

## Wildlife Awareness

### Bears

#### Bear safety essentials

- Respect all bears - they all can be dangerous.
- Never approach a bear.
- Never attempt to feed a bear.
- Be defensive - never surprise a bear.
- Learn about bears. Anticipate and avoid encounters.
- Know what to do if you encounter a bear.
- Each bear encounter is unique. No hard and fast rules can be applied when dealing with a potentially complex situation.

#### About bears

- Bears can run as fast as horses, uphill or downhill.
- Bears can climb trees, although black bears are better tree-climbers than grizzly bears.
- Bears have excellent senses of smell and hearing, and better sight than many people believe.
- Bears are strong. They can tear cars apart looking for food.
- Every bear defends a "personal space". The extent of this space will vary with each bear and each situation; it may be a few meters or a few hundred meters. Intrusion into this space is considered a threat and may provoke an attack.
- Bears aggressively defend their food.
- All female bears defend their cubs. If a female with cubs is surprised at close range or is separated from her cubs, she may attack. An aggressive response is the mother grizzly's natural defense against danger to her young.
- A female black bear's natural defense is to chase her cubs up a tree and defend them from the base. However, she is still dangerous and may become aggressive if provoked.



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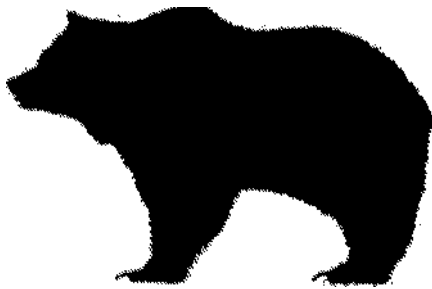
The most dangerous bears are:

- Bears habituated to human food.
- Females defending cubs.
- Bears defending a fresh kill.
- Cute, friendly, and apparently not interested in YOU.

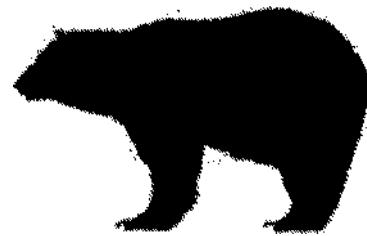
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Your food and garbage

- Odours attract bears. Reduce or eliminate odours from yourself, your camp, your clothes, and your vehicle.
- Don't sleep in the same clothes you cook in.
- Store food so that bears cannot smell or reach it. Don't keep food in your tent - not even a chocolate bar.
- Properly store and pack out all garbage.
- Handle and store pet food with as much care as your own.



*Grizzly Bear*



*Black Bear*

### When in Bear Country

- Avoid conflict by practicing prevention.
- Be alert.

- Look for signs of recent bear activity. These include droppings, tracks, evidence of digging, and claw or bite marks on trees.

- Make your presence known by talking loudly, clapping, singing, or occasionally calling out. Some people prefer to wear bells. Whatever you do, be heard! It doesn't pay to surprise a bear.
- Keep children close at hand and within sight.
- Photographing bears can be dangerous. Use a long-range telephoto lens.
- There is no guaranteed minimum safe distance from a bear - the further, the better.
- Stay away from dead animals. Bears may attack to defend such food.
- It is best not to hike with dogs, as dogs can antagonize bears and cause an attack. An unleashed dog may bring a bear back to you.
- Never leave pets unattended.

### **If You Encounter a Bear...**

- Remain calm and avoid sudden movements.
- Give the bear plenty of room, allowing it to continue its activities undisturbed. If it changes its behavior, you're too close so back away.
- If you see a bear but the bear doesn't see you, detour quickly and quietly.
- Remember that a standing bear is not always a sign of aggression. Many times, bears will stand to get a better view.
- Throw something onto the ground (like your camera) if the bear pursues you, as it may be distracted by this and allow you to escape.
- Never feed or throw food to a bear.

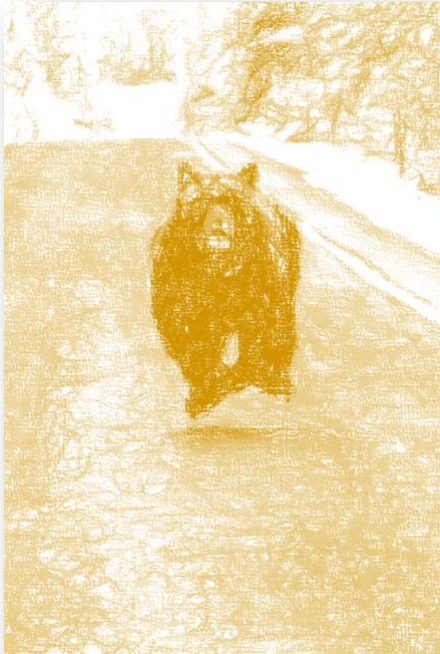


### **If you encounter a bear at the roadside**

- Remain in your vehicle. Don't get out even for a "quick photo".
- Keep your windows up.
- Do not impede the bear from crossing the road.
- If you park to view bears at a distance, leave your car well off the road to avoid accidents

### **In the event of a close black bear encounter...**

- Stand still—even though your first reaction might be to run away.
- Speak softly. A soft monotone voice will let the bear know you are human.
- Back away slowly, never turning your back on the bear.
- Wait for the bear to leave. If it doesn't—or if it approaches you—wave your arms to make yourself look bigger.
- Stand your ground and use bear pepper spray if the animal keeps advancing.
- Use bear banger



### **In the event of a close grizzly bear encounter...**

- Don't run! You will not be able to outrun the animal.
- Do not look directly into the bear's eyes.

- Speak softly in a monotone voice and wave your arms to let the bear know you're human.
- If the bear does not approach you, back away slowly.
- Stand your ground if the bear charges.
- Use bear pepper spray if the animal charges within 25 feet of you.
- Use bear banger

### **If a Bear Charges...**

- Remember that many bears charge as a bluff. They may run, then veer off or stop abruptly. Stand your ground until the bear stops, then slowly back away.
- Never run from a bear! They will chase you and bears can run faster than 30 mph.
- Don't run towards or climb a tree. Black bears and some grizzlies can climb trees, and many bear will be provoked to chase you if they see you climbing.
- If you have pepper spray, be sure that you have trained with it before using it during an attack.

### **If a Black Bear Attacks...**

- Be loud, waive your arms, and stand your ground.
- Fight back! Be aggressive and use any object you have.
- Only if you are sure the bear attacking is a mother who is protecting its cubs, play dead.
- If you have pepper spray, use it. Begin spraying when it's within 40 ft so it runs into the fog. Aim for the face.
- If you have bear bangers aim for in front of the bear, not behind, to scare the bear in the other direction.

### **If a Grizzly Bear Attacks...**

- Play dead!
- Lie face down on the ground with your hands around the back of your neck.
- Stay silent and try not to move.

- Keep your legs spread apart and if you can, leave your pack on to protect your back.
- Once the bear backs off, stay quiet and still for as long as you can. Bears will often watch from a distance and come back if they see movement.
- If you have bear bangers aim for in front of the bear, not behind, to scare the bear in the other direction.



## Cougars

The cougar, also called mountain lion or panther, is Canada's largest cat.

- Cougars have long tails which may be one-third of their total body length.
- An adult male cougar weighs between 63 and 90 kg (140-200 lbs), and a female cougar, between 40 and 50 kg (90-120 lbs). The biggest cougars are found in the interior and the Kootenays.
- The cougar's primary prey is deer. It will also feed on wild sheep, elk, rabbits, beaver, raccoons, grouse, and occasionally livestock.
- Cougars are most active at dusk and dawn. However, they will roam and hunt at any time of the day or night and in all seasons.
- During late spring and summer, one to two-year old cougars become independent of their mothers. While attempting to find a home range, these young cougars may roam widely in search of unoccupied territory. This is when cougars are most likely to conflict with humans.

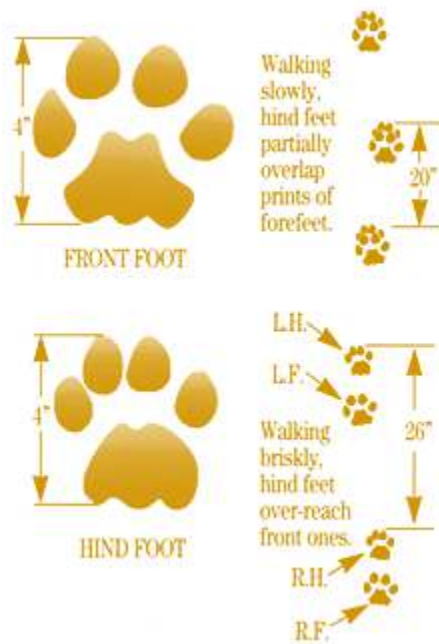


### When in Cougar Country

- Most conflict with cougars occurs in rural communities, where people live in isolated settlements. People also encounter cougars while spending leisure time in cougar country.
- Cougars are predators - the top of the food chain - and their actions are often unpredictable. We have little understanding about what might trigger an attack, but following these general guidelines will reduce the risk of cougar conflict and prepare you in the unlikely event of an attack.

### Tracks

- Cougars have four toes with three distinct lobes present at the base of the pad. Claws are retractable, so they usually do not leave imprints.
- Generally, cougars are solitary. If tracks show two or more cougars traveling together, it probably indicates a female with kittens.



## Pets

- Roaming pets are easy prey.
- Bring pets in at night. If they must be left out, confine them in a kennel with a secure top.
- Do not feed pets outside. This not only attracts young cougars but also many small animals, such as mice and raccoons, that cougars prey upon.

## Hiking or working in cougar country

- Hike in groups of two or more. Make enough noise to prevent surprising a cougar.
- Carry a sturdy walking stick to be used as a weapon if necessary.
- Keep children close-at-hand and under control.
- Watch for cougar tracks and signs. Cougars cover unconsumed portions of their kills with soil and leaf litter. Avoid these food caches.
- Cougar kittens are usually well-hidden. However, if you do stumble upon cougar kittens, do not approach or attempt to pick them up. Leave the area immediately, as a female will defend her young.

**If you meet a cougar**

- Never approach a cougar. Although cougars will normally avoid a confrontation, all cougars are unpredictable. Cougars feeding on a kill may be dangerous.
- Always give a cougar an avenue of escape.
- Stay calm. Talk to the cougar in a confident voice.
- Pick all children up off the ground immediately. Children frighten easily and their rapid movements may provoke an attack.
- Do not run. Try to back away from the cougar slowly. Sudden movement or flight may trigger an instinctive attack.
- Do not turn your back on the cougar. Face the cougar and remain upright.
- Do all you can to enlarge your image. Don't crouch down or try to hide. Pick up sticks or branches and wave them about.

**If a cougar behaves aggressively**

- Arm yourself with a large stick, throw rocks, speak loudly and firmly. Convince the cougar that you are a threat not prey.
- If a cougar attacks, fight back! Many people have survived cougar attacks by fighting back with anything, including rocks, sticks, bare fists, and fishing poles.
- focus your attack on the cougar's face and eyes.





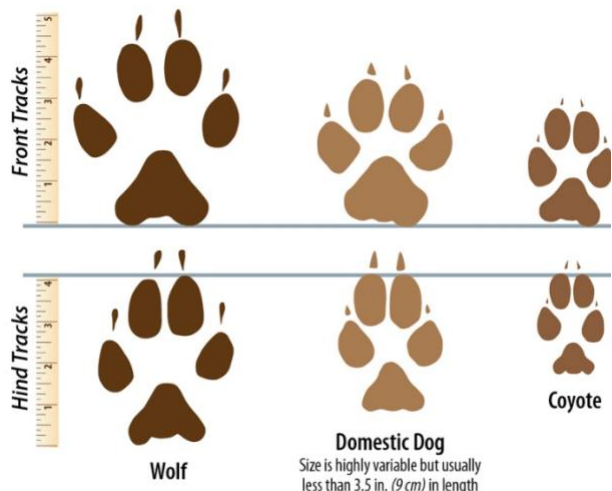
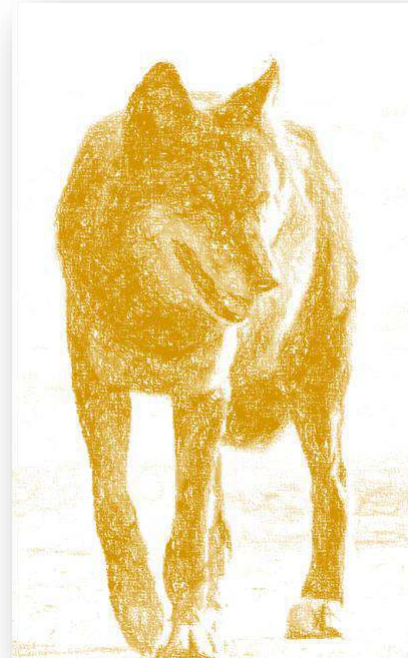
## Wolves

If a wolf approaches you, or appears to be aggressive, you should take the following actions, keeping in mind that no encounter and no wolves are alike, and that a given strategy is never guaranteed to work in all circumstances.

- Do not run.
- Back away slowly. Do not turn your back to the animal.
- Stay with your group.
- Raise your arms in order to appear bigger.

If the behavior of the animal(s) does not change:

- Show your teeth.
- Throw anything you can at the animal(s), such as rocks, sticks, sand, etc...
- Make a lot of noise.
- Use your pepper spray.



*Tracks from field drawings by David Moskowitz*

## Large Ungulates (Deer, Moose, Elk, Caribou)

Large ungulate attacks cause more fatalities than all predator attacks put together (Bear, Wolves, Cougars) attacks.

- Large ungulates will attack or charge if cornered or to defend their young or territory.
- The nature of the heard may account for territorial behavior.
- Large ungulates are far more likely to attack or charge during rutting (mating) season, especially moose and elk.

Defensive attacks may occur if an animal

- Senses your actions as competition for females
- Is cornered, trapped, constrained
- Is feeling threatened



You can expect

- Moose will use their front legs to stomp and kick
- Bison use their horns to gore
- Elk and deer will use their feet to stomp and their antlers to gore
- Female ungulates will charge to defend their young especially the first few days after birth



Your response

- Avoid confrontations
- Give the animal plenty of room
- Observe and assess the animals behavior
- Animal may stare intently in your direction and lower its head
- May raise the hair on its shoulders and neck
- If it lays its ears back, paws the ground, licks its lips or expels air through its nose, the animal may feel threatened and could attack
- Look for an avenue of escape
- Consider climbing a tree, returning to your vehicle or heading for a nearby building

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Most charges will be a warning charge

- Look for a solid obstruction (e.g. tree or a large rock).
- If you cannot climb the tree you can run around it more quickly than a moose or bison can.
- If you are knocked down and the animal does not continue running it may stomp you with all 4 feet.
- Curl up in a ball, protecting your head with your arms, and lie as still as possible.
- Do not move until the animal is a safe distance away.



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Always have a plan for how to react.

- Think ahead to avoid a situation and protect both yourself and the animal.



*Deer*



*Elk*



*Moose*



*Caribou*