



Bear Incidents

On the Appalachian Trail

2018



The Appalachian Trail Conservancy recommends the use of a bear-resistant canister as the best way to keep your food safe from bears, rodents, raccoons, and other animals. If you do hang your food, we recommend the “PCT method,” with your bag hanging a minimum of 12 feet from the ground and 6 feet from the overhanging limb and trunk.

Bears are found along the entire length of the Appalachian Trail. In any location along the Trail, bears may pursue human food when easy access is available. The first incident often begins with a poorly hung food bag (too low to the ground or too close to the trunk or overhanging limb) or unattended, unsecured food. With experience, bears may become more adept at stealing food, and more aggressive towards humans. In several cases bears have come to associate tents with food and reached into tents with people in them, even when no food was reported present. Storing your food properly is critical in order to protect your food, bears, and you.

The areas below had recorded incidents of hiker’s food being taken or aggressive behavior by bears toward humans in 2018. Each year problem areas change (and the number grows).

GEORGIA

Frosty Mountain - Bear Warning

A bear was reported taking a hiker's food bag near the shelter.

Sassafras Gap - Bear Warning

A bear was reported taking hikers' food bags.

NORTH CAROLINA

Standing Indian/Deep Gap Area - Bear Warning

Bears were reported taking hikers' food bags.

GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

Closed due to bear activity

- Birch Spring Campsite (Campsite #113) A bear collapsed a tent with a person inside the tent
- Spence Field
- Derrick Knob Shelter
- Russell Field Shelter
- Cosby Knob Shelter
- Mt. Collins Shelter

Caution alerts due to bear activity

- A.T. Trailhead at Fontana Dam
- Mollies Ridge Shelter

TENNESSEE

McQueens Knob - Bear Warning

Bears reported taking hikers' food bags.

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Watauga Dam - Bears Active in Area

Hikers advised to use caution near Watauga Dam as bears have been aggressive in this area; hikers should be alert for and keep a respectful distance from bear(s) with cubs.

Watauga Lake Shelter – Closed to all entry due to bear activity. No picnicking, lingering or overnight camping. Hiking the Appalachian Trail only. **AGGRESSIVE BEARS IN THIS AREA.** Please continue through the area without stopping. Closure Order: National Forest System lands Oliver Hollow Rd. to Wilbur Dam; closed until further notice.

SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA

Approximately **17 miles** of the Appalachian Trail (A.T.) in the Mount Rogers National Recreation Area, Grayson Highlands State Park, and surrounding National Forest lands **were closed to overnight camping**. This closure order affected the A.T. between Elk Garden/VA-600 and Fox Creek/VA-603, **including the three A.T. shelters** in those 17 miles:

- Thomas Knob Shelter
- Wise Shelter
- Old Orchard Shelter

At least one hikers' tent was shredded with hikers in it, and more than 70 bags were taken the area.

CENTRAL VIRGINIA

Humpback Rocks / Paul Wolfe Shelter - Bear Activity

Bear activity was reported in the vicinity of Humpback Rocks (mile 852.5) and Paul C. Wolfe Shelter (mile 858.0), including an incident in which an animal stole a hiker's food, and an aggressive bear at the Paul C. Wolfe Shelter. Hikers advised to exercise extra caution when storing food overnight, keep dogs on leash, and avoid solo hiking and camping if possible in this area.

SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK, VIRGINIA

Bear Advisory at Huts in the Park

There was increased bear activity reported in the park, especially at lean-tos (called "huts" in Shenandoah National Park) with a heightened potential for encounters with wildlife. Habituated bears learned to associate tents and backpacks with food.

Tom Floyd Wayside - Bear caution

A hiker reported a bear approaching the shelter.

Rod Hollow Shelter - Bear caution

A hiker reported a bear stealing a food bag off a picnic table in front of the Rod Hollow Shelter in late July. A bear-resistant canister was untouched. '

NEW YORK

Fingerboard Shelter - Bear Warning (Harriman State Park)

Multiple reports of bears taking hikers' food bag at the Fingerboard Shelter.

MASSACHUSETTS

Shaker Campsite—regular bear activity

The Shaker Campsite saw regular bear activity. The bears were not aggressive but were not frightened away by human activity. Hikers were advised to immediately place their food and other odoriferous items into the bear box at the campsite upon arrival, and to prepare and cook food away from their tents.

For more information about bears along the Appalachian Trail and how to stay safe, visit appalachiantrail.org/bears.