

Black bears rebounding throughout the U.S.

By Jennifer S. Holland, National Geographic

If you live in the eastern United States, you might want to keep an eye on your backyard for some surprising summer visitors.

Bears.

The American black bear (*Ursus americanus*), which was heavily diminished by overhunting, habitat loss, and fragmentation in the past century, is making an impressive comeback in parts of North America – particularly the East. An estimated 800,000 black bears roam the continent, slowly returning to many of their old haunts.

Three success stories highlight the resurgence of the up-to-600 pound omnivores. The Department of the Interior announced in May that Louisiana's black bears may be pulled from the Endangered Species List, where they've sat since 1992. Years of legal protection, better habitat, and a reintroduction program have helped boost the population from as few as 200 animals to some 750 or more.

In Florida, an extensive new survey shows bear numbers have doubled, to some 1,200 animals, in one area and increased by almost a third in another since 2002.

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