



***Cherokee National Forest***

2800 Ocoee Street N.

Cleveland, TN 37312

Web: <http://fs.usda.gov/cherokee>

# News Release

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## Black Bear Country

The Cherokee National Forest is home to approximately 1,500 black bears.

**CLEVELAND, TENN – July 14, 2017 ...** USDA Forest Service officials at the Cherokee National Forest say that when visiting the national forest, visitors should be mindful of wildlife that make their homes there. The Cherokee National Forest is home to approximately 1,500 black bears. It is best for national forest visitors and bears that a healthy respect and distance is maintained.

While camping or picnicking many people leave food and ice chests out on tables or in the open. This action becomes the source of most bear and human problems. Storing unattended food in bear-resistant containers or in a vehicle in solid non-pliable material reduces the risks of bear encounters.

Bears are opportunists by nature. They feed on whatever is readily available in the wild, from berries to insects. Bears have a remarkable sense of smell that can lead them to unnatural foods. Garbage and food odors attract bears to residential areas, dump sites, campsites, and picnic areas. Bears that begin to enter places occupied by humans are in immediate danger.

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Once a bear develops a pattern of relying on human food sources it begins to lose its fear of people and may become aggressive. This behavior creates safety concerns for humans and can be fatal for the bear. Bears that frequent inhabited areas may become an easy target for illegal hunting, may be accidentally killed by an automobile, or may ingest toxic material. Close encounters between humans and bears usually spell trouble.

Following are procedures that will help reduce the chances of a close encounter with a bear while on a picnic or camping trip:

- ✓ ***Never*** leave food or trash unattended. If possible place food in trunk of car.
- ✓ ***Never*** cook or store food in or near your tent.
- ✓ ***Keep*** a clean site by properly disposing of garbage including fruit rinds and cores, empty cans or jars and aluminum foil used for grilling or cooking.
- ✓ ***Pick*** up all food scraps around your site.
- ✓ ***Wipe*** down tabletops after each use and before vacating your site.
- ✓ ***NEVER*** feed a bear or other animals.
- ✓ ***NEVER*** approach a bear.
- ✓ ***If*** a bear approaches your site, pack up your food and trash. If necessary, attempt to scare the animal away with loud shouts, or by banging pans together. If the bear is persistent, move away ***slowly*** to your vehicle or other secure area.
- ✓ ***Keep*** children close at hand.
- ✓ ***Keep*** pets properly confined to a leash or in a vehicle or camper.
- ❖ ***ALWAYS respect bears and admire them from a distance.***

For more information about bear safety visit online: <http://bearwise.org/>  
<https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/cherokee/home/?cid=stelprdb5263029> -

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