

Black Bears in Georgia

M. T. Mengak

Warnell School of Forestry and Natural Resources

- 3 populations in Georgia --- North Central South
 - Appalachian Mountains – Ocmulgee River – Okefenokee Swamp
- Ursus americanus americanus* *U. a. floridanus*
- GA-SC-NC density of about 1 bear per square mile (640 acres)
 - N. GA bears in all or part of 12 counties
Dawson, Fannin, Gilmer, Habersham, Lumpkin, Murray, Pickens, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union, White
 - Possible population size (statewide) 2500 bears; 1500 in Mountains
 - Population may be declining due to home development & increased visitation
 - Females den in large trees; males and subadults favor ground dens; good tree climber
 - Age at 1st breeding ~ 4 years for female; 1.5 – 2.5 years for males
 - Average 2-3 cubs per litter
 - Breed every 2-3 years
 - Typically 5-6 feet long; weight 125 to 400 pounds
 - Omnivores -- eat whatever is available; opportunistic
 - Forbs, grass, berries, fruit, acorns & other nuts, animal matter inc. carrion, insects, fish, corn, clover, grain sorghum
 - Home range variable – up to 10 sq miles
 - Secure food items in locked containers or hang in trees when camping; nuisance complaints increasing especially in spring as young males disperse
 - Harvest 2002– 212 bears; 2003 – 260; 2004 – 160

