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Ohio Department of Natural Resources
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Summary of 2014 Black Bear Observations in Ohio

ODNR Division of Wildlife Procedure 6 and the “Black Bear Observation Report” form provide the basis for tracking, reporting, and summarizing sightings of black bears in Ohio. In 2014, 135 sightings involving an estimated 88 individual black bears were received (Table 1). This represents a decrease in the total number of sightings from 158, but an increase in the number of individuals from 74 in 2013. The number of individual bears is a subjective judgment.

The number and percentage of confirmed sightings (confirmed by evidence such as tracks, photos, etc.) was higher than that of the previous year. Sixty (44%) of the 135 sightings were confirmed by Division of Wildlife personnel (Table 1). Likewise the number of individuals was higher than in 2013. The number of counties involved, however, was comparable to that of the previous year. These 60 sightings represented an estimated 42 bears in 20 counties. For comparison, in 2013, 54 (34%) of 158 sightings were confirmed for an estimated 28 bears in 23 counties. Although the number one source for verification of bear sightings was trail camera pictures (Table 2; n = 18, 30%), photographs and video taken by eye witnesses, along with tracks and damage that could only be caused by a bear collectively accounted for over half of the verified sightings (Table 2; n = 31; 51.7%).

A higher number and percentage of nuisance complaints compared to that of the previous year was received. Thirty-four (26%) of the 135 observations involved nuisance

situations (Table 1). These 34 complaints involved an estimated 28 individual bears in 10 counties. For comparison, 25 (16%) of the 158 observations during 2013 included nuisance situations, which involved an estimated 17 individual bears in 9 counties. During 2014, 20 of the nuisance sightings were confirmed for 18 individual bears in 7 counties (Table 1). Nuisance bear situations recorded during 2014 included damaging beehives at apiaries (15), raiding bird feeders (13), eating from garbage cans and dumpsters (3), and damaging structures or property (3). Two bears died as a result from being struck by vehicles, one each in Mahoning and Washington counties.

Black bear sightings were received during every month in 2014. Fifty-two percent of the sightings were reported from May through July coincident with peak black bear breeding activity and dispersal of juvenile males. There were 2 sightings of a sow traveling with juveniles, and 10 additional sightings of lone cubs. There was a sighting of a sow with 1 juvenile and another of a sow with 2 juveniles, both from Athens County. The sighting of the sow with 2 juveniles was confirmed; the observer was able to take a picture of the 2nd young bear, which appeared to be a yearling.

Bear sightings were reported in 43 Ohio counties during 2014 (Table 1). Most sightings (55%) were in Wildlife District 3 (northeastern Ohio) counties. Formal sightings from 1993 through present show bear observations in 64 predominately eastern and south-central counties (Fig. 1). Black bear sightings have been confirmed in 53 of the 64 counties since 1993 (Fig. 2). The first confirmed sightings for Hamilton County occurred during 2014. Compared with the 10-year average (141), 2014 was a fairly average year for black bear sightings, and the overall trend is increasing (Fig. 3).

We thank Division of Wildlife personnel who were involved in investigating and reporting observations.

Table 1. Black bear sightings reported during 2014 in Ohio, classified by type.

County	All Sightings	Confirmed Sightings	All Nuisance Reports	Confirmed Nuisance Reports
Adams	2	1		
Ashtabula	21	14	11	6
Athens	5	2		
Belmont	2	2		
Brown	1			
Carroll	1	1		
Clermont	1			
Columbiana	6		1	
Delaware	1			
Fairfield	4		2	
Gallia	1			
Geauga	4	2	3	2
Guernsey	1	1		
Hamilton	1	1		
Hancock	1			
Harrison	1			
Highland	1			
Hocking	4	1		
Huron	1			
Jackson	2			
Jefferson	1			
Lake	1			
Lawrence	2	1	1	
Lucas	1			
Madison	1			
Mahoning	8	4	1	1
Meigs	1			
Monroe	3	3	1	1
Morgan	1	1		
Muskingum	1			
Pike	6	4		
Portage	4	3	4	3
Richland	2			
Ross	2			
Scioto	5	2		
Seneca	1			
Stark	2	2		
Summit	1	1	1	1
Trumbull	21	13	9	6
Tuscarawas	3			
Vinton	3			
Washington	2	1		
Wood	2			
TOTALS	135	60	34	20

Table 2. Source of verification for bear sightings during 2014.

Source	Number	%
Trail cam picture	18	30.0
Photograph/Video	12	20.0
Tracks	11	18.3
Damage	8	13.3
Multiple calls	4	6.7
Observation	3	5.0
Scat	2	3.3
Dead	2	3.3

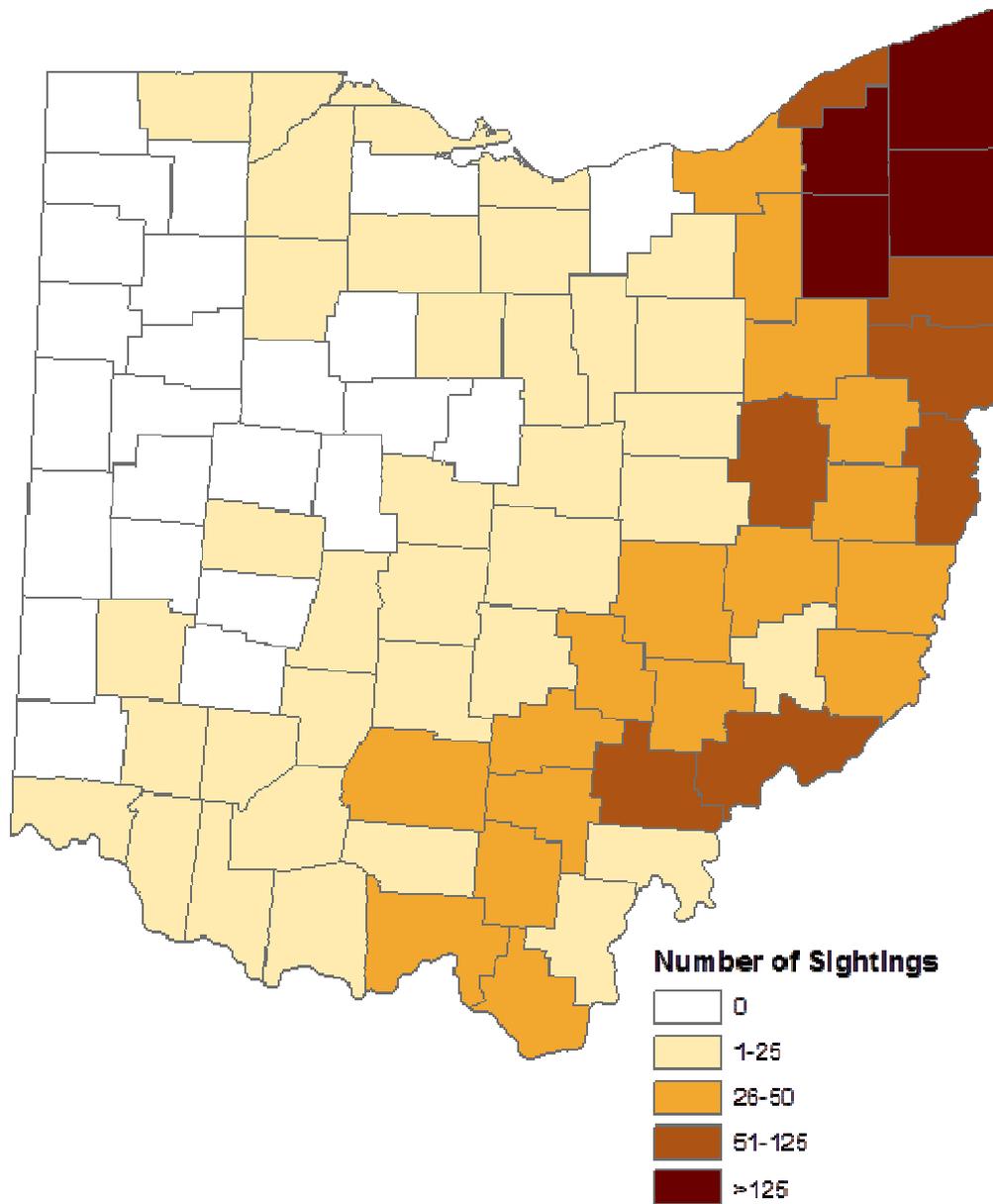


Figure 1. Black bear sightings (confirmed and unconfirmed) in Ohio by county, 1993-2014.

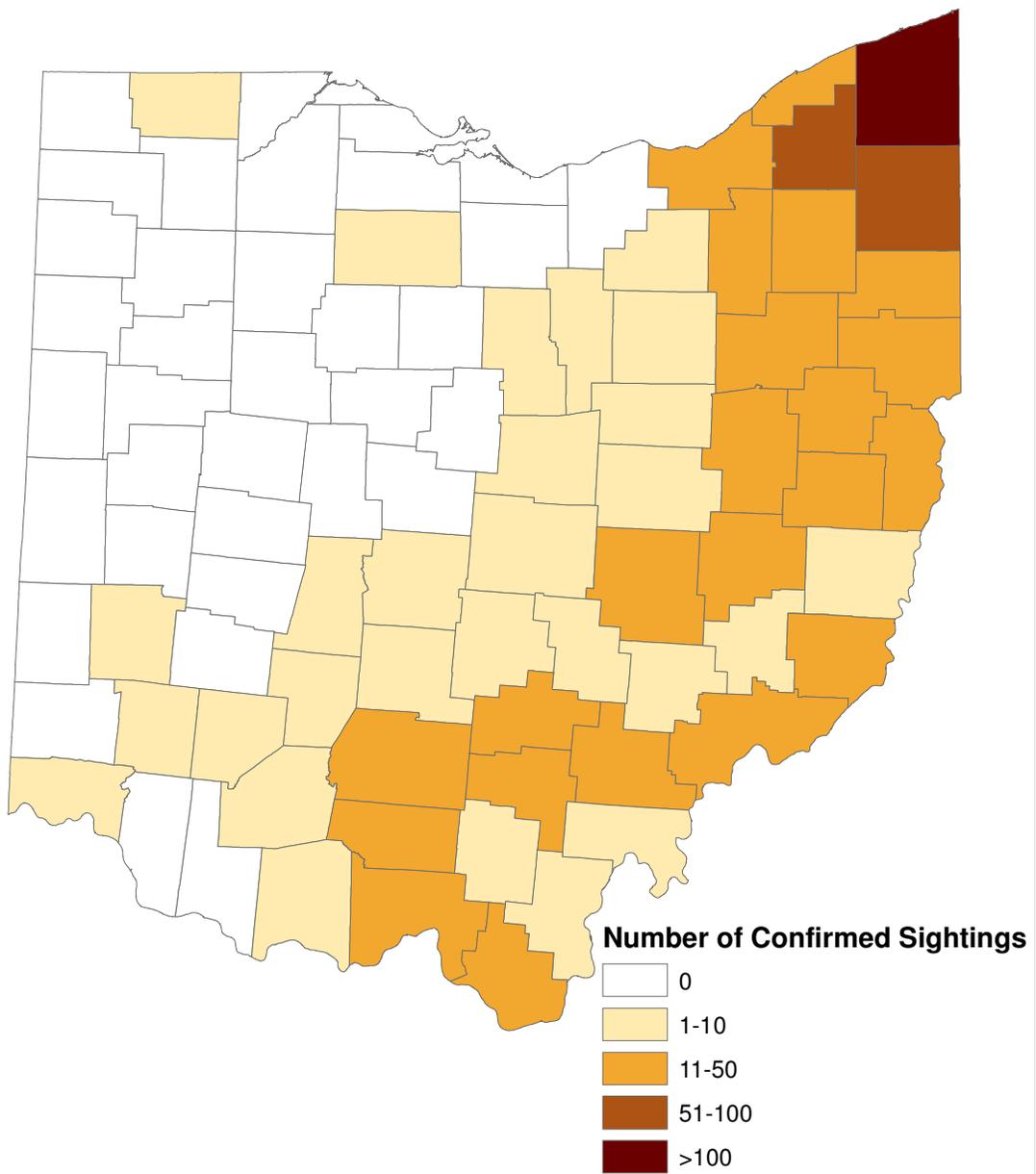


Figure 2. Confirmed black bear sightings in Ohio by county, 1993-2014.

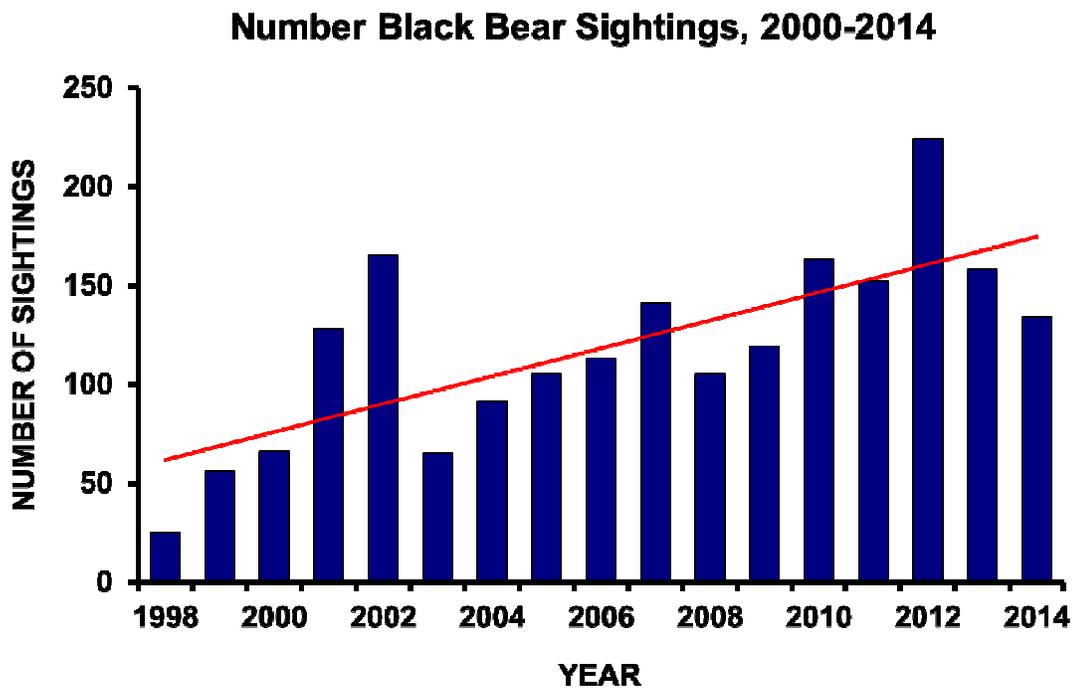


Figure 3. Number of black bear sightings in Ohio by year, 1998-2014. Red line indicates overall trend in the number of sightings per year.