

FLORIDA BLACK BEAR

Ursus americanus floridanus



Order:	Carnivora
Family:	Ursidae
FNAI Ranks:	G5T2/S2
U.S. Status:	None
FL Status:	Threatened (does not apply to Baker or Columbia counties or Apalachicola National Forest)



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Description: A large mammal (3 to 3.5 ft. = 2.8 - 3.2 m at the shoulder) with glossy black hair and a brown muzzle. Females average approximately 180 lbs. (82 kg); males average approximately 250 lbs. (113 kg). Individuals in southern Florida may lose their dorsal guard hairs, exposing the woolly brown undercoat. A white chest patch may be present on some individuals. Tail is short and inconspicuous. Ears are round and widely separated. In males, front feet range from 3.5 - 5.5 in. (89 -140 mm)

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by 3.3 - 5.9 in. (84 - 150 mm); rear feet measure 3 in. (76 mm) by 5.5 - 8.7 in. (140 - 221 mm). Sign may include shredded cabbage palm, torn-up logs, and large scratches on trees. Scat (droppings) generally similar to that of dogs, but may vary in consistency and may contain a mix of seeds, hairs, and grasses.

Similar Species: A large, black dog could be mistaken for a black bear, but does not compare in size or foot measurements.

Habitat: A wide variety of forested communities is needed to support the varied seasonal diet of black bears. Forested wetlands are particularly important for diurnal cover. Baygalls (bayheads) are important for cover and dens.

Seasonal Occurrence: Active year-round.

Florida Distribution: Historically ranged across nearly all of Florida. Currently, occurs discontinuously across the state with substantial populations in the Apalachicola to Big Bend area, Baker and Columbia counties, Ocala National Forest region, and Collier to Highlands counties.

Range-wide Distribution: Florida, extreme southern Alabama, and southeastern Georgia.

Conservation Status: Protected on several large areas of public land, including Apalachicola National Forest, St. Marks National Wildlife Refuge, Eglin Air Force Base, Ocala National Forest, Osceola National Forest, Pinhook Swamp Wildlife Management Area, and Big Cypress National Preserve.

Protection and Management: Through purchase or easement, protect additional habitat to support viable populations of bears. Other threats in addition to habitat loss include poaching and collisions with vehicles. Maintain a diversity of habitats over extensive acreage, including dense baygalls that are inaccessible to humans.

Selected References: Brown 1997, Hall 1981, Humphrey (ed.) 1992, Whitaker 1996.