

Q&A on Bear Sightings

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Ecology

Q: How many Asian black bears live in Tokyo?

A:

According to the analysis of a habitat survey* conducted by the Tokyo Metropolitan Government in FY2025, the population of Asian black bears in Tokyo is estimated to be between 120 and 378, with an average estimate of 235 bears. The estimated population density** is 0.47 bears per square kilometer.

Because the estimation method differs from those used in previous surveys, direct comparison with past results is not possible. However, taking into account interviews with experts and municipalities, the number of Asian black bears in Tokyo is considered to be increasing.

* **Habitat survey:** In the FY2025 survey, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government used a method in which bear hair collected through hair traps was analyzed using DNA testing. This allowed for individual identification and analysis of movement ranges, which were then used to estimate the population.

** **Population density:** The estimated number of bears divided by the forest area.

Q: What is the current situation regarding sightings of Asian black bears in Tokyo?

A:

The latest information can be viewed on the Tokyo Metropolitan Government's "[Tokyo Asian Black Bear Sighting and Related Information Map](#)," also known as TOKYO Kumap.

(Note: TOKYO Kumap is available in Japanese only.)

Information is categorized into four types —traces signs, photographs, captures, and sightings — and can be checked on the map. The information is also available in table format, allowing users to access the data according to their needs.

In addition, in cooperation with Yamanashi Prefecture, the map also includes information from areas adjacent to Tokyo.

Q: Are Asian black bears an endangered species?

A:

In "[Tokyo Red List — Mainland Area, 2020 Revised Edition](#)," the Asian black bear is classified as Near Threatened.

However, according to the FY2025 survey, the estimated population is believed to be increasing, as noted above. In addition, bears are expanding their range of activity, with sightings now occurring around urban areas where

none had previously been reported. Therefore, active management is necessary in order to prevent human injury and other damage.

Q: How can accidents involving bears be prevented?

A:

Avoiding encounters with bears

Asian black bears are extremely fast and strong, and it is difficult for humans to outrun them. An attack can be life-threatening. Before thinking about what to do after encountering a bear, it is important first and foremost to take measures to avoid such encounters.

When entering mountains where Asian black bears live, people should make their presence known to bears by taking measures such as:

- Wearing and ringing a bear bell
- Playing a radio
- Talking while walking
- Clapping your hands in areas with poor visibility

Particular caution is needed in areas where many sightings or related reports have been made, and during the early morning and evening hours when Asian black bears are more active. People should also be careful on mountain trails with poor visibility, and in areas where the sound of streams is loud, as unexpected encounters with bears are more likely.

If you encounter a bear

- **If the bear is far away:**
Remain calm and leave the area. Do not run or shout, as this may startle the bear.
- **If the bear is nearby:**
Do not turn your back on the bear. Remain calm and slowly back away. If the bear approaches, bear spray is effective.
- **If you are attacked by a bear:**
Lie face down, curl up, and protect the back of your neck with your clasped hands. Asian black bears do not attack humans to eat them; rather, they attack to escape. It is said that if you do not resist and endure the attack for several minutes, the bear will leave.

Countermeasures

Q: What is the Asian Black Bear Management Plan?

A:

Through this plan, which is based on law,* the Tokyo Metropolitan Government will comprehensively promote initiatives such as capturing problem bears, responding to bear appearances in urban areas, and creating environments that do not attract bears.

The Tokyo Metropolitan Government is currently developing the plan, with the aim of formulating it during

FY2026.

Even while the plan is being developed, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government will continue to implement necessary measures as appropriate. These include providing [financial support for municipal initiatives such as the creation of buffer zones](#), [disseminating information on bear appearances](#), and [dispatching hunters when bears appear](#).

* **Plan based on law:** [Category 2 Specified Wildlife Protection Plan under the Wildlife Protection, Control, and Hunting Management Act](#).

Q: Can bears be captured if they appear near human settlements?

A:

Wild animals may be captured under certain circumstances. This includes capture based on permission under the Wildlife Protection, Control, and Hunting Management Act, as well as capture under the emergency firearm hunting system.

Bears that become habituated to human settlements are highly dangerous and need to be captured.

Bears that have learned that there are food sources such as persimmons and other fruit trees, or food waste, in human settlements become fixated on these food sources and begin searching for food in such areas. They may also come to associate humans with food, or may learn from experience in human living areas and become increasingly adapted to them. This makes them dangerous.

Q: What measures are effective for creating communities that do not attract bears? Why are “buffer zones” between people and bears necessary?

A:

By creating buffer zones between human settlements and bear habitats, it becomes harder for bears to approach residential areas.

Removing thickets and other vegetation between houses and mountains improves visibility. This allows bears to more easily recognize the presence of humans and is expected to make them more cautious. Bears are naturally highly wary animals.

In addition to clearing thickets and underbrush, other effective measures for creating communities that do not attract bears include cutting down fruit trees such as persimmon trees whose fruit has been left unharvested, and not leaving food waste or other garbage outdoors. These items can attract bears, which have a strong sense of smell.

Q: Are Asian black bears subject to hunting?

A:

In Tokyo, hunting of Asian black bears has been prohibited under the [Tokyo Wildlife Protection and Management Program](#) since April 1, 2008. The current 13th Tokyo Wildlife Protection and Management Program covers the

period from April 1, 2022, to March 31, 2027.

However, based on the most recent estimated population and the expansion of bears' range of activity, it is necessary to strengthen capture pressure* on bears. Therefore, in the bear management plan to be deliberated by the Tokyo Metropolitan Nature Conservation Council in FY2026, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government will consider a partial lifting of the hunting ban.

* **Capture pressure:** The degree of impact or pressure that human capture and similar actions exert on wildlife populations and ecosystems.

Q: Is it possible for bears to enter urban areas along rivers?

A:

Riverside areas contain natural environments such as shrubs and grasslands, and provide continuous green spaces where bears can hide. Therefore, it has been pointed out that riverside areas could serve as routes for bears moving from mountainous habitats into urban areas.

For this reason, with regard to the management of rivers that could become bear movement routes, the Tokyo Metropolitan Government will work with relevant ministries, agencies, local governments, and other organizations to advance various measures to prevent bears from being attracted to these areas.