



County	Total
Androscoggin	0
Aroostook	989
Cumberland	7
Franklin	120
Hancock	105
Kennebec	2
Knox	1
Lincoln	0
Oxford	201
Penobscot	292
Piscataquis	313
Sagadahoc	0
Somerset	429
Waldo	2
Washington	241
York	17
State	2719
Male	1583
Female	1123
Unreported	13
<u>By Hunter Residence</u>	
Resident	854
Nonresident	1865

2008 Bear Harvest by Town
 Total = 2,719

Maine's 2008 Black Bear Season

The general hunting season for black bear in 2008 opened August 25 and closed November 29. Hunters were allowed to hunt bears near natural food sources or by still-hunting throughout this 3-month period. Hunting over bait was permitted from August 25 through September 20. The hound season overlapped the bait season, opening September 8 and closing October 31. The bear trapping season opened September 1 and closed October 31.

The 2008 harvest of 2,719 bears marks the 4th straight year of a harvest just below 3,000 bears, when previous harvests averaged 3,700 bears. In 2008, 2,038 bears were taken over bait (75%), 329 bears were taken by hound hunters (12%), 75 bears were taken in traps (3%), 122 were taken by unreported methods (4%), and 155 bears (6%) were harvested by deer hunters. Most bears were taken early in the season, with 2,341 bears (86%) harvested before the end of September. When fall foods are abundant, as they were this year, bears enter dens later providing greater hunting opportunity to deer hunters. This year, Maine deer hunters harvested more bears than last year (155 vs. 43).

Geographic Distribution of the Harvest

Bears were harvested in 27 Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs). No bears were taken in WMDs 22 and 23. The density of harvest expressed as the number of bears killed per 100 square miles of habitat (forested land) was greatest in WMD 3 at 23 bears/100 mi² followed closely by WMDs 6 and 28 with 22 and 17 bears harvested/100 mi². In all other WMDs, hunters harvested less than 15 bears/100 mi² (statewide average of 9.4 bears/100 mi²). Bears were harvested in 13 of the state's 16 counties. Most bears (989) were harvested in Aroostook county accounting for 36% of the harvest. No bears were taken in Lincoln, Waldo, and Sagadahoc counties.

Residence of Successful Hunters

Maine's reputation for producing high-quality bear hunting is reflected in the harvest distribution by hunter residency. Visitors to Maine killed 1,865 bears (69%) of the 2,719 bears tagged during 2008. Non-resident hunters shot most of the bears (75%) taken over bait and with the use of hounds (69%), although bait hunting remains popular amongst resident hunters with 59% of successful resident hunters taking their bear over bait. Although few bears are taken during the deer season or in traps, Maine residents accounted for the majority (79% and 84%, respectively) of the bears taken during those seasons.

Assistance by Registered Maine Guides

In 2008, guides helped take 81% of bears harvested over hounds, 77% of the bears taken over bait, 27% of trapped bears, 26% of the bears for which method of take was unreported, and 3% of the bears taken by deer hunters. Guides assisted 194 residents (23%) and 1,692 nonresidents (92%) with their successful hunts in 2008.

Sex and Age Distribution of the Harvest

Males made up 58% (1,583 bears) of the 2008 harvest. Adult bears accounted for 94% (2,559 bears) of the harvest and sex and age were not reported for an additional 13 bears (<1%).

Prospects for the 2009 season

The Department has adopted a generic bear season framework to maintain consistent hunting periods, unless management concerns require changes to the lengths of hunting or trapping periods. In 2009, the season will remain similar to those in recent years. Under our current bear season framework, the season begins on the last Monday in August and closes on the last Saturday in November, generally a 13-week period (August 31-November 28, 2009).

Current population models indicated that Maine's black bear population can sustain a harvest of up to 15% of the population. Our current bear season framework and past hunter participation rates provides the opportunity for hunters to stabilize Maine's bear population with a harvest between 2,300 and 3,500 bears. Our population estimate of 23,000 bears is a conservative estimate, especially given recent high cub numbers and cub survival rates. Over the last several years, we have been collecting new information to update our population estimates including equipping a sample of bears with GPS collars and collecting teeth from harvested black bears. In the next couple of years, we should have sufficient information to update our population estimate and modify hunting seasons if necessary to meet current management objectives (i.e., stabilize the bear population).