



# DEP NEWS RELEASE

New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

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## IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **DIVISION OF FISH AND WILDLIFE AND STATE PARK SERVICE OFFER TIPS ON REDUCING RISKS FROM BEAR ENCOUNTERS FOLLOWING EVENTS AT RAMAPO MOUNTAIN STATE FOREST**

**(15/P77) TRENTON** – The New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection’s Division of Fish and Wildlife and State Park Service are reminding residents of ways to reduce bear encounters and offering tips should they come within close range of black bears following a recent bear-human interaction at Ramapo Mountain State Forest.

On Saturday afternoon, a pair of hikers was closely followed by a potentially aggressive black bear at the forest. The Division of Fish and Wildlife is investigating whether the bear came in contact with one of the hikers, a 7-year-old boy. Neither person was seriously injured.

Additionally, a third park visitor also came within close proximity of the same bear, which stopped about 15 feet of the man and his dog. The bear paced for several minutes before backing away, according to the visitor.

Both encounters occurred along the White Trail at Ramapo Mountain State Forest, which has been closed until further notice. Other trails or portions of the park, straddling Passaic and Bergen counties north of Interstate 287, may be closed at the discretion of park officials.

The Division of Fish and Wildlife tracked the bear for some distance late that afternoon, but its current whereabouts are not known. A culvert trap has been set and State Parks Police and Division of Fish and Wildlife Conservation Officers are closely monitoring the area.

**If you see a bear, in particular one that does not show much fear, immediately contact the Department of Environmental Protection’s hotline at (877) 927-6337, or (877) WARN-DEP.**

In most cases, encounters between people and bears end without incident. However, black bears are wild animals and the Division of Fish and Wildlife reminds the public that it is very important for people who live in or visit New Jersey’s bear country to be alert to their presence, especially when hiking.

The Division of Fish and Wildlife offers the following tips when hiking in bear country:

- Never feed or approach a bear.
- Make your presence on the trail known by speaking loudly, singing, clapping your hands, or making other noises.
- Remain calm if you encounter a bear. **DO NOT RUN FROM IT.** Do not make direct eye contact with the bear, as this may be perceived as a challenge. **SLOWLY BACK AWAY.**
- Make sure the bear has an escape route.
- If the bear continues to follow you or is otherwise undeterred, make loud noises by yelling, blow a whistle, bang pots and pans, or use an air horn, if available. Make yourself look as big as possible by waving your arms. If you are with someone else, stand close together with your arms raised above your head.
- If a bear stands on its hind legs or moves closer, it may be trying to get a better view or detect scents in the air. It is usually not a threatening behavior.
- The bear may utter a series of huffs, make popping jaw sounds by snapping its jaws and swat the ground. These are warning signs that you are too close. Slowly back away, avoid direct eye contact and do not run.
- Black bears will sometimes “bluff charge” when cornered, threatened or attempting to steal food. Stand your ground, avoid direct eye contact, then slowly back away and do not run.
- Black bear attacks are extremely rare. However, if one does attack, fight back. Do not “play dead.”

In addition, families who live in areas frequented by black bears should have a "Bear Plan" in place for children, with an escape route and planned use. The Division of Fish and Wildlife offers these other important rules to help minimize conflicts with black bears:

- If a bear enters your home, provide it with an escape route by propping all doors open.
- Invest in certified bear-resistant garbage containers, which offer the best protection. If not using bear-proof garbage containers, store all garbage in containers with tight fitting lids in a secure area where bears are unlikely to see or smell them, such as a basement or the inside wall of a garage. Business owners should contact their sanitation company to acquire a bear resistant dumpster if they are having issues with black bears.
- Use electric fencing to protect livestock and beehives. It is the most effective and efficient way to prevent bear damage. A properly installed and baited electric fence not only deters bears, but teaches them to keep away.
- Put garbage out on collection day, not the evening before.

- Wash garbage and recycling containers with a disinfectant at least once a week to reduce odors. Draping an ammonia- or bleach-soaked cloth over containers will help to eliminate odors.
- Do not place meat or sweet food scraps in compost piles.
- Feed birds only from December 1 to April 1, when bears are least active.
- Feed outdoor pets during daylight hours only. Immediately remove all food scraps and bowls after feeding.
- Clean outdoor grills thoroughly after each use. Grease and food residue can attract bears.
- Do not leave food unattended while camping or picnicking.

For more information on black bear behavior, biology and tips, visit:  
<http://www.state.nj.us/dep/fgw/bearfacts.htm>

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