

# 2003 VERMONT WILDLIFE HARVEST REPORT

## Black Bear



VERMONT  
FISH & WILDLIFE DEPARTMENT  
(802) 241-3700 / [www.vtfishandwildlife.com](http://www.vtfishandwildlife.com)



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Most of the programs described in this report are funded through the **Federal Aid in Wildlife Restoration Program**. This program initiated in 1937 as the Federal Aid In Wildlife Act and created a system where by taxes are paid on firearms, ammunition and archery equipment by the public who hunts. Today this excise tax generates over a hundred million dollars each year that are dedicated to state wildlife restoration and management projects across the United States. The State of Vermont use these monies for acquiring land, and for restoring and managing wildlife. These excise tax dollars, coupled with state hunting license fees have been the predominate source of money funding the successful restoration and management of Vermont's wildlife resources.



*Protecting the integrity, diversity and vitality of Vermont's fish, wildlife and plants and their habitats for the people of Vermont.*

## Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

Agency of Natural Resources

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# 2003 Black Bear Report

## Habitat Protection

The black bear is a species that requires large areas of forest to meet its needs for food, cover and space to reproduce and raise offspring. Suitable bear habitat is critical to ensuring a viable bear population is maintained in Vermont in the coming century. Loss of habitat is the biggest threat to a sustainable bear population. Development, habitat fragmentation, sprawl and traffic flow are of great concern. In 2003 department game wardens responded to 71 reports of bears struck by motor vehicles.

Under Vermont Act 250 law, three types of bear habitat are considered “necessary” and deserving of protection. These include stands of oak and American beech trees that have been climbed by bears. Beechnuts and oak acorns are extremely important food eaten by bears to gain weight in the fall, prior to winter hibernation. Wetlands and travel corridors also are very important for bears.

Through Vermont’s Act 250 land use permit review process, department biologists provide input to help conserve these important habitats. In 2002 department biologists reviewed 182 projects related to bear habitat. Biologists also work with landowners to help manage American beech stands. This is conducted through forestry workshops and comments through easements the department holds on lands.



John Hall

### NUMBER OF PROJECTS REVIEWED 1999-2003

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Bear Habitat	25	18	12	25	24
Wetlands	62	132	133	157	128
<b>Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>145</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>152</b>

Despite these efforts Vermont continues to lose bear habitat each year. Bear habitat protection and loss in the past five years are summarized in the tables below.

### ACRES OF BLACK BEAR HABITAT PROTECTED IN VERMONT FEDERAL YEARS 1999-2003

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Bear Habitat	4,926	1,524	1,205	2,832	64
Wetlands	641	177	481	791	724
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,567</b>	<b>1,701</b>	<b>1,686</b>	<b>3,623</b>	<b>788</b>

### ACRES OF BLACK BEAR HABITAT LOSS IN VERMONT FEDERAL YEARS 1999-2003

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
Bear Habitat	115	100	360	37	0
Wetlands	20	122	35	26	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>135</b>	<b>222</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>20</b>

**Habitat loss and development continue to degrade the quantity and quality of suitable bear habitat in Vermont.**



**The availability of fall foods, primarily beechnuts, is a major influence on the distribution of the bear harvest, road kills and property damage by bears. Excellent fall food supplies tend to limit bear movement, focusing bear movements to the “core” bear range in the state. In years with good fall food supplies generally fewer bears are taken, because bears do not move into agricultural areas, and much of the harvest occurs late in the season. The opposite is true when natural food supplies are poor.**

## Public Education and Outreach

Biologists participate in a variety of forums in an effort to promote understanding of bears and bear management. In 2003 staff presented talks on bears at:

- The Nature Conservancy
- Woodford State Park
- Middletown Springs, Danville and Northfield Schools
- Vermont Bear Houndsmans Association
- Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department’s Teacher Course
- Vermont 4-H Workshop

Game wardens responded to 154 complaints of black bears causing property damage or potentially threatening public safety. Wardens spent hundreds of hours monitoring bears in suburban areas, hazing bears away from houses and showing people how to make their property less attractive to bears looking for food. When the department receives property damage complaints wardens document the damage and provide technical advice.

We have increased our effort to provide people with information on living among bears, particularly in dealing with bears attracted to garbage and birdseed. Hundreds of black bear posters have been distributed, and TV spots have been aired asking for people to remove their bird feeders from April through late October.

## Regulated Harvest & Utilization

Twenty-five laws govern the harvest, use and sale of bears in Vermont today. The regulated hunting of bears is an important wildlife management tool, as well as a means by which the public utilizes bears for food and for other reasons.

Utilization of bear resources is important in Vermont as households look to Vermont’s forests and swamps as an important place to harvest natural resources. This is a key component of bear conservation, as hunting of bears requires a forested land base, and the activity does not demand conversion of the landscape into some other form of human use. Thus, food from Vermont’s forest provides a powerful incentive to keep Vermont’s landscape in a condition that promotes valuable habitat for many species of wildlife, including a sustainable bear population.

In 2003 an estimated 30,500 lbs of boneless bear meat was harvested from the 720 black bears taken in the 77-day hunting season. This was the highest Vermont bear harvest on record, indicating a robust bear population of 3,600 to 4,500 bears state-wide, good habitat overall, and reduced fall foods that greatly influenced where bears traveled during fall months. Results of the 2003 seasons are listed by wildlife management unit (WMU), by town and by sex in a table at the end of this report.

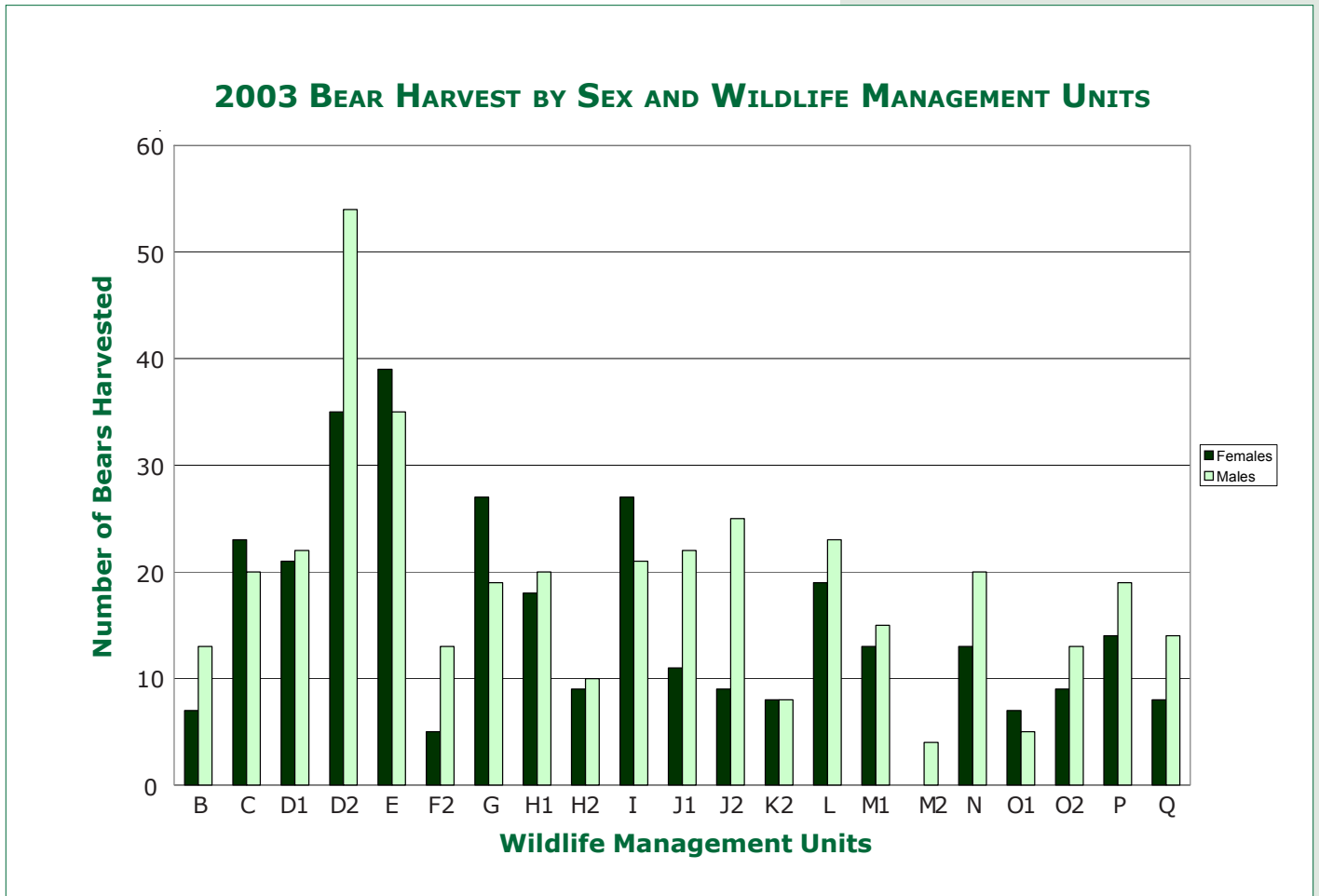
## Mast Survey

Beechnuts and acorns were scarce throughout the state in 2003. Good to excellent beechnut crops have occurred almost every other year since 1994. However, 2003 was a particularly poor year, making the bears move around in search of other foods.

The abundance of fall foods also influences when bears go into their winter dens. Low availability of beechnuts and acorns in 2003 resulted in 44% of the bear harvest occurring in September and 44% in October. Only 12% of the harvest occurred during November.

## Harvest Distribution

The graph below showing the harvest of bears by Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) reveals that, as in past years, the principle areas of harvest are units D2 and E, followed by the units within the Green Mountains (G, I and L) — all within “core” bear habitat (see map). Also noteworthy is the distribution of harvest in areas that are outside “core” habitat, where because of poor beechnut production, bears were moving throughout the state.

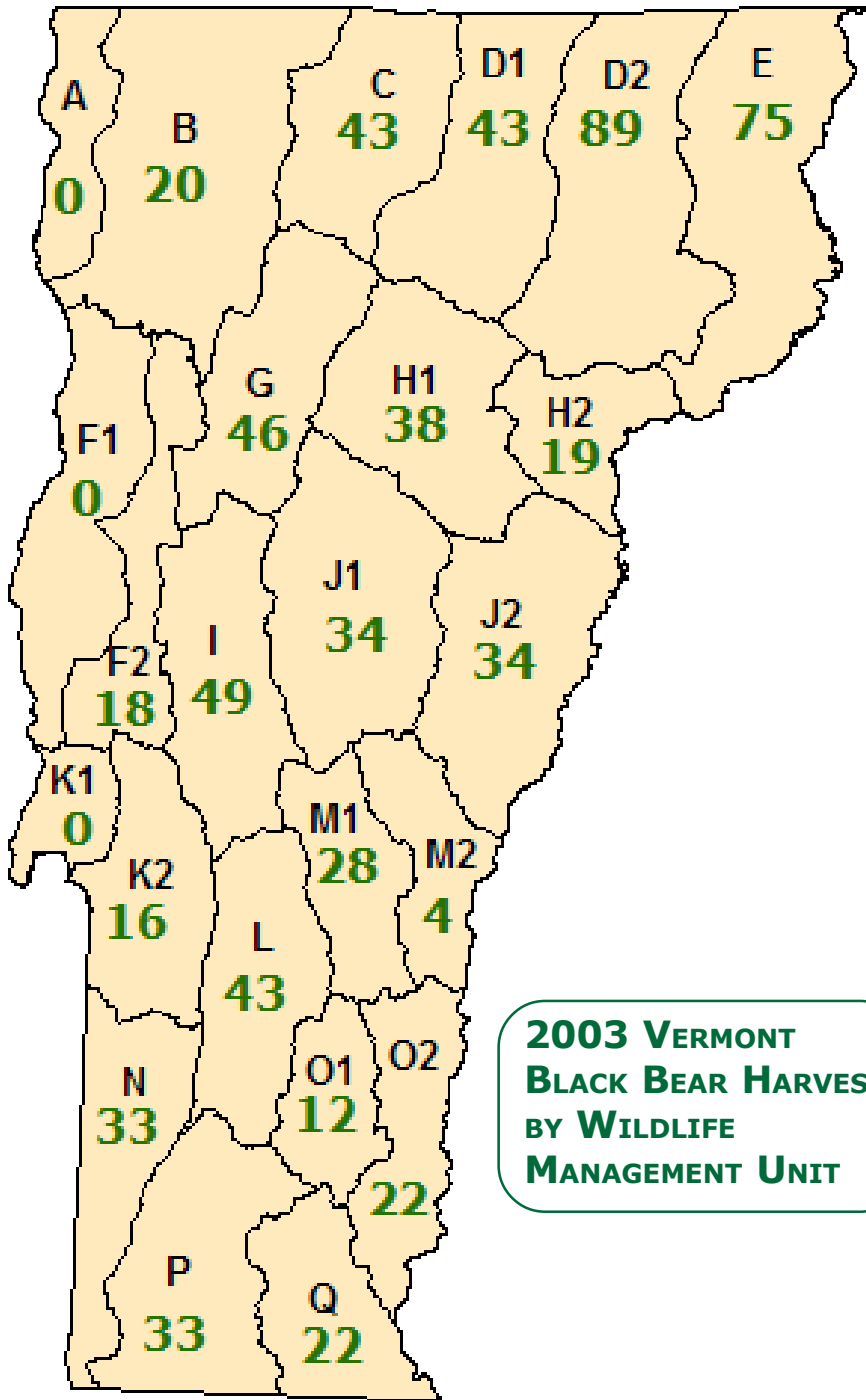


## 2003 BEAR HARVEST BY HUNTING OPPORTUNITY

### Principle Species

Hunter Was Seeking	# Harvested	% of Harvest
<b>Bear</b>	<b>524</b>	<b>73%</b>
Harvest w\ Dog	88	17%
Harvest w\ No Dog	436	83%
<b>Deer</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>23%</b>
<b>Birds</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Other Wildlife</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Unknown</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>100%</b>

Bears were primarily taken by hunters specifically hunting for bears (73%), and 27% were taken by hunters who opportunistically took a bear while hunting other species.



**2003 VERMONT  
BLACK BEAR HARVEST  
BY WILDLIFE  
MANAGEMENT UNIT**

**NOTABLE WEIGHTS OF HARVESTED BEARS DURING THE 2003 SEASON BY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT**

WMU	Weight	Implement	Sex
B	312	Firearm	M
D1	385	Firearm	M
D2	366	Firearm	M
D2	418	Firearm	M
D2	405	Firearm	M
E	412	Archery	M
E	368	Firearm	M
F2	351	Firearm	M
H1	325	Firearm	M
H2	328	Firearm	M
J1	367	Firearm	M
O1	318	Firearm	M
P	304	Firearm	M

**Research and Surveys  
Genetics Study**

The Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department has been cooperating with the University of Vermont in an investigation of baseline genetic information of black bears in the state. Department biologists, technicians and game wardens collected hair samples from bears killed by automobiles as well as bears taken by licensed hunters during the fall season. These samples supplement samples collected by UVM researchers from trees and fences where bears forage or regularly cross.

# 2003 LEGAL BLACK BEAR HARVEST BY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT, TOWN AND SEX

WMU	Town of Kill	Total Harvest	Females	Males	Unkown
B	BAKERSFIELD	1	1		
	BERKSHIRE	3		3	
	CAMBRIDGE	2		2	
	ENOSBURG	2	1	1	
	ESSEX	1	1		
	FAIRFAX	2		2	
	FAIRFIELD	1	1		
	FLETCHER	1	1		
	JERICO	2	1	1	
	UNDERHILL	3	1	2	
	WESTFORD	2		2	
<b>TOTAL WMU B HARVEST</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>
C	BAKERSFIELD	4	1	3	
	BELVIDERE	4	2	2	
	CAMBRIDGE	2	1	1	
	EDEN	2	2		
	ENOSBURG	4		4	
	JAY	4	2	2	
	JOHNSON5	3	2		
	LOWELL	4	3	1	
	MONTGOMERY	1	1		
	RICHFORD	6	3	3	
	TROY	1		1	
	WATERVILLE3		3		
	WESTFIELD3	1	2		
<b>TOTAL WMU C HARVEST</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>
D1	ALBANY	4	3	1	
	COVENTRY	5	3	2	
	CRAFTSBURY	4	3	1	
	DERBY	1	1		
	EDEN	3	1	2	
	GLOVER	3	2	1	
	GREENSBORO	2		2	
	HARDWICK	5	2	3	
	HYDE PARK	1		1	
	IRASBURG	6	2	4	
	LOWELL	2	1	1	
	NEWPORT	4	2	2	
	TROY	1	1		
	WOLCOTT	2		2	
<b>TOTAL WMU D1 HARVEST</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>0</b>
D2	BARTON	3	3		
	BRIGHTON	3	2	1	
	BROWNINGTON	2		2	
	BURKE	3	2	1	
	CHARLESTON	7	3	4	
	COVENTRY	1		1	
	CRAFTSBURY	1		1	
	DANVILLE	9	1	8	
	EAST BURKE	2		2	
	HOLLAND	5	2	3	
	KIRBY	10	4	6	
	LYNDON	7	4	3	
	MORGAN	7	4	3	
	NEWARK	5	2	3	
	ORLEANS	1	1		



## 2003 LEGAL BLACK BEAR HARVEST BY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT, TOWN AND SEX

WMU	Town of Kill	Total Harvest	Females	Males	Unkown
D2	SHEFFIELD	2		2	
	ST JOHNSBURY	1		1	
	STANNARD	2	1	1	
	SUTTON	9	2	7	
	VICTORY	2	1	1	
	WALDEN	2	2		
	WESTMORE	1		1	
	WHEELOCK	4	1	3	
<b>TOTAL WMU D2 HARVEST</b>		<b>89</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>0</b>
E	BLOOMFIELD	9	3	6	
	BRIGHTON	4	3	1	
	BRUNSWICK	2		2	
	CANAAN	4	2	2	
	CONCORD	8	4	4	
	EAST HAVEN	2	2		
	GRANBY	1		1	
	GUILDHALL	16	10	6	
	KIRBY	1		1	
	LEMINGTON	6	3	3	
	LUNENBURG	14	10	3	1
	MAIDSTONE	2	1	1	
	NEWARK	1		1	
	NORTON	3		3	
WATERFORD	2	1	1		
<b>TOTAL WMU E HARVEST</b>		<b>75</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>1</b>
F2	BRANDON	2		2	
	BRISTOL	2		2	
	HINESBURG	1		1	
	LINCOLN	1		1	
	MONKTON	1	1		
	RICHMOND	4	3	1	
	SALISBURY	3		3	
	STARKSBORO	2		2	
WILLISTON	2	1	1		
<b>TOTAL WMU F2 HARVEST</b>		<b>18</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>
G	CAMBRIDGE	4	2	2	
	DUXBURY	4	2	2	
	HUNTINGTON	4	4		
	HYDE PARK	1		1	
	JERICO	4	2	2	
	JOHNSON	2		2	
	MORRISTOWN	2	1	1	
	MORRISVILLE	1	1		
	RICHMOND	7	5	2	
	STARKSBORO	11	5	6	
	STOWE	2	2		
WATERBURY	4	3	1		
<b>TOTAL WMU G HARVEST</b>		<b>46</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0</b>
H1	CABOT	2	1	1	
	CALAIS	4		4	
	E MONTPELIER	2	1	1	
	EAST MONTPELIER	1		1	
	ELMORE	2	1	1	
	GROTON	4	4		
HARDWICK	3		3		

# 2003 LEGAL BLACK BEAR HARVEST BY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT, TOWN AND SEX

WMU	Town of Kill	Total Harvest	Females	Males	Unkown
H1	MARSHFIELD	2	1	1	
	MIDDLESEX	2	1	1	
	MORRISTOWN	2	1	1	
	MORRISVILLE	3	3		
	PLAINFIELD	1	1		
	STOWE	1		1	
	WATERBURY	2	1	1	
	WOLCOTT	2	1	1	
	WOODBURY	3	1	2	
	WORCESTER	2	1	1	
<b>TOTAL WMU H1 HARVEST</b>		<b>38</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>
H2	BARNET	3	1	2	
	DANVILLE	3	1	2	
	GROTON	5	4	1	
	PEACHAM	2		2	
	RYEGATE	1		1	
	WATERFORD	5	3	2	
<b>TOTAL WMU H2 HARVEST</b>		<b>19</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>0</b>
I	BRANDON	3	1	2	
	BRISTOL	1	1		
	CHITTENDEN	5	3	1	1
	GOSHEN	3	2	1	
	GRANVILLE	5	3	2	
	HANCOCK	1		1	
	LEICESTER	1		1	
	LINCOLN	6	6		
	MIDDEBURY	1		1	
	MIDDLEBURY	1	1		
	PITTSFIELD	2	1	1	
	PITTSFORD	5	1	4	
	RIPTON	3	3		
	ROCHESTER	7	3	4	
	SALISBURY	2	1	1	
	STARKSBORO	1	1		
STOCKBRIDGE	1		1		
WAITSFIELD	1		1		
<b>TOTAL WMU I HARVEST</b>		<b>49</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1</b>
J1	BARRE TOWN	1		1	
	BERLIN	1		1	
	BETHEL	4	1	3	
	BRAINTREE	1		1	
	CHELSEA	1	1		
	GRANVILLE	1		1	
	HANCOCK	1		1	
	MORETOWN	3	2	1	
	NORTHFIELD	3		2	1
	RANDOLPH	3	1	2	
	ROCHESTER	4	1	3	
	ROYALTON	1	1		
	STOCKBRIDGE	1		1	
	TUNBRIDGE	2		2	
	VERSHIRE	1	1		
WAITSFIELD	4	2	2		
WARREN	1	1			
WILLIAMSTOWN	1		1		
<b>TOTAL WMU J1 HARVEST</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>1</b>

## 2003 LEGAL BLACK BEAR HARVEST BY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT, TOWN AND SEX

WMU	Town of Kill	Total Harvest	Females	Males	Unkown
J2	BRADFORD	5		5	
	CHELSEA	2	2		
	CORINTH	3	1	2	
	HARTFORD	1		1	
	NEWBURY	6	2	4	
	NORWICH	4	1	3	
	ORANGE	1	1		
	STRAFFORD	3		3	
	THETFORD	2	1	1	
	WASHINGTON	6	1	5	
	WEST FAIRLEE	1		1	
<b>TOTAL WMU J2 HARVEST</b>		<b>34</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>0</b>
K2	CLARENDON	1		1	
	DANBY	7	4	3	
	HUBBARDTON	1		1	
	IRA	2		2	
	PITTSFORD	1	1		
	TINMOUTH	1	1		
	WALLINGFORD	2	2		
	WEST RUTLAND	1		1	
<b>TOTAL WMU K2 HARVEST</b>		<b>16</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>
L	JAMAICA	1	1		
	KILLINGTON	1		1	
	LONDONDERRY	1		1	
	LUDLOW	4	1	3	
	MENDON	2	1		1
	MT HOLLY	8	3	5	
	MT TABOR	6	5	1	
	PERU	2	2		
	PLYMOUTH	2	1	1	
	SHREWSBURY	9	3	6	
	WALLINGFORD	2		2	
	WESTON	4	2	2	
WINHALL	1		1		
<b>TOTAL WMU L HARVEST</b>		<b>43</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>1</b>
M1	BARNARD	2	1	1	
	BRIDGEWATER	12	7	5	
	LUDLOW	1		1	
	PLYMOUTH	6	2	4	
	READING	3	2	1	
	STOCKBRIDGE	1	1		
	WOODSTOCK	3		3	
<b>TOTAL WMU M1 HARVEST</b>		<b>28</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>
M2	HARTFORD	1		1	
	HARTLAND	1		1	
	POMFRET	2		2	
<b>TOTAL WMU M2 HARVEST</b>		<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
N	ARLINGTON	4	1	3	
	BENNINGTON	1		1	
	DANBY	2	1	1	
	DORSET	3	3		
	PAWLET	1	1		
	POWNAAL	6	2	3	1

# 2003 LEGAL BLACK BEAR HARVEST BY WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT UNIT, TOWN AND SEX

WMU	Town of Kill	Total Harvest	Females	Males	Unkown
N	RUPERT	6	2	4	
	SANDGATE	3		3	
	SHAFTSBURY	7	3	4	
	<b>TOTAL WMU N HARVEST</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>0</b>
O1	ANDOVER	1	1		
	ATHENS	1	1		
	CHESTER	3	2	1	
	GRAFTON	1	1		
	LONDONDERRY	1	1		
	LUDLOW	4	1	3	
	WINDHAM	1		1	
<b>TOTAL WMU O1 HARVEST</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	
O2	BALTIMORE	2	2		
	BARTON	1		1	
	BRATTLEBORO	2	2		
	CANENDISH	1		1	
	CAVENDISH	1	1		
	CHESTER	1	1		
	DUMMERSTON	4	1	3	
	ROCKINGHAM	4		4	
	SPRINGFIELD	3	1	2	
	WEATHERSFIELD	3	1	2	
<b>TOTAL WMU O2 HARVEST</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>0</b>	
P	BENNINGTON	3	1	2	
	JAMACIA	1	1		
	JAMAICA	1		1	
	POWNAI	4	4		
	READSBORO	3	1	2	
	SEARSBURG	1		1	
	STAMFORD	2		2	
	STRATTON	1	1		
	SUNDERLAND	1	1		
	WARDSBORO	1		1	
	WHITINGHAM	2	2		
	WILMINGTON	6		6	
WOODFORD	7	3	4		
<b>TOTAL WMU P HARVEST</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>0</b>	
Q	BRATTLEBORO	2		2	
	BROOKLINE	1		1	
	DOVER	1		1	
	DUMMERSTON	2	1	1	
	GUILDORD	2		2	
	GUILFORD	2		2	
	HALIFAX	1	1		
	NEWFANE	2	1	1	
	PUTNEY	1		1	
	TOWNSHEND	1	1		
	WARDSBORO	2	1	1	
	WHITINGHAM	2	2		
	WILMINGTON	3	1	2	
<b>TOTAL WMU Q HARVEST</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>0</b>	
<b>STATE TOTALS</b>		<b>721</b>	<b>322</b>	<b>395</b>	<b>4</b>

# Notable Weights of Vermont's Harvested Big Game Wildlife

This program keeps track of some of the largest black bear, white-tailed deer and moose taken by legal means in Vermont each year. All animals recorded must be completely field dressed. Wildlife listed here have been entered in to this program based on a submission by the hunter to the department.

**Cleaned field dressed weight:** All animals must be reported completely field dressed (all internal organs removed, including heart, liver and lungs). By completely field dressing your deer, bear or turkey immediately after tagging you insure the most rapid cooling of the body cavity and the least amount of coagulated blood, and thus the least amount of meat will be at risk of spoilage.

It is your responsibility as a sportsperson to properly care for your game and use it fully. If you take more meat than you and your family can consume within a year, you will easily find friends, relatives and/or local food shelves that will gladly accept your surplus meat. By properly dressing your game you will help to ensure that the meat you consume or give away will be of the finest possible quality.

**Points:** points are defined as 1 inch above the antler beam.

## FIVE HEAVIEST REPORTED BLACK BEAR BY WEIGHT

Year	Weight (lbs.)	Town Harvested
1986	514	Lemington
1985	441	Jay
2001	383	Brookfield
1985	383	Irasburg
1995	363	Ferdinand

## FIVE HEAVIEST REPORTED WHITE-TAILED DEER BY WEIGHT

Year	Weight (lbs.)	Points	Town Harvested
1989	269	8	Granby
1993	267	8	Alburg
1994	261	8	Bloomfield
1995	257	11	Averill
1995	255	8	Maidstone

## FIVE HEAVIEST MOOSE BY WEIGHT

Year	Weight (lbs.)	Points	Town Harvested
1996	1040	19	Brighton
1997	946	20	Eden
1995	945	16	Ferdinand
1996	943	27	Granby
1997	941	16	Lowell

**For more information please contact: Lucy Herring (802) 241-3117**