

USDA Forest Service- Cherokee National Forest
Bear Attack Update
April 19, 2006

Information Regarding the Various Stages of the Bear Attack and On-Going Investigation

The Attack

An attack by a black bear on April 13, 2006 in the Cherokee National Forest ended in tragedy with two injuries and a fatality. The bear seriously injured a 45-year old woman and her two-year old son and killed the woman's six-year old daughter near the Chilhowee Recreation Area about 22 miles east of Cleveland, Tennessee. This attack on humans by a black bear is a very unusual and rare event. This is the second recorded fatal attack by a black bear in the Southeastern United States.

Shots were fired at the bear by a rescue worker but it is unknown whether or not a bullet hit the animal. No employees of the USDA Forest Service (USFS), Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) or Tennessee State Parks were involved with the shooting.

The Chilhowee Recreation Area will remain closed indefinitely while the investigation is being conducted.

The Capture

The TWRA set traps in the area, one close to the site of the attack and several others in a one and a half mile area surrounding it. The bear captured Sunday was found in the trap close to the attack site while the one captured Monday was found in one of the perimeter traps. Since the second capture all the perimeter traps have been deactivated. The one near the attack site is still active.

Bear 1- Captured April 16

A male bear weighing over 200 pounds was found on Sunday April 16 in a trap set by the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) near the site of the incident. The bear's body was taken to the University of Tennessee Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Knoxville. There was no evidence like ear tags or tattoos to indicate the bear had been captured before or had been brought in from outside the Cherokee National Forest.

Bear 2- Captured April 17

A male bear weighing between 100 and 120 pounds was trapped approximately one and a half miles from the site of the attack Monday April 17. The bear is alive and being held while the forensic tests on the first bear are being conducted.

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The Forensic Investigation

The body of the bear captured on April 16 was taken to the University of Tennessee Veterinary Teaching Hospital in Knoxville. X-rays showed no evidence of a bullet on the body and results of the rabies test were negative.

Samples have been gathered and are being evaluated by appropriate testing facilities for further forensic analysis. The results of the analysis may take longer since the techniques and technology normally used to deal with human-on-human incidents are being adapted to deal with a wild animal.

Additional Information

Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency- www.tnwildlife.org
Cherokee National Forest- www.fs.fed.us/r8/cherokee

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