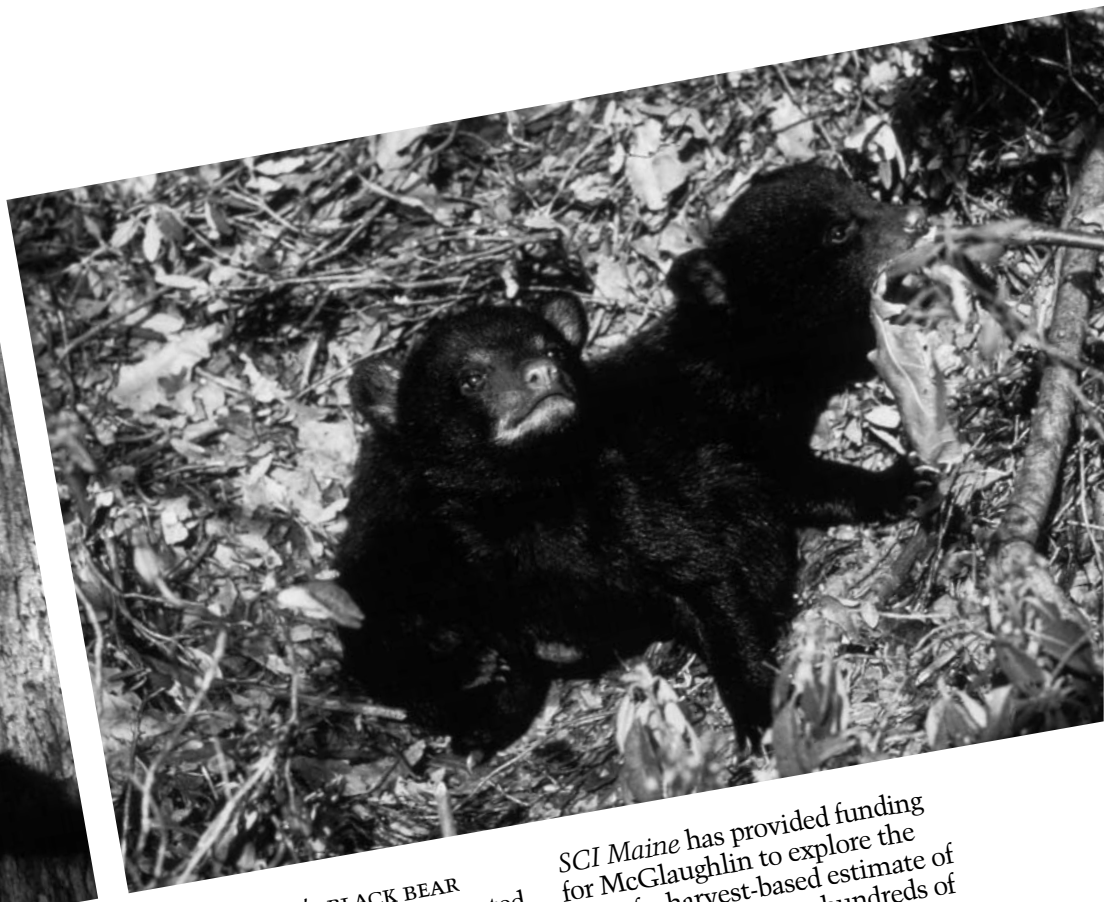
Making a Difference for Wildlife

Hundreds of local conservation projects are undertaken annually by SCI Chapters. They are reinforced by many notable conservation initiatives funded by the SCI Foundation.

SCI FOUNDATION

Estimating Black Bear Reproductive Potential from Harvest Data
Northern Maine, USA
Total Funds: $5,500



Maine's black bear population is estimated at 23,000 animals and is growing above management objectives. Fundamental bear demographic information is collected to balance reasonable bear hunting with population conservation. Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife bear study leader Dr. Craig McGlaughlin collects data such as life span, first cub production age, and time interval between litters to determine population productivity. Data are collected from radio-collared animals captured at selected study areas. These results are extrapolated to the rest of the state, but habitat variables between regions make such extrapolation speculative.

SCI Maine has provided funding for McGlaughlin to explore the idea of a harvest-based estimate of cub production. After hundreds of den visits, he has found that sows that have previously nursed cubs develop permanently larger, darker nipples. This is a characteristic that can be measured in harvested sows checked in with the Department by bear hunters. Using SCI funds, the idea is being calibrated versus known population characteristics for two of the existing study areas. The results are promising, and may result in a less expensive, less intrusive and more accurate way to estimate cub production across Maine.

According to McGlaughlin, "I am very grateful for SCI's contribution. Without it, we simply would not be conducting this research."