

# Be Bear Aware.org



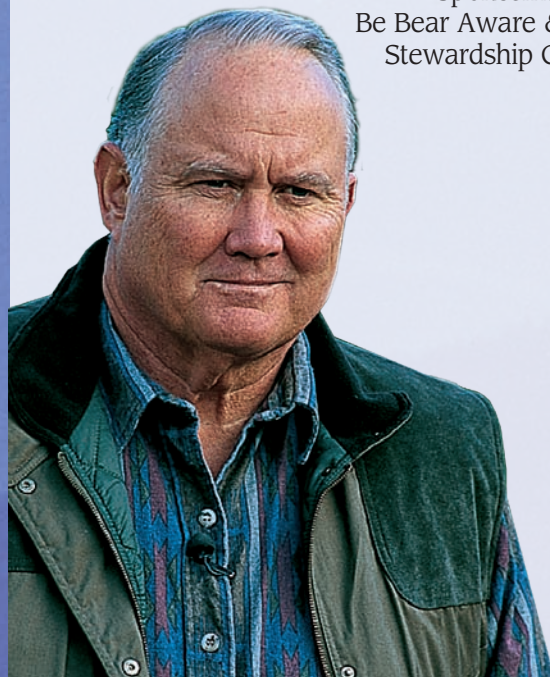
Seeing a black bear is an exciting and memorable experience. When visiting, recreating, or living in or near black bear country, it is always important to be aware that you may encounter a bear at any time.

Most conflicts between people and bears are the result of people approaching and/or feeding them or allowing them to obtain garbage and pet/livestock feeds. Learning the appropriate safety techniques will minimize the possibility of a conflict.

You are responsible for your safety and the safety of bears. Please help keep bears wild by not approaching or feeding them.

General H. Norman  
Schwarzkopf

Spokesman for the  
Be Bear Aware & Wildlife  
Stewardship Campaign



[www.bebearaware.org](http://www.bebearaware.org)



## BLACK BEARS AT A GLANCE

Black bears can be found across most of North America. Black bear habitat varies from the lowlands of Florida to mountains, deserts and subarctic tundra. Black bears can be found in and adjacent to metropolitan areas.

- ◆ **Colors:** Black, brown, blonde, rust, or cinnamon. Rare colors are white and blue.
- ◆ **Size:** Adults measure about 3 feet at the shoulder and 5 to 6 feet when standing.
- ◆ **Weight:** Adults weigh 125 to 425+ lbs. Some can weigh as much as 700 lbs.
- ◆ **Life Span:** Approximately 20 years.
- ◆ **Eyesight:** Similar to humans.
- ◆ **Sense of Smell:** Excellent; can span miles.
- ◆ **Attributes:** Very agile; climb trees well; good swimmers; and can run as fast as 35 mph.

A black bear's diet can include acorns, berries, insects, vegetation, fish and other live prey, and carrion. They mate during May and early June. They hibernate between November and April when food is scarce, though this may vary. Healthy mothers produce 1–3 cubs.



## DON'T FEED BEARS!

Bears should never obtain human food, pet/livestock feeds, or garbage. Bears that receive these “food rewards” may become aggressive towards humans or cause property damage. To protect people, these bears may have to be destroyed.

- ◆ Black bears have a natural fear of humans and will attempt to avoid people and developed areas—fed bears do not.
- ◆ Black bears rely on natural foods, such as berries, ants, roots, grubs, fish and other live prey for proper nutrition. Fed bears will abandon these vital food sources for human foods and garbage.
- ◆ Fed bears quickly become conditioned to food handouts and will teach their cubs to approach people to get these inappropriate food rewards.
- ◆ Black bears fed along roads tend to stay near roads, increasing the number of vehicle-animal accidents.
- ◆ Fed black bears will eat garbage including bottle caps, glass, aluminum foil, and other related items that can be harmful to their mouth, throat, and digestive system.

***Remember—A FED BEAR  
IS A DEAD BEAR!***



## RESIDENTIAL AREAS

Minimize odors and the availability of food rewards throughout your yard and community.

- ◆ Put garbage out on the day of pick up, not the night before. Store attractants in a sturdy building or place in an approved bear-resistant trash receptacle. Feed pets inside.
- ◆ Hang bird feeders from a pulley system with a catch tray so they're out of reach of bears. Take feeders down between April and November when natural seed and nectar are available.
- ◆ Clear brush from your yard so you have a clear visible area.
- ◆ Keep barbecues clean. Store with other attractants (livestock/pet feed, and garbage) inside a sturdy building. Windows, doors, and shutters should close *against* reinforced jams.
- ◆ Pick all ripe fruit from fruit trees promptly, and keep the ground clear of fallen fruit.
- ◆ Vegetable gardens, compost piles, orchards, and beehives may attract bears. Use electric fences to keep bears out.
- ◆ Place children's play areas close to your house with viewable space around them and away from brush or forested areas.



- ◆ Provide outdoor lighting at entrances and walkways.

- ◆ If a bear enters your home, **leave immediately**. If you can't get to an exit, go to the nearest room where you can shut the door securely. Call for assistance from your local wildlife agency, police, or fire department. When help arrives, open doors and windows to provide the bear with as many exits as possible.

Bear activity may intensify in spring when bears are emerging from their dens, during fall when bears are bulking up for hibernation, and during periods of drought when bears' natural food sources become scarce.



## TIPS FOR A BEAR SAFE COMMUNITY

- ◆ Clear brush away from playgrounds, use wide trails leading to schools, recreation areas, or community sites.
- ◆ Place children's play sets in the center of openings, away from brush or forested areas.
- ◆ Establish a neighbor to neighbor warning network. Working with local police and fire departments, establish a calling network to warn each other if there is a bear, cougar, or other potentially dangerous wild animal in the area.
- ◆ Hold community workshops on how to avoid encounters with all wildlife, especially bears.
- ◆ Use bear resistant refuse containers community wide.
- ◆ Plan green belts so they allow animals to pass through communities and not be funneled into densely populated areas.



## RESPECT ALL WILDLIFE



All wildlife has the potential to be dangerous. Do not approach, interact with, or feed wild animals. Allow them to go about their daily routine earning a living looking for food, and watching for predators or prey, uninterrupted by visitors.

**Wildlife + Distance = Safety  
for both people and wildlife**



◆ Children should remain near parents and should always be in sight.

- ◆ Don't let them play in or near dense cover.
- ◆ Never have a child pose for a photo with a wild animal, even if it appears tame.
- ◆ Warn them never to approach wildlife, especially seemingly abandoned baby animals, and never to try to feed, pet or catch/handle wild animals.
- ◆ Children should refrain from squealing or making animal-like noises while hiking.

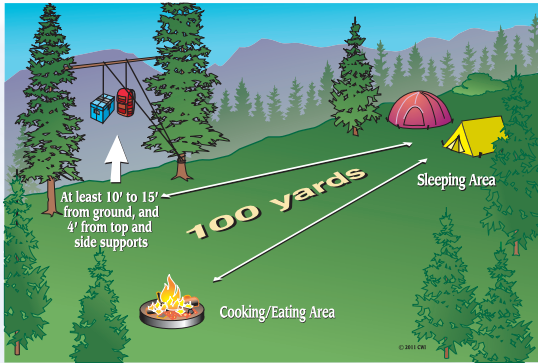


## CAMPGROUND TIPS

- ◆ Always keep a clean camp. Keep your gear together, minimize the space that you occupy.
- ◆ Keep your sleeping area, tent, and sleeping bag free of food and odors. Don't sleep in clothes that you wore while cooking or handling fish or game.
- ◆ Clean barbecue grills and store them so they are unavailable to bears.
- ◆ Use bear-resistant trash receptacles and food storage lockers.
- ◆ Keep pets under control at all times.
- ◆ Keep a flashlight and bear spray readily available.



- ◆ Set up tents in a line with space between them, *not* in a circle, so that tents don't restrict a bear's line of travel.
- ◆ Do not leave food, beverages or coolers unattended. Store so they are unavailable to bears when you are not in camp.
- ◆ Clean fish or game away from your campsite.
- ◆ Remember, bears and other wildlife may pass through a campground at anytime.



## BACKCOUNTRY TIPS

- ◆ Select a campsite away from animal trails, thick brush, and bear food sources such as berry patches and fish spawning streams. Place tents in a line so there is viewable space on all sides.
- ◆ Store food, garbage and other scented items in bear resistant containers or by hanging at least 10 ft off the ground and 4 ft from side and top support.
- ◆ Strain food particles from dishwater and store with other garbage so that they are unavailable to bears.
- ◆ Pack everything out—never bury garbage or burn it in the fire pit.
- ◆ Set up your sleeping area 100 yards from food storage and cooking/eating areas.
- ◆ New light-weight electric fences are now available to provide protection for attractants and gear.



## HIKING TIPS

- ◆ Let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return.
- ◆ Read all signs at the trailhead, and carry bear spray. Hike during daylight hours, after sunrise and before sunset.
- ◆ Hike in a group; keep children close at hand. Make your presence known.
- ◆ Scan ahead for signs of bear activity.
- ◆ Avoid taking pets; they may attract bears to you. If they are allowed, keep them on a leash.
- ◆ Keep your backpack or day sack with you at all times or store so it is unavailable to bears by hanging.
- ◆ Watch for bear signs: scat, claw marks, diggings, torn apart logs and stumps, and overturned rocks.
- ◆ View or photograph from the trail and observation areas. Use binoculars, spotting scopes, and telephoto lenses.
- ◆ If a bear or other animal approaches you, back away and maintain a safe distance.
- ◆ Always follow local regulations.





## ENCOUNTERS

Bears, like all wild animals, are potentially dangerous, though they will usually detect your presence and leave the area. **Remember: distance = safety.**

- ◆ If a bear is **visible but not close**, alter your route so that you will move away from its area.

- ◆ If a bear **approaches**, *do not run*. Remain calm, group together, and pick up small children. Continue to face the bear, and slowly back away. If the bear continues to approach, try to scare it away by shouting and taking an aggressive stance.



- ◆ If a **black bear attacks**, use bear spray and fight back using everything in your power—fists, sticks, rocks, etc.

## BEAR SPRAY

- ◆ Bear spray is a unique formula specially prepared for use on bears. Personal defense or pepper spray is not formulated for bears. Bear spray must have an EPA registration number.
- ◆ Bear spray must contain 1–2% of the active ingredients Capsaicin and related capsaicinoids.
- ◆ Suggested spray distance is **at least 25 ft.**; suggested spray duration is **at least 6 seconds**.



The **Be Bear Aware Campaign** works in partnership with the Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies and the regional associations in the southeast, northeast, mid-west, and west. Other participants include the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee; the Wildlife Management Institute; the Wildlife Society; and hunting, fishing, outfitting and guiding organizations to inform the public about bear safety.

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 that can provide additional information. Their web addresses can be found in our agency directory at [www.BeBearAware.org](http://www.BeBearAware.org).

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