

# What to know about black bears at Kenmure

As a forest community, Kenmure is a natural home to many varieties of wildlife, including black bears, bobcats, foxes, deer, coyotes, raccoons, possums, birds, and snakes. Black bears especially are often seen and encountered by Kenmure's human population. Here is a sampling of information about these fellow residents and how best to behave in their company.



(Above, a momma bear and two toddlers crossing a Kenmure driveway in spring 2025.)

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## The Black Bear

**The black bear [the only bear species found in North Carolina] is a very shy, non-aggressive animal that avoids humans in most cases.**

Occasionally, bears wander into developed areas in search of food [to supplement their natural omnivore diet of acorns, berries, carrion, fish, frogs, fruits, grasses, grubs, honey, insects, larvae, reptiles, roots, seeds, small mammals, etc.] . . . In agricultural areas where corn, peanuts, soybeans and wheat are common, bears often feed on these crops.

Due to rising bear and human populations, bears and people are increasingly coming into contact with each other in many parts of the state. To avoid negative interactions, bears should never have access to human foods, garbage, pet food or bird food.

Feeding bears rewards them for coming into residential areas. Bears feeding on unnatural food sources around your home may lose their fear of humans and will be more likely to approach people — a situation that rarely ends well for the bear and could have potential safety issues for humans as well!

**If you see a bear, stay calm and keep a safe distance.** If you encounter a bear **at close range, back away slowly and make lots of noise** [As other sources note, running away can trigger the bear's chase instinct, and humans cannot outrun or outclimb a healthy bear; if attacked, fight back—do *not* 'play dead'\*]. Once you are a safe distance from the bear, enjoy watching this amazing animal!

Source: North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, "Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*)," <https://www.ncwildlife.gov/media/1403/download>, visited 09/15/2025. [Excerpt; bolding added.]

\* See "What if I surprise a bear?" below.

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## ‘What If I Surprise a Bear?’

**If you surprise a bear, regardless of the species, don’t fight it.** Unless the bear is acting predatory, do not fight it. This can cause the bear to act more aggressively toward you and trigger an attack.

If you surprise a bear, **slowly and calmly back away while avoiding direct eye contact**—the bear may see this as an aggressive or challenging behavior. Slowly and calmly speak to the bear, wave your arms to let the bear know you are a human. Pick up any small children or pets immediately. Watch the bear as you leave the area.

**If you surprise a black bear *and* it charges or attacks, fight back with everything you have!** [‘Playing dead’ can work against *grizzly/brown* bears, but they do not live in North Carolina.\*\*]

Source: National Park Service, “Bear Attacks,” <https://www.nps.gov/articles/bearattacks.htm>, visited 09/15/2025. [Excerpt; bolding added.]

\*\* “‘Playing dead’ seldom helps when being attacked by a black bear. Vigorously fighting back with sticks, rocks, fists or feet and yelling, waving arms and flapping coats are more likely to stop an attacking black bear.” Source: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, “New York State Black Bear Response Manual, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 2011. [https://extapps.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife\\_pdf/bearsopm.pdf](https://extapps.dec.ny.gov/docs/wildlife_pdf/bearsopm.pdf) , visited 09/15/2025. [Other sources also mention using bear spray to ward off attacks.]

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## Threatening vs. non-threatening bear behavior

### Examples of bear threatening behavior

- Bear charges towards a person. This often occurs when people have cornered the bear or have placed themselves too close to the bear.
- Bear approaches a person directly, despite efforts to harass it away.
- Bear follows a person, despite efforts to harass it away.

### Examples of bear behavior that is not threatening

- Simply being in a neighborhood or being in a neighborhood with children.
- Standing on its legs. If a bear stands on its hind legs, it is attempting to see or smell.
- Vocalizations. If a bear feels threatened or stressed, it will start to vocalize, in the form of huffs, snorts, blowing, moans, and the popping of its jaw (a chomping sound). If a bear exhibits these behaviors, people should back away from the bear. Through visuals and sounds, the bear is telling you it is feeling threatened and you are too close.

Source: North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, “WRC Will Not Trap or Relocate Bears,” <https://www.ncwildlife.gov/wildlife-habitat/species/black-bear/wrc-will-not-trap-or-relocate-bears>, visited 09/15/2025. [Excerpt; bolding added.]

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## ‘Can wildlife be relocated?’

**It is illegal to relocate many wildlife species in North Carolina**, including those in the order Carnivora (e.g., coyotes, foxes, raccoons, skunks, bears, bobcats, mink, weasels, and otter), armadillos, groundhogs, nutria, and beaver. When these species have been trapped for depredation reasons (causing property damage), they must either be humanely euthanized or released on the same property they were captured (15A NCAC 10B .0106).

Importantly, **relocation is not considered to be an environmentally responsible or humane method** of resolving wildlife conflicts for the following reasons:

- High mortality - wildlife removed from their home territory have a low chance of survival.
- Ineffective - strong homing instincts drive relocated wildlife to return to their home territory, or die trying. Relocation also does not solve the underlying issue that attracted the animal in the first place.
- Spreads disease - relocating wild animals helps spread any diseases or parasites they are carrying to new areas.
- Relocates the problem - wildlife that have become habituated to humans will continue to cause issues wherever they are relocated.

Source: North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, “Wildlife Problem FAQ’s,” <https://www.ncwildlife.gov/connect/have-wildlife-problem/wildlife-problem-faqs>, visited 09/15/2025 [Excerpt; bolding added.]

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## Be Bearwise

North Carolina—home to some 20,000 black bears—is a member of the national Bearwise consortium supported by 44 state wildlife agencies. Bearwise offers free information on bear lifestyles and behaviors, advice on keeping your property free of attractions for bears, best practices for safety, and more. Visit <https://bearwise.org>

— Information compiled by Clark Irwin, KPOA Board Community Relations Liaison.