

2012 Black Bear Harvest

Arkansas black bear hunters harvested 432 bears during the 2012 season. This season was the third highest harvest on record.

Season Framework

Arkansas's 2013 black bear seasons were:

Bear zone 1

- Oct. 1-Nov. 30 -- Archery
- Oct. 20-28 -- Muzzleloader
- Nov. 3-4 -- Modern gun youth hunt
- Nov. 5-30 -- Modern gun

Bear zone 2

- Sept. 15-Nov. 30 -- Archery
- Oct. 20-38 -- Muzzleloader
- Nov. 3-4 -- Modern gun youth hunt
- Sept 15-16, Nov. 5-30-- Modern gun

Bear zone 5 (Quota 35)

- Dec. 1-9 -- Modern gun

Bear zone 5A (Quota 15)

- Nov. 24-Dec. 9 -- 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 season bag limit was one bear by any method. Bear Zone 1 (including all WMAs within Zone 1) the quota was 165 bears for the month of October and 200 bears total for all seasons combined. In bear zone 5 the quota was 10 bears and in bear zone 5A the quota was 5 bears.

Results

A third record 432 bears were legally harvested during the 2012 season. Two hundred sixty four males (61%) and 167 females (39%) were harvested statewide. Most bears were harvested with archery equipment at 359 (83%) followed by modern gun 48 (11%) and muzzleloader 25 (6%). Bear zone 1 produced 176 (43%) of the total harvest (Table 1). There were 107 males and 69 females harvested in Zone 1. Bear zone 2 provided 53 percent (217) of the total harvest. There were 112 males and 105 females harvested Bear Zone 2. Bear zones 5 and 5A produced 14 bears or 3% of the total harvest.

One hundred thirty five bears (31%) were killed on public land and 297 (69%) were killed on private land. The top five counties for bear harvest were Johnson, Van Buren, Madison, Newton and Searcy (Figure 1). Two hundred thirty four (54%) were harvested with using bait. Corn was the most commonly used bear bait, followed by dog food.

Discussion

The 2012 statewide bear harvest is the third 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 harvest over bait. Reported harvest over bait was only 54% where as private land harvest was at 69% which leads me to believe that many hunters who harvest bears over bait are not willing to report it for whatever reason.

Bear zones 1 maintained a harvest quota of 200 bears total (165 Archery, 35 Modern Gun). Bear Zone has long since been without a harvest quota because Bear Zone 2 is for the most part self-regulating during to the limited amount of private lands interspersed within the Ouachita National Forest. Those quotas were lifted in 2006 after several years of harvest numbers that fell shy of the quota. However, during 2008 and 2009, bear zone 1 has consistently exceeded the previous quota causing some concern for possible overharvest. Possible overharvest coupled with a decline in reproduction over in 2007-2009 prompted the need for some reduction in harvest strategies for bear zone 1. For 2010 season 200-bear quota was re-instated. Also, the Bear Zone 1 quota was rationed out to a monthly framework. For the months of September and October the zone 1 quota was 165 bears and 35 bears for the modern gun season.

Bear zone 2 has consistently shown lower than desired harvest numbers. In 2009-2010, bear hunters in zone 2 were once able to use modern guns during the first two days of the September season which accounts for Zone 2 harvesting about 50% of the statewide harvest in 2009 and 2010.

Figure 1. Arkansas black bear harvest by county, 2012.

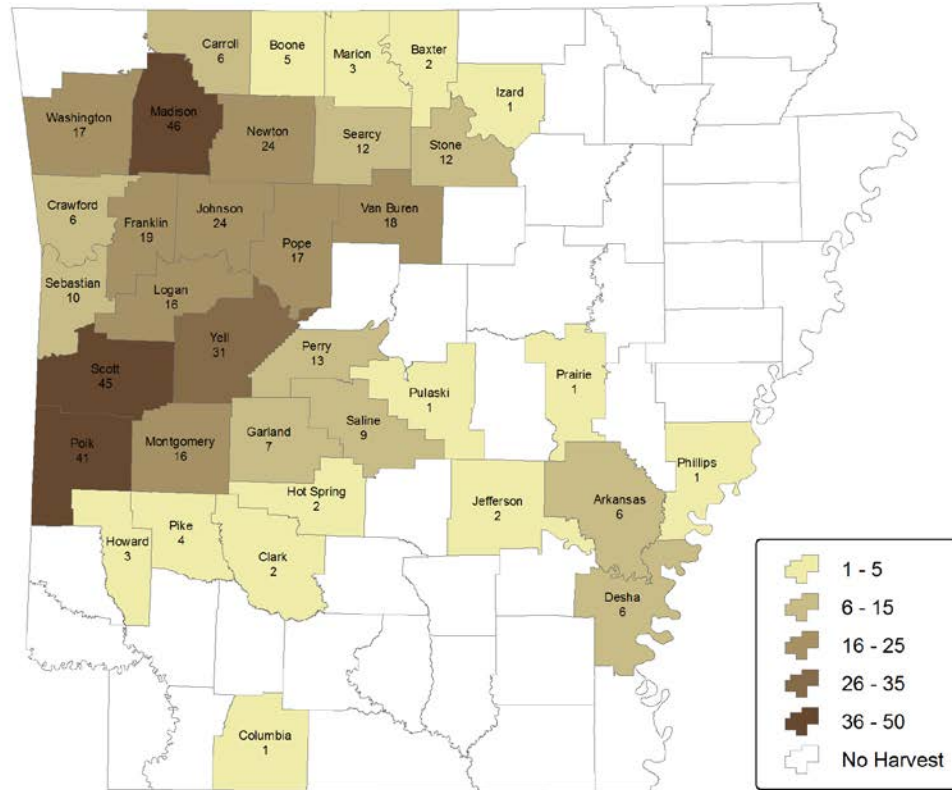


Figure 2. Arkansas black bear harvest, 1980-2012.

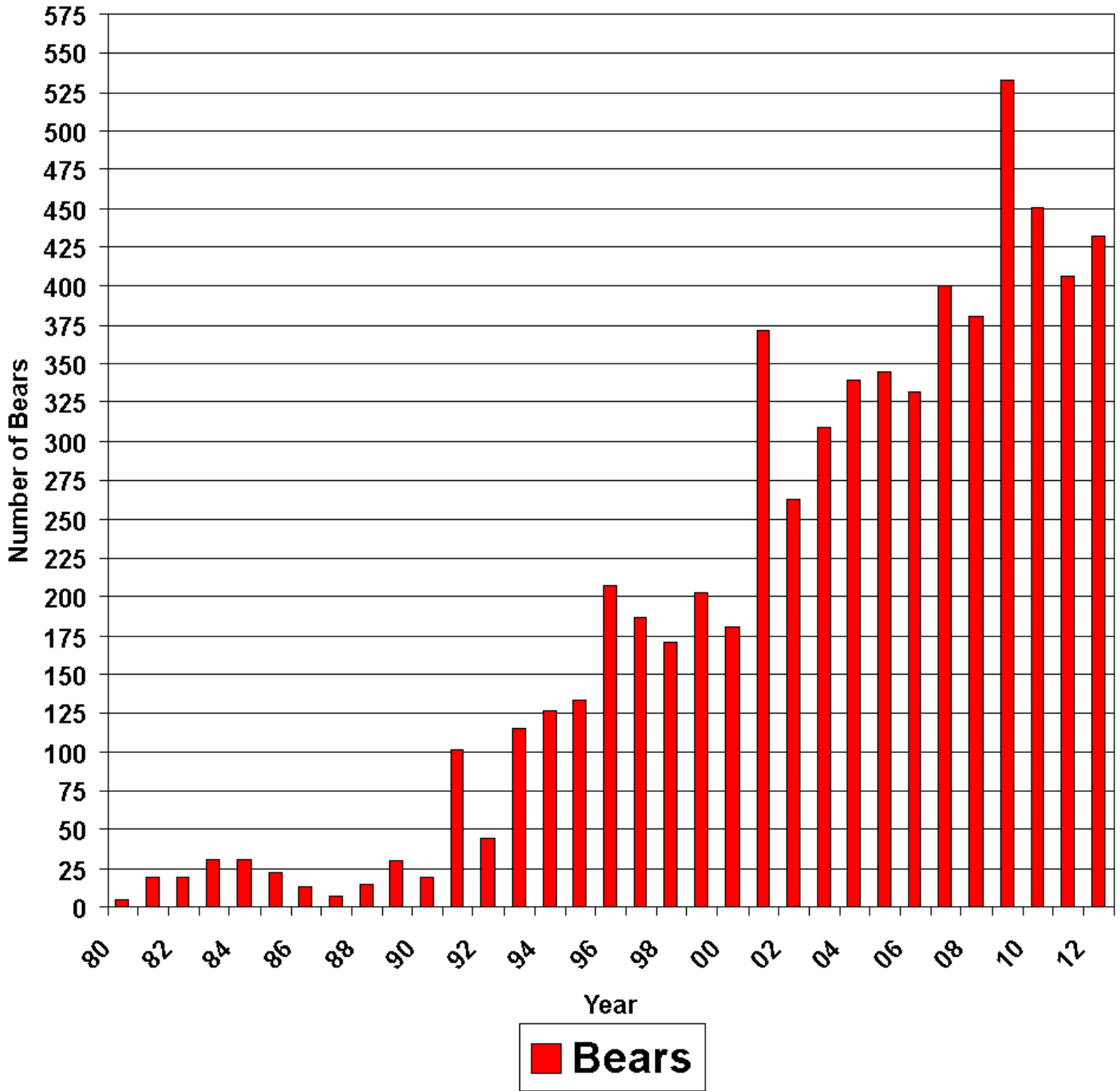


Table 1. Arkansas black bear harvest by bear zone, sex, and method, 2012.

	<i>Total Harvest</i>	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	<i>Archery</i>	<i>Muzzle-loader</i>	<i>Modern Gun</i>
<i>Zone 1</i>	200	135	65	186	2	12
<i>Zone 2</i>	219	125	93	171	22	95
<i>Zone 5</i>	11	2	9	2	1	4
<i>Zone 5A</i>	2	2	0	0	0	1

Table 2. Arkansas black bear harvest by county and method for 2012.

<i>County</i>	<i>Total Harvest</i>	<i>Archery</i>	<i>Muzzleloader</i>	<i>Modern Gun</i>
<i>Arkansas</i>	6	2	0	4
<i>Baxter</i>	2	2	0	0
<i>Boone</i>	5	5	0	0
<i>Carroll</i>	6	5	0	1
<i>Clark</i>	2	2	0	0
<i>Columbia</i>	1	1	0	0
<i>Crawford</i>	6	5	0	1
<i>Desha</i>	6	0	0	6
<i>Franklin</i>	19	17	0	2
<i>Garland</i>	7	7	0	0
<i>Hot Springs</i>	2	1	1	0

<i>Howard</i>	3	3	0	0
<i>Izard</i>	1	1	0	0
<i>Jefferson</i>	2	2	0	0
<i>Johnson</i>	24	20	1	3
<i>Logan</i>	16	15	1	0
<i>Madison</i>	46	45	0	1
<i>Marion</i>	3	2	0	1
<i>Montgomery</i>	16	8	3	5
<i>Newton</i>	24	21	0	3
<i>Perry</i>	13	9	3	1
<i>Phillips</i>	1	0	1	0
<i>Pike</i>	4	3	0	1
<i>Polk</i>	41	27	4	10
<i>Pope</i>	17	16	0	1

<i>Prairie</i>	1	0	0	1
<i>Pulaski</i>	1	1	0	0
<i>Saline</i>	9	9	0	0
<i>Scott</i>	45	34	8	3
<i>Searcy</i>	12	12	0	0
<i>Sebastian</i>	10	9	1	0
<i>Stone</i>	12	12	0	0
<i>Van Buren</i>	18	18	0	0
<i>Washington</i>	17	15	1	1
<i>Yell</i>	31	27	3	1

