



**Conservancy Advisory
Living with Black Bears
On the Santa Lucia Preserve**



Black bear – William’s Canyon Wildlife Camera August, 2015

Wow - Black Bears on the Preserve!

The recent appearance of black bears on the Preserve has stimulated lots of excitement, some reasonable concerns, and more than a few questions. Here are some facts about bears along the Central Coast:

- 🐻 The American black bear (*Ursus Americanus*) occurs across North America.
- 🐻 California supports an estimated 30,000 black bears, mostly in the Sierra Nevada.
- 🐻 Despite their name, black bears occur in a variety of colors: black, dark brown, tan, and blond.
- 🐻 Females weigh ~90-150 lbs., Males ~120-350 lbs.
- 🐻 Habitat: Black bears live primarily in oak and pine forests where there is abundant food.
- 🐻 Diet: Though omnivorous, 75% of a bear’s diet consists of berries, nuts, insects and new vegetation growth.
- 🐻 Home range: Females = 15-30 mi.², Males = 30-75 mi.² (the Preserve is 30 mi.²)
- 🐻 Genetic testing suggests the bears along the Central Coast have naturally expanded from the Southern Sierra Nevada and Tehachapi mountain ranges. This has occurred over the last century since grizzly bears were hunted to extinction (this is called “competitive release”).
- 🐻 In the Central Coast, black bears do not need to hibernate and are active year round.
- 🐻 Black bears prefer to avoid conflict and are quick to retreat into the brush or climb up a tree.

IN YOUR HOMELAND:	ON THE TRAIL:
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Keep garbage, recycling and compost secure. The greatest threat to black bears is access to garbage: once habituated to humans and garbage, most bears have to be euthanized.2. Do not feed pets outdoors.3. Keep BBQ grills clean.4. Don’t feed wildlife. Consider taking bird feeders in at night.5. Protect fruit trees. If you have fruit trees in your garden, consider putting an electric fence around them and harvesting the fruit as soon as it is ripe.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Give them a heads up. Make some noise: talking, singing or ringing a bell will give the bear time to get out of your way.2. Keep dogs on leash or close to heel. Bears will defend themselves from inquisitive pets.3. Hike with a buddy. Being social and talking on your hike is a great way to shoo away any bears on the trail.4. Give them space. If you do see a bear off in the distance, do not approach (even for a photo). Consider heading back the way you came or taking a detour and give the bear a wide berth.5. Stay calm and back away. If you have a close encounter with the bear remain calm, keep an eye on the bear as you slowly back away and speak loudly to the bear: “Go away bear!”6. Keep them wild. Like most wildlife, bears prefer to avoid contact with humans, so they will be eager to get away from you. In fact, they are so quick you may never know you shared the trail.