

## Fawn predation by black bears in northeastern Minnesota

Lynn L. Rogers, Patrick S. Beringer, David A. Trauba, and Gregory A. Wilker. North Central Forest Experiment Station, SR 1, Box 7200, Ely, MN 55731 (218) 365-4138

Is the black bear (*Ursus americanus*) an important predator of white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) fawns? Do fawns contribute significantly to black bear diets? We attempted to answer these and other questions by closely observing 5 wild, researcher-habituated black bears in northeastern Minnesota for 1 or more years during 1986-1991. The bears were observed to kill or scavenge 21 fawns, all between 23 May and 28 June of those years. In 1990, observations were concentrated on a territorial mother and her independent yearling from 23 May to 27 June. The 2 bears used an area of 19.7 square kilometers which contained an estimated 69 fawns (3.5 fawns/km<sup>2</sup>) (Mark Lenarz, Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, personal communication, 1990). The mother killed 2 fawns, found 2 that had been killed by other bears, scavenged a nonpredated carcass, and killed or scavenged 1 other. The yearling killed and ate 1 fawn. These 7 fawns, comprised 10 percent of the estimated 69 fawns available and comprised 2-5 percent of the 2 bears' diets. The bears detected bedded fawns up to 186 m away. Eight (38%) of the 21 fawns eaten during this study were eaten between June 10 and 15 when fawns are approximately 10-15 days old, assuming birth dates around June 1. This age of highest vulnerability coincides with the age when fawns begin to move more frequently and create scent by urinating on their back legs. Bears found fawns incidentally in the course of feeding upon insects and vegetation. At observed fawn densities, the bears did not appear to hunt fawns until they smelled them.

Annotation: Newborn fawns contributed 2-5% to the diets of 2 bears between 23 May and 27 June in Superior National Forest, in Minnesota. The 7 fawns that were killed or scavenged comprised 10 percent of the estimated 69 fawns in the bears' territories.

Key words: Black bear, ursus americanus, white-tailed deer fawn, predation, scavenging, black bear diet.