

## 2009 Black Bear Harvest

Arkansas black bear hunters harvested 533 bears during the 2009 season. Not only is this the highest harvest since hunting was reinstated in 1980, it eclipsed the former record set in 2007 (400 bears). In fact, bear zone 1 almost set the record on its own, posting a harvest of 392 bears.

### Season Framework

Arkansas's 2009 black bear seasons were:

Bear zone 1

- Oct. 1-Nov. 30       -- Archery
- Oct. 17-25           -- Muzzleloader
- Nov. 7-8             -- Modern gun youth hunt
- Nov. 9-30            -- Modern gun

Bear zone 2

- Sept. 15-Nov. 30     -- Archery
- Oct. 17-25           -- Muzzleloader
- Nov. 7-8             -- Modern gun youth hunt
- Sept 15-16, Nov. 9-30-- Modern gun

Bear zone 5 (Quota 35)

- Dec. 5-13            -- Modern gun

Bear zone 5A (Quota 15)

- Nov. 28-Dec. 13     -- Modern gun

As in previous seasons, the use of dogs to hunt bears was prohibited. Baiting was allowed on private land in zones 1, 2, 5 and 5A from 30 days before the opening of bear season until the end of bear season. The bear zone 5 quota was 35 bears and the bear zone 5A was 15 bears. The season bag limit was one bear by any method.

### Results

A record 533 bears were legally harvested during the 2009 season. Three hundred two males (56 percent) and 228 females (44 percent) were harvested statewide. Most bears were harvested with archery equipment (69 percent) followed by modern gun (24 percent) and muzzleloader (18 percent).

Bear zone 1 produced 74 percent of the harvest (Table 1). Bear zone 2 provided 21 percent of the total harvest. Bear zones 5 and 5A produced 4 percent and 1 percent of the harvest, respectively.

One hundred bears (19 percent of the total harvest) were killed on public land and 433 (81 percent) were killed on private land. The top three public areas reporting harvested bears were Ozark National Forest, Ouachita National Forest and White Rock Wildlife Management Area (Table 2). The top five counties for bear harvest were Johnson, Van Buren, Madison, Newton and Searcy (Figure 1).

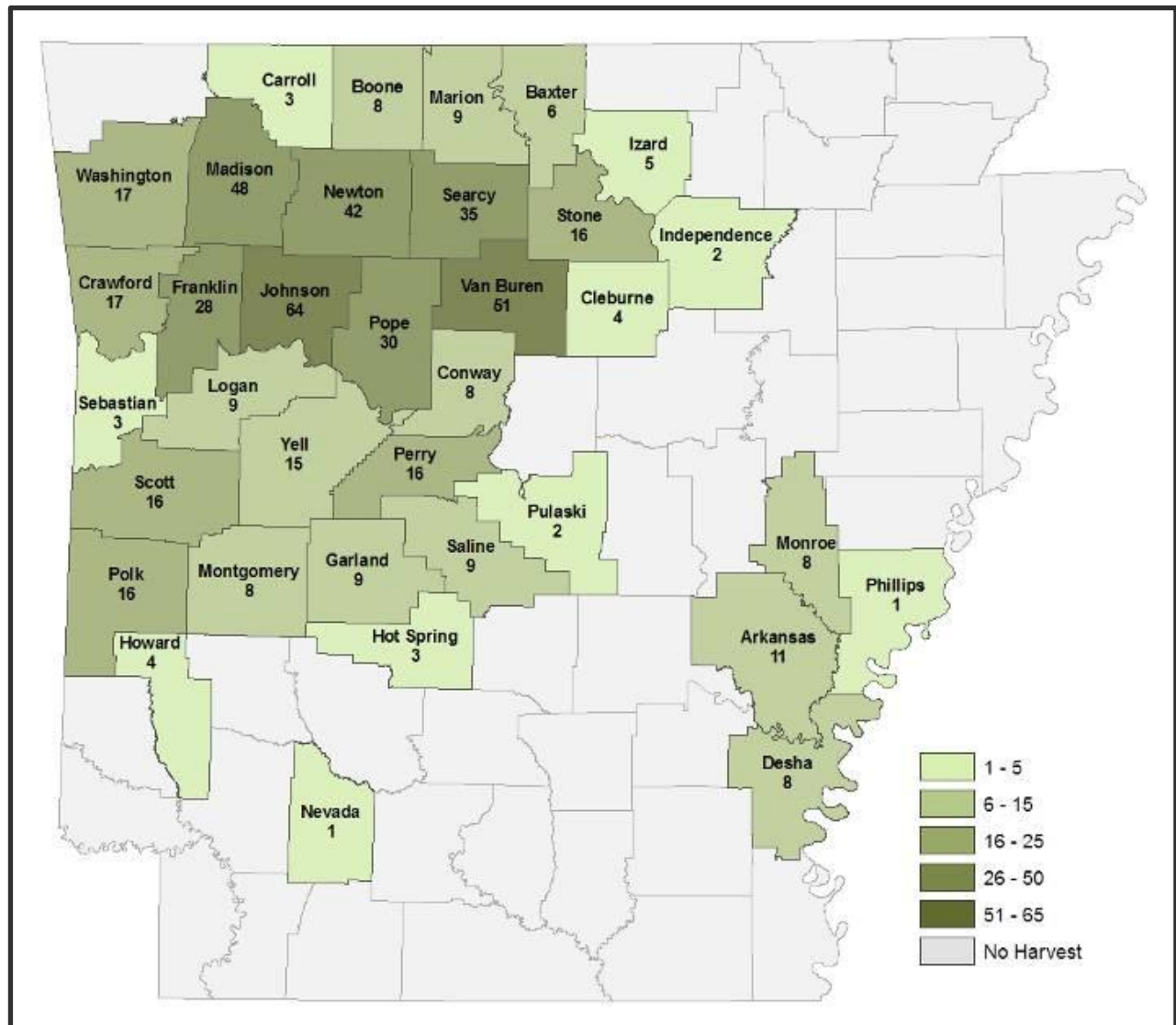
Two hundred eighty hunters (52 percent) reported using bait. However, since 81 percent of the harvested bears came from private land, the actual percentage of bears harvested over bait may have been much higher. Corn was the most commonly used bear bait, followed by dog food.

**Discussion**

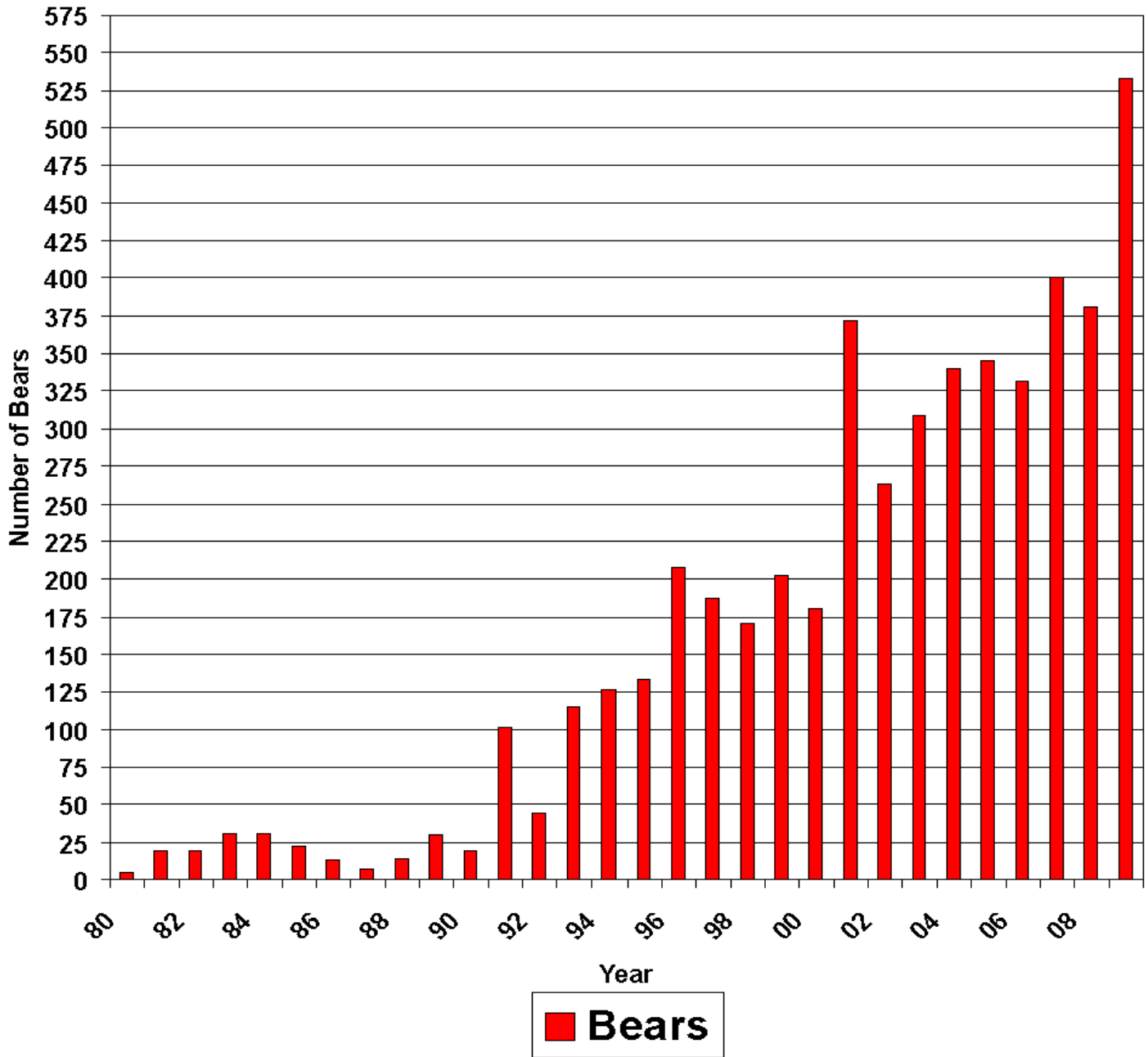
The 2009 statewide bear harvest is the highest since modern-day bear hunting began in 1980. The high harvest was most likely due to low availability of hard mast making bears more susceptible to bait. Reported harvest over bait was much higher than previous years. Typically, about 30 percent of Arkansas bear hunters report harvesting their bear over bait; however, 50 percent reported using bait to harvest their bear in 2007 (another hard mast failure year). The high private-land bear harvest may lead to a reduction in future human-bear conflicts. Bait-station survey trends and reproductive trends suggest healthy and expanding or stable populations in the Ozark and Ouachita regions.

Bear zones 1 and 2 previously had harvest quotas of 200 and 150 bears to regulate harvest. Those quotas were lifted in 2006 after several years of harvest numbers that fell shy of the quota. However, during the last two years, bear zone 1 has consistently exceeded the previous quota causing some concern for possible overharvest. Possible overharvest coupled with a decline in reproduction over the past two years has prompted the need for some reduction in harvest strategies for bear zone 1. The 200-bear quota will be reestablished for 2010 in this zone. Bear zone 2 has consistently shown lower than desired harvest numbers. In 2010, bear hunters in zone 2 will be able to use modern guns during the first two days of bear season to increase harvest to the desired level.

**Figure 1. Arkansas black bear harvest by county, 2009.**



**Figure 2. Arkansas black bear harvest From 1980-2009.**



**Table 1. Arkansas black bear harvest by bear zone, sex, and method, 2009.**

	<i>Total Harvest</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Archery</i>	<i>Crossbow</i>	<i>Muzzle-loader</i>	<i>Modern Gun</i>
<i>Zone 1</i>	<b>392</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>178</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>21</b>
<i>Zone 2</i>	<b>114</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>22</b>
<i>Zone 5</i>	<b>25</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>23</b>
<i>Zone 5A</i>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>

**Table 2. Arkansas black bear harvest by county and method for 2009.**

<i>County</i>	<i>Total Harvest</i>	<i>Archery</i>	<i>Muzzleloader</i>	<i>Modern Gun</i>
<i>Arkansas</i>	<b>11</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>10</b>
<i>Baxter</i>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>Boone</i>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Carroll</i>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>Cleburne</i>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Conway</i>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>Crawford</i>	<b>17</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Desha</i>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>
<i>Franklin</i>	<b>28</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>
<i>Garland</i>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Hot Springs</i>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Howard</i>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>

<i>Independence</i>	2	2	0	0
<i>Izard</i>	5	2	3	0
<i>Johnson</i>	64	49	12	3
<i>Logan</i>	9	5	2	2
<i>Madison</i>	48	45	1	2
<i>Marion</i>	9	4	5	0
<i>Monroe</i>	8	0	0	8
<i>Montgomery</i>	8	4	1	3
<i>Nevada</i>	1	1	0	0
<i>Newton</i>	42	28	13	1
<i>Perry</i>	16	10	4	2
<i>Phillips</i>	1	0	0	1
<i>Polk</i>	16	10	4	2
<i>Pope</i>	30	22	6	2

<i>Pulaski</i>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>Saline</i>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>3</b>
<i>Scott</i>	<b>16</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>6</b>
<i>Searcy</i>	<b>36</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>Sebastian</i>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>Stone</i>	<b>16</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>0</b>
<i>Van Buren</i>	<b>51</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>
<i>Washington</i>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Yell</i>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>
<i>Totals</i>	<b>533</b>	<b>368</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>69</b>