



FEEDING OF BEARS FOR RECREATIONAL TOURISM AT FINNISH-RUSSIAN BORDER: BIOLOGICAL EFFECTS AND HUMAN SAFETY

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Bear watching and photographing are popular and profitable wildlife tourism in easternmost Finland. Most common baits are leftovers of farmed salmon and dog food and sometimes carcasses of domestic pig. Roughly 100 – 150 brown bears (*Ursus arctos*), visit these feeding sites each year. Artificial feeding might disrupt movement patterns and home range use and make bears abnormal fat. In public debate the primary concern is about feeding making bears less wary of humans. We found that Kernel home range of male bears was negatively correlated the proportion of time bears spent at feeding site. The back fat depth or body mass of hunted bears did not, however, associate with the distance from baiting sites by conclusive fashion. So far we have not found evidence that bears conditioned to artificial food and human presence at baiting sites had been a risk for human safety. So called problem bears, moving in urban areas or countryside house yards shot by police or basing on a license issued by police were shot further from baiting sites than bears that were harvested in ordinary autumn hunting. Also distance from bears shot for self defense was higher than that from the hunted bears. In eastern Finland bears are actively hunted with dogs which has probably kept them adequately wary of humans.

