

Black bears have been seen at Ivy Creek. They are rarely spotted and usually only when visitors are careless about leaving food trash. We have **never** had an encounter during a school tour as we make plenty of warning noise on the trails. But it is always good to know what to do. Here is some information from the Shenandoah National Park website:

- Stay alert to your surroundings and the presence of wildlife while hiking.
- If possible, hike in groups.
- When you spot a bear, make noise to ensure that the bear is aware of your presence.
- If the bear doesn't leave the area, take a detour or slowly back away. Making noise during your retreat is appropriate. Keep children close to the group.
- Do not pursue and **NEVER** surround a bear. Give it room to escape.
- **DO NOT run from a bear.** Bears will pursue prey and flight is a signal to them to start pursuit.
- If a bear approaches and you have no escape route, stand tall, wave your arms, yell, clap, and throw rocks to deter the bear.

Most of the time avoidance or making noise will result in an uneventful encounter. There are circumstances when the bear perceives that the threat is more significant such as when you have simply startled the bear. For information on bluff charges or real charges, see below.

If an encounter occurs ...

Remain calm and don't run. Like dogs, bears will often chase fleeing animals. You can't outrun a bear. They have been clocked at speeds up to 35 mph! Climbing a tree is futile since black bears excel at climbing trees. Jaw popping by the bear is a signal to you that it is uncomfortable.

Let the bear know you are human. Talk to it in a normal voice and wave your arms. If a bear cannot tell what you are, it may come closer or stand on its hind legs to get a better look or smell. A standing bear is usually curious - not threatening.

If the Bear does not leave the area - move away slowly. If leaving the area is not an option, or if the bear gets too close, you should make yourself appear as large as possible. Lifting your arms and a pack over head, moving to higher ground or, if in a group, huddling together will help discourage the bear. Make louder noise by banging pots and pans or using other noisemakers. Throwing rocks or objects at the bear may be appropriate but only when you are "cornered."

If a bear charges...

Don't run! Bears often make bluff charges, sometimes to within 10 feet of their adversary, without making contact. Usually, if you hold your ground they will back off.

Discharge pepper spray if you have it. Make sure you know how to use pepper spray. Discharging pepper spray improperly could make matters worse if you incapacitate yourself or others in your party.

If a bear actually makes contact...

Fight back! In rare instances black bears perceive humans as prey - if you are attacked by a black bear always fight back. Try to focus your attack on the bear's eyes and nose.