

Westbrook Land Conservation Trust

The Bear Facts

At our open Annual Meeting, November 8th, in the Library, a compelling presentation called 'The Bear Reality' was given by DEEP adjunct wildlife conservationist Felicia Ortner. It seems that black bears are gradually moving east in the state, and we ought to be prepared to prevent difficulties.

In the past year, I heard of a black bear encounter within a quarter mile of my house near Wright's Pond. That was a first, so close. According to CT Insider's Dave Holahan, in 2022, American black bears were reported in 158 of 169 towns in Connecticut. Although there was a hundred year absence of bears until the 80's, the current population sits at over 1000 bears statewide. Much of western Connecticut is near carrying capacity. Conversely, the eastern side is not. Yet, there are many forests with nut-bearing trees just right for them on this side. Since most female bears and families are located in Northwest Connecticut, probably only wandering males might happen into your yard. Although encounters are infrequent, our state has the highest ratio of face to face meetings relative to population for any state in the Northeast. An explanation is the blending of suburban and natural landscapes, which obscures borders. There is also a larger issue with their becoming habituated and even hostile in certain towns such as Simsbury, due to people feeding them. If you live in Westbrook, you should become aware of guidelines and precautions regarding bears, just in case! In general, they are afraid of us and not a danger. Visit the DEEP website, and look up "The Basics of Living with Bears" article. They advise removing sources of food outdoors, leaving them alone if encountered, and never feeding them. Living in a town with such rich natural character, we have to learn to live with wildlife correctly.

The Westbrook Land Conservation Trust owns 31 land parcels of conserved open space, totaling 141 acres, as well as the conservation rights to an additional 51 acres. Founded in 1968, the Land Trust is a small organization that requires annual dues from membership. If you appreciate the natural areas we preserve, and are interested in helping us to maintain them, please consider joining the Land Trust.

Visit our website www.Westbrooklct.org, our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/WestbrookCTLandTrust>, or email us at Westbrooklct@gmail.com, or simply write us at Westbrook Land Conservation Trust, PO Box 1124, Westbrook, CT 06498.

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