

Preventing Black Bears at Camp

- ❖ **Keep your camp clean and odor free.** Wipe tables and clean eating utensils thoroughly after every meal. Burn all grease off grills and camp stoves. In short, keep your tent, camper and sleeping bag free of all food smells.
- ❖ **Never leave food in your tent.** Store your food in safe or bear proof places. Place foods and coolers in your car trunk or suspend them from a tree branch.
- ❖ **Dispose of garbage properly.** Use the camp receptacles provided.
- ❖ **If you hike at dawn or dusk your chances are greater of meeting a bear or other wildlife.** In places where hearing or visibility is impaired (roar of fast-moving water, thick vegetation), reduce your chances of surprising a bear by talking or making noise.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU MEET A BLACK BEAR

- ❖ **Stay calm.** If you see a bear and it hasn't seen you, leave the area calmly. While moving away, talk to help the bear discover your presence.
- ❖ **Get back.** If you have a close encounter, back away slowly while facing a bear. Avoid direct eye contact, which a bear may perceive as a threat. Give the bear plenty of room to escape. Wild bears rarely attack people unless they feel threatened or provoked. If you're on a trail, step off on the downhill side and slowly leave the area.
- ❖ **Don't climb or run.** If a cub is nearby, try to move away from it. But be alert, there could be other cubs. Never climb a tree to escape because sows chase their cubs up trees when they detect danger. If you climb a tree, a sow may interpret that as an attempt to get her cubs. Stay on the ground and don't run or make any sudden movements. Running may prompt the bear to give chase, and you can't outrun a bear.
- ❖ **Pay attention.** Bears will use all of their senses to figure out what you are. If they recognize you as a person, some may stand upright or move closer in their efforts to detect odors in the air currents. Don't consider this a sign of aggression. Once a bear identifies you, it will usually leave the area. However, if the bear stays, it may pop its jaws as a warning sign that it's uncomfortable. That's a sign for you to leave. Back away and slowly leave the area. If you ignore the jaw popping warning, some bears have been known to bluff charge to within a few feet. If this occurs, wave your arms wildly and shout at the bear.
- ❖ **Fight back.** Black bear attacks in the eastern United States are rare. However, they have occurred. If a bear attacks, fight back. Bears have been driven away when people have fought back with rocks, sticks, binoculars and even their bare hands.