



The Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Wildlife Resources Division
BLACK BEAR SAFETY INFORMATION



The Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*) symbolizes the wild qualities of our state. Prior to the eighteenth century bears were common in Georgia. However, habitat loss, unrestricted hunting, and overall degradation of habitat due to human development contributed to a serious population decline. Thanks to sound wildlife management practices bears have recovered to the present population of approximately 5,100 statewide.

Unfortunately, as the bear population and our human population both increase, especially in traditional rural areas like the mountains, bear/human conflicts are on the rise. Bears are opportunist by nature. In the wild they feed on whatever is readily available. The bear's remarkable sense of smell also leads it to unnatural foods, such as garbage. Food odors and garbage attract bears to campgrounds, picnic areas, residential neighborhoods, businesses, and dump sites. Over time, "garbage bears" will lose their fear of humans and become a serious threat to human safety. In the end, the bears will lose resulting in the statement "Garbage Kills Bears."

While you are in the mountains, either as a visitor or permanent resident, please do your part to protect Georgia's bear population by keeping our bears wild. Please follow the following guidelines to protect people, property, and the bears!

At Rental Cabins, Chalets, Motels, or Residential Areas:

1. NEVER leave unattended food or garbage outside.
2. Do NOT feed birds between April and November unless you use feeders that bears cannot reach and have spill pans to prevent seeds from reaching the ground.
3. Do NOT leave pet food outside (especially overnight).
4. Do NOT leave food as bait for ANY animals or leave food scraps on the ground.
5. If a bear approaches, move your family and any food indoors immediately.

In Campground and Picnic Areas:

1. Keep a clean site by properly disposing of ALL garbage, including fruit rinds and cores; aluminum foil, plastic wrap and bags that have been used to cook or store food; and cans and jars that are empty.
2. Pick up food scraps around your site.
3. Never leave food or coolers outside and unattended.
4. Store food and garbage inside your vehicle or hard-sided camper.
5. Wipe down table tops before vacating your site
6. If a bear approaches, pack up your food and trash. If necessary, attempt to scare the animal away by shouting, banging pans together, or throwing rocks at the bear. If the bear is persistent, move away slowly to your vehicle or another secure area.

Any Time You See A Bear:

1. Do NOT feed or toss food to a bear or any wild animal.
2. Keep children close and pets indoors or in a vehicle or camper.
3. Do NOT approach a bear—they are dangerous. If it changes its natural behavior (feeding, foraging, movement) because of your presence, you are TOO CLOSE.
4. Never surround or corner a bear.
5. Never run from a bear—back slowly away and make lots of noise.
6. In the extreme case you are attacked by a bear, fight back using any object available. Act aggressively and intimidate the bear by yelling and waving your arms. Playing dead is not appropriate.

There are very few bear attacks on record in Georgia, and NO fatalities, so enjoy our natural resources and help us keep the "WILD" in our wildlife.