

Black Bear

Ursus americanus

Photo: Joe Brail

Newfoundland & Labrador's traditional predator

Black bears are native to both Newfoundland and Labrador and are part of the *Ursidae* family, which includes grizzly and polar bears.

Black bears eat plants and berries, animals including caribou and moose calves, and carrion. Black bears can reach 600 lb (227 kg) depending on food sources, but average weights are 110-180 lb (50-82 kg) for females and 200-300 lb (91-136 kg) for males. Bears are most active at dawn and dusk, and though naturally shy creatures, they will overcome their fear of humans if food is available.



North American black bear distribution

Bears in Newfoundland and Labrador roam large territories, though they do not defend these areas from other bears. Males have home ranges upwards of 200 km² or more, while females' home ranges are about 60 km².

Black bears spend the winter dormant in their dens, surviving on fat reserves. They make their dens in caves, burrows, brush piles, tree cavities or other sheltered spots. Female black bears give birth to two or three blind cubs in mid-winter and nurse them in their dens until spring, when they emerge in search of food. Cubs stay with their very protective mothers for about two years.

Finding answers in a strand of bear hair

The Wildlife Division is investigating black bear population trends through the Provincial Black Bear Index Program, which will help establish an accurate estimate of black bear numbers in all regions of the Island.

Some of the answers may be found in individual strands of the animals' coarse, black fur, which is collected at barbed wire hair snag stations. The hair provides a DNA database of black bears occupying an area, providing an estimate of the population.

For more information, visit www.env.gov.nl.ca/env/wildlife or call (709) 637-2025

Department of Environment & Conservation

Wildlife Division

Newfoundland
Labrador



Photo: Charmaine Barney



Photo: Chuck Porter

When black bears become accustomed (habituated) to humans, their natural fear of people fades and they take more chances to access food. Habituated bears are unpredictable and may become aggressive. Avoid creating problem bears by making sure food, trash and other attractants are stored properly.

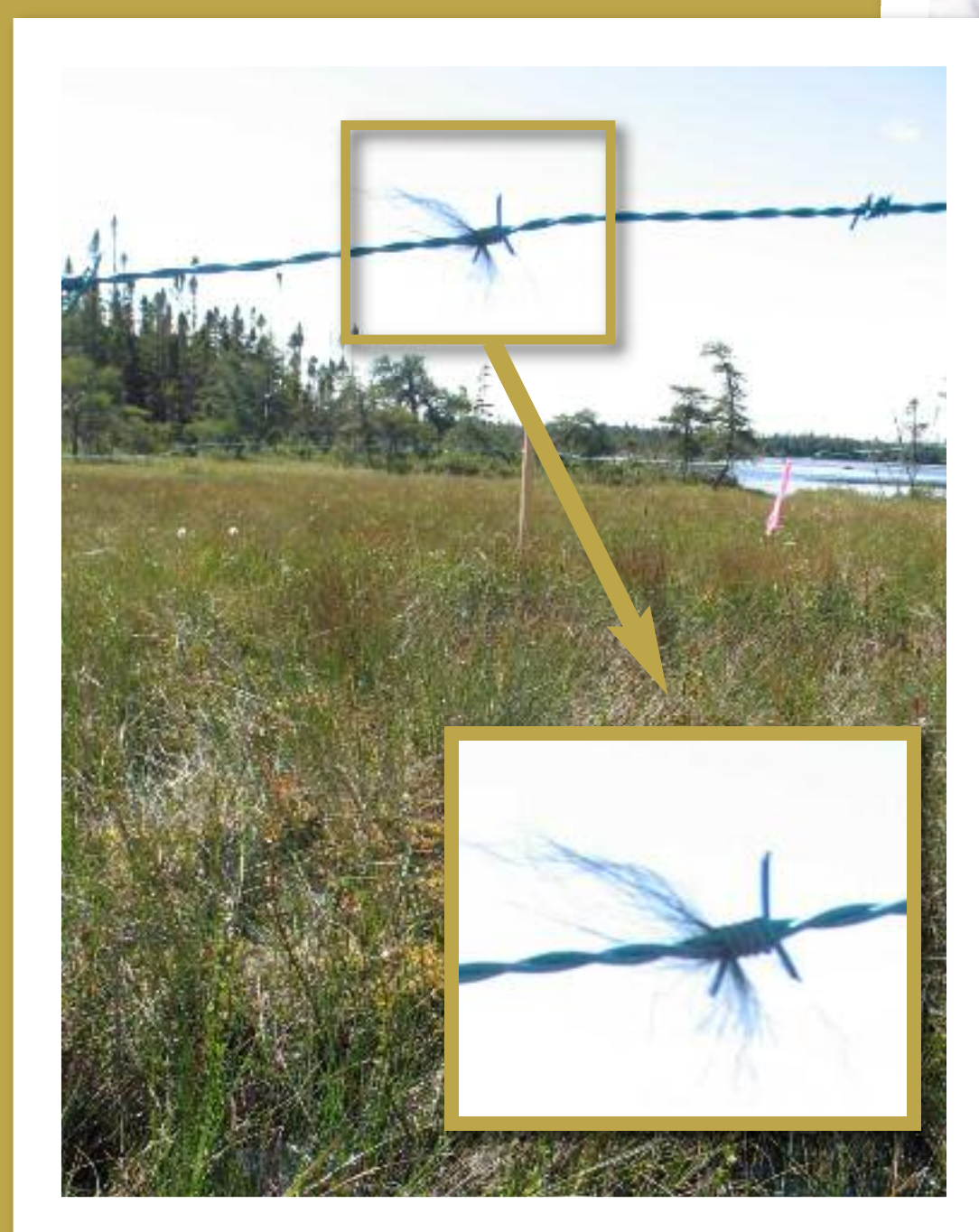


Photo: Tyler Hedder

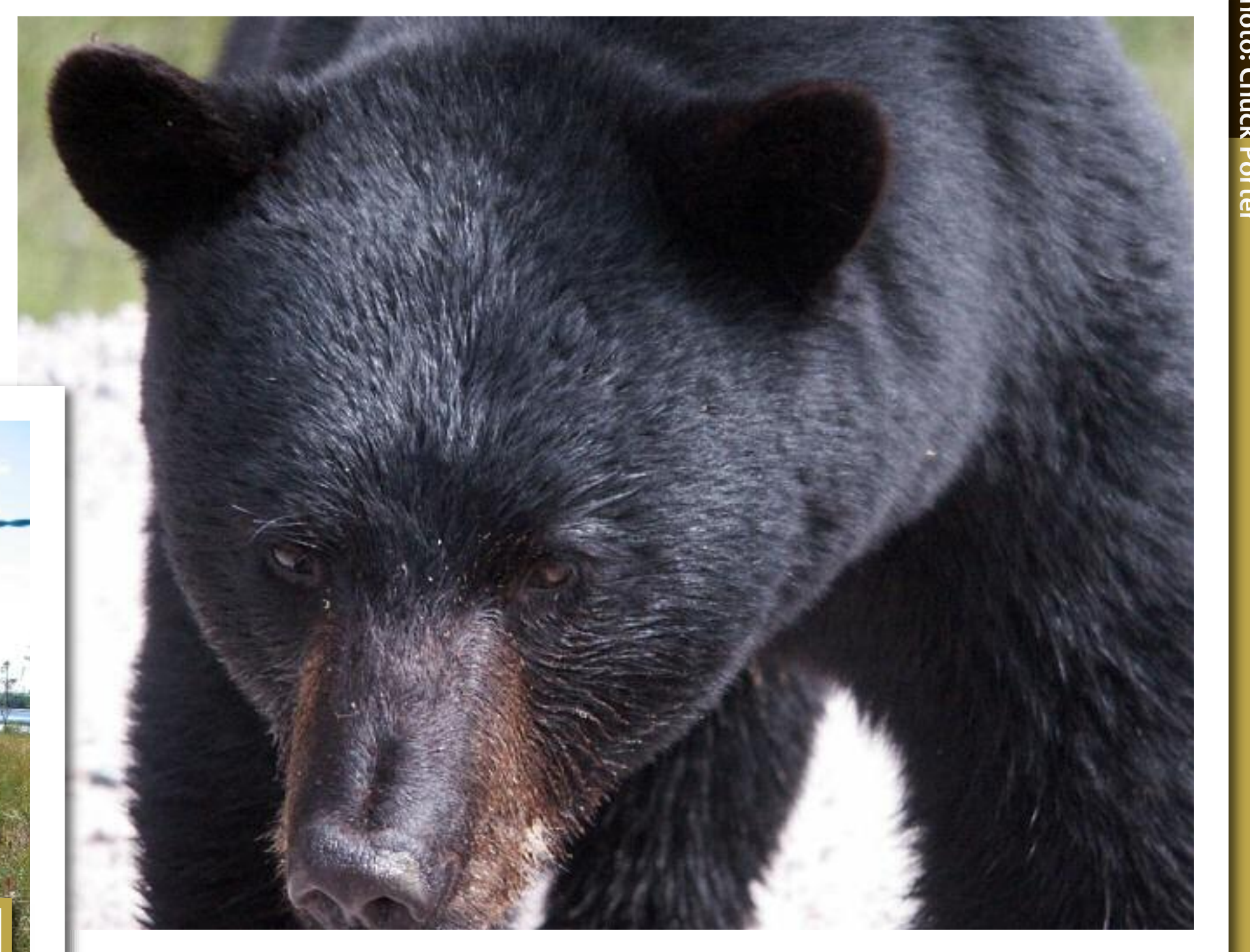


Photo: Chuck Porter