

Safety

It is vitally important that hunters participating in any hunt follow basic safety precautions to ensure a safe and enjoyable experience.

Large-calibre centrefire rifles are long-range firearms. Always be aware of your target and what is beyond it. Never use full-metal or non-expanding bullets. These are illegal and prone to deflection.

Never hunt near cabins, dwellings or communities. Regulations require a person to be at least 300 metres from a dwelling before discharging a firearm.

If using a tree stand, always wear an approved safety harness.

Remember and practice the four ACTS of firearm safety:

Assume your firearm is loaded

Control the muzzle at all times

Trigger finger OFF the trigger until ready to fire

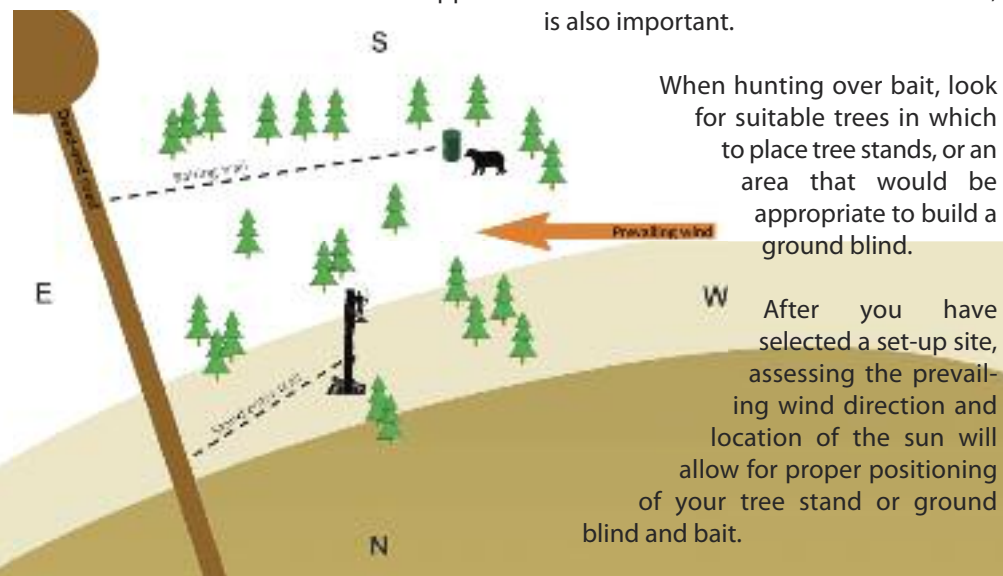
See (prove) the firearm is unloaded

Ethics

Hunted and trapped species must be harvested in a humane and efficient manner. Black bears are adaptive animals with keen senses and great survival skills. Hunters should respect them and not let negative impressions of black bears based on rumor, hearsay or disdain cause errors in judgment.

Hunting Methods

The three main methods or approaches to black bear hunting are **baiting**, **spot and stalk**, and **calling**. When black bear hunting, consider natural signs such as scat, tracks, or tree markings. Adequate cover to conceal either yourself and/or your stand, or to use as an approach to either stalk the animal or call it in, is also important.



A compass will assist in determining directions and help you build a site that will best utilize wind to your advantage and keep the sun out of your eyes while hunting. Use of camouflage and scent control (cover scent) is important, and will help greatly in your attempts to remain concealed.

Baiting bears consists of two elements: use of attractants, and food stuffs. Strong, sweet smells such as vanilla or honey, or stink baits consisting of animal carcasses, offal, or household scraps, can be used to draw bears in from a distance. Burns of honey, bacon or molasses can also be very effective.

Bait should incorporate strong smell, sweetness, and nutritional value. Bears love to eat sweets; however, they are looking for stable food supplies to build up their weight. Mixtures of grease, fats or lard are excellent sources of baits that will attract bears. It is up to an individual hunter to find the mixture that works for them.

Calling can be an effective way to harvest bears if you are in an area where you know the animals are present. Use of a prey in distress (screamer) call, moose calf in distress call, or crow calls can work very well. It is very important to consider wind direction and concealment when using this technique; a bear may be hesitant to come to a call if it is aware of a hunter's presence. Electronic calls are permitted and widely available in a number of types and brands, but may be expensive and unhandy to carry around. Mouth or hand calls can also be used and are generally inexpensive and easy to carry.

When calling black bears, it is wise to hunt with a partner. Black bears are formidable predators and you need to be ready for an encounter from any direction.

If you are successful

After harvesting a black bear, it is important to remove its entrails immediately. The animal may be pelted for mounting or to make a bear-skin rug. Bear pelts may be sold to licenced fur dealers. Export permits are required (CITIES) for sale outside the province. Black bears also provide excellent meat for table fare, but be sure to cook thoroughly to avoid possible trichinosis, which can occur in bear meat.

For more information, please contact:

Wildlife Division
PO Box 2007
117 Riverside Drive
Corner Brook, NL
A2H 7S1

Tel: (709) 637-2025
Fax: (709) 637-2032

Website:
www.gov.nl.ca



in Newfoundland & Labrador

Biology, Management & Harvest Strategies



Department of Environment & Conservation

Wildlife Division



Black Bear: the Traditional Predator

Insular Newfoundland's black bears (*Ursus americanus hamiltoni*) have been designated as a distinct subspecies. This designation acknowledges differences in head shape and size, genetic diversity, and a larger-than-average body size compared to other black bears throughout

North America. Black bears are found throughout the Island of Newfoundland, but only occasionally on the Avalon and southern Burin Peninsulas. In Labrador, black bears range from the southern border as far north as the Nakvak Fiord.

Description

The black bear is the largest land carnivore in insular Newfoundland, and the second largest in Labrador, where polar bears are found. Black bears range in size up to 275 kg or 600 lb; males generally range from 90-140 kg (200-300 lb). Females range from 50-90 kg (110-180 lb) and rarely exceed 100 kg (225 lb). Bear sizes and weights vary widely depending on regional differences in habitat quality.

Biology

Black bears breed in June and July. The female estrus period lasts for about a month, with individual sows only receptive for 2-3 days. Pregnancy lasts approximately 6 ½ months, with delayed implantation for 4 or 5 months until she enters the den in late November.

Food availability and physical condition affect breeding and litter size; Newfoundland females average two cubs per litter. Black bears usually hibernate from late November until early April.

Male bears may sometimes kill cubs in the area to reduce competition for breeding females, propagate their own genes, or establish new territory. Predation may be the intent in some cases; adults will often eat cubs they have killed.

Black bears are crepuscular; they are most active at dawn and dusk. Most of their activity occurs a half-hour before sunrise, with a nap or two during the day, then bedding down for the night an hour or two after sunset. This may vary depending on the season, available food, social interactions, presence of cubs, temperature, weather patterns, or human disturbance. Some bears are nocturnal, staying active at night to avoid people or other bears.

With adequate food availability, weights may more than double between August and November, with bears gaining as much as 1-2 lb per day. Adult bears have calorie intake requirements of about 20,000 calories per day to help build winter fat reserves.



When berry crops are poor, bears may focus on foods associated with humans, such as birdseed, dog food, or garbage.

Food abundance influences a bear's reproductive success, survival, food habits, nutrition, habitat use, movement patterns, home range, denning, and interactions with humans.

Black Bear Research

Current research includes an island-wide population index using hair snag stations near Clarenville, Port Saunders and Springdale. In cooperation with the Department of Natural Resources, hair samples are collected annually. Genetic analysis helps determine the number of individual bears visiting snagging stations, giving researchers a good indication of black bear populations and trends.

Another ongoing research initiative is the voluntary bear skull submission program, which allows for assessment of age interpretation, reproductive potential of some females, and detailed cranial measurements, which are proportional to body size.

Skulls also provide a source of tissue for future research. Properly shipped skulls are cleaned and returned to hunters as trophies. A "Cooperating Bear Hunter" hat is also provided as an incentive for hunters to send in their returns, and a "Big Bruin" crest is given to hunters who submit bear skulls that meet size specifications for trophy bears.



Black Bear Licence

In Newfoundland and Labrador, black bears are considered big game animals. Licence applications are available in the annual Hunting and Trapping Guide. In Labrador, black bear licences are sold at a variety of vendor locations. There are two seasons for black bear: spring (May to July) and fall (September to November). Two bears may be taken on a licence. Hunters are also permitted to take coyotes on a black bear licence.

Firearms & Ammunition

When hunting black bears, big game calibres must be used; centrefire rifles .243 or greater using ammunition with bullet weights equal to or greater than 100 grains, and muzzle energy of 1500 foot pounds or greater.

Shotguns may also be used with a slug, as long as they are 20-gauge or larger.

Archery equipment may also be used to hunt black bears. Long bows, recurve bows or compound bows may be used provided they have a minimum draw weight of 20 kg (45lb). All arrows must be tipped with a metal hunting head equipped with two or more sharpened cutting edges.

