



# Black Bear Fact Sheet for Backcountry Users

## Facts About Black Bears

- **Bears are Common in New York** - The Northern Black Bear Range contains the largest black bear population in New York (4,000-5,000), mostly in the Adirondacks. The Southern Black Bear Range contains about 2,000 bears, with the highest density in the Catskills. You are very likely to encounter a bear while camping in the backcountry of these regions.
- **Bears are Intelligent and Curious** - They spend a great deal of time exploring for food, and this can bring them close to humans. If an activity results in food, they will repeat that activity.
- **Feeding Bears Will Cause Trouble for Humans and Bears** - When bears learn to obtain food from humans, they become bold and aggressive. Bear's natural foraging habits and behavior are changed. Usually solitary, bears can be concentrated in areas causing stress, injuries from physical conflicts, and the spread of diseases. When feeding from human sources, bears will often eat unhealthy materials such as soap, shaving cream, insect repellent, food packaging, etc.

## **DO NOT FEED BEARS (INTENTIONALLY or ACCIDENTALLY)**

## How to Avoid Attracting Bears

- **Use Bear-Resistant Canisters** - This is a highly effective means for preventing bears from getting your food, toiletries and garbage. If you have no choice but to hang your food be sure to use a **dark-colored cord**. The cord should be 75 feet long and the bag should be hung 15 feet above the ground and at least 10 feet away from trees.

## **NYSDEC REGULATION REQUIRES THE USE OF BEAR-RESISTANT CANISTERS BY OVERNIGHT USERS IN THE EASTERN HIGH PEAKS WILDERNESS BETWEEN APRIL 1 AND NOVEMBER 30.**

- **Pack a Minimal Amount of Food and Plan Meals to Avoid Leftovers** - The less food to store, the better. Use lightweight and dehydrated foods. Eat all that you cook.
- **Cook Before 5 p.m., Away From Your Campsite and Be Clean** - Bears become active after 5 p.m.; have food stored and site cleaned by then. Choose an area at least 100 feet away from your campsite. Avoid spills and drippings.
- **Keep Food in Storage Containers** - Only take out the food you plan to cook. Store food immediately if a bear approaches your cooking area.
- **Never Leave Food Unattended** - Bears often watch, hidden in woods, waiting for opportunities to steal food.

## Bear Encounters

- **Never Approach or Surround a Bear** - Bears aggressively defend themselves when they feel threatened or cornered. Be especially cautious around cubs as mother bears are very protective.
- **Do Not Throw Your Backpack or Food Bag at an Approaching Bear** - This practice will only encourage bears to approach and "bully" people to get food.
- **Use Noise to Scare Bears Away** - Yell, clap or bang pots immediately upon sighting a bear near your campsite. Never run from the bear. If you feel threatened, back away slowly.
- **Avoid Walking Trails at Night** - Stay in your campsite to avoid chance encounters.

## **FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS OF DEC FOREST RANGERS AND CARETAKERS**

More information may be found on the DEC web site [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6960.html](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/6960.html)  
or call the DEC Wildlife Office at 518/402-8883.

**New York State Department of Environmental Conservation**

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