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Zabaikalsky Region Offers Bounties for Bears as Human Encounters Rise

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The Eurasian brown bear. **Christina & Peter / pexels**

Authorities in Russia's Far East Zabaikalsky region have introduced a bounty for bear culling in the region to curb the sharp rise in dangerous encounters with humans.

The regional ministry of natural resources on Thursday offered a reward of 15,000 rubles ($180) for every bear hunted.

More than 100 bear sightings have been recorded in the Zabaikalsky region so far, with 35 taking place directly inside human settlements. Hunters have culled 70 bears across the region as part of its campaign to regulate the animal's population.

The Zabaikalsky region introduced a high-alert status on Tuesday, with officials urging residents to avoid forests for foraging, fishing or recreation.

"The main goal of these measures is to protect human life and health and reduce the risk of dangerous encounters with wild animals," the ministry said in a statement.

At least 22 people have been killed in bear attacks across Russia in 2026. Experts attribute the spate of killings to climate change, with a lack of berries forcing bears to look for food elsewhere, as well as people leaving food waste out in the open where it attracts bears.

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Russia's Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Patrushev said Wednesday the government was drafting measures to manage the brown bear population, which has doubled over the last three decades to 308,000.

Lifting hunting quotas and setting regional population limits, as well as giving local authorities extra powers to control bear numbers, were among the proposals.

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