

Study to monitor bears and hunters by GPS

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West Virginia University and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources say they're using GPS technology to study black bears.

The collaborative research project will monitor the movement of Maryland's black bears by using global positioning radio collars and determining hunter movements through the use of GPS armband units.

"Use of such novel technology will allow us to determine spatial patterns and habitat use of black bears throughout the year, while at the same time allowing us to assess the vulnerability of bears to hunting mortality by providing real-time information of bear and hunter movements during the black bear season," said John Edwards, associate professor of wildlife and fisheries.

He said it's the first study of its kind in which concurrent GPS information will be collected on both bears and bear hunters.

Edwards said data gathered during the next two years will allow biologists to determine the most likely habitats occupied by black bears, and how to best structure hunting seasons to maintain desired numbers of black bears in western Maryland.

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