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# Asiatic Black Bear Activity Ramps Up: Visitor Guidelines for Coexistence in the Jirisan Area

- Korea National Park Service emphasizes use of designated trails and carrying noisemaking devices

The Korea National Park Service (KNPS, Chairman Joo Dae-young) under the Ministry of Environment announced that as the critically endangered Asiatic black bears in the Jirisan area enter their mating season and become more active, it will strengthen visitor guidelines for Jirisan National Park.

In 2024, the KNPS analyzed Asiatic black bears' average seasonal home ranges\* and found that, taking spring (March–May), when they emerge from hibernation, as a baseline of 1, their range expanded approximately 5.3-fold as they moved into summer (June–August).

\* Analysis of the home ranges of Asiatic black bears fitted with Very High Frequency (VHF) tracking transmitters

Typically, Asiatic black bears become most active during their mating season, which runs from late May through July.

During this period, visitors to Jirisan National Park must stay on designated trails and are advised to hike in groups of two or more rather than alone. In particular, visitors should make noise, such as attaching a bell or similar noisemaker\* to their backpacks, to alert bears of their presence so the bears steer clear of them.

\* Backpack-mounted bells, whistles, sports air horns, etc.

The KNPS has installed promotional flags and unmanned information kiosks at around 600 locations, such as entrances to closed side trails, to mark Asiatic black bear habitat and ensure safe visits.

In addition, during the peak autumn season (September–November), Jirisan National Park plans to distribute noise-making devices, such as backpack bells and whistles, at trailheads as part of a coexistence awareness campaign.

In the second half of this year, to make noise-making devices more accessible, they'll also be sold\* at visitor centers and shelters in Jirisan and Deogyusan National Parks, and permanent bells will be trial-installed at 10 spots along the Jirisan traverse ridge.

\* (Jirisan) At eight locations, including the Hwaecom Visitor Center (Gurye, Jeollanam-do), Nogodan Shelter, and Jangteomok Shelter  
(Deogyusan) Deogyusan Visitor Center (Muju, Jeollabuk-do) and two Satgatjae Shelters

Meanwhile, Asiatic black bears are highly wary of and inclined to avoid humans, and in the past 10 years only 10 sightings have been reported on the park's trails, just one per 3.2 million visits, given Jirisan's 32.07 million visitors over the same period.

Even if visitors encounter an Asiatic black bear, it will generally move away first. If it doesn't, the most important thing is to back away quietly without turning their backs or breaking eye contact, and to avoid any provocative actions like offering food or approaching for photos.

Chairman Joo Dae-young stated, "Now that conditions are securely in place for Asiatic black bears to inhabit the Jirisan area stably, we will do our utmost to create an environment where bears and people can safely coexist. Both visitors and local residents must follow the park guidelines and join us on this path of coexistence."