

The North Shore is Bear Country



Photo: Tony Joyce



Best Practices for Running in Bear Habitat

Black bears are the only bear species living in the North Shore's dense, vast forests.

Black bears are naturally wary of humans and expend a lot of energy attempting to avoid us. Their instinct is to hide in trees from threats. As intelligent animals, they are adapting to increased human activity in their environment. Bears may become more tolerant of our presence and this should not be mistaken for boldness or aggression.

Running is a high speed, quiet and often very technical activity that increases your chances of a surprise encounter with a bear. When recreating in wildlife habitat, we have a responsibility to reduce our impact and learn how to respond in an encounter.

Following these best practices will help to reduce risk for people and bears.



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Avoidance Strategies

- If you see a bear in the distance and it does not notice you, quietly turn around and take an alternate route
- Respect all warnings, including bear-in-area notices and trail closures
- Be alert and aware of your surroundings. Stay on the trail
- Avoid wearing headphones
- Use your voice to alert wildlife that humans are close by. Use a loud, firm voice and call out often. Be louder on narrow, low visibility trails or when running by rivers and creeks
- Reduce speed on blind corners and low visibility trails
- Travel in groups; avoid running alone
- Tell someone your trip plan
- Learn to recognize and be alert for natural bear foods, bear tracks and bear scat. Avoid or leave areas with an abundance of fresh bear sign or natural bear foods
- Never leave food unattended
- Avoid running between dusk and dawn when wildlife is most active



Off-leash dogs pressure bears to defend themselves and are the cause of many negative encounters between people and bears. Keep your dog on leash or at home to reduce risk and impact on wildlife.

If you encounter a bear, stop and stay calm. Speak calmly to the bear as you slowly back away. Show you are not a threat. Give the bear an exit. If a black bear is curious, they may approach you. Never run as this could trigger a chase. Stand your ground and use a loud, firm voice. Raise your arms to appear bigger. Be prepared to use your bear spray. Leave your phone alone; never approach bears for photographs!



Bear spray is just as important as water. Always carry bear spray and know how to use it. Bear spray is your best defense in a surprise encounter. Wear it on a chest or hip holster for immediate access. Lightweight, neoprene holsters are available and designed for trail runners.

Report bear sightings
northshorebears.com 604 317 4911

