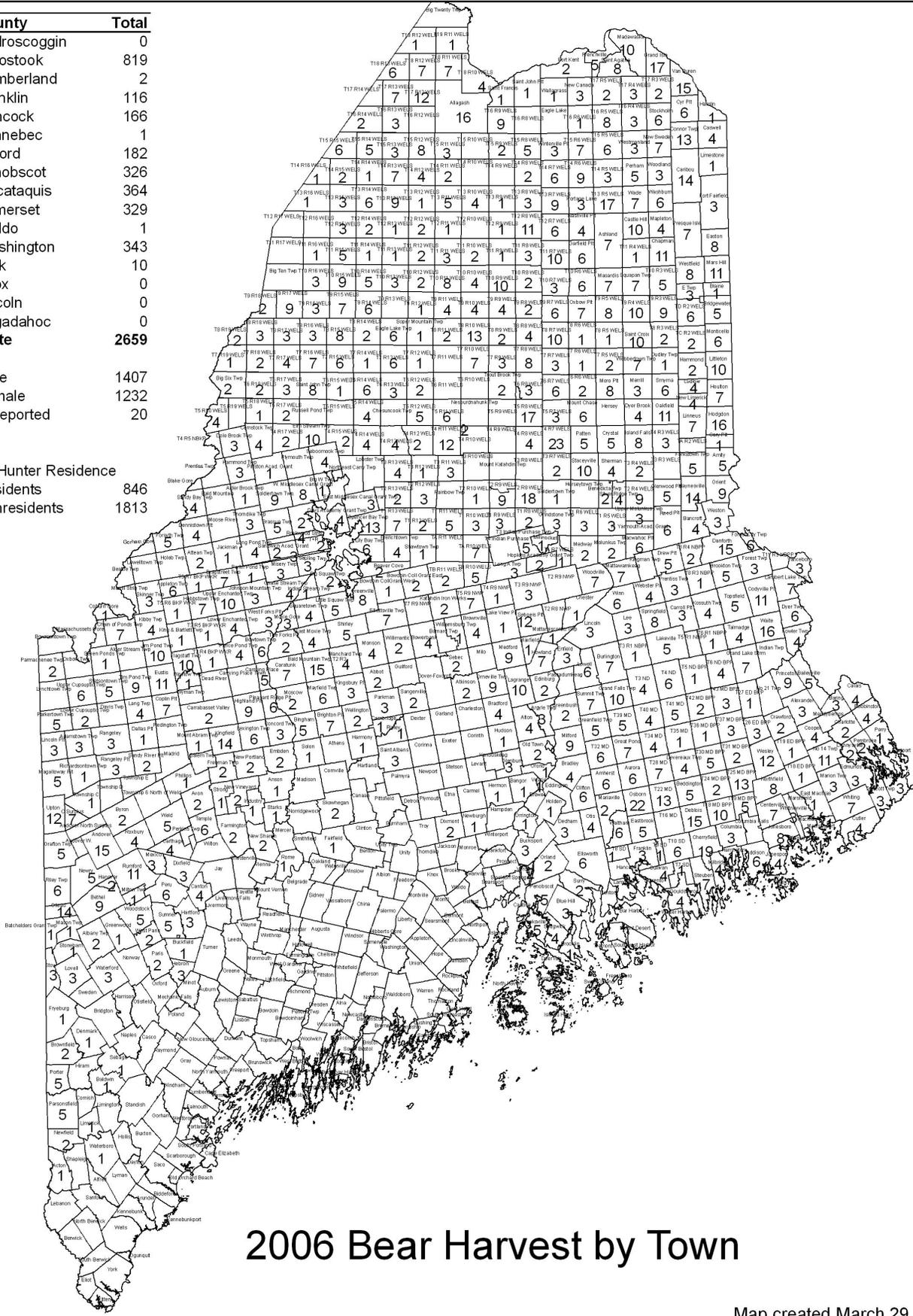


County	Total
Androscoggin	0
Aroostook	819
Cumberland	2
Franklin	116
Hancock	166
Kennebec	1
Oxford	182
Penobscot	326
Piscataquis	364
Somerset	329
Waldo	1
Washington	343
York	10
Knox	0
Lincoln	0
Sagadahoc	0
State	2659

Male	1407
Female	1232
Unreported	20

By Hunter Residence	
Residents	846
Nonresidents	1813



Map created March 29, 2007

Maine's 2006 Black Bear Season

The general hunting season for black bear in 2006 opened August 28 and closed November 25. Hunters were allowed to hunt bears near natural food sources or by still-hunting throughout this 3-month period. Hunting over bait was permitted from August 28 through September 23. The hound season overlapped the bait season, opening September 11 and closing October 27. The bear trapping season opened September 1 and closed October 31.

The 2006 harvest of 2,659 bears is below recent harvest levels. During the previous 5-year period, harvest ranged between 2,873 and 3,921 bears (average 3,622 bears). In 2006, 1,945 bears were taken over bait (73%), 279 bears were taken by hound hunters (11%), 146 bears were taken in traps (6%), 88 were taken by unreported methods (3%), and 201 bears (8%) were harvested by deer hunters. Most bears were taken early in the season, with 2,220 bears (84%) harvested before the end of September. Most notable this year was the abundance of both soft and hard mast crops, which likely influenced the lower bear harvest by decreasing bears' response to baits. Higher weights of adult female and yearling bears and higher cub survival rates observed during our telemetry studies provide additional support of the influence of abundant natural foods this year. Reports indicate that the beechnut crop was relatively abundant this fall following several years of low to moderate crops. Heavy beechnut crops provide an abundant fall food source for bears, which delays their entry into dens and leads to a higher harvest of bears by deer hunters. Consequently, the harvest of bears by deer hunters doubled this fall.

Geographic Distribution of the Harvest

Bears were harvested in 26 Wildlife Management Districts (WMDs). No bears were taken in WMDs 22, 24, 25, and 30. The density of harvest expressed as the number of bears killed per 100 square miles of habitat (forested land) was greatest in WMD 28 at 26 bears/100 mi² followed closely by WMDs 3, 6, 10, and 11 with 20 to 15 bears harvested/100 mi². In all other WMDs, hunters harvested less than 15 bears/100 mi² (statewide average of 8.5 bears/100 mi²). Bears were harvested in 12 of the State's 16 counties. Most bears (819) were harvested in Aroostook county accounting for 31% of the harvest. No bears were taken in Androscoggin, Knox, Lincoln, and Sagadahoc counties.

Residence of Successful Hunters

Maine's reputation for producing high-quality bear hunting is reflected in the harvest distribution by hunter residency. Visitors to Maine killed 1,813 bears (68%) of the 2,659 bears tagged during 2006. Visitors and Maine residents took most of their bears over bait and with the aid of hounds, although most of the bears taken over bait (75%) and with the use of hounds (75%) were taken by non-resident hunters. Maine residents accounted for most of the bears harvested by unreported methods (67%), during the deer seasons (63%), and in traps (65%).

Assistance by Registered Maine Guides

In 2006, guides helped take 85% of bears harvested over hounds, 75% of the bears taken over bait, 42% of trapped bears, 16% of the bears for which method of take was unreported, and 3% of the bears taken by deer hunters. Guides assisted 164 residents (10%) and 1,612 nonresidents (90%) with their successful hunts in 2006.

Sex and Age Distribution of the Harvest

Males made up 53% (1,407 bears) of the 2006 harvest. Adult bears accounted for 93% (2,464 bears) of the 2006 harvest and sex and age were not reported for an additional 20 bears (<1%).

Prospects for the 2007 season

The Department has adopted a generic bear season framework to maintain consistent hunting periods, unless management concerns require changes to the lengths of hunting or trapping periods. In 2007, the season will remain similar to those in recent years. Under our current bear season framework, the season begins on the last Monday in August and closes on the last Saturday in November, generally a 13-week period (August 27-November 24, 2007). Starting in 2007, only cable foot traps and cage traps will be allowed to trap a black bear and each trapper will be limited to 1 trap. In accordance with our management goal, Maine's bear population estimate remains near 23,000 bears. Thus the current bear season framework and hunter participation rates provide the opportunity to obtain harvest levels of over 3,500 bears in 2007. However as evidenced in recent harvests, hunter success is influenced by additional factors, such as weather and natural foods.