



### RANGERS ENFORCE REGULATIONS

Violations can bring a fine. Rangers patrol campgrounds and back country areas and issue citations for violating park regulations.

Not taking these precautions can bring you another type of penalty. A bear may rip your tent to get at your food. Having succeeded, the bear is likely to return the next night to bother some other unsuspecting camper. Your actions can influence a bear's habits. When you take the time to remove food from your tent and table you are helping the bear maintain its normal foraging habits. Failure to do so invites the bear to develop bad habits and creates bear-people problems for park visitors.

Bears continuing to frequent campgrounds—tempted by campers' food—may have to be removed to isolated areas where they can once again lead a healthy and natural life.—

**National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior**

# bear

Friend or foe?..



**SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK**

... **NEITHER.** A bear is not a human.

It is a bear—an American Black Bear to be exact. A black bear in its natural state is a formidable, majestic creature that climbs like a steeplejack and swims rushing rivers. It can outrace a horse for short distances.

Active at night, the bear has poor eyesight, a fair sense of hearing, and a keen sense of smell. Its sharp nose leads it to nature's meals of fruit, berries and small mammals. However, the animal is also enticed by "people food" left on campground tables.

#### BEARS IN THE WILD

The sight of a big black bear lumbering down a mountain path or a mother bear frolicking with her cubs ranks high in many a camper's memory. Rangers at Shenandoah want to preserve this scene for you and future visitors by maintaining the park's bear population in its wild state.

#### NUMBERS INCREASING

When Shenandoah National Park was established in 1936, few bears roamed the Blue Ridge. Much of the forest had been cleared away by mountain settlers. Bears had to look elsewhere for food and a place to den. But now the forest has grown up again; the bears have returned. The bear population today, park naturalists estimate, is about one bear per square mile.

#### KEY WORD: RESPECT

The National Park Service bear management policy is based on two basic principles:

- The bear deserves the right to exist within the park as nearly as possible in its natural environment.
- The visitor deserves the opportunity to view bears in their wild state and in their natural habitat.

The best way to achieve these goals, park managers believe, is to separate the activities of the bear from the activities of the visitor, and keep unnatural and unpleasant interactions between people and bears to a minimum.

This is where you come in. As a human, you would not find it natural to shinny up a 30-foot tree to forage for nuts, fruit, or insects.

In the same way the black bear does not find it natural to squeeze into a trash can, "pose" for photographs, or eat "people food." Human food is foreign to a bear's diet and may cause health problems.

Human beings and bears exist best in their own spheres. If you respect the bear's natural way of life, the normally shy bear will avoid your sphere.

#### WHAT YOU CAN DO

*View any bear from a safe distance*

Don't be lulled into thinking it is tame and move in for a closeup photo.

#### *Do not molest bears*

Hunting, wounding, killing or capturing a bear in the park is prohibited by law. So are acts of feeding, touching, teasing, molesting or intentionally disturbing a bear.

If a bear enters your campground, you may, however, try to change its direction by making loud noises—for example, banging on a garbage can or hitting a pot with a stick. You might honk your auto horn or yell at the bear. If these measures fail, leave the scene and get assistance from a ranger.

#### *Keep human food away from bears*

- Store your camp food in a sealed vehicle or camping unit constructed of solid, non-pliable material. Place food chests and food containers in your car trunk.

- Hang food at least 10 feet above the ground on a limb that cannot support a bear's weight. Or rig your food chest between two trees. Rangers may have other suggestions; ask them.

- Keep a clean camp—no food lying about; cooking utensils cleaned and packed away.

- Do not cook or eat inside your tent. Food odors will remain and attract bears.

- Discard food leftovers in the bearproof trash cans provided.

- Please report property damaged by bears to the nearest ranger station.