



# Saving AMERICA'S BEARS



*From Yogi to Smokey to Teddy, few animals are as beloved as America's bears. And few animals are as misunderstood.*

The truth is, bears have more to fear from us than we have to fear from them. Here are some of the greatest threats facing bears in the United States today, what Defenders of Wildlife is doing to protect them—and what you can do to help.

## WHAT BEARS ARE UP AGAINST

Almost all the threats facing bears today can be attributed to human activity.

- In the Arctic, climate change poses the single greatest threat to polar bears, as the sea ice they depend on for denning, hunting and mating shrinks every year. Black and brown bears are also being targeted in Alaska under predator control programs, because hunters view them as competition for game.
- In Florida, commercial and residential development destroys and fragments the habitat for threatened black bears, giving them less room to roam and making it more difficult to find food and

mates. Highway projects are also a major problem. In an average year, more than 130 bears are killed on Florida roads, making collisions with vehicles their number one cause of death.

- In the Rockies, grizzlies are often killed by wildlife officials once the bears start to frequent residential areas for easy meals of garbage, livestock, pet food and birdseed, or by hunters who encounter them in the field and shoot rather than use bear spray.
- And in all regions, as bears find themselves forced to live closer to developed areas, human-bear conflicts continue to rise, all too often resulting in the death of the bear.



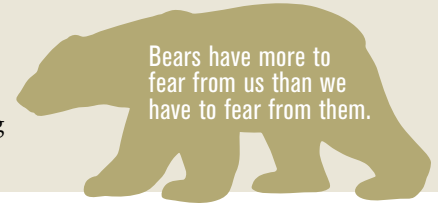
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## DOES A BEAR YOU-KNOW-WHAT IN THE WOODS?

In the woods, along river banks, wherever they roam...And the scat they leave behind is full of berry seeds ready to germinate and nutrients that revitalize the soil.

Bears provide food for other animals when they leave behind the remains of salmon, seals and other prey. They also help prevent the overpopulations of deer, elk and other prey species that can cause harmful imbalances in nature.

Bears are considered an “umbrella species,” which means that they roam through a large area using a variety of habitat types. So when we protect them and their habitat, we’re also protecting many other species.



## DEFENDERS IN ACTION

Defenders of Wildlife has been working to protect bears for decades. Here are just a few things we’re doing now:

### FOR POLAR BEARS

- Cosponsoring a pilot program with World Wildlife Fund and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to provide bear-resistant food lockers to the coastal village of Kaktovik, Alaska
- Hosting a workshop to examine the pros and cons of supplemental feeding of polar bears
- Fighting in court to prevent efforts to overturn the listing of the polar bear as threatened under the Endangered Species Act

### FOR FLORIDA BLACK BEARS

- Educating the public on living responsibly with bears
- Advocating for the installation of wildlife crossings on roads in bear country
- Speaking for bears by commenting on development plans affecting bear ranges

### FOR GRIZZLY/BROWN BEARS

- Working with ranchers in the Northern Rockies to develop nonlethal methods for keeping bears away from livestock and compensating them financially for the losses caused by bears
- Cost-sharing on projects such as fencing around town dumps and bear-resistant food lockers in campgrounds
- Serving on the Anchorage Bear Committee, an interorganizational team focused on bear safety and awareness education



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## WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP

Here are some actions you can take to make a difference for bears across the nation.

- Contact elected and appointed officials and tell them bears deserve to be protected. Sign up for Defenders e-mail alerts ([www.defenders.org/signup](http://www.defenders.org/signup)) so you’ll know when there are specific actions you can take.
- Support conservation and education efforts at national and state parks and forests, zoos, nature centers and other such facilities.
- Use less energy and demand new energy development in your area be as efficient as possible.
- Educate your children about the importance of bears in nature.
- Support smart growth policies that keep development out of habitat important to bears and other wildlife.
- Stay informed about local transportation planning and projects to be sure they are compatible with wildlife movement and safety.
- Adopt a bear from the Defenders of Wildlife Adoption Center ([www.wildlifeadoption.org](http://www.wildlifeadoption.org)) to support our work fighting for bears.

## IF YOU LIVE IN BEAR COUNTRY

- **NEVER** feed a bear. “A fed bear is a dead bear.”
- **Keep trash indoors until the morning of pickup or use bear-resistant trash containers.**
- **Store all food, including pet food, indoors.**
- **Protect livestock and gardens with electric fencing.**
- **Always watch out for wildlife while driving.**
- **Carry bear spray when hiking in bear country and know how to use it properly.**