

Black Bear Facts and Tips



HEY BOO BOO

**I FOUND THE
PICNIC
BASKETS**

The Bear Facts

Bear Biology:



Female - Reach sexual maturity at age $3 \frac{1}{2}$ and only breed every other year. They breed in early June or July, young being born in January February. 2-3 cubs weighing 7-12 ounces, mother bear will go back into dormancy while cubs nurse. Parental care is solely the female's responsibility. Cubs are weaned off first late summer remaining with mother throughout first year. It is rare that female black bears will defend their cubs (be aggressive), this is more a trait of Grizzly Bears, they usually flee up trees.

Male - Travel extensively in search of females, fighting occurs between rival males. Males bears have nothing to do with cubs, in fact they will kill and eat them.

Colors range from Black to Brown, some may have a small white patch on chest. Usually 1.5-1.8 meters long. Adults can weigh 100 -400 lbs. They can live past 20 years of age. Bears have home ranges of from 50-200 square km. Bears do not hibernate, they become dormant but remain active year-round. They are nocturnal, feeding and traveling mostly at night but some forage during the day. They can use any downed tree, brush pile, cavity, cave as a den for the winter. Bear habitat consists of Mature forests, forest edges, rock ledges and swamps, sometimes habiting hardwood ranges and urban areas where they've become accustomed to human food. They are a shy creature, and generally avoid humans, as they don't see them as a territorial threat. Bears are omnivores but are opportunistic feeders they eat a variety of vegetable and animal matter.

Bear Talk:

Blowing Loudly - Is a sign of a nervous, afraid bear.

Clacking its Teeth - In combination with blowing he/she is getting Upset. It's telling you to move away. Makes short lunges and slaps the ground, these are bluff charges not attacks, again move away.

Standing on its hind legs - It's just checking you out, getting your Smell and will give off low grunting sounds, just curious.

Ear Position - Threatened bears will flatten their ears against their head, aggressive bears, ears are forward. Ears straight up is normal.

Close Encounters of the Bear Kind:



- If seen from a distance quietly back up and leave, try to stay upwind. Bear will generally leave if it smells human.
- Make lots of noise if it starts to approach, make yourself look large, blow whistles, bang pots, air horns. If it follows you, put something down (backpack) to distract it, not food.
- Carry bear spray if you expect to be in bear country, it will only temporarily effect bear, and like humans it can be in-effective on some bears, use it as a last resort.
- Do not play dead, playing dead will work for grizzlies but not black bear. Fight back, you can improve your chances of escape by launching a strong counter-attack.

Bear Proofing /Prevention:



- Bears will only destroy doors, siding, windows, tents, garbage cans, composters, Barbeques and bird feeders if they smell food! Therefore, package things in tight containers (It's the smell they're after)
- Leave garbage inside until morning of pick-up and if you can't leave it inside take it directly to the dump, you can purchase bear proof garbage containers. But if the container is air tight, what they cannot smell they won't go after. Completely stop composting, or freeze it and put it out the day off also.
- Keep barbeque grills clean & stored away.
- If household pets are fed outdoors make sure scraps are cleaned up after.
- Remove bird feeders at night if a bear has been in the area.
- Do not pour cooking fats outside.
- Sprinkle Cayenne pepper on garbage and composters, they detest the smell/taste of it.
- Wash bins regularly, rinse with Javex
- If you must leave composting with meats and smelly foods in it leave container in the shade & sprinkle lime over everything to reduce smells at least until pick-up day

When you Camp Avoid Smokey & Yogi:

- Avoid setting up camp in areas with bear activity signs - scratches, overturned rocks, scat, berry patches, rotting carcasses, garbage dumps.



- Pitch tents in a row rather than a circle, that way if a bear gets into camps he/she has a clear escape route
- Store food in your vehicle or store it suspended between 2 trees on a strong line, sealed containers at least 4 meters from the ground, 3 meters from nearest tree. Hang pans from the food bag/container to create noise and scare off curious bears.
- Keep dogs tied to a lead, loose dogs may antagonize a bear.
- Avoid perfumes and scented items
- Cook downwind from your tent (100 meters away)
- Wash dishes immediately and burn scraps or garbage in your fire pit. Even clothes with spilt food should be stored away!

Alternatives to Prevention:

- **Relocation/Trapping:** Is relatively in effective, many bears try to return to their original home and as mentioned above if it's within 200 km chances are good. Relocating bears usually occurs in bear death as they are put into another bears territory, the stress, starvation, intra-species strife and predation by new bears all come with relocating it into a new habitat.
Call your local DNR office: 1-800-565-2224
- **Scare Tactics:** Scarecrows, bells, noisemakers, electronic sound and light devices, sirens and strobe lights have all been tried but this is a short-term solution as animals learn to ignore them after a short period of time.
- **Landscaping:** Some plants attract animals, berries, oak anything that brings a bear to live in a attractive habitat. Although if a bear is hungry enough it'll eat anything, so landscaping isn't always effective.
- **Fencing** - Is a costly alternative and will keep some predators out, bears are very strong and can rip this down quickly, putting up electrical fencing is the best alternative.
- **Hunting/Self Defense:** As we know Black Bear is one of our Big Game during hunting season and can be taken legally by gun or bow in the fall by registering a bait site. This is never the ending we hope to see but if a problem bear becomes too much of a problem we must euthanize it, directing a local hunter to an area of concern is sometimes an option, staff having to put the bear down as it's a threat or if a bear attacks someone and as self-defense it is euthanized. No bear can be killed without a permit or license and should not be done otherwise.

Bearfore we Go:

"Problem bears are created by us. When we are careless we teach bears that people are easy sources of food. The chances of being killed by a bear is less than by a domestic dog, bees, lightening or being murdered. One of the safest places a person can be is in the woods with bears." (L. Rogers)

Attacks that have happened across Canada have been in remote areas where bears had no contact what so ever with humans. Bears that are accustomed to human food and camps are never involved. Black bears are the most timid of bears, and like every species there's always the loose nut that will become a killer. They look scary, they sound scary, but it's just the way they look.

