

# The Traveling Nature Photographer Blog

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## Black Bears and People:

I have had the pleasure, privilege and concerns of being very close to truly wild black bears. I have been as close as a person sitting across the table from you sitting on my butt and looked up and a bear that I had been trying to get close to and photograph for well over a week was looking down at me. I have been around moms and their cubs without any fear. Here is a link to an article that talks about the facts and they are much different than the stories.

Let me make something clear. Bears will defend their young, their territory and their food just like humans so understand the guidelines and the bear's comfort zone and you should be fine.

I learned a lot photographing the bears in four states, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, and North Carolina. I have been huffed twice and earned them both. Both happened within minutes and the same bear. I pushed the limits and the bear's comfort zone and was purposely between him and his food source as a mom was trying to get her small cubs out and away. Bears like lions will sometimes lose cubs to other bears when they get close.

One image I am putting up is a small cub diving out of a tree to get away from a woman running to the tree and calling her kids to come to get cell pictures of the bears. Mom had just left running after the other two cubs that took off running. The woman would not stop yelling and trying to get close until the cub jumped down and hit the ground. Another image is of the cube laying on the ground. We kill many more of them in a year than they have killed us in over a century.

This may make some people angry but too bad. I do not think that people should get out of their cars to run after bears in the parks. Cades Cove should be off-limits to cars except for those who pay a large permit fee. It should be by tour bus only. Bears need privacy and protection just like us. Interfering with a mom and her cubs or single bears when they are foraging for food should be banned. Hunting bears with dogs should be banned. Having a dog run a bear up and tree and walking up and shooting it not hunting or a sport. I have hunted for most of my life. I hunted in the early part with a bow and black powder. The last couple of decades I have hunted with my cameras. I am not advocating the banning of hunting animals as some control needs to be in place.

I hope by posting some of these images of bears being bears without human contamination helps people see them differently. The three cubs probably had never seen a human before me. The family allowed me to be very close over time. The mother even went quite a ways away to eat with the cubs close to me eating as she knew I was not a threat. She kept a watch but more because the cubs kept getting closer to me than she liked. I also thought that they kept coming closer was a bad idea for them, not me.

I hope that people learn these are not pets, they do not like selfies, they do not like being yelled at and chased. They will react so understand that. Understand they when you are close to a bear they really are in charge. You cannot outrun them, you cannot outclimb them. If you cross their tolerance level it is YOUR fault, not theirs but they get killed and you get to go home. The same is true with garbage. They try to eat it and die. Feeding bears to get them close is illegal and should be severely punished. Remember a fed bear is a dead bear. Things may happen if you encounter a bear up close but the chances are very slim. Don't panic, yell or scare the bear if they are really close. They do not understand and will react one of two ways, either they run or they attack depending on the situation. Give them room and well of 90 percent of the time they will leave if given the opportunity.



