PUTTING BLACK BEARS ON THE FURBEARER LIST

After a long absence from Iowa\(^1\), the black bear has begun repopulating the state. Northeast Iowa has habitat that favors black bear. The black bear currently has no protection from hunting, so any black bear found in Iowa can legally be killed.

In order to allow the black bear to continue expanding in Iowa, the black bear must be protected from hunting pressure. The way to accomplish this is to add the back bear to the furbearer list, Iowa Code Section 481A.1(20). Initially the black bear can be given a closed season. Once the population expands, a sustainable hunting season can be established.

Black bear are not common in Iowa, but are spotted in Iowa almost every year. Black bear live in Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Missouri, so it is not surprising that bear periodically make their way into Iowa.

In 2017, black bear sightings were reported in Poweshiek County and in Mahaska County.\(^2\)

In 2016, a black bear was struck on a highway in Allamakee County, in northeast Iowa.\(^3\)

In the spring of 2015, tracks of a black bear were identified on the south side of Dubuque.\(^4\) Iowa Department of Natural Resources believe the bear entered Iowa from Minnesota or Wisconsin.\(^5\)

In the summer of 2014 a female black bear and two cubs were observed in Clayton County. A young male has also been spotted.\(^6\)

Although beekeepers have expressed concerns about the black bear, the beehives can be surrounded by electric fences which will keep the bears at bay.

**The Iowa Chapter supports placing the black bear on the furbearer list.**

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1. The black bear was extirpated from Iowa by over-hunting in the mid 1800’s. For more information, see *A Country So Full of Game* by James J. Dinsmore, University of Iowa Press, 1994, pages 50 to 56.
2. “Black bear spotted in Iowa again”, KCCI, September 13, 2017
3. “Black Bear Killed on Allamakee County Highway”, June 27, 2016, Iowa Department of Natural Resources news release
5. “Black Bears in the Upper Midwest and Iowa”, flyer available from the Iowa Department of Natural Resources
6. Orlan Love, “Time to consider Iowa as bear habitat?”, Cedar Rapids Gazette, August 7, 2014