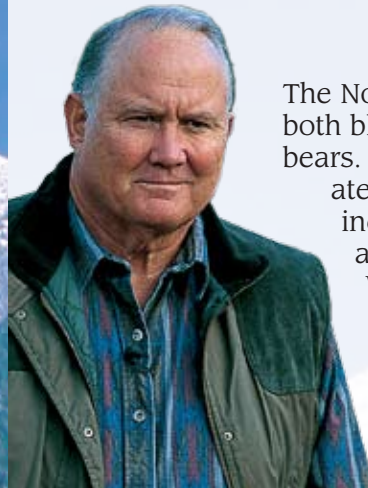


Hiking in Bear Country



The Northwest is home to both black bears and grizzly bears. As more people recreate and bear populations increase, the chances of an encounter increase. We can minimize the chances of a conflict by following basic bear avoidance safety precautions such as staying on trails, making noise to alert bears of our presence, and not attempting to approach, follow, interact with, or feed them. When visiting bear country, we are responsible for our own safety and the safety of the bears. Please treat bears and other wildlife with respect, courtesy, and caution, and help keep wildlife wild.

General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, Spokesman for the Be Bear Aware and Wildlife Stewardship Campaign

www.BeBearAware.org



www.bebearaware.org



Color and size can be misleading. Look for a combination of characteristics.

Grizzly/brown bears are found in the north-western states, Alaska, and western Canada. Black bears are found throughout North America. Distinguishing between black bears and grizzly bears is important for both you and the protected grizzly bear.

Bear Avoidance Precautions



Bear tracks

- Always follow local regulations and review trailhead signs before hiking.
- Let someone know where you're going and when you plan to return.
- Keep children close and in sight at all times.
- Stay on the trail. Be aware of your surroundings, and scan ahead periodically.



- **Watch for bear signs** such as tracks, diggings, rocks/logs rolled over or torn apart, scat, and claw marks.



Logs torn apart

- **Don't hike alone or at night.** Groups of four or more tend to make more noise, appear more formidable, and can provide one another with assistance. Although bears may be encountered any time, they are most active at dawn, at dusk, and at night.



Claw marks

- **Make your presence known.** Talk, sing, clap hands, call out "hey ho," etc., to alert bears of your presence. Don't rely on bells; they are too quiet.
- Be especially careful near streams and waterfalls, when you can't see the path ahead, or when walking near thick cover.

- **Avoid carcasses.** Report dead animals near a trail or campsite to a local wildlife management agency. Do not approach a carcass—a bear may be nearby.
- **Avoid odorous items** such as food or beverages with strong odors and scented personal hygiene products.

Diggings



The Wildlife Society

- **Stay with your gear.** Don't leave packs, food, or beverages unattended.
- **Taking pets on hiking trails is not advised**—they may attract bears or cougars. Pets are not allowed on trails in national parks or refuges. If pets are permitted, keep them on leashes at all times.
- **View and photograph from established observation areas or the trail.** Use binoculars, spotting scopes, and telephoto lenses.

- **Don't try to interact with an animal** by offering food, throwing rocks, making noise, or trying to herd it. Allow the animal to go about its regular routine undisturbed.



- **If an animal approaches,** back away to maintain a safe distance. Don't try to pursue an animal that is leaving the area. Always leave an animal a clear line of travel.
- **A bear conditioned to hikers** may not leave the area when it hears people hiking on the trail. Allow the bear plenty of space to continue its activities undisturbed as you proceed out of the area.

Unattended packs may attract bears.



The Wildlife Management Institute



Too close!

Safety Precautions for Children

- Children should remain near parents and should always be in sight.
- Don't let them play in or near dense cover.
- Warn them never to approach animals, especially baby animals, and never to try to feed or pet wild animals.
- Never have a child pose for a photo with a wild animal, even if it appears tame.

Remember: wildlife + distance = safety for both people and animals.

Bear country may also be home to cougars, snakes, bison, moose, deer, elk, and other wildlife. All wildlife has the potential to be dangerous if startled or feeling threatened. Always maintain a safe and respectful distance from all wildlife.

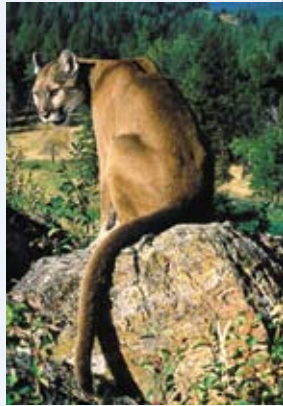


Too close!
Keep at least 100 yards from bears and 25 yards from other wildlife.

***The Pittsburgh Foundation,
Thyresa W. Amos, Helen P. Rush,
and Savina S. Skewis Fund***

Cougar Encounters

Cougars are quiet and elusive. When they're seen, it's usually only a brief glimpse. Pay attention to trailhead signs and local news reports about cougar sightings. If a cougar is encountered, group together, try to look as large as possible, stay between children and the cougar, shout aggressively, and back away. Don't turn your back, play dead, or run. Be prepared to fight back using sticks, rocks, fists, etc. Bear spray has been used successfully to deter aggressive cougars.



Snake Encounters

Snakes will try to avoid you if they can. To avoid snake encounters, always be very aware of where you're walking. Avoid stepping where you can't see, such as behind rocks or logs or in tall grass. Be careful when sitting down and when picking things up that a snake could hide under or behind. Don't attempt to approach, touch, or "wrangle" any snake—enjoy them safely and responsibly from a distance.



All wildlife can be dangerous when startled or when defending space, food, or young.

www.igbconline.org

CounterAssault.com
Grizzly Tough Bear Spray, Food Storage Unit, and Electric Fences

Most Common Causes of Conflicts with Bears

- Surprising a bear, especially a mother with cubs.
- Attempting to approach, interact with, or feed a bear.
- Being perceived as threat to a bear's space, a food source, or its young.
- Hiking alone, off the trail, or at dawn, dusk, or night.



Bear Encounters

At a distance: Do not approach. If necessary, alter your route to maintain a safe distance between you and the bear. Monitor the bear for signs of agitation or that it's going to approach. If you don't think you can pass by the bear safely, turn back.

Close encounters: Remain calm. Don't run or make sudden movements. Group together; pick up small children. If the bear appears calm and unaggressive, back away slowly making quiet, reassuring sounds. Avoid direct eye contact, but monitor the bear for signs of agitation.

If the bear seems agitated (woofing, clicking teeth, stamping paws, growling, lunging forward), remove bear spray from holster and remove safety clip. Stand quietly and give the bear a chance to calm down and/or leave. As soon as the situation allows, leave the area. Back away slowly if the bear is still in the area. If the bear leaves the area, leave quickly, but don't run, and be alert for any indications that the bear is following or stalking you.

Charges and Attacks

It is difficult to determine the intent of an aggressive or charging bear. You must use your best judgment in your situation to determine what you think will be the most appropriate response.

- **Wildlife + distance = safety.** Never allow or encourage a bear to approach. Distance allows you more time to avoid conflict or prepare for a confrontation.
- **Common predatory/stalking bear behavior** includes following, circling, and disappearing/reappearing. If a bear exhibits these behaviors, be prepared for a confrontation.
- **Bears that are used to people or have had access to human food/garbage** may not exhibit common predatory behavior. These bears may appear indifferent or curious and then attack without warning.
- **If a black bear charges:** Use bear spray. If you don't have bear spray, throw rocks, wave your arms, shout "No!" "Stop!" "Go away!" in a loud, firm voice. If the bear makes contact, fight back aggressively using any available weapon. Aim for sensitive areas such as the eyes and nose.
- **If a grizzly bear charges:** Use bear spray. If you don't have bear spray, stand still. Grizzlies often bluff charge (break off without making contact). If the bear is going to make contact, play dead (drop to the ground, lie flat on your stomach, clasp hands behind neck, use elbows and toes to resist being rolled over). Don't struggle—this may prolong the attack. Remain in this position until the bear leaves the area. If the attack becomes predatory, fight back aggressively.



Educational Reenactment

Don't play dead unless you're sure the bear is about to make contact or it has already made contact. Don't play dead if the bear is at a distance or if it's leaving the area.



Bear Spray

- Read the label—make sure you're purchasing bear spray, not personal defense spray. The label should clearly indicate the product is for deterring bears, not people.
- Active ingredients: 1–2% **capsaicin and related capsaicinoids**.
- Look for EPA registration.
- Recommended minimum spray distance is 25 feet and recommended minimum spray duration is 6 seconds to allow for multiple charges/multiple bears, to compensate for wind, and so there is a reserve for the hike out.



How to Use Bear Spray

- Bear spray isn't a substitute for following appropriate safety precautions.
- Bear spray should only be used on aggressive or attacking bears.
- Don't use bear spray as a repellent—don't spray tents, gear, or people with it.
- Practice removing the can from the holster and the safety clip from the trigger. Keep bear spray readily available.
- Bear charging from a distance: spray a short burst toward the bear; point can slightly downward; use side-to-side motion to create expanding cloud of spray the bear must pass through. If bear continues approaching, continue to spray.
- Close encounter: spray at the front of the bear until it diverts its charge or makes contact. If the bear makes contact, play dead and wait for the spray to take effect. Bear spray has been shown to reduce length and severity of maulings.

The Be Bear Aware and Wildlife Stewardship Campaign works in partnership with the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee; the Western, Midwestern, Northeastern, and Southeastern Associations of Fish and Wildlife Agencies; The Wildlife Management Institute; The Wildlife Society; and hunting, fishing, outfitting, and guiding organizations.

Please join with us by sharing this bear avoidance and wildlife stewardship safety material with family, neighbors, schools, and community organizations.

Your local, state, and federal wildlife and land management agencies have educational websites and staff who can provide educational programs for schools, youth groups, and community organizations. Their web addresses can be found in our agency directory at www.BeBearAware.org.

Photographs and educational concepts by Chuck Bartlebaugh; additional bear photographs by Milo Burcham and Drew Wilson/*Virginian Pilot*, and Bill Lee; design by students of the Graphic Arts Wildlife Fund; text development by Elizabeth Moore.



P.O. Box 7487

Missoula, Montana 59807

Phone: 406-239-2315 | Email: bearinfo@cfwi.com

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