

Biologists Estimate Over 20 Black Bears Sighted In Northeast Ohio During 2012

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AKRON, OH – Biologists estimate a total of 23 individual black bears accounted for 37 confirmed sightings in 14 northeast Ohio counties last year, according to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Wildlife. The number of confirmed sightings is up from 26 in 2011.

“We experienced two or three specific bears that were very active and therefore highly visible to Geauga and Portage county residents,” said Scott Peters, wildlife management supervisor for District Three Division of Wildlife. “The number of sightings slightly increased in 2012 mostly due to this activity,” noted Peters. Many factors contribute to fluctuating bear movement annually including weather, lack or high availability of food sources, and the presence of other bears.

Sightings were reported beginning in late February and continuing each month through mid-December. The majority of bears were reported May through August, which is the peak of black bear breeding and dispersal of young male bears.

Of the 37 confirmed sightings, 15 were confirmed as conflict or nuisance behavior, such as damage to bird feeders, beehives, and garbage containers, as well as consumption of pet food.

Trumbull County lead northeast Ohio with 10 confirmed sightings, followed by Portage with six (6) and Ashtabula, Geauga, and Mahoning counties with five (5) confirmed sightings each.

Confirmed sightings include such details as photographs, tracks, scat, and reports directly from wildlife officials.

The Division of Wildlife began formally keeping records of black bear observations in 1993. Since that time, bears have been confirmed in over half of Ohio’s 88 counties. Most observations occur in northeast and southern Ohio.

Efforts to monitor the black bear have been supported by the Wildlife Diversity and Endangered Species fund, which receives donations from Ohioans through the state income tax check-off program and by the purchase of cardinal license plates and Wildlife Legacy Stamps. Individuals wanting to donate to the fund can also donate online at www.wildohio.com

The black bear is listed as endangered in Ohio and protected by state law. For more information about Ohio’s wildlife species visit www.wildohio.com

Editor’s note: Additional northeast Ohio counties with confirmed sightings include Columbiana (1), Cuyahoga (2), Jefferson (1), and Summit (1).