

See a Bear - Back Away

Every once in a while, people have face-to-face encounters with black bears. Do not panic. Chances are the bear is just as afraid of you as you are of it.

If you do encounter a bear, follow these rules to be safe.

- **Do not run!** - If you see a bear, stay calm.
- **Stand upright** - Slowly wave your arms.
- **Back away** - Slowly back away from the bear.
- **Look for cubs** - Do not come between a mother and her cubs.
- **Fight back** - If attacked, fight back aggressively.



The Bear Facts

- Never feed a bear. It is illegal to create a nuisance by feeding bears.
- Human trash accounted for 70 percent of the bear-human conflicts in one study.
- Bears generally will avoid humans unless they grow accustomed to eating human food or garbage.
- Roughly 85 percent of a black bear's diet is vegetable material.
- Black bears occur in all mountainous areas of New Mexico, from Chama in the north to the Guadalupe and Peloncillo Mountains in the south.
- *Ursus americanus* comes in a variety of colors – cinnamon, black and brown – but all are called “black bears.”
- Grizzly bears no longer occur in New Mexico.
- Adult black bears weigh between 125 and 400 pounds. They are strong enough to rip doors off cars.
- Cubs weigh 10 to 16 ounces at birth and are born while the mother is in the den during the winter.
- Black bears can run up to 35 miles an hour, climb trees and swim well.



You Can Contact Us

Keeping you safe and bears alive are goals of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. The tips in this brochure will go a long way to meeting these goals, but only if you follow them!

If you have questions about black bears, call one of the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish offices.

Santa Fe	(505) 476-8000
Albuquerque	(505) 222-4700
Las Cruces	(505) 532-2100
Raton	(505) 445-2311
Roswell	(505) 624-6135



www.wildlife.state.nm.us

Keeping Bears Alive



and You Safe!

A GUIDE FOR PEOPLE WHO LIVE IN OR VISIT BEAR COUNTRY

To Bears, Garbage = Food

To a bear, anything that smells like food is food. Bears can smell food from over a mile away.



They lick grease off your barbecue grill. They go “dumpster diving” for steak bones, leftover scrambled eggs, burnt brownies, pet food and sour milk cartons.

Trash means trouble for bears and it can mean trouble for homeowners, visitors and campers.

A steady stream of new residents is moving into bear country across the West. People bring their trash with them.

When bears start eating human food, it becomes their food of choice and they teach their cubs about it. If bears find humans are a source of food, they lose their natural fear and can become very aggressive in their search for food.

The Department of Game and Fish will relocate a nuisance bear once or maybe twice, if it's caught foraging in trash cans or near homes. Bears caught a third time, or bears that exhibit aggressive behavior will be destroyed.

No one is happy when a bear has to be killed. **Killing a mother with cubs often means that the cubs will die too.**



Homeowners - Secure Your Property

By making the following recommendations a part of your daily life when in bear country, you can keep bears alive and yourself safe. These preventative measures were developed with the assistance of Sandia Mountain BearWatch.

- **Garbage** – Store it in closed, sturdy cans kept inside a secure metal shed or garage. Do not put out garbage the night before a scheduled pickup.
- **Pet food** – Feed pets indoors. Store food in secure metal cans inside a sturdy shed or garage. Make sure your garage door is closed at night.
- **Bird feeders** – Set out only enough bird seed to last throughout the day. Hummingbird feeders must be brought inside at night. Hang bird feeders from trees, not on the porch or from the house rafters.
- **Fruit trees** – Plant fruit trees away from your house. Fruit should be picked as it ripens. Spoiled fruit that falls to the ground should be removed because it will attract bears.
- **Woodpiles** – Keep wood away from the house. It attracts rodents, which bears eat.
- **Compost piles** – Keep them away from the house. Do not add melon rinds or other fragrant fruits.
- **Beehives and chicken pens** – Livestock and beehives should be kept away from your house. Protect them with electric fencing.
- **Barbecues** – Clean them after each use. Store them in a closed sturdy shed or garage.

Hikers - Watch Your Step

When hiking in bear country, be especially alert.

- **Hike in groups**
- **Make noise** - A surprised bear is a dangerous bear.
- **Know where they are** - Keep your children and pets close at hand.
- **Don't trash it** - Don't leave trash on the trail. Pack it in, pack it out!



Campers- Take Extra Precautions

A bear's nose can get you into trouble. Follow these tips to keep your camp clean and safe.

- **Keep a clean camp** - Always keep your camp clean. Do not leave food items out when not in use.
- **Coolers are just lunch boxes to bears**- Keep them in hard sided trailers, campers or vehicles with the windows rolled up.
- **Fragrant items attract bears** - Toothpaste, insect repellents, soap, candy bars and other fragrant items can attract bears. They should be securely stored away from where you sleep.
- **Cooking odors attract bears** - If possible, your cooking area should be 100 yards from where you sleep.
- **Change your clothes** - After you cook and before going to sleep, change your clothing.
- **Hang it up** - Suspend human food, pet food and garbage from a tree, 10 feet off the ground and four feet from side trunks or branches.
- **Strain your dishwater** - Strain food particles from your dishwater and pack them out with your garbage.
- **Pack it out!** - Never bury or burn your garbage. The next group of campers may encounter the bears your trash attracted. If available, use bear resistant trash receptacles.
- **Leash 'em** - Keep pets on a leash.