

Black Bear Damage and Nuisance Complaints 2007

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Abstract

The United States Department of Agriculture, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, Wildlife Services (WS) personnel received 1,193 bear complaints during calendar year 2007 and trapped and translocated 763 bears. Three hundred eighty-two bears were trapped from agriculture complaints, 336 from nuisance complaints and 45 from property damage complaints. The majority of complaints (n = 699, 59%) were resolved over the phone with advice and recommendations from nuisance wildlife specialists located at the Rhinelander and Waupun District Offices. Complaints requiring field investigation or trapping (n = 494, 41%) were dispatched to WS field personnel. Bears captured were translocated to large blocks of contiguous public forestlands.

Methods

Wildlife Services co-manages bear damage/nuisance abatement work with the WDNR. Wildlife Services entered into a cooperative agreement with the WDNR in 1990. The WS program is administered from a State Office in Sun Prairie and District Offices in Rhinelander and Waupun. The Rhinelander District Office is supervised by Bob Willging and the Waupun District Office by Charles Lovell. The Rhinelander Office covers roughly the northern half of the state and the Waupun Office the southern half. Wildlife Specialists are located in the field throughout both Districts.

A nuisance bear was characterized as any bear causing problems at bird feeders, garbage cans, dumpsters, campgrounds or similar type situations generally involving a food or scent attractant. Agriculture and property damage bears were defined as bears causing depredations to agricultural crops, beehives, livestock, or property (e.g. house siding). Bear complaints received by WS District Offices on the toll-free lines are screened to determine the type and severity of the complaint. Most nuisance complaints are resolved by providing information on food removal and other ways to reduce bear visits. Chronic nuisance complaints not involving a food attractant are dispatched to field staff. After investigating the complaint, field staff may set a culvert trap in an attempt to trap and translocate the bear if appropriate. Agricultural and property damage complaints are generally resolved by trapping and translocation.

Bears that exhibit bold or aggressive behavior towards people, are highly habituated to people, depredate livestock, or routinely cross electric fences and destroy apiaries may be euthanized by WDNR or WS agents. WS may sometimes recommend that agriculture damage shooting permits be issued by WDNR to producers to alleviate excessive bear damage to crops. WDNR is responsible for issuing agriculture and nuisance bear shooting permits.

Results

Calendar year 2007 marked the eighteenth year that WS has assisted WDNR with bear damage/nuisance abatement. Bear complaints in 2007 (1,193) were up 7% from 2006 (1,107), and down 17% from the record number of complaints (1,439) received in 1995. The majority of the complaints (81%) were nuisance complaints, 7% involved property damage, and 12% involved damage to agriculture (Figure 1).

WS personnel live-trapped and translocated 763 bears during 2007 (Table 1). Fifty percent of the bears trapped and translocated were involved in agriculture damage situations, although agriculture complaints accounted for only 12% of the total complaints. The number of bears translocated for agriculture complaints decreased from 2006 when a hard mast failure likely resulted in black bears congregating near agriculture fields (Figure 2).

A total of 336 bears were trapped and moved from nuisance situations, and 45 from property damage complaint situations. Bear traps were set in 36% of nuisance complaint situations, while 64% were handled with advice and recommendations. The toll-free phone system for reporting bear complaints again proved invaluable as most nuisance complaints came in on the toll-free lines.

During 2007, WS or the WDNR euthanized 9 bears. These bears either depredated livestock, were highly habituated to humans, or consistently crossed electric fences.

Agricultural Damage Bear Permits were issued to eight farms in 2007. Thirty-two bears were killed under these permits.

The cooperative service agreement between the WDNR and WS for bear nuisance and damage management continues to work extremely well.

Table 1. *Number of black bears trapped and translocated by county and type, 2007.*

County	Agriculture	Property	Nuisance	Total
Ashland	8	6	8	22
Barron	6	0	2	8
Bayfield	23	5	43	71
Burnett	1	0	8	9
Chippewa	0	0	2	2
Douglas	4	3	23	30
Florence	69	1	0	70
Forest	13	0	8	21
Iron	0	0	11	11
Jackson	0	0	1	1
Langlade	57	0	4	61
Lincoln	10	0	2	12
Marathon	5	0	0	5
Marinette	0	3	2	5
Oconto	1	4	6	11
Oneida	0	6	17	23
Portage	0	0	1	1
Price	48	8	62	118
Rusk	27	0	10	37
Sauk	0	0	1	1
Sawyer	100	8	96	204
St. Croix	0	0	1	1
Taylor	7	0	3	10
Vilas	0	0	19	19
Washburn	1	1	6	8
Waushara	2		0	2
Total	382	45	336	763

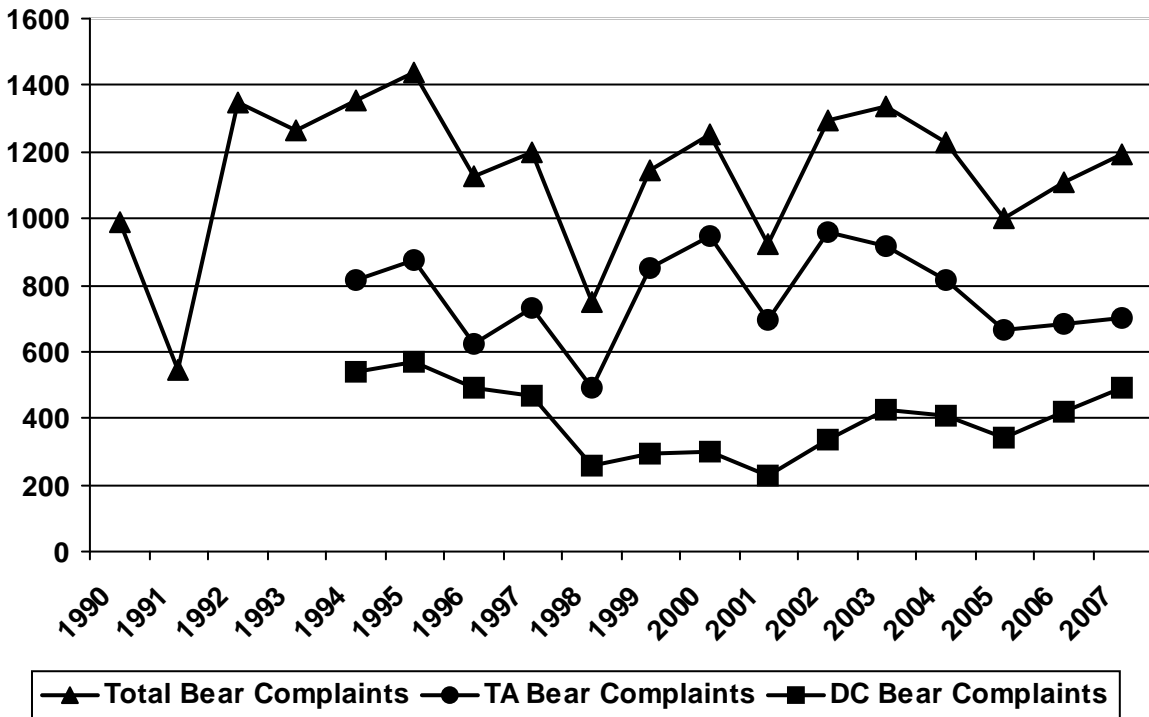


Figure 1. Total black bear complaints, black bear complaints handled with technical assistance (TA) and black bear complaints requiring direct control (DC), 1990-2007.

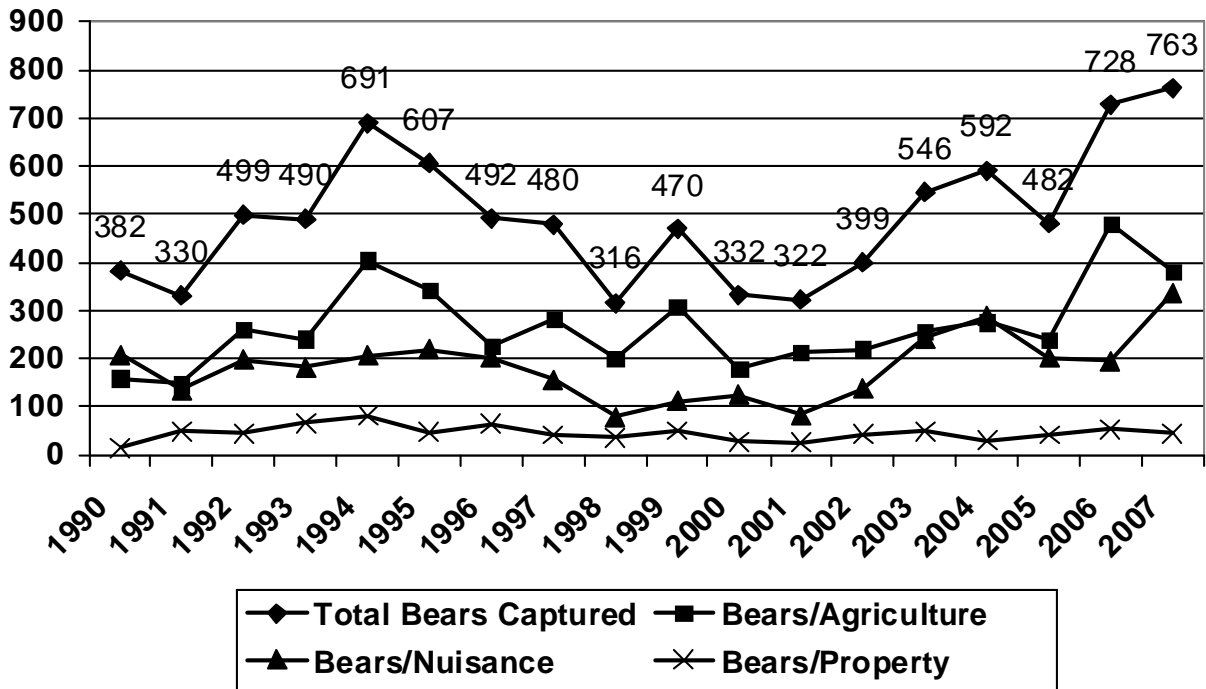


Figure 2. Number of black bears translocated by WS, total and by type of complaint, 1990-2007.