

Bear Safety Tips with Blue Ridge Parkway Ranger Linda Barnes

Written by Adam Hicks

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A Black Mountain woman sustained minor injuries after she was swatted by a black bear on Sunday.

The Asheville Citizen-Times reports the woman sustained minor injuries and was treated and released from Mission Hospital.

According to the Asheville newspaper, the mother bear struck the woman after two cubs wandered into her yard.

While this incident didn't have a tragic ending, when a person crosses a wild animal with the size and strength of a bear, it can be very dangerous.

High Country Radio was able to catch up with Ranger Linda Barnes of the Blue Ridge Parkway. Barnes conducts a class all about black bears through the Parkway Service.

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Barnes said usually, black bears are very shy and timid creatures; so seeing one in the wild can be quite rare. Barnes also said if you do run into a bear in the forest, it will most likely run away.

Barnes said, "Only about one in every 600,000 black bears will actually fatally attack. Grim as it sounds, being murdered is 90,000 times more likely."

Barnes explained if you do come across a black bear in the forest and it begins coming toward you, don't follow the cliché of playing dead.

Barnes said, "Just clap your hands and start walking backward. Wave your arms. If you have walking sticks you can put those over your head, because the bear will think you're very tall. If you're hiking with a group of people, you can do the same thing. You can put your packs over your head and link arms, then start walking backward. He is going to think that you're very large and you're actually going to intimidate him."

Barnes explained some hikers bring a whistle with them. She said a whistle can also be a helpful tool in trying to scare off a bear.

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We'll check back in with Ranger Barnes later this week for a few bear safety tips for campers.