

Division of Wildlife
Ohio Department of Natural Resources
Waterloo Wildlife Research Station
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Summary of 2013 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 2013, 158 sightings involving an estimated 74 individual black bears were received (Table 1). This represents a decrease in the total number of sightings in comparison with 2012 when 224 sightings involving an estimated 93 individual black bears were received. The number of individual bears is a subjective judgment.

The number of confirmed sightings (confirmed by evidence such as tracks, photos, etc.) was lower than that of the previous year, although the percentage was somewhat higher. Fifty-four (34%) of the 158 sightings were confirmed by Division of Wildlife personnel (Table 1). The number of counties involved, however, was comparable to that of the previous year. These 54 sightings represented an estimated 28 bears in 23 counties. For comparison, in 2012, 65 (29%) of 224 sightings were confirmed for an estimated 35 bears in 21 counties.

A lower number, but similar percentage, of nuisance complaints compared to that of the previous year was received. Twenty-five (16%) of the 158 observations involved nuisance situations (Table 1). These 25 complaints involved an estimated 17 individual bears in 9 counties. For comparison, 39 (17%) of the 224 observations during 2012 involved nuisance situations, which involved an estimated 20 individual bears in 10 counties. During 2013, 13 of the nuisance sightings were confirmed for 12 individual bears in 7 counties (Table 1). Nuisance

bear situations recorded during 2013 included raiding bird feeders (12), eating from garbage cans (5), damaging beehives (3), eating bird food and garbage (1), damaging deer feeders (1), uprooting plants and tearing down hanging baskets (1), eating from feed bucket in chicken coop (1), and damaging corn crops (1). Four bears died as a result of being struck by vehicles (Belmont, Lawrence, Meigs, and Trumbull counties). A 5th bear was struck by a vehicle in Geauga County, although the bear was able to leave the scene and its fate is unknown. An additional bear was shot in Stark County.

Black bear sightings were received during every month in 2013, except for February and December. Sixty-six percent of the sightings were reported from May through July coincident with peak black bear breeding activity and dispersal of juvenile males. There were 5 sightings of a sow with cubs, and 2 additional sightings of lone cubs; none of these were confirmed. A sow with 2 cubs was reported from Columbiana and Trumbull counties. A sow with 1 cub was reported from Columbiana, Portage, and Trumbull counties. Sightings of 2 lone cubs were reported from Erie and Scioto counties.

Bear sightings were reported in 35 Ohio counties during 2013 (Table 1). Most sightings (57%) were in Wildlife District 3 (northeastern Ohio) counties. Formal sightings from 1993 through present show bear observations in 59 predominately eastern and south-central counties (Fig. 1). Black bear sightings have been confirmed in 52 of the 59 counties since 1993 (Fig. 2). The first verified sightings for Medina and Seneca counties occurred during 2013. Compared with the 10-year average (137), 2013 was an above 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 2013 in Ohio, classified by type.

County	All Sightings	Confirmed Sightings	All Nuisance Reports	Confirmed Nuisance Reports
Adams	3			
Ashtabula	11	4	4	2
Athens	3			
Belmont	8	1		
Brown	1			
Carroll	1			
Columbiana	3			
Cuyahoga	1	1		
Erie	1			
Gallia	1			
Geauga	10	2	4	2
Guernsey	3	2	1	
Harrison	1			
Hocking	4	1		
Jackson	2			
Lake	5	2	2	1
Lawrence	2	1		
Mahoning	7	4	2	1
Medina	1	1	1	1
Meigs	2	1		
Monroe	6	3		
Perry	2			
Pickaway	1			
Pike	5	2		
Portage	17	7	4	3
Ross	12	3		
Scioto	5	1		
Seneca	1	1		
Stark	4	2	1	
Summit	5	3		
Trumbull	22	7	6	3
Tuscarawas	1			
Vinton	1	1		
Washington	5	3		
Wayne	1	1		
TOTALS	158	54	25	13

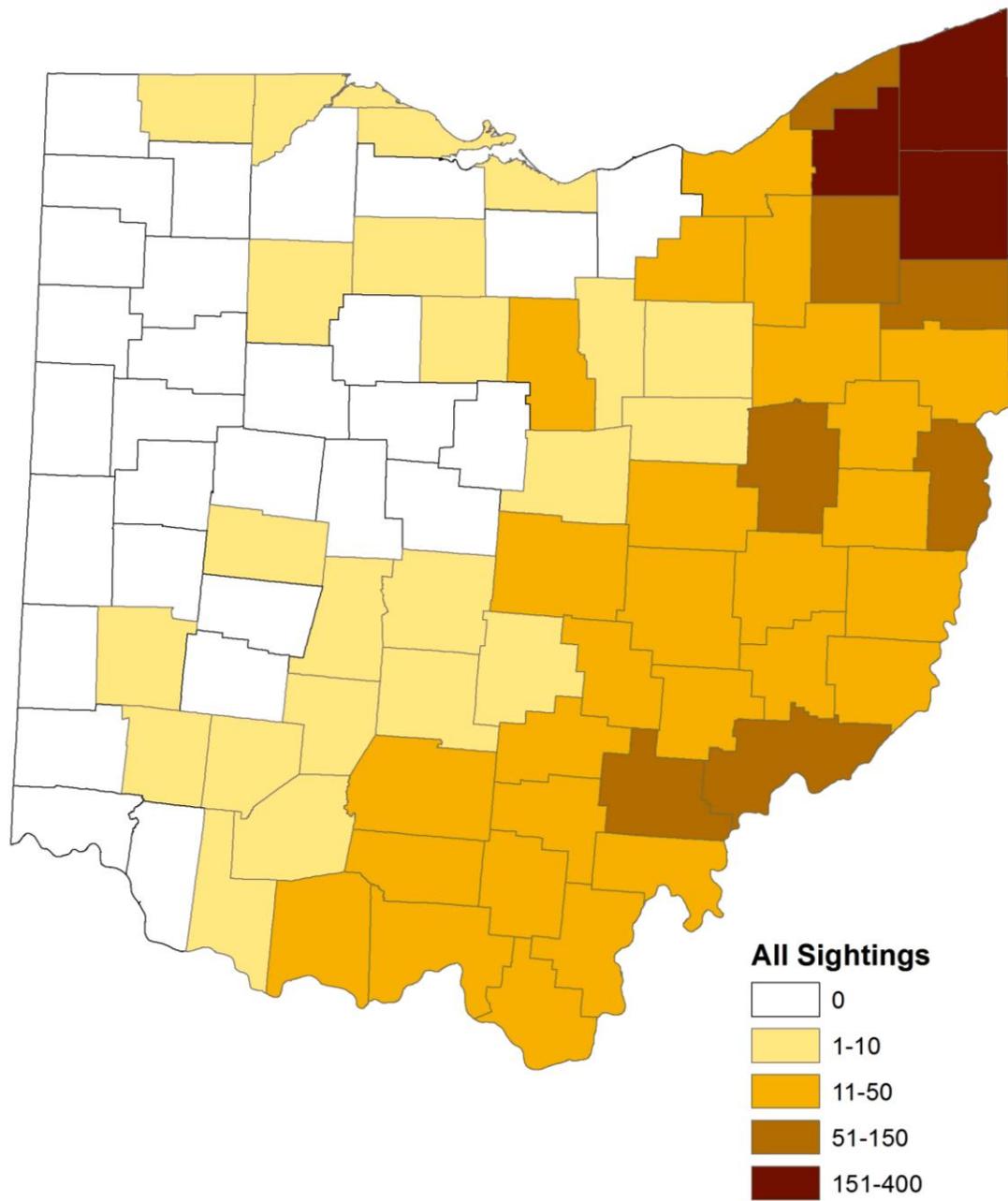


Figure 1. Black bear sightings in Ohio by county, 1993-2013.

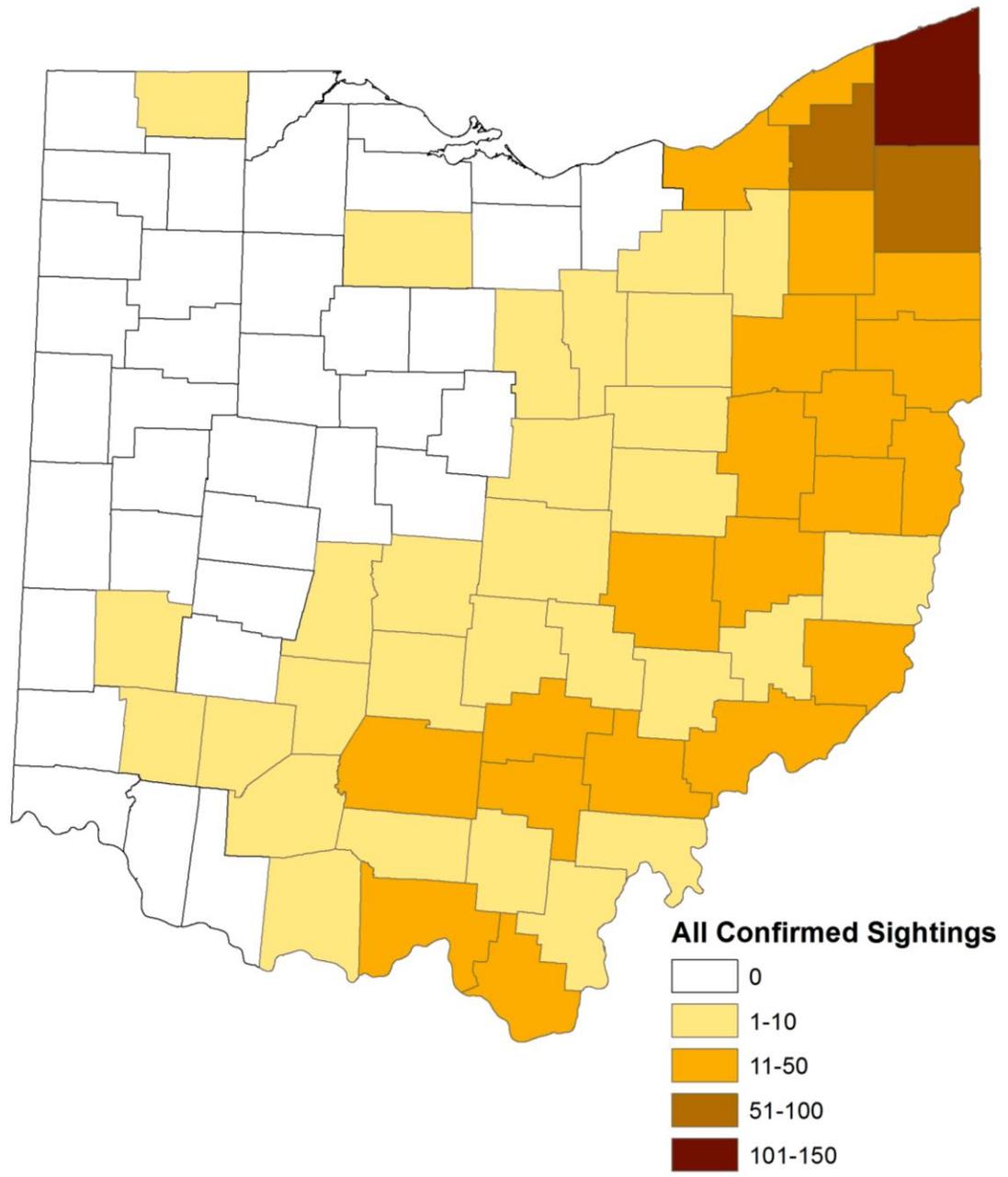


Figure 2. Confirmed black bear sightings in Ohio by county, 1993-2013.

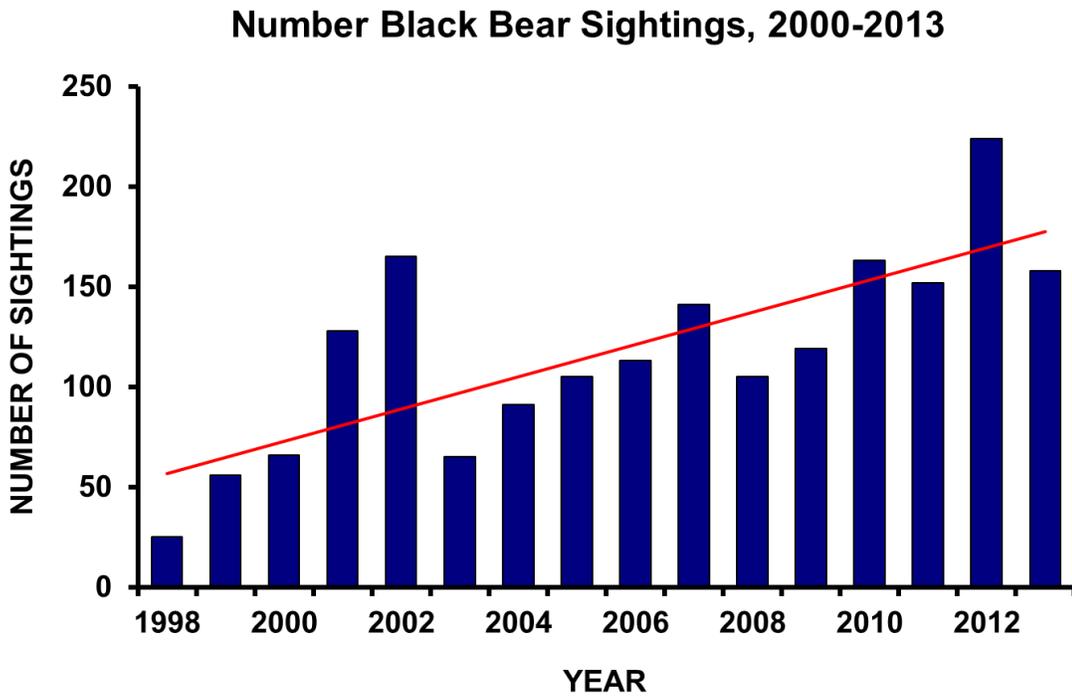


Figure 3. Number of black bear sightings in Ohio by year, 1998-2013. Red line indicates overall trend in the number of sightings per year.