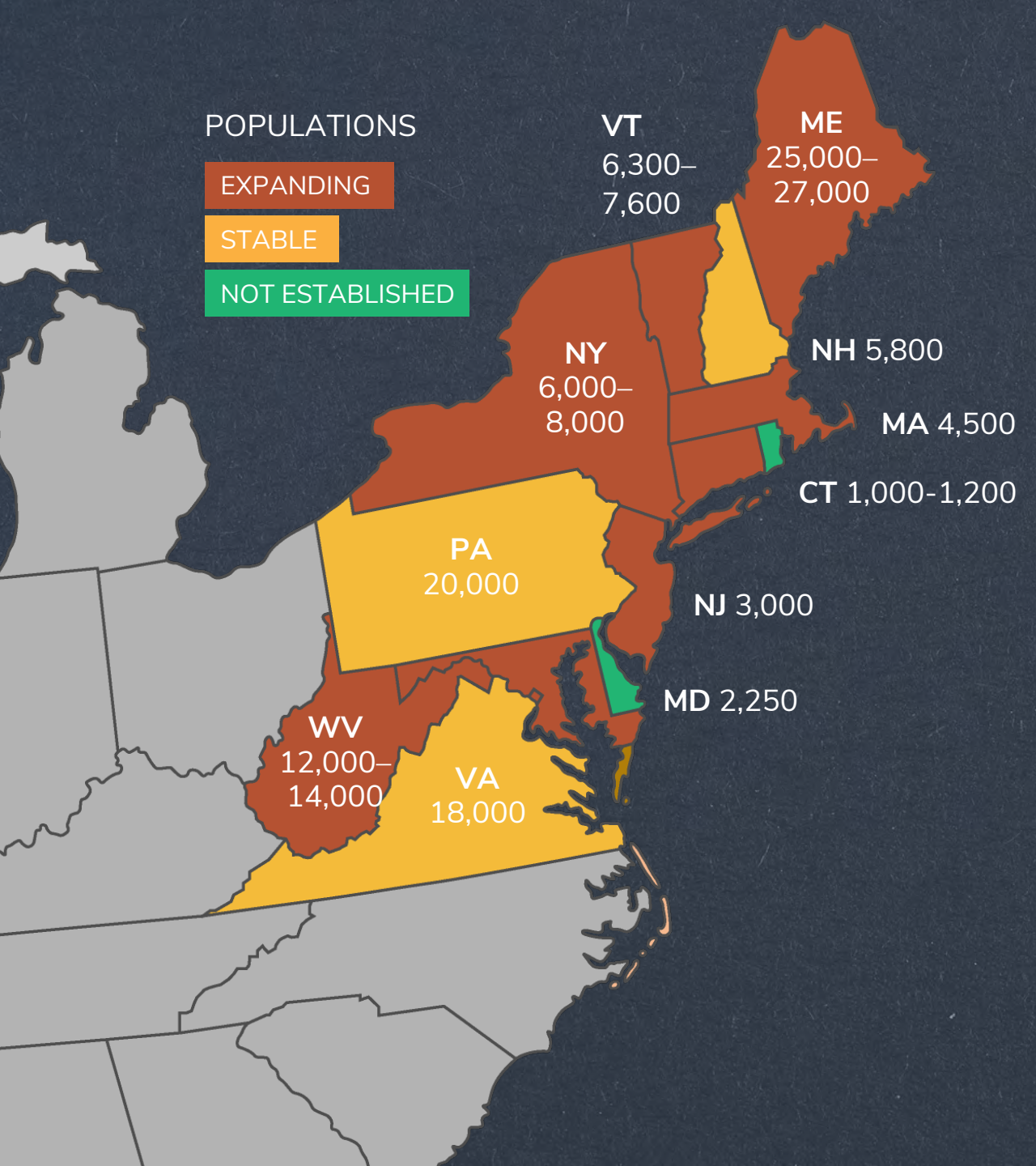


Conflicts and Home Entries Reported in CT

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 more than 4,500 and 6,000 bears, respectively, see less than 1 home entry per 100 bears each year. In comparison, over the last 6 years CT has averaged 4 home entries per 100 bears each year.

Reported Home Entries per 100 Bears (Estimated Population)





Other States' Populations and Conflicts

STATE	ANNUAL CONFLICTS (2023)
Massachusetts	645
Maine	228
New Hampshire	485
New Jersey	1,091
New York	1,194
Vermont	912
West Virginia	1,227
Connecticut	3,093

Based on most recently available 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

In 2023, several new bear-related laws were enacted in CT. 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.

STATE	HUNTING	AVG HARVEST	PERCENT OF POP	FEEDING BEARS
Massachusetts	Yes	262	5–6%	Legal
Maine	Yes	3,791	14–15%	Legal
New Hampshire	Yes	1,195	20%	Unlawful
New Jersey	Yes	473	15–24%	Unlawful
New York	Yes	1,685	21–28%	Unlawful
Pennsylvania	Yes	2,642	15%	Unlawful
Vermont	Yes	1,036	13–16%	Unlawful
West Virginia	Yes	2,479	17–21%	Unlawful
Maryland	Yes	125	5–6%	Unlawful
Connecticut	No	NA	NA	Unlawful
Rhode Island*	No	NA	NA	Unlawful

Based on 2024 harvest data. 2025 data is still being compiled.

* RI has few resident bears, but population is expected to grow as bears move in from MA and CT.



Coexisting Safely with Bears

PREVENT ACCESS TO TRASH AND FOOD-WASTE

- Secure your trash or use a bear-resistant cart

REMOVE BIRDFEEDERS ENTIRELY

- Invites bears, even if empty or out of reach
- Hot pepper seed, nyjer, and hummingbird feeders are all food rewards that still attract bears
- Winter feeding can still be problematic

EXCLUDE BEARS WITH ELECTRIC FENCING

- Most effective and efficient tool for keeping bears away from crops, fruit trees, beehives, chicken coops, and livestock

SCARE BEARS AWAY WHEN THEY ARE LOOKING FOR HUMAN-RELATED FOODS OR CAUSING DAMAGE ON YOUR PROPERTY.

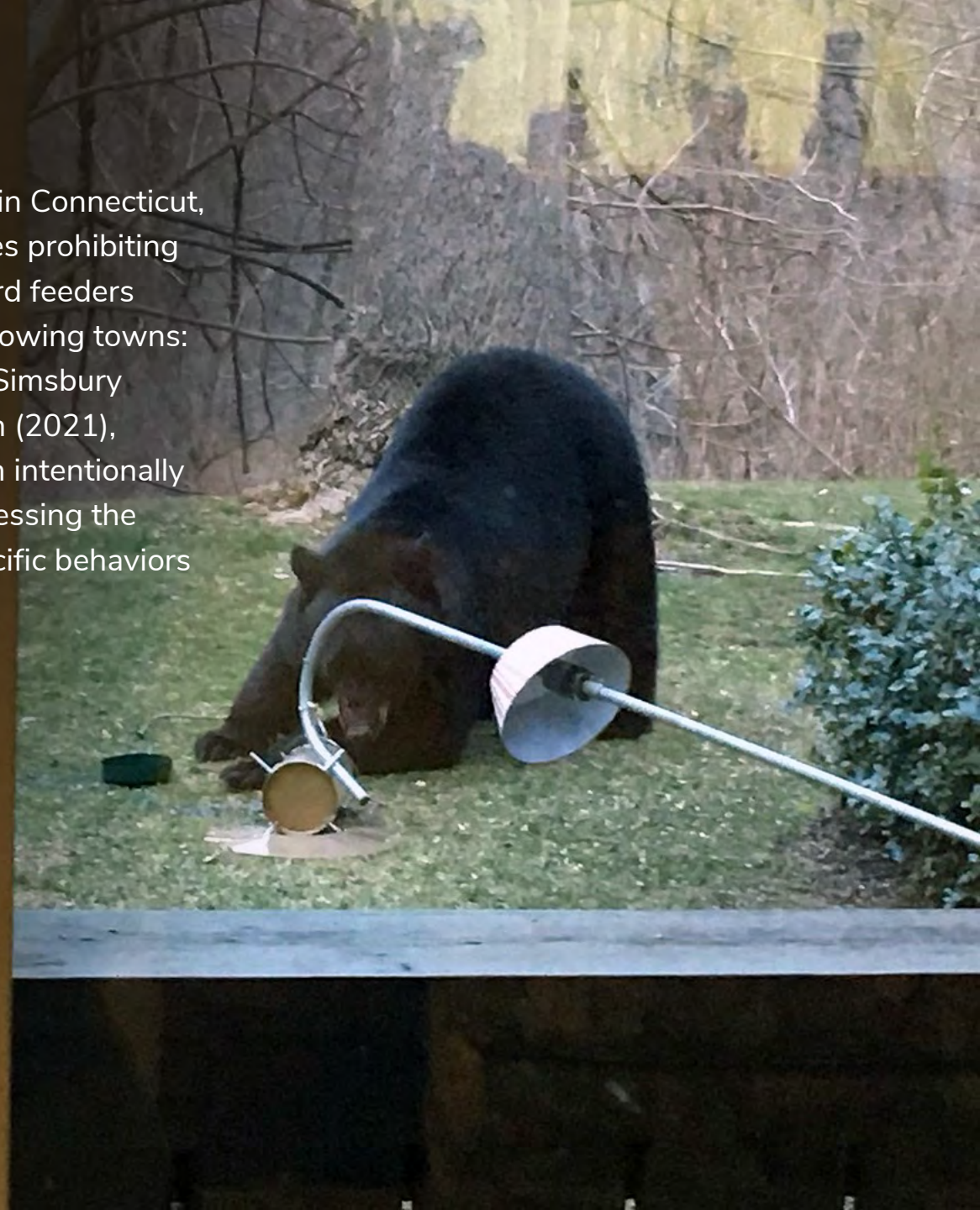
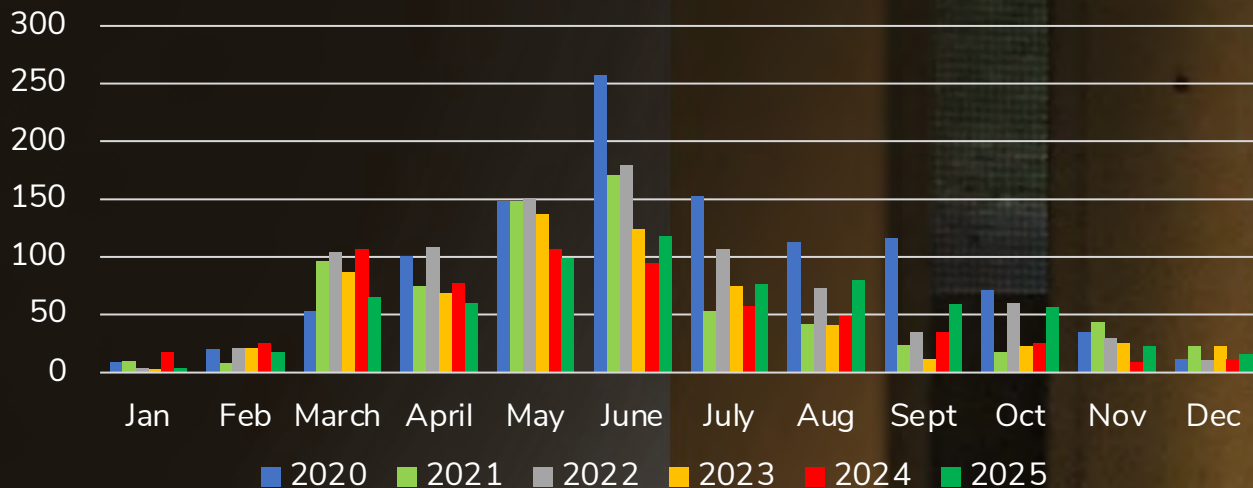


Scan to view BearWise's handout
"Scare the Bear" for tips

Feeding Laws & Ordinances

It is illegal to intentionally feed bears or other potentially dangerous wildlife in Connecticut, per state law passed in 2023. Some municipalities have instituted ordinances prohibiting intentional and unintentional feeding of bears, which includes prohibiting bird feeders during the warmer part of the year. Ordinances have been passed in the following towns: Colebrook (2010), Stratford (2011), Hartland (2019), Barkhamsted (2020), Simsbury (2020), East Granby (2020), Granby (2021), Manchester (2021), Farmington (2021), Salisbury (2022), and North Canaan (2022). Even with the 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 2020–2025





Electric Fencing

In 2025, DEEP Biologists hosted a series of electric fence workshops focused on preventing bear conflicts. Participants received hands-on training in fence design, installation, grounding, and maintenance to protect livestock, crops, and apiaries. Additional workshops are planned for 2026.

[Download Electric Fence Tips](#) or scan the QR code below for the Beginner's Guide to Electric Fencing from BearWise.



Scan for the Beginner's Guide to Electric Fencing from BearWise.



For more information visit:

portal.ct.gov/bears