

Lake Wildlife Watch

June 25, 2024

Over at least the past five weeks black bear(s) have been observed (seen or photographed) around the Lawrence Lake area between May 20th and June 21st. The observations have been along Eagle Ave., down 2nd Court to Tucker Point, and at multiple locations in the Dahlke Preserve Subdivision (near Dahlke Drive). In addition, evidence of a bear being present was found in the woods on the south side of the lake near 3rd Ave. on June 21st and 22nd.



The sightings have included a single bear and a bear with cub(s).

Black Bear Facts (Source: WDNR Website)

Physical Characteristics

The black bear is the most common and smallest species of bear in North America and the only wild bear species found in Wisconsin. Adult males range from 250-300 pounds, and adult females range from 120-280 pounds.

Diet

Black bears are opportunistic eaters. They are omnivorous, eating both plants and animals. They will most often eat vegetation, berries, insects and nuts, but will also target other animals. If they are in a farming area, livestock, crops and honey bees can become part of their diet.

Habitat

Black bears prefer forests, swamps or anywhere with dense cover. However, they will readily adapt to other habitats if a good food source is available.

Behavior

Black bears normally try to avoid humans. Their home range is about 27 square miles for males and 8 square miles for females.

Black bear mothers may leave their cubs for up to 15 hours while they search for food elsewhere. If you find bear cubs without their mother, do not handle them. Leave them where you found them.

To avoid potential conflicts, it's important to recognize what attracts black bears and take steps to reduce these attractants whenever possible. Black bears are known for returning to locations where they've found good food sources, so prevention is the best tactic.

Per the WDNR website:

Follow these steps at home to avoid attracting black bears:

- **Completely remove bird feeders, even during daytime hours** – Bird feeders provide a high-density food source for black bears, so bears might frequent a bird feeder for several weeks to see if it is refilled. Areas around bird feeders also have accumulations of seeds that should be cleaned up when removing a feeder. Black bears are also active during throughout the day, so removing bird feeders only at night is not sufficient.
- **Reduce smells from trash and recycling containers** – Black bears have keen noses and are attracted to all types of food waste. Rinsing food cans and bottles before throwing them away, as well as storing meat scraps in the fridge or freezer until garbage day, can reduce the intensity of odors emanating from your garbage and recycling containers. Storing containers in a closed building can also reduce access to food waste. Commercial dumpsters should also be locked whenever possible.
- **Limit the amount of time pets and pet food are left outside unattended** – Black bears can be skittish, but they are highly food-motivated. They may also defend themselves or attack pets when provoked. Prevent potential conflicts by limiting how long pets are left alone outside or keep them on a leash when recreating. Pet food should not be left outside, as it may attract bears.
- **Be conscious of attractants in public spaces like grills and picnic tables** – Barbeque grills and picnic tables often have leftover food scraps or residues on them that can attract black bears. Clean surfaces after use in public spaces to reduce negative human-bear interactions.
- **Avoid feeding or interacting with black bears** – Never feed a bear, whether intentionally or not. The risk of unexpected interactions increases when bears begin to associate people with food. If bears find a consistent food source around people or people actively feed a bear, the bear will make a habit of visiting the area or approaching people.

Know What To Do If You Encounter A Bear

- If a bear is near your home or cabin, from a safe location, try to scare the bear away by making loud noises (like clanging pots and pans together) or throwing objects in the bear's direction. Black bears tend to avoid interactions with people if escape is possible, so make sure it has a clear escape route – never corner a bear. Do not turn your back to a bear or run away.
- If you encounter a bear while in the woods, stay calm and do not run. Wave your arms and make loud noises to scare it away. Back away slowly and seek a safe location from where you can wait for the bear to leave. Never approach a bear. For your safety, do not attempt to break up a fight between a pet and a bear.
- If unable to resolve a recurring issue with a nuisance bear, contact the USDA Wildlife Services toll-free line at 1-800-433-0663 for properties in southern Wisconsin or at 1-800-228-1368 for properties in northern Wisconsin.

Additional reading:

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/newsroom/release/90876>

<https://p.widencdn.net/io8myi/bearpractice>

<https://dnr.wisconsin.gov/topic/hunt/bearpop>

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