



Forest Service News Alert

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Forest Service issues Warning about Black Bears in Joyce Kilmer Slickrock Wilderness

Robbinsville, NC, June 4, 2021— Visitors to the Joyce Kilmer-Slickrock Wilderness on the Nantahala National Forest are asked to take precautions to avoid bears after recent reports of increased bear encounters within the Wilderness.

Specific trails where these encounters have occurred include:

- Haoe Lead Trail TR53 BMT 18b
- Stratton Bald Trail TR54 BMT 18b
- Hangover Lead Trail TR56 BMT 18c
- Hangover Trail TR56A BMT 18c

No injuries have been reported. Encounters include bears stealing food and backpacks. The bears will often stay in the area of the incident for multiple hours, possibly days, depending on availability of food sources. This time of the year black bears are opportunistically looking for food that campers and trail users bring on their trips. While black bear attacks on people are rare, such attacks have resulted in human fatalities.

To avoid bear attacks, experts recommend the following:

- Keep your dog on a leash in areas where bears are reported.
- If you notice a bear nearby, pack up your food and trash immediately and vacate the area as soon as possible.
- If a bear approaches, move away slowly; do not run.
- If necessary, attempt to scare the animal away with loud shouts, by banging pans together, or throwing rocks and sticks at it.

If you are attacked by a black bear, try to fight back using any object available. Act aggressively and intimidate the bear by yelling and waving your arms. Playing dead is not appropriate.

Visitors are encouraged to prevent bear interactions by practicing these additional safety tips:

- Do not store food in tents or leave food unattended.
- Properly store food and scented items like toothpaste by using a bear-proof container.
- Clean up food or garbage around areas of your campsite.
- Never run away from a bear-back away slowly and make lots of noise.

For more tips, visit <http://go.usa.gov/czWbW> or go to www.fs.usda.gov/nfsnc and click on "Learn about Bear Safety."