

Stop the Baiting of Black Bears (*Ursus americanus*)

"Hooking an animal on an artificial food source, then blasting it from 200 yards, is analogous to worm fishing at a fish hatchery raceway. Where is the sport?"ⁱ

What is Bear Baiting?

Bear baiting involves intensive feeding of black bears, typically weeks in advance of hunting seasons, so that the animals become accustomed to feeding in a certain area and then easy targets for trophy hunters waiting nearby. Bait piles for black bears usually consist of donuts, candy, grease, rotting garbage, corn, fish, meat and other high-calorie foods, which can be toxic and even fatal to bears and other wildlife.ⁱⁱ Baiting bears to shoot them at close range habituates bears to human scents, which can result in negative human-bear interactions.

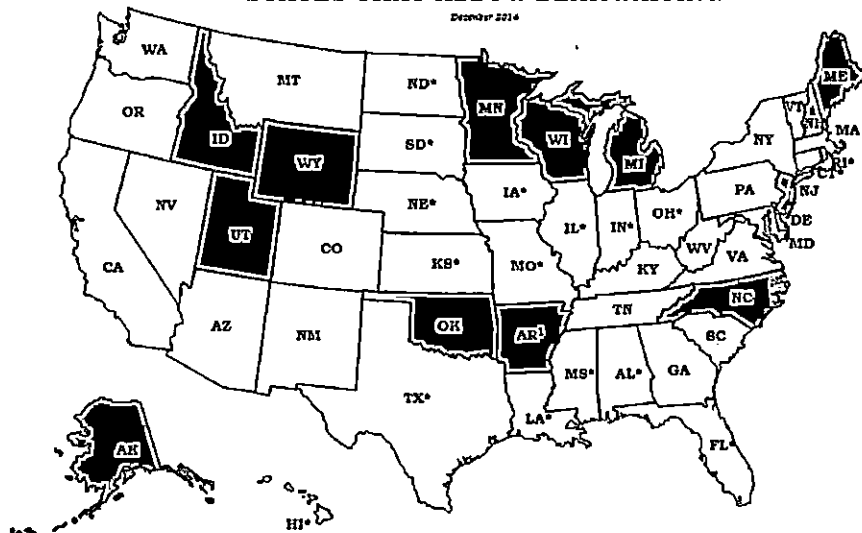


What are the Welfare and Ethical Considerations of Baiting?

- ◆ Bait piles make females with cubs vulnerable to hunters, and cubs can be orphaned if their mother is shot.ⁱⁱⁱ
- ◆ Bait sites concentrate bears – putting young bears in harm's way. Adult bears may prey upon cubs or small bears.^{iv}
- ◆ Some of the baits that hunters use are made from waste candy that contains Theobromine, which is toxic to dogs, coyotes, foxes, rabbits, hares and wild fowl, and recently documented as fatal to bears.^v Spoiled baits are also toxic and even fatal to bears and other wildlife.^{vi}
- ◆ Bait sites concentrate wildlife of different species and thus increase the potential for disease and parasite transmission between species, especially rabies.^{vii}
- ◆ Baiting is considered unsporting, even among many sportsmen, because it is not "fair chase," the cornerstone of ethical hunting.^{viii}

STATES THAT ALLOW BEAR BAITING

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ⁱ Arkansas baiting on private land only; Oklahoma baiting prohibited in WMAs

■ Allow Baitingⁱ (13)

* States that have NO bear hunting

"Going out there and putting jelly doughnuts down, and Yogi comes up and sits there and thinks he's found the mother lode for five days in a row—and then you back-shoot him from a tree? . . . That ain't sport—that's an assassination."^{ix}

How Does Baiting Increase Bear-Human Conflicts? Baiting habituates bears to human scents and can stimulate negative bear-human interactions. Outfitters and baiters place bait piles into the environment at the time when bears go into a frenzied eating behavior, called *hyperphagia*, in late summer or fall just when bears need to gain 20 to 40 pounds per week to survive hibernation.

- ◆ Bears that become habituated to human foods become less shy and unpredictable.^x As a result of placing junk food in the woods, bears associate food with the smells of humans, and even livestock.^{xi} Feeding bears with bait increases the likelihood of conflicts.
- ◆ Baited bears experience serious behavior modifications, which are sometimes irreversible.^{xii} Food-conditioned bears change their eating habits, home ranges, and movement patterns.^{xiii}



What are the Environmental Problems Associated with Baiting?

- ◆ Bait sites require ease of access and biologists have noted habitat destruction at these places, including the spread of invasive plants.^{xiv}
- ◆ Bait piles are smelly and irritating to other outdoor recreationists, and, if they are near roadways, can endanger bears who travel near roadways to access bait piles.^{xv}

Does the Amount of Food in the Environment Regulate Bear Populations?

- ◆ Ironically, as a result of extra food available from bait piles, more mother bears are able to produce young, and cub and sub-adult survival increases.^{xvi} This increases the bear population, the opposite result that many wildlife managers intend.^{xvii} Food is the key factor in bear population regulation. Craig McLaughlin, Maine's former lead bear biologist explained:
 - “There is little evidence that bear populations are regulated by internal factors, such as behavior It is more likely that they are limited by their food supply, which may control age of sexual maturity, proportion of adult females that reproduce, and survival of bears (primarily cubs, yearlings, and subadults)”^{xviii}
- ◆ Other biologists concur that supplemental food grows the bear population.
 - Bears that have access to supplemental foods from human sources are more productive and cub survival increases.^{xix} Females that have access to human foods start reproduction years earlier than bears that rely only upon natural foods.^{xx} When bears obtain human foods, the interval of time between litters decreases while the numbers of cubs increase.^{xxi}
 - Beck et al. write: “Baiting in the fall may also increase cub production the following year in those years when fall foods are scarce. In food-poor years, supplemental food may also increase survival for yearling bears. The short-term impact upon population productivity may be significant.”^{xxii}
 - Dunkley and Cattet found in their research on baiting that: “physical condition and reproductive success are closely linked; animals in good condition generally have better reproductive success than animals in poor condition.”^{xxiii}

Click [here](#) to learn how you can help us protect bears from baiting

Sources:

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- ^{iv} M. Elfstrom et al., "Ultimate and Proximate Mechanisms Underlying the Occurrence of Bears Close to Human Settlements: Review and Management Implications," *Mammal Review* 44, no. 1 (2014).
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- ^{viii} J. Posewitz, *Beyond Fair Chase: The Ethic and Tradition of Hunting* (Helena, Montana: Falcon Press, 1994); T. L. Teel, R. S. Krannich, and R. H. Schmidt, "Utah Stakeholders' Attitudes toward Selected Cougar and Black Bear Management Practices," *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 30, no. 1 (2002); C.W. Ryan, J.W. Edwards, and M.D. Duda, "West Virginia Residents: Attitudes and Opinions toward American Black Bear Hunting," *Ursus* 2, (2009); C. A. Loker and D. J. Decker, "Colorado Black Bear Hunting Referendum: What Was Behind the Vote?," *Wildlife Society Bulletin* 23, no. 3 (1995).
- ^{ix} Jesse Ventura, Governor of Minnesota circa 2002. <http://archive.audubonmagazine.org/incite/incite0509.html>.
- ^x Inslerman et al., "Baiting and Supplemental Feeding of Game Wildlife Species. The Wildlife Society.; Dunkley and Cattet, "A Comprehensive Review of the Ecological and Human Social Effects of Artificial Feeding and Baiting of Wildlife."
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- ^{xii} Inslerman et al., "Baiting and Supplemental Feeding of Game Wildlife Species. The Wildlife Society."
- ^{xiii} J. P. Beckmann and J. Berger, "Rapid Ecological and Behavioural Changes in Carnivores: The Responses of Black Bears (*Ursus Americanus*) to Altered Food," *Journal of Zoology* 261, (2003).
- ^{xiv} Hank Hristienko and Jr. McDonald, John E., "Going in the 21st Century: A Perspective on Trends and Controversies in the Management of the Black Bear " *Ursus* 18, no. 1 (2007).
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- ^{xvi} Beck et al., "Sociological and Ethical Considerations of Black Bear Hunting." Lynn L. Rogers, "Effects of Food Supply and Kinship on Social Behavior, Movements, and Population Growth of Black Bears in Northeastern Minnesota," *Wildlife Monographs, The Wildlife Society* 51, no. 97 (1987); Lynn L. Rogers, "The Role of Habitat Quality in the Natural Regulation of Black Bear Populations," *Technical Report, National Park Service*, no. NPS/NRWR/NRTR-93-/12 (1993); Dunkley and Cattet, "A Comprehensive Review of the Ecological and Human Social Effects of Artificial Feeding and Baiting of Wildlife."
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- ^{xxi} Rogers, "The Role of Habitat Quality in the Natural Regulation of Black Bear Populations."
- ^{xxii} Beck et al., "Sociological and Ethical Considerations of Black Bear Hunting."
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