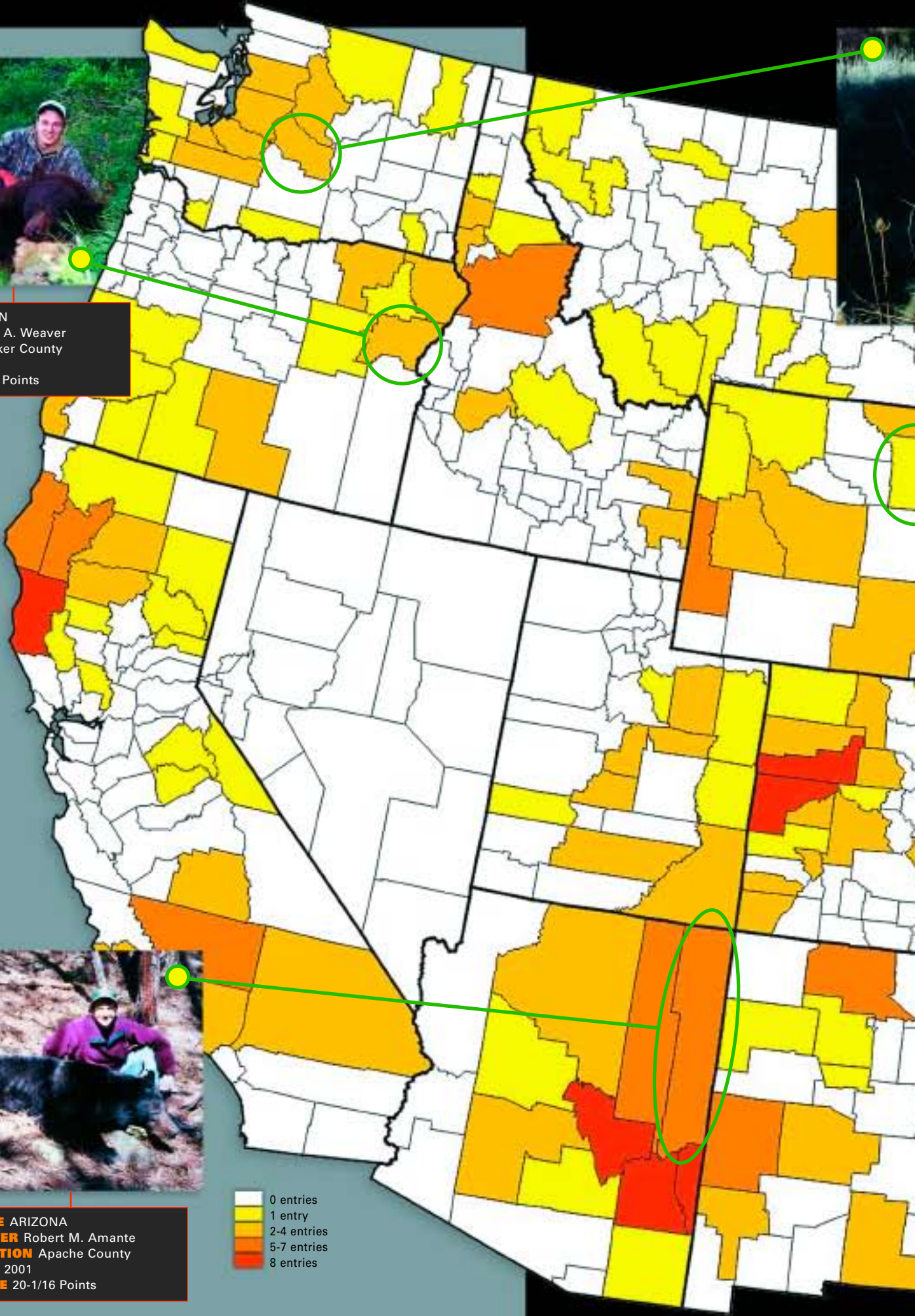






STATE OREGON
HUNTER Darin A. Weaver
LOCATION Baker County
YEAR 2001
SCORE 20-1/16 Points



STATE ARIZONA
HUNTER Robert M. Amante
LOCATION Apache County
YEAR 2001
SCORE 20-1/16 Points

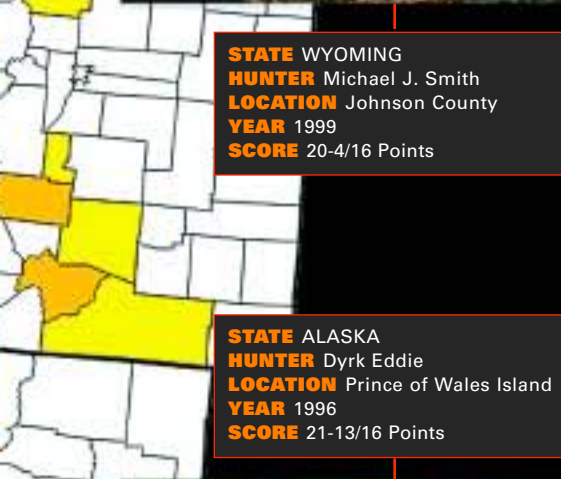


STATE WASHINGTON
HUNTER Brennan D. Earhart
LOCATION Kittitas County
YEAR 1997
SCORE 20-8/16 Points

BLACK BEAR DISTRIBUTION IN THE WESTERN STATES



STATE ALASKA
HUNTER Nathan L. Andersohn
LOCATION Kuiu Island
YEAR 2002
SCORE 20-4/16 Points



STATE WYOMING
HUNTER Michael J. Smith
LOCATION Johnson County
YEAR 1999
SCORE 20-4/16 Points



STATE ALASKA
HUNTER Dyrk Eddie
LOCATION Prince of Wales Island
YEAR 1996
SCORE 21-13/16 Points

bears, prompting some to suggest the possibility of a hunting season in the foreseeable future.

Mapping the Boone and Crockett records book for black bear creates a map with an interesting and varied pattern across the United States. The black bear records book distribution is more fragmented compared to the other species examined in this series of articles. Mule deer, elk, and whitetail deer records book entries all demonstrate a more continuous distribution extending over various habitat types. Black bears are less adaptable in relation to habitat, depending almost exclusively on forested areas. Therefore the distribution shown on the maps generally corresponds with areas containing relatively large expanses of forested habitat.

The records book I obtained from the Boone and Crockett Club contained 926 black bear entries from the U.S. Thirty-eight entries are not mapped since they do not contain county information. The remaining 888 entries successfully mapped span the years 1928 to 2001. The 11-year period from 1990-2001

produced 611, or 69% of the records book entries, with an additional 183 being entered during the 1980s, and the remaining 94 being entered prior to 1979.

Twenty-five states have records book entries, with the top ten states being Wisconsin (142), Pennsylvania (102), Alaska (99), California (83), Arizona (74), Minnesota (59), Colorado (48), North Carolina (42), Michigan (35), and New Mexico (25). These ten states account for 80% of the entries, with the remaining 20% distributed between the remaining 15 states. The Great Plains states provide an orderly dividing line between the records book entries found in the eastern and western United States since each region has 444 mapped entries.

Western States

What is immediately apparent about the western states is the absence of entries from Nevada. Nevada creates a “hole” in the West since it does not offer a hunting season, although it does have an estimated 300 black bears. The ten states surrounding Nevada and Alaska all have large areas of suitable black bear habitat and numerous counties with impressive numbers of entries.

The third highest-ranking state in the nation for black bear entries is Alaska, with the Alexander Archipelago accounting for most of the state’s 99 entries, especially Prince of Wales (41), Kuiu (16), and Kupreanof (6) Islands. California is fascinating since it has excellent bear hunting in both the northern and southern halves of the state. Northern Mendocino County (22), located on the Pacific Coast, ranks second in the nation, while Ventura County (15) in the south ranks fourth.

Other high-ranking states in the West include Arizona (74) and Colorado (48). The top-ranked county in the nation is central Arizona’s Gila County with 32 entries. Graham (13) and Greenlee (9) counties also rank in the top ten nationally and along with Gila form one of the nation’s best areas for trophy black bear hunting. Colorado’s west-central Garfield (10) and Mesa (9) counties also rank in the top ten nationally.

The other western states have 25 or fewer entries with no county ranking particularly high nationally. Utah, with only 21 entries, is worth mentioning since it has the distinction of producing the World’s Record black bear. This impressive specimen was picked up in 1975 in

central Utah’s San Pete County and scored 23-10/16 points.

Eastern States

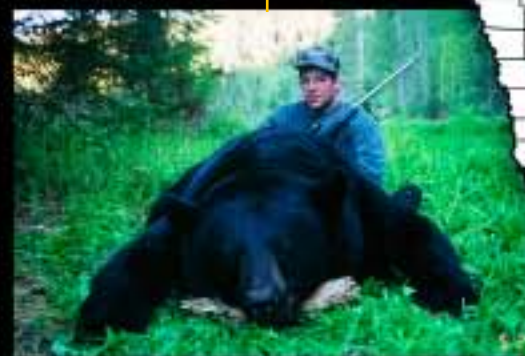
The eastern United States is interesting since the region’s 444 entries are clustered in areas that are not contiguous. The largest of these areas is the northern lake country of Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan, which account for 236 of the 444 eastern entries. Northern Wisconsin is an exceptional area with seven counties that rank in the top ten nationally; these include Price (13), Bayfield (12), Sawyer (12), Burnett (9), Iron (8), Rusk (8), and Langlade (8) counties. Minnesota has 19 counties with entries, with Pine County (10) ranking eighth in the country. This region’s excellent hunting also extends into the Upper Peninsula of Michigan with Menominee County (11) being ranked seventh nationally.

Pennsylvania is another state with a long tradition of black bear hunting. The Keystone State, with 102 entries, is the second best in the nation, with most entries coming from the mountainous and heavily forested midsection of the state. Pennsylvania has three counties, Pike (9), McKean (9), and Lycoming (8), which rank in the top ten nationally. Another perhaps less known trophy black bear region is eastern North Carolina, with its cluster of 12 counties that account for all, but one of the state’s 42 entries. This region includes Hyde County (17) the third ranked county in the nation, and Tyrrell County (8) which is ranked tenth.

The remaining nine states in the East have a total of 64 entries with most of these coming mainly from eastern New York (22), the mountains of western Virginia (17), and northern Maine (12). West Virginia (3) has produced three records book entries divided between two counties. The remaining states include Arkansas (3), South Carolina (2), Georgia (2), Florida (2), and New Hampshire (1), with the entries from these states all coming from counties producing a single entry.

Mapping the Boone and Crockett Club’s records book is a useful endeavor since it provides a visual image of where entries originate. Future mapping of the black bear records book would be particularly interesting and useful in monitoring the expansion of the black bears’ range and the additional hunting opportunities that this may produce. ■

PROVINCE SASKATCHEWAN
HUNTER Richard P. Smith
LOCATION Carswell Lake
YEAR 2002
SCORE 21-14/16 Points



PROVINCE BRITISH COLUMBIA
HUNTER Mark A. Nucci
LOCATION Clyde Creek
YEAR 1999
SCORE 20-15/16 Points

Although not shown here due to lack of county information, Canada offers many great opportunities for trophy black bear. Over 40 percent of black bear entries in the Boone and Crockett Club’s Records Program are from Canada.



STATE WISCONSIN
HUNTER Vincent A. Volkey
LOCATION Sawyer County
YEAR 1998
SCORE 20-13/16 Points

STATE NEW YORK
HUNTER Kerry Rogers
LOCATION Hamilton County
YEAR 1986
SCORE 21-2/16 Points



STATE NEW YORK
HUNTER Edward B. Rivenburg, Jr.
LOCATION Greene County
YEAR 1997
SCORE 21-12/16 Points



STATE NORTH CAROLINA
HUNTER Albert J. Blase
LOCATION Tyrrell County
YEAR 1996
SCORE 21-14/16 Points

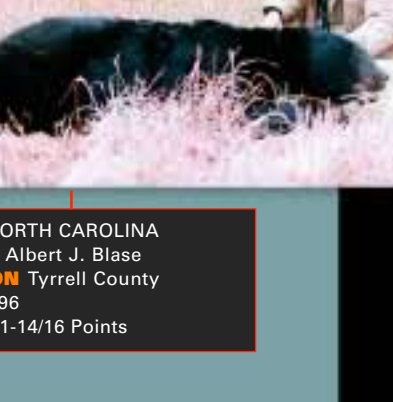
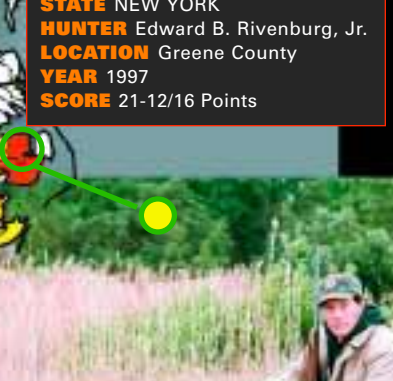


TOP BLACK BEAR COUNTIES

1. Gila County, Arizona	32 entries
2. Mendocino County, California	22 entries
3. Hyde County, North Carolina	17 entries
4. Ventura County, California	15 entries
5. Price County, Wisconsin	13 entries
5. Graham County, Arizona	13 entries



STATE PENNSYLVANIA
HUNTER Jackson D. Wetzel
LOCATION Union County
YEAR 1998
SCORE 20-9/16 Points



STATE PENNSYLVANIA
HUNTER Elwood W. Maurer
LOCATION Schuylkill County
YEAR 1997
SCORE 23-8/16 Points



BLACK BEAR DISTRIBUTION IN THE EASTERN STATES

