

INFORMATION PAPER

SUBJECT: Black Bear (and other wildlife) Encounters

1. PURPOSE: To provide guidance for minimizing encounters with black bears and other wildlife

2. INFORMATION:

a. ALL wildlife are opportunistic feeders and will go where food is easiest to obtain. Once an animal obtains food easily at a bivouac site or other food source, they will return expecting to obtain food again and will become a nuisance and possibly aggressive.

b. The black bear is a large and powerful animal typically weighing between 100-500 lbs. and standing between 4.0 - 6.0 ft. tall. Black bears prefer forested areas and feed on a variety of plants and animals such as grasses, berries, nuts, insects, small mammals, and carrion. During a spring following a drought year, as northern New York experienced in 1999, natural bear food is less available and bear encounters with humans occur with greater frequency as they search for food.

c. There are several ways to minimize the chances of a dangerous or damaging bear encounter.

(1) DO NOT FEED THE BEARS, RACCOONS, OR OTHER WILDLIFE.

(2) Keep food and cooking utensils in closed containers, preferably in sealed plastic, to prevent the scent of food from escaping. Bears are attracted by smells. With the exception of ammonia, camphor and a few other strong chemicals, EVERYTHING smells like potential bear food. THIS INCLUDES MRE PACKAGING.

(3) Do not cook near or have food inside tents or vehicles. When setting up at a site, the cooking area and food storage area should be at least 300 feet from sleeping quarters.

(4) Do not dump fat drippings or food scraps on ground or into wastewater pits. Put food scraps in closed containers such as screw-lid jars before placing in garbage container.

(5) Remove all garbage from the site at least once each day and before nightfall. Camphor disks, mothballs, or ammonia-soaked rags can be placed in garbage cans to mask food odors until the garbage is removed from the site.

(6) Do not sleep in the clothes used while cooking food. If you need to store materials that are likely to attract bears, do so by hanging them from tree branches at least 10 feet away from the main trunk and 12 feet off the ground.

3. CONCLUSION: Following these procedures will minimize the threat of a dangerous and/or damaging black bear encounter. The Fish and Wildlife Management Program is administered by the Directorate of Public Works (PW) Environmental Division. The point-of-contact for this program is the Fish and Wildlife Management Program Manager, (315) 772-9636; DSN 772.