

# Bears Have a Schedule of When They're Active, So Be Prepared!

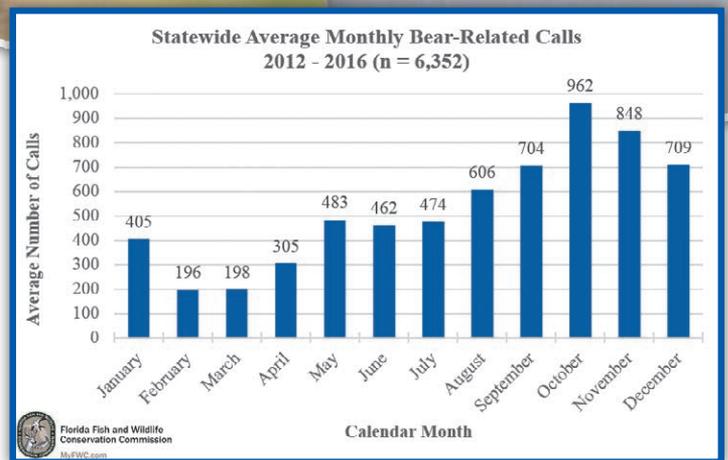


Think like a Florida black bear to help you be better prepared to prevent human-bear conflicts in your neighborhood.

Bears follow a seasonal calendar of when they're most hungry and most active. If you and your neighbors are aware of and can anticipate when to expect increased bear activity, it's easier to prepare and take the steps necessary to keep bears out of your backyard and keep yourself, your family, your pets, and the bears safe. Your actions can help minimize bear encounters and prevent human-bear conflicts.

So, what does a bear's schedule look like?

- Spring is a bear's wake-up call! Bears are increasingly active in spring and early summer. As the weather warms up, they are moving around more in search of food. Cubs born early in the year are much bigger now and starting to travel around with their mothers. Late spring is also time for bears to start searching for a mate.
- Fall is when a bear's stomach starts really grumbling and telling it to bulk up for winter! Bears need to consume lots of calorie-packed food (up to 20,000 calories a day) in the autumn and early winter. If it's easy to paw through garbage, knock over a bird feeder or dine on pet food outdoors, bears may be tempted to leave the forest and linger in someone's backyard or near a store's dumpster.



Once you understand a bear's seasonally-driven behaviors, what are your best responses in order to be prepared?

**Get a bear-resistant trash can:** These trash cans are very effective and available now in Leon, Wakulla and Franklin counties as well as within the City of Midway in Gadsden County. Their cost is a monthly lease fee ranging from \$5 to \$15 per month. Contact Waste Pro, which partnered with state and county officials to make these cans available, for more details. You also can try modifying your existing trash can to be more bear-resistant.

**Call for help:** As soon as you see a bear lingering in your yard, neighborhood or near your business, call the Northwest Regional Office, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), at 850-265-3676. This gives FWC staff the opportunity to work with your entire community on implementing “BearWise” strategies to keep bears wild and promote the safety of both humans and bears. Please don’t wait until a bear becomes a frequent visitor -- or has harmed a pet or broken into a screened-in porch or home. Once a bear is used to hanging out in a neighborhood to find food, dealing with the situation becomes more challenging.

**Get involved:** Before your neighborhood or business district has to deal with encountering a bear, take BearWise actions that will help conserve bears by keeping them in the forest and away from places where people live and work.

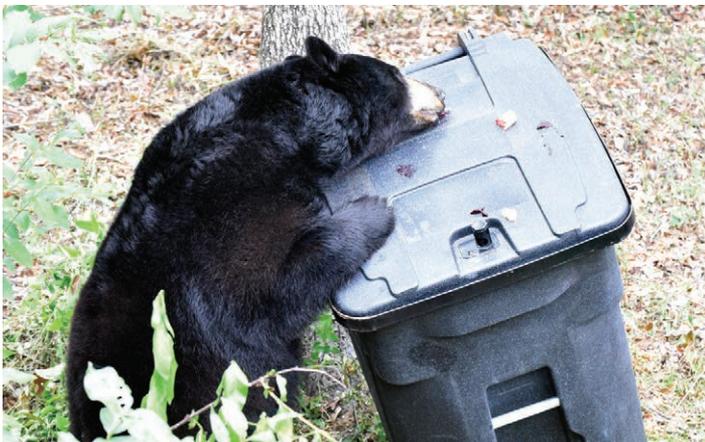
Meanwhile, it’s always a good time to do the basics to prepare for the seasons when bears are particularly active and hungry:

- Secure garbage in bear-resistant cans or in places such as a closed garage or sturdy shed. Wait until the morning of your garbage pickup day to bring trash cans to the curb.
- Feed pets indoors, or bring their outside food dishes in at night, even if they are empty. Store pet or livestock feed in bear-resistant containers, garages, or sturdy sheds.
- Remove bird and wildlife feeders. Ensure outdoor areas are free of all seed, corn and other wild animal feed.
- Keep gardens and orchards tidy. Harvest nuts, fruits and vegetables when they are ripe. Remove rotten fruit or vegetables.
- Clean barbeque grills and meat smokers after use with a degreasing detergent.
- Use electric fences to protect livestock, beehives, gardens and compost piles.

Your efforts to be BearWise and help prevent human-bear conflicts are invaluable! Thank you for being part of the solution of how we can safely coexist with Florida black bears. 🌲

*By Diane Hirth, Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC)*

*The FWC’s bear management program is trained and prepared to help you, your neighborhood and your community become BearWise so you can prevent human-bear conflicts. If you suspect illegal activity, like someone feeding bears, or there is a wildlife emergency, contact the FWC’s Wildlife Alert Hotline, 888-404-FWCC (3922) or #FWC or \*FWC on your cell phone twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. More information is at [MyFWC.com/Bear](http://MyFWC.com/Bear).*



*Photo courtesy of FWC*