

BEARS

from FRONT

black bears are currently roaming across much of the Commonwealth. The post explains why residents are increasingly spotting bears in neighborhoods, backyards and even on home security cameras, and why wildlife officials say there is usually no reason for alarm.

For Adair Countians, the advisory arrives at a time when local sightings are no longer unusual.

Last fall, a black bear photographed in the Clifty Creek area attracted considerable attention after residents reported seeing the animal moving through the countryside. Property owners in the area secured beehives, chicken coops and livestock, while many welcomed the visitor as another sign that Kentucky's wildlife continues to recover.

This year, according to Kentucky Fish and Wildlife, reports have become even more common across the state.

From Lexington to London, Mount Sterling, Bath County, Rockcastle County and many places in between, homeowners have captured bears on doorbell cameras, trail cameras and dash cameras. Wildlife officials say there are two reasons for the apparent explosion in sightings: Kentucky's bear population continues to grow, and modern home security cameras are recording animals that once passed unnoticed in the darkness.

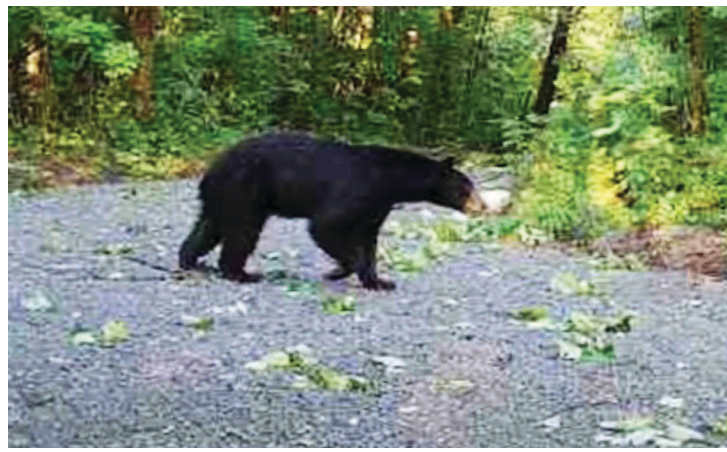
The bears most people are seeing are not large, aggressive adults looking for trouble. Instead, they are usually young males that have recently been driven away from the areas where they were born.

Every late spring and early summer, mature male bears force younger males to leave established territories during the breeding season. Those inexperienced bears can wander for weeks while searching for food, suitable habitat and eventually a place of their own.

According to Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Bear Program Coordinator John Hast, these juveniles often become confused as they travel through unfamiliar country. They may spend the daytime hiding in wooded areas before moving again after dark, sometimes covering 20 miles or more in a single day.

Some Kentucky bears have even been suspected of traveling hundreds of miles before returning toward the mountains in the fall. That means a bear photographed in Adair County today may already be in neighboring Russell, Casey or Taylor counties tomorrow.

The presence of black bears in south-central Kentucky would have surprised residents only a generation ago. Historically, black bears lived throughout Kentucky, but by the early 1900s they



One of the – in the meantime – many sightings of an adult black bear in Adair County. (Photo source: Columbia Magazine)

had virtually disappeared. Extensive logging destroyed much of their habitat, while unregulated hunting further reduced their numbers.

Contrary to a common misconception, Kentucky never conducted a large-scale bear reintroduction program. Instead, wildlife officials say bears gradually recolonized the Commonwealth on their own from healthy populations in Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia after forests regenerated over the last century.

Today, Kentucky supports a healthy and expanding black bear population, particularly in the eastern mountains. As those populations increase, more young bears naturally disperse into central and western parts of the state, including counties such as Adair.

Although seeing a bear walking through a backyard can certainly be startling, wildlife biologists emphasize that black bears are naturally shy animals. They generally avoid people whenever possible and adverse encounters remain extremely rare. Problems usually begin only when bears discover an easy food source around homes.

Garbage cans, bird feeders, pet food left outdoors, dirty barbecue grills, livestock feed and even hummingbird feeders can attract bears from surprising distances. A black bear's sense of smell is estimated to be several times stronger than that of a bloodhound.

Once a bear learns that a neighborhood provides easy meals, it is likely to return repeatedly.

That is why Kentucky law prohibits intentionally feeding bears or knowingly leaving food available for them. Wildlife officials note that feeding bears ultimately harms the animals by teaching them to associate people with food, often leading to property damage or situations where problem bears must eventually be destroyed.

Kentucky Fish and Wildlife offers straightforward advice if a black bear appears near your home. Residents should remain calm, keep a safe distance and never attempt to approach or feed the animal.

If possible, remove anything that might attract it, including garbage, pet food or bird seed. Store trash inside a garage or secure building until pickup day, clean grills after use and notify neighbors so they can also remove food sources.

Most importantly, allow the bear an escape route. If a bear approaches too closely, officials recommend standing your ground, raising your arms to appear larger and making plenty of noise by yelling. Never run, as running can trigger the bear's instinct to chase.

Should a black bear ever become aggressive—which wildlife officials stress is extremely uncommon—people are advised to fight back rather than play dead. The growing number of bear sightings reflects broader changes occurring across Kentucky.

Improved forest habitat, successful wildlife management and expanding bear populations mean more Kentuckians are learning to share the landscape with an animal that had virtually disappeared from the state little more than a century ago.

For Adair County residents, that likely means occasional bear sightings will become part of life rather than headline-making events. Most visitors will simply pass through on their nighttime travels before continuing elsewhere.

Still, every sighting serves as a reminder that the forests surrounding Adair County remain connected to a much larger natural world. The advice from wildlife officials is simple: enjoy seeing these remarkable animals from a safe distance, don't give them a reason to stay, and let them remain wild.

Residents who observe black bears may report sightings to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources Information Center by calling 1-800-858-1549 during business hours or by emailing Info.Center@ky.gov. Additional information about living safely with bears is available through the department's Black Bears webpage and the national BearWise program.

MORATORIUM

from FRONT

hearing during which several residents voiced concerns ranging from environmental impacts and water consumption to noise, electricity demand and quality of life.

The Commission Chairman opened the hearing by reading a draft resolution outlining the proposed moratorium. Under the recommendation, the City would temporarily halt the acceptance and processing of rezoning applications for projects involving data centers, suspend review of development plans for data centers in any zoning district, and stop issuing permits or other approvals necessary for their operation until Dec. 15, 2026.

According to the draft resolution, the purpose of the moratorium is to provide sufficient time for city officials to examine the potential impacts of data centers, review current zoning regulations and determine whether changes to local ordinances are necessary before considering future proposals. The resolution specifically cites concerns including environmental impacts, potential nuisance issues and possible effects on residential energy costs.

Before taking public comment, the chairman reminded those in attendance that the Planning and Zoning Commission could only make a recommendation. Any moratorium would ultimately require approval by the Columbia City Council before taking effect.

Fairplay resident Veronica Arnold, who has spoken at previous meetings on the issue, asked commissioners whether they had reviewed sample ordinances she had previously provided for consideration. Commission members indicated the full commission had not yet reviewed those materials, although individual members said they had examined ordinances adopted by other communities addressing data centers. Arnold encouraged the commission to ensure the information was distributed before future meetings.

Lisa Combest urged commissioners to carefully investigate what she

described as the long-term consequences of data centers before making any decisions.

Speaking both for herself and on behalf of her sister, Combest said she believes the potential drawbacks outweigh any benefits. She expressed concerns about electromagnetic field exposure, possible contamination of land and water, and urged officials to conduct extensive independent research before allowing any such development.

"I just urge you, please check out all the pros and all of the cons," she said, adding that she was personally opposed to data centers because of what she believes would be their impact on the community.

Laura Morgan also encouraged commissioners to study water usage associated with large-scale data centers. Citing figures from her own research, she said a typical household uses between 1,000 and 1,200 kilowatt-hours of electricity per month, while a data center's energy demands are substantially greater. She also expressed concern about the large quantities of water used by some facilities and encouraged commissioners to review information published by environmental advocate Erin Brockovich regarding communities located near data centers.

Several younger residents also addressed the commission. A University of Kentucky student and Adair County High School graduate who lives in the Knifley community, said one of the reasons she enjoys returning home from Lexington is the quiet rural atmosphere.

She expressed concern that industrial-scale data centers could introduce constant mechanical noise into the countryside and urged commissioners to protect the area's rural character.

"When this moratorium possibly lifts or there's time for another discussion about it, all I ask is that you would please help me keep my quiet that I come home to," she told commissioners.

Another University of Kentucky student said his appreciation for Adair County had grown after leaving home for college. He

encouraged the commission to continue researching potential impacts before permitting any large data center projects.

Kingrey cited reports he had seen regarding electricity demand, agricultural concerns and community impacts elsewhere, saying he believed preserving the area's character should remain a priority.

Following the public hearing, the commission reconvened in a special meeting to discuss the proposed moratorium.

One commissioner noted that while much of the public discussion has focused on very large data center campuses, smaller facilities also exist. He questioned whether a six-month moratorium would provide enough time for a thorough review, although Bandy explained the city's legal guidance was to begin with a six-month period that could later be extended if necessary.

Another commissioner told those in attendance that the commission had already participated in an educational webinar discussing both the advantages and disadvantages of data centers and pledged that members would continue researching policies adopted across the country as they develop recommendations for the city.

During the discussion, one audience member asked why the proposed city moratorium would last only six months when a recent article in The Adair Progress reported the Adair Fiscal Court was considering a two-year moratorium. Commissioners clarified that the two proposals involve separate governments, with the county considering a different timeline than the City of Columbia.

The commission then unanimously approved a motion recommending the six-month moratorium and forwarded the proposal to the Columbia City Council for final consideration. Bandy thanked those attending the meeting for their participation, comments and continued interest in the issue before adjourning.

Veterans Invited to Meet with VFW Service Officer

Veterans and their spouses will have an opportunity to receive free assistance with VA benefits and claims when VFW Service Officer Doc Cook visits the Columbia VFW Post on Thursday, July 16. Cook will be available beginning at 10 a.m. CT at the post, located at 1500 Greenhills Road in Columbia.

The service is open to any veteran who needs help filing a VA claim or has

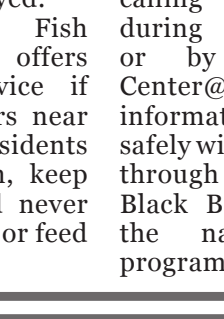
questions about existing claims or benefits. Those seeking assistance with an existing claim are encouraged to bring their most recent paperwork from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs.

Veterans wishing to enroll in the VA healthcare system should bring a copy of their DD-214 discharge papers.

Veterans' spouses are also welcome to attend if they

have questions about eligibility or available benefits. The service is provided free of charge.

Organizers encourage anyone with questions or concerns about VA benefits to take advantage of the opportunity to meet with Cook and receive one-on-one assistance.



University of Kentucky
College of Agriculture,
Food and Environment
Cooperative Extension Service



Extension News

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Nick Roy
Adair County Extension Office

Adair County Cattlemen's Field Day

The Adair County Cattlemen's Association Field Day is July 27th at 6:00 pm at the Blankenship Farm located at 1591 Powell Road in Columbia. Signs will be posted.

The field day will serve as an educational and fellowship opportunity for all cattle producers in Adair County. Participation in the field day is free, and a complimentary meal will be provided. Please RSVP by calling the Adair County Extension Office at (270) 384-2317.

Several topics will be covered during the field day. Adair County Extension Intern, Emylou Miller will present forage quality data collected this summer comparing the quality of hay harvested in May versus June. An interactive

permanent electric fence demonstration will also be conducted with the help of industry representatives.

Given the drought conditions this spring, both temporary and permanent electric fencing could play an important role in wintering cows this year. These cost-effective, low-labor options can be used to graze hay fields and allow cattle to utilize corn fields after grain harvest.

In addition to the presentations, a small trade show featuring local agricultural businesses will be available throughout the event. Local agribusinesses interested in setting up a tent to visit with farmers are welcome to participate. For more information, contact the Adair County Extension Office at (270) 384-2317..

The Martin-Gatton College of Agriculture, Food and Environment is an Equal Opportunity Organization with respect to education and employment and authorization to provide research, education information and other services only to individuals and institutions that function without regard to economic or social status and will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, creed, religion, political belief, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, pregnancy, marital status, genetic information, age, veteran status, physical or mental disability or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Reasonable accommodation of disability may be available with prior notice. Program information may be made available in languages other than English. University of Kentucky, Kentucky State University, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Kentucky Counties, Cooperating. Lexington, KY 40506

Subscribe to The Adair Progress today!

Call 270-384-6471