Dogs for Bear Hunting
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**Effects of habitat and hunting framework on American black bear harvest structure in Wisconsin**

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**Abstract:** Sex and age composition of harvested individuals often is used to estimate population parameters and inform management decisions. However, factors other than sex and age structure of the harvested population may affect composition of the harvest and complicate the interpretation of harvest data. For example, class-specific behavior could predispose certain age and sex classes to harvest. Those classes also may respond differentially to environmental variables such as natural food abundance. In addition, hunter methods such as baiting or hunting with dogs are known to alter the composition of harvests of American black bears (Ursus americanus) and influence hunter success. Bear hunting methods and general habitat characteristics vary geographically in Wisconsin, USA. From 1999 through 2004, bear hunting was regulated so that first season hunting opportunities alternated annually between hunters aided by dogs and hunters without dogs in portions of 21 northern counties. Bear hunting with dogs was prohibited in the remainder of the state. We analyzed bear harvest records from those 6 years to evaluate relative effects of forest cover, forest composition, and legal hunting methods on sex and age composition of harvested bears. With other variables held constant, mean age of harvested female bears was 0.6 years older in counties that were partially open to hunting bears with dogs. Countywide allowance of hunting with dogs equated to a 1.3 year increase in the mean age of harvested female bears over counties where the use of dogs was not permitted. A 20% increase in area of potentially mast-producing forests was associated with a 0.7 year decrease in mean age of harvested females. Mean age of harvested male bears was 0.3 years higher when hunters with dogs hunted after hunters without dogs. Finally, males comprised higher percents of harvests in counties with less total forest cover or greater mast-type forest cover when other variables were held constant. Our study suggests that variation in hunting method and habitat influenced harvest outcomes at a broad spatial scale and warrant consideration when interpreting patterns in sex and age structure of black bear harvests.

**West Virginia residents' attitudes and opinions toward American black bear hunting**

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**Abstract:** American black bear (Ursus americanus) hunting has come under close scrutiny over the past decade. As black bear populations have increased and expanded, wildlife agencies have been faced with new challenges on how to set population and harvest goals. Wildlife agencies have altered proposed regulations or have had seasons entirely stopped because of public opposition, necessitating a proactive approach to wildlife management based on a scientific understanding of public opinion rather than reactive decision-making in response to public resistance. In November-December 2006, we conducted a telephone survey of 1,206 West Virginia residents to determine their opinions and attitudes toward black bear populations and hunting seasons and to help strengthen the state's black bear management strategies. Although the majority of West Virginians, nearly 3 of 4 respondents in this study, indicated they know at least something about black bears in West Virginia, there were significant regional differences in the
public’s assessment of their knowledge of the species. Although most respondents thought the black bear population size was "about right," again, there were regional differences among respondents. In general, most respondents supported black bear hunting if the population was carefully monitored, if they knew the population was stable, or both; however, a number of regional and sociodemographic characteristics appeared to influence public opinion on black bear hunting and hunting seasons in the state, and support for specific seasons varied considerably according to hunting method. Interestingly, our study found that even among hunters, public opposition exceeded support for the current, year-round training season of black bear hunting dogs without harvesting animals in the state. Although it is important for wildlife managers to consider human dimensions and public opinion data in conjunction with biological data when making management decisions, we demonstrate that it also is important for managers to consider regional and sociodemographic differences with respect to attitudes and opinions when making management decisions and population objectives.

Hunting patterns, ban on baiting, and harvest demographics of brown bears in Sweden

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Abstract: We analyzed harvest data to describe hunting patterns and harvest demography of brown bears (Ursus arctos) killed in 3 geographic regions in Sweden during 1981-2004. In addition, we investigated the effects of a ban on baiting, instituted in 2001, and 2 major changes in the quota system: a switch to sex-specific quotas in 1992 and a return to total quotas in 1999. Brown bears (n = 887) were harvested specifically by bear hunters and incidentally by moose (Alces alces) hunters. Both hunter categories harvested bears 1) using dogs (37%), 2) by still hunting (30%), 3) with the use of bait (18%), and 4) by stalking (16%). The proportion of bears killed with different harvest methods varied among regions and between bear- and moose-oriented hunters. We found differences between male (52%) and female bears (48%) with respect to the variables that explained age. Moose-oriented hunters using still hunting harvested the youngest male bears. Bears harvested during the first management period (1981-1991) were older and had greater odds of being male than during the subsequent period. It appears that hunters harvesting bears in Sweden are less selective than their North American counterparts, possibly due to differences in the hunting system. When comparing the 4 years immediately prior to the ban on baiting with the 4 years following the ban, we found no differences in average age of harvested bears, sex ratio, or proportion of bears killed with stalking, still hunting, and hunting with dogs, suggesting that the ban on baiting in Sweden had no immediate effect on patterns of brown bear harvest demography and remaining hunting methods. As the demographic and evolutionary side effects of selective harvesting receive growing attention, wildlife managers should be aware that differences in harvest systems between jurisdictions may cause qualitative and quantitative differences in harvest biases.

Going into the 21(st) century: a perspective on trends and controversies in the management of the American blackbear

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Abstract: We surveyed 52 jurisdictions across continental North America to gather comparative information on management strategies for American black bear (Ursus americanus) for the late 1980s and the start of the 21(st) century. Specifically, we asked about: population estimates and targets, harvest objectives and
hunting methods (spring hunt, use of bait, use of dogs), hunter and harvest data, and trends in human-bear conflicts. Most population estimates were derived through a subjective process of extrapolation and expert opinion and were used as the basis for adjusting management practices. In 17 jurisdictions that had spring hunts, estimated black bear populations increased by 6%, compared to a 51% increase in the 21 jurisdictions with fall-only seasons. Estimated populations increased by 87% in the 14 jurisdictions without hunting seasons. Another 10 jurisdictions had reports of occasional transient bears but no resident population. Jurisdictions with liberal hunting regimes tended to maintain human-bear conflict at stable levels, whereas those with more restrictive regimes appeared to experience a growing trend. We suggest that the goal of management should be to balance the goals of maintaining viable black bear populations, safeguarding human welfare and property, and satisfying the needs of stakeholders in a cost-effective manner. Hunting and proactive education and awareness programs are keys to achieving that balance. By setting appropriate harvest objectives and hunting methods to regulate the density and distribution of black bears, in conjunction with measures to deter bears from associating people and dwellings with food, agencies should be better able to manage for human-bear conflict in the 21st century.

Paying for tolerance: Rural citizens' attitudes toward wolf depredation and compensation

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Times Cited: 52 (from Web of Science)
Cited References: 37 [view related records] Citation Map

Abstract: As wolf (Canis lupus) populations recover in Wisconsin (U. S. A.), their depredations on livestock, pets, and hunting dogs have increased. We used a mail-back survey to assess the tolerance of 535 rural citizens of wolves and their preferences regarding the management of "problem" wolves. Specifically, we tested whether people who had lost domestic animals to wolves or other predators were less tolerant of wolves than neighboring residents who had not and whether compensation payments improved tolerance of wolves. We assessed tolerance via proxy measures related to an individual's preferred wolf population size for Wisconsin and the likelihood she or he would shoot a wolf. We also measured individuals' approval of lethal control and other wolf-management tactics under five conflict scenarios. Multivariate analysis revealed that the strongest predictor of tolerance was social group. Bear (Ursus americanus) hunters were concerned about losing valuable hounds to wolves and were more likely to approve of lethal control and reducing the wolf population than were livestock producers, who were more concerned than general residents. To a lesser degree, education level, experience of loss, and gender were also significant. Livestock producers and bear hunters who had been compensated for their losses to wolves were not more tolerant than their counterparts who alleged a loss but received no compensation. Yet all respondents approved of compensation payments as a management strategy. Our results indicate that deep-rooted social identity and occupation are more powerful predictors of tolerance of wolves than individual encounters with these large carnivores.

Effects of hunting with hounds on a non-target species living on the edge of a protected area

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Abstract: The impact of hunting on wildlife is a complex phenomenon which varies in space and across time, and yet limited knowledge is available on it. This is especially the case of the indirect effects of hunting on the behaviour of target as well as non-target species. Here we analyze how hunting affected the spatial behaviour of 62 radiocollared roe deer (Capreolus capreolus) in a protected area adjacent to areas where hunting with hounds (target species: wild boar and hares) and stalking with rifles from high seats without dogs (target species: roe deer) were permitted during the hunting season. Our results showed that hunting caused a significant increase in the home range size of monitored deer, as well as a "reserve effect", whereby roe deer used the protected area as a refuge from hunters. These behavioural responses were significant only at times when hunting with hounds was conducted, even though roe deer was not the target species of this technique. Reactions to the perceived risk of predation varied among age and sex classes, with yearling being more sensitive and using the protected area more than adults. As shown in our study, hunting harassment provoked by drives with hounds significantly affects the behaviour of non-target species. Therefore, the use of long-legged hounds represents a variable that should be carefully evaluated by wildlife managers in their management plans and conservation policies, especially when endangered or vulnerable species are present. (C) 2010 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.