

# Bears in Adams County

Adams County Travel  
and Visitors Bureau



A reported bear was sighted off Vaughn Ridge Road in Tiffin Township by a resident awoken at night by a bear getting into garbage. A week later, Adams County Sheriff's Deputy, David Russell reported a bear sighting east of Cedar Mills on St. Rt. 348, near the Brush Creek - Jefferson township line.

Gilkey said they were 113 reported bear sightings in Ohio in 2006, of these he believes 27 were confirmed sightings. Reports of bears came from 10 different Ohio counties, adding up to the possibility that there were a least 67 different bears in Ohio according to a report issued by the Division of Wildlife. Sightings have occurred every month except January and February when bears are in hibernation. Gilkey said the peak months for bear sightings in Ohio are during the summer months.

In August a trail camera set up near a game feeder east of Cedar Mills in Brush Creek Township, took photographs of a wild bear. During the period between August 7 and August 13, eleven photographs were taken of a black bear feeding on the pile of corn that had accumulated under the feeder. That bear was actually observed at the feeder when the owner went to check in it. Later in early September, possibly the same bear, was sighted north of Cedar Mills near a pond off Cedar Mills Road in Meigs Township.

The sightings continued into September and received the attention of several local newspapers. Later in the fall, Cincinnati TV stations Channel 9, and Channel 12 did broadcast news stories about the number of bear sightings in Adams County.

A growing number of Adams County residents are apprehensive about bears being in the county, as they are often misunderstood creatures of the night that instill fear and tend to stir the imaginations of people who are not familiar with them.

Bears aren't the only animals that go bump in the night. Biologists believe Adams County has a small population of bobcats in the southeastern part of the county near the Scioto-Adams County line. That area also supports Ohio's only population of the Allegheny wood rat (pack rat).



This picture was taken on August 13<sup>th</sup>, 2007 near Cedar Mills with a trail camera.



Photo taken in Shawnee State Forrest in 2007.

**2007 was a record year for bear sightings in Adams County!**

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*The above photo courtesy of Kevin Bradbury, Shawnee State Forest.*

## Adams County Reports Numerous Bear Sightings in 2007

By Tom Cross

Adams County residents reported a number of bear sightings this past summer and early fall, with bears sightings being reported in seven different townships in 2007.

"Adams County was the only county in southwest Ohio to report any bears sightings," said Dave Kohler, wildlife biologist for District Five Headquarters in Xenia. "From those reports, two are confirmed sightings from different townships that lead us to believe there were at least two different bears in the county. Some of those bear sightings in Adams County could be bears coming across the Ohio River from Kentucky."

Starting in June, the rash of bear sightings began. According to Adams County Wildlife Officer Chris Gilkey, he believes this could be the result of two, possibly three bears having visited the county this past year. With the most recent confirmed sightings in August, officer Gilkey believes Adams County could possibly have one or more bears taking up residence in Adams County.

"With the number of sightings that has occurred in the southern part of the county, and a history of sightings dating back several years in that same general area between Buckeye Station and Bat Roost," said Gilkey, "this leads me to believe a bear may have taken permanent residence in Adams County."

The first bear sighting occurred in mid-June with a sighting on Bat Roost Road in Monroe Township. It was a quiet, warm evening around 10 p.m., Sherry Leis was sitting on her porch talking over the phone when her dog started barking.

"I made the comment to whom I was talking to, that the bogie man might be out there," said Leis. "Then the dog stopped barking and things got quiet."

Leis noticed a dark object coming up the ditch line toward her. At first she thought it was a black cow, and then she realized it was a bear heading for a bowl of dog food she had put out earlier.

Startled, she hollered over the phone, "It's a bear!"

Hearing her voice, the bear was startled and quickly vanished into the night.

Approximately three miles away and a few days later in June, another sighting occurred near St. Rt. 247 near Beasley Fork. It was late at night when the person was awakened thinking it was raccoons that got into the garbage can. When they flipped on the porch light, it was a bear. A few days later another bear was sighted, this time with cubs, near Bentonville in Sprigg Township.

Gilkey said the majority of bear sightings in the spring are young males seeking new territory. "These are known as transient bears," said Gilkey, "they are on the move, trying to establish new home ranges."

Gilkey believes that most bears in Adams County originally came from West Virginia, perhaps through Kentucky. The vast tracts of timber and woodlands make Adams County an attractive place for wondering bears in search of a new home.

"Adams County is ideal habitat for bears," said Gilkey, "mainly because of the prevalence of large unbroken tracts of forest such as Shawnee State Forest, the Edge of Appalachia Preserve, and the woodlands that extends all along the Ohio River hills into Adams County."

In June, other bear sightings on Cemetery Road, near Locust Grove in Franklin Township were also reported.

"It's difficult for me to believe this is the same bear that was reported in the southern part of the county earlier," said Gilkey. "This bear is considered a confirmed sighting because we have an actual photograph of the bear on Cemetery Road that someone took."

During the first of August two more bear sightings occurred in Adams County, according to officer Gilkey.



This bear was photographed 11 times by a trail camera in August while visiting the game feeder pictured in the background near Cedar Mills, in Adams County.

*Photo courtesy of Wanda Moles.*