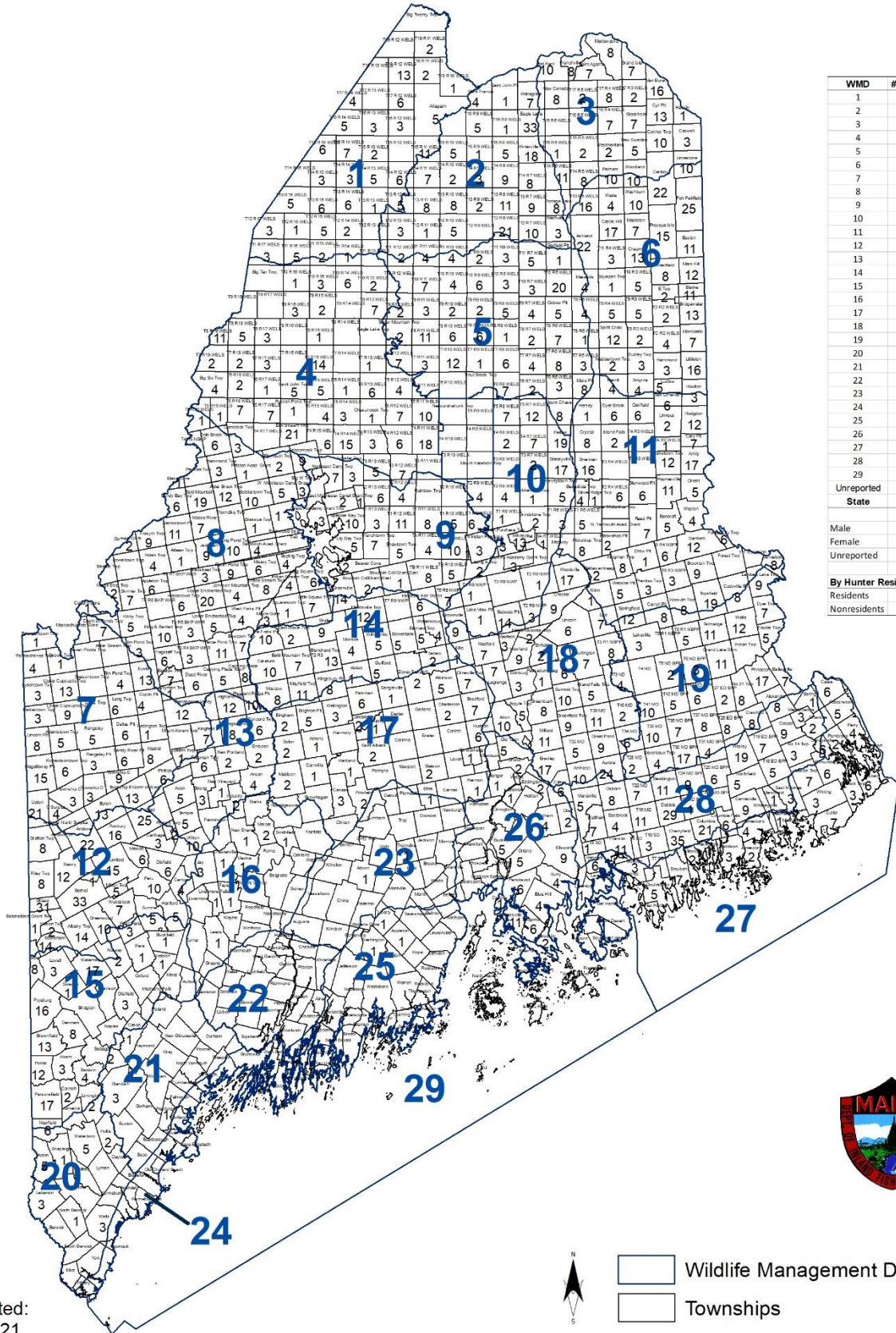


# 2020 Bear Harvest by Town



WMD	# of Bears
1	128
2	160
3	223
4	235
5	191
6	282
7	212
8	341
9	143
10	131
11	260
12	261
13	77
14	113
15	118
16	14
17	70
18	244
19	225
20	23
21	3
22	0
23	3
24	1
25	3
26	75
27	86
28	260
29	1
Unreported State	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,883</b>
<b>By Hunter Residence</b>	
Residents	1,585
Nonresidents	2,259

Map created:  
08/31/2021



- Wildlife Management Districts
- Townships

## **Maine's 2020 Black Bear Season**

The general hunting season for black bears opens the last Monday in August and closes the last Saturday in November. Hunters are allowed to hunt bears near natural food sources or by still-hunting throughout the entire 3-month season. The bear trapping season continues to span 2 months opening on September 1 and closing on October 31. Hunting over bait is permitted during the first 4 weeks of the season (August 29-September 26, 2020). The hound season overlaps the last two weeks of the bait season and continues through the following five weeks (September 14-October 30, 2020). Starting in 2015, youth hunters are permitted to hunt the Saturday prior to the opening of the season. During the 2020 season, 40 youth hunters shot a bear on youth day.

Natural food abundance varies from year to year and influences harvest levels. This fall, natural foods were particularly poor resulting in a near record harvest of 3,883 bears and provided approximately 310,000 pounds of bear meat to hunters and their families. Most bears (95%) continue to be harvested with the use of bait, dogs, or traps, and the lack of natural foods led to higher interest in bait. As a result, 2,815 bears were harvested over bait accounting for 73% of the harvest. Another 785 bears were taken by hunters using trained bear dogs accounting for 20% of the harvest, and 183 bears were taken in traps (5%); a record high. Only 2% of bears were taken by other methods; 28 bears were harvested by deer hunters and 43 by spot/stalk or still-hunting. Most bears (89%) continue to be harvested earlier in the season with 3,484 bears harvested before the end of September. Hunters can take two bears if one is taken by trapping and the other by hunting with 41 hunters/trappers harvested 2 bears in 2020 (twice as many then average).

### ***Geographic Distribution of the Harvest***

In 2020, bears were harvested in 14 of the state's 16 counties and in 28 of 29 WMDs. Although the highest harvest occurred in Aroostook County (1,041 bears, 27% of total harvest), the density of harvest, expressed as the number of bears killed per 100 square miles of habitat (forested land), remains greatest in portions of northern, western and eastern Maine with between 26 and 36 bears/100 mi<sup>2</sup> harvested in WMDs 3, 6, 12, and 28. Fewer bears were taken in southern portions of the State with only 1 to 11 bears harvested in Androscoggin, Cumberland, Kennebec, Knox, and Waldo counties and less than five bears/100 mi<sup>2</sup> harvested in WMD 16, 20, 23-25, and 29. In all other WMDs, hunters harvested between 6 and 20 bears/100 mi<sup>2</sup>. No bears were taken in Lincoln and Sagadahoc counties and in WMD 22. The statewide average of 11 bears/100 mi<sup>2</sup> was like other year's when natural foods are poor.

### ***Residence of Successful Hunters***

Maine's reputation for producing high-quality bear hunting was again reflected in the distribution of the harvest by hunter residency. Visitors to Maine killed 2,259 bears (59%) of the 3,883 bears tagged during 2020. Non-resident hunters shot more of the bears (60%) taken over bait and with the use of hounds (68%). However, hunting over bait remained popular among resident hunters with 72% of successful resident hunters taking their bear over bait. Although fewer bears were taken during the deer season, in traps, or by spot and stalk methods, Maine residents accounted for the majority (89%, 79%, and 84% respectively) of the bears taken during those seasons.

### ***Assistance by Registered Maine Guides***

In 2020, guides assisted 415 residents (26%) and 2,005 non-residents (89%) with their successful hunts. Assistance by guides accounting for 83% of bears harvested with trained bear dogs, 61% of the bears taken over bait, 24% of trapped bears, 12% of bears taken by spot/stalk/still-hunt methods, and none of the bears taken while deer hunting.

### ***Sex and Age Distribution of the Harvest***

Males made up 55% (2,126 bears) of the 2020 harvest. Adult bears accounted for 94% (3,659 bears) of the harvest.

### ***Prospects for the 2021 season***

Since 1997, the Department has adopted a generic bear season framework to maintain consistent hunting periods. However, bear hunting regulations can be modified in response to changes in Maine's bear population or other management concerns. The 2021 season will remain like recent years, opening with a youth day the last Saturday in August. The general season will open the following Monday and will close the last Saturday in November. Successful hunts are influenced by a variety of factors, but natural food availability is often the most influential. In years with an abundance of soft or hard mast crops, hunters hunting over bait experience lower success while deer hunters and hunters that pursue bears with hounds have additional opportunity as bears remain out foraging on abundant food crops longer than in years with poor food abundance. Based on past alternate cycles in natural food abundance, we anticipate that the 2021 season will provide less opportunity for hunters to take a bear with the aid of bait, but could provide more opportunity later in the season or by hunting over natural food sources.