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Mother bear injures man in Gatlinburg

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GATLINBURG (WATE) -- A 50-year-old Sevierville man has minor injuries from a mother bear after he tried to take her picture in Gatlinburg.

The incident happened at 647 Ski Mountain Road, which goes to Ober Gatlinburg.

"She's real timid, she doesn't really approach anybody," said Danny Mortland, a resident of the Club Chalet time share.

Mortland witnessed the attack. He told 6 News the black mother bear comes by the development often with her two cubs.

But at 4 p.m. Friday, ironically right by a wood carving of a bear, 50 year-old Max Lemmons of Sevierville got out of his vehicle to take a picture of the mother bear.

His dog got out of the van and went for the bear. Lemmons went to save it.

Mortland added, "It happened so fast, I don't know if he tried to kick the dog or reach down and grab her. But the bear stood up and swiped him right across the face."

The man had scratches on his face and chest and was treated and later released from Ft. Sanders Sevier Medical Center.

But the drama didn't end there. Wildlife resources officers shot the mother bear with a high powered rifle and were combing the woods for where she wandered away to die.

The lead TWRA man on the scene, Willard Perryman, defended his decision.

"We don't want bears who attack people ion the middle of the day whether it seems justified or not. We're not comfortable with the potential risk of the next attack."

As officers searched for the two cubs they wandered up right to our camera. A hound chased them up a tree.

We're told they will not be killed, but will be taken to the Appalachian Bear Center in Townsend where they will be cared for over the next year and a half to two years.

Then they'll be released back to the wild.

The man's dog was not believed to have been injured.



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