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# Craig Medred

A HOME FOR READERS AND THINKERS

FRIDAY, JUNE 30TH, 2017

NEWS

## Bear ignored spray

BY CRAIGMEDRED ON JUNE 22, 2017 • ( 57 COMMENTS )



The predatory black bear that pursued a Canadian for 45 minutes/Rob Foster photo

**Updated on June 23 to include other [bear spray failures](#)**

A black bear that killed a 27-year-old Anchorage woman in central Alaska on Monday appears to have hunted down the woman and a colleague while they were conducting environmental surveys for the Pogo Mine.

The bear jumped one of the women from behind before she had any chance react, and then moved on to the woman's colleague, their employer, himself a wildlife biologist, said Thursday.

An attempt to drive the bear off with [pepper spray failed. The efficacy of pepper spray has been questioned in other cases involving predatory black bears.](#)

Dead is 27-year-old Erin Johnson, a lifelong Alaskan who grew up in Anchorage and celebrated her wedding only two weeks ago. Injured was 38-year-old Ellen Trainor of Fairbanks.

Both had spent countless hours in the Alaska wilderness and were well familiar with bears.

They were working in brushy terrain in the Tanana uplands when attacked, said Steve Murphy, the president of Alaska Biological Research said Thursday. ABR is a small, environmental consulting firm that started in Fairbanks before adding an office in Anchorage.

ABR staff were in shock over a seemingly inexplicable incident.

“Both of them were very experienced outdoor people,” Murphy said, but the experience could not save them from a predatory black bear.

## Surprise attack

“This bear approached them from behind and took Ellen Trainor down,” he said. “Things get a little murky after that.”

Trainor didn’t sense the bear until it was within 10 feet, and she had no time to react. Murphy thinks her backpack, which the bear chewed on, might have saved her. With Trainor down, the bear moved on to Johnson as Trainor struggled to get a can of bear spray out of a holster on the pack’s waist band.

She succeeded in doing that, but the spray was of limited use, Murphy said.

“Ellen was able to spray the bear twice,” Murphy said, “but the bear came back....We’re trying to understand this.”

[There has been some past research indicating that black bears can rather quickly recover from being sprayed.](#)

“I don’t know why,” Stephen Herrero, the dean of bear research said Thursday evening, “but it showed up in the data.”

As in this case, Herrero said, the spray initially drove bears off, but they came back. [This is, however, the first time a fatality has been associated with the failure of bear spray.](#)

## Harrowing Canadian story

A Canadian biologist working in remote Ontario in June 2013 reported he was able to keep a black bear at bay by spraying it

in the face several times, but the bear persisted in trying to take him down.

Rob Foster “said the bear charged at him repeatedly — even after he used his bear spray,” [the CBC reported at the time](http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/northern-ontario-biologist-dances-with-bear-1.1383190) (<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/northern-ontario-biologist-dances-with-bear-1.1383190>).

“We were like two feet away [at one point],” Foster told CBC. “He’d stick his head out one side of the jack pine, and I’d threaten to spray and he’d stick his head on the other side of the tree. It was almost comical, if the stakes hadn’t been so high.”

Foster said he felt lucky to get out of the encounter alive.

Brad Benter, [an Alaska biologist who ironically happened to be at the scene of a separate predatory bear attack only a day before the Pogo incident](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/size-matters/), (<https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/size-matters/>) said [“I’ve sprayed two different black bears at close range, both times with little to no reaction- once in the field on a weather port platform above the bear, with safe retreat, once from a deck of a house, also with safe retreat. I believe it is better than nothing, but I also don’t count on it working.”](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/size-matters/)

Foster’s experience was similar to Benter’s. Foster now teaches bear safety in Ontario and says he was lucky to have the spray with him despite its limited effectiveness.

“I sprayed (the bear) four times,” he said in a Friday telephone interview. “The first time I sprayed him at maybe two and a half meters (about 8 feet). I wanted to make sure I got him good.”

The bear ran off, but shortly came back, Foster said. It would keep running off and coming back for 45 minutes.

## Attacking a bear

Foster, who has worked around both black and grizzly bears in the Yukon Territory, Canada, and lions in Africa, said he had no doubt the black bear had decided the man was prey and was trying to set him up for a kill. The bear was constantly circling to get behind and attack him from the rear as the Pogo-area bear attacked Trainor, and **as another bear in the Pogo-area attacked Cynthia Dusel Bacon not far away in the 1970s.**

(<https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/21/dangerous-bear/>)

“The second time I sprayed him was at maybe two meters,” Foster said.

**Upon being sprayed, the bear would quickly whirl and run away, a reaction not much different from that reported by others who’ve swatting black bear with sticks or thrown rocks at them in similar situations.**

When the bear turned, Foster said, he’d stop spraying, recognizing shooting spray at a bear’s ass was a waste of spray he might need later.

“He constantly tried to circle me and get me from behind,” said the biologist, who was lucky to have had a GPS running that gave him a track back to his truck. He eventually decided that the best way out of the mess was to maneuver the bear into a position where every time the man attacked the bear – and Foster said he repeatedly went at the bear screaming and hollering to make it clear he wasn’t going down easy – the man would be moving a little closer to his truck.

As this dance of predator and prey continued, Foster said, the bear spray became effective in that he could sometimes push the bear back by charging at it – a bold move – and bringing the can up as if he was going to spray.

At one point, Foster paused to take photos of the bear. It seems a little crazy now, he admitted, but “I wanted to document this in case he took me down.”

Asked what he thought would have happened if he hadn’t aggressively and repeatedly gone at the bear screaming, sometimes waving his arm and threatening it with that can of spray, Foster had a simple answer:

“We wouldn’t be having this conversation today. It was a flat-out predatory attack.”

## A frustrated predator

Eventually, Foster said, he worked the bear out of an alder thicket and into a patch of woods.

“I was driving him toward my truck,” the biologist said. “He only once made a sound. He gave one woof. He was kind of frustrated.”

At one point in the woods, he and the bear played that peek-a-boo game around a tree. Foster said he could see then that one of the bear’s eyes was swollen shut, an apparent reaction to the powerful irritating powers of the pepper spray.

But despite this, the bear continued to press the attack.

As the bear and man ducked around trees in the woods, Foster sprayed the animal for the fourth time at a distance of only about four feet.

“He seemed to lose a little enthusiasm after that,” the biologist said, and after 45 minutes, “he kind of lost interest.”

That is common predatory behavior. Predators will test and test and test before deciding the prey is going to be too difficult to kill and then abandon the effort. Foster said he still feels lucky to be alive.

“It was pretty intense,” he said, but he lived.

Twice in Alaska in two days, others were not as lucky.

**Correction:** This story was corrected on June 23 to reflect the bear spray was in a holster on a waist band and not in a backpack.

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57 replies »

📍 Pingback: [Alexandria Attack Demonstrates Complete Failure of Gun Control | SOTG](#)

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One critically important point that's been completely overlooked by the media is that employees of various companies in Alaska are now required to carry bear spray rather than a firearm. This requirement is based on the laughable premise that research "proves" bear spray is more effective than a firearm. If you compare the results of Efficacy of Bear Deterrent Spray in Alaska to the results of Efficacy of Firearms in For Bear Deterrence in Alaska, bear spray wins. But Efficacy of Firearms for Bear Deterrence in Alaska is not the only study about guns vs. bears in Alaska. There's also Miller and Tutterrow's 1999 study based on ADFG records of bears killed in defense of life or property:"CHARACTERISTICS OF NONSPORT MORTALITIES TO BROWN AND BLACK BEARS AND HUMAN INJURIES FROM BEARS IN ALASKA." The human injury rate for Miller & Tutterrow's firearms study is lower than both efficacy of firearms and bear spray. Oddly, Miller & Tutterrow's research examined 2,289 incidents from 1970-1996 when people killed bears in defense of life or property, but Efficacy of Firearms for Bear Deterrence in Alaska examined 269 incidents from 1883-2006. What basis did the authors of Efficacy of Firearms for Bear Deterrence have for omitting almost 2,000 incidents? If we're going to compare the results of a bear spray study to the results of a firearms study, why not compare the results of Efficacy of Bear Deterrent Spray in Alaska to Characteristics of Nonsport

Reply

## Mortalities to Brown and Black Bears and Human Injuries From Bears in Alaska?

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9164&\\_wpnonce=14731f8419](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9164&_wpnonce=14731f8419))

Like

The comparisons could be slanted purposely, for rea. Reply  
commerce, and the likely culprits would tend to be where  
the money is. Namely companies who make and sell bear  
spray could be motivated to slant such a study IMO.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9166&\\_wpnonce=e12bc00ae3](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9166&_wpnonce=e12bc00ae3))

Like

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Out of all of these comments the one about shooting th Reply  
keep it from becoming someone else's problem is the one that  
sticks for me. I couldn't agree more.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9146&\\_wpnonce=de8d11519f](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9146&_wpnonce=de8d11519f))

Like

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I'm not sure what's going on with everyone's bear spra Reply  
every time I've ever sprayed a bear (there have been many) it  
seem to have worked marvelously. I guess the only difference  
with my spray and yours is, mine contains on hell of a lot of  
BB's.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9114&\\_wpnonce=6469dc7ddc](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9114&_wpnonce=6469dc7ddc))

Like

I agree here, Jim. Especially if the bear is showing p. Reply  
behavior. Always possible its just hungry at the time and  
would change its behavior when well-fed, but IMO a black  
bear showing this behavior should be removed asap.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9151&\\_wpnonce=0c75a2aa76](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9151&_wpnonce=0c75a2aa76))

Liked by [1 person](#) (#)

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Reblogged this on [Windage and Elucidation](#)

[Reply](#)

(<https://matthewcarberryblog.wordpress.com/2017/06/26/bear-ignored-spray/>)

and commented:

Spray is good, but not a magic talisman even when used correctly

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9113&\\_wpnonce=9b6d773840](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9113&_wpnonce=9b6d773840))

Like

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Not a fan of black bears. People look at me funny when I see them I'd rather move off the trail with a grizz. [Reply](#)

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9087&\\_wpnonce=cdffae8866](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9087&_wpnonce=cdffae8866))

Like

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I've recently heard about using an air horn as a deterrent. it's possibly as effective as pepper spray. Any thoughts on this? [Reply](#)

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9085&\\_wpnonce=65ffcec66f](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9085&_wpnonce=65ffcec66f))

Like

they've worked for some people and not others. i've bears ignore gunshots, yelling and truck horns, and run from the snap of a twig. go figure. i'm sure there are situations in which air horns work, but i wouldn't expect them stop a predatory black bear. still, the can could be a useful weapon for hitting the bear on the head. i have heard good reports on the use of handheld flares similar to the old fusee, but i have not used one. [Reply](#)

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9088&\\_wpnonce=51ac23b15e](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9088&_wpnonce=51ac23b15e))

Like

I chased a black bear into the next neighborhood that had gotten my pet rabbit, George. The newspaper said the bear stopped, turned around and challenged me. That bear never stopped once. I guess I was lucky. I don't know what I would have done if I could have grabbed his back or something. It was just a sudden reaction I had to go after the bear and rescue George. I'll never forget that day for the rest of my life and I still feel the pain. I was so stupid to put my bunny and myself in that position. There was a can of bear spray by the door and I forgot to use it. I'm sitting outside my apartment now with the same kind of bunny as George in the pen. I have my back to the woods and keep thinking I shouldn't. I have a can of bear spray too. There was a pile of scat in the lawn and have had multiple sightings in the area. Stupid is as stupid does.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9091&\\_wpnonce=572d0938c3](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9091&_wpnonce=572d0938c3))

Like

I thought people in Alaska carried 45 Cal side arms they are near or in the bush ?? Reply

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9149&\\_wpnonce=de6f2f2285](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9149&_wpnonce=de6f2f2285))

Like

I'm sure in all these attacks where they are being stalked I would have loved to have a shotgun or some firearm available...everything I have ever read about bear attacks is that black bears sometimes stalk and hunt humans as prey and there is usually lots of warnings and lots and lots of time to get a firearm up and ready to defend oneself....I cant imagine going into the wilderness with just bear spray. I know it can be better then nothing but oh wow...I think this young woman Reply

would be alive today if she had been armed ...I would almost bet on it ...

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9058&\\_wpnonce=87540e7346](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9058&_wpnonce=87540e7346))

Like

You're correct John that many predatory black bear incidents gave people plenty of time to use a firearm that would have ended the encounter NOW. No drama, No spraying and having the bear temporarily dissuaded, only to return. Wildlife professionals and agencies really need to go back to square one on bear spray, which has been hyped for decades. The 2 studies on bear spray and the 2012 study on guns vs bear in Alaska are seriously flawed. To put it bluntly, the studies on bear spray and firearms in Alaska are examples of biologists behaving like used car salesman. People should be aware that one trick bear spray advocates use is to rave about the overall "success" rate for bear spray. For example, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee says "In a study of bear spray incidents in Alaska, spray effectively deterred undesirable behavior more than 90% of the time. In 72 incidents involving 175 people, only three people were harmed, none seriously." You're not told that just 9 of 72 incidents involved charging grizzlies. Or that 3 of 9 people who sprayed charging grizzlies were injured. Or that the study did not include data on incidents when people did not have time to use their bear spray. Reply

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9081&\\_wpnonce=138f8380b6](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9081&_wpnonce=138f8380b6))

Liked by [1 person](#) (#)

Pepper spray is not a cure all on any bear attack black grizzly. I interview Tom Orr the man who was attacked last fall Reply

in Montana twice and live to tell about by sow grizzly. He pepper spray her and when I ask him about the USFWS saying it was 100% effective at stopping a bear attack he laughed. They estimate the black bear population in North America at 950,000 I believe it is well over million. What we're seeing is bears that no longer fear humans because they are over protected or have little hunting pressure. As long as we take the "coexist" logic attacks are going to increase.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9054&\\_wpnonce=2f7ae789d6](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9054&_wpnonce=2f7ae789d6))

Like

It is called BEAR SPRAY NOT PEPPER SPRAY P! Reply  
USE THE PROPER NAME It is actually against the law to use pepper spray on bears. Dave Smith has provided some really good information. To many cooks in the kitchen with incomplete information.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9216&\\_wpnonce=834ee81a05](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9216&_wpnonce=834ee81a05))

Like

If you would like a proof reader- hit me up before you \_ Reply  
Grammar and typos – otherwise good article. "bear and manned duck around". S/B "bear and man ducked around ".  
There's about 4 more. Anytime. I'm serious.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9029&\\_wpnonce=920fd47194](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9029&_wpnonce=920fd47194))

Like

ping me any time at craigmedred.news when you see Reply  
and i'll get 'em fixed. it's a one-person show, and it's hard to catch all of the typos in a fairly high volume operation. any crowd-sourcing is appreciated. i fixed the duck. caught another type just now. it's always easier to proof read a day

later after you've forgotten most of what you wrote when you were writing.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9036&\\_wpnonce=8e9b4d9055](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9036&_wpnonce=8e9b4d9055))

Like

I appreciate and enjoy the typos and auto-(in)corrects. I actually look forward to finding a few in every article. It's part of the Medred flavor and it puts you in some elite company like the Grauniad. I recommend less time proofreading and more time outside.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9039&\\_wpnonce=df5432b30b](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9039&_wpnonce=df5432b30b))

Liked by [1 person](#) (#)

thanks, Pete; i hate the typos, and i need more time outside. i'm going to go jump the bike right now!

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9047&\\_wpnonce=10b014edeb](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9047&_wpnonce=10b014edeb))

Like

Craig, try grammarly.com. It's like spellcheck on steroids.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9043&\\_wpnonce=e0cee8a191](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9043&_wpnonce=e0cee8a191))

Like

thanks. i'll give it a shot. word press's spell check is definitely weak. i regularly catch words it has missed for reasons hard to tell.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9046&\\_wpnonce=8588fa655c](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9046&_wpnonce=8588fa655c))

Like

Also, the beer? Maybe should have been bear?

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9062&\\_wpnonce=755b4ebcb5](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9062&_wpnonce=755b4ebcb5))

Like

damn that spell check! thanks. fixed. thankfully i only had one beer.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9063&\\_wpnonce=325e93d3b6](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9063&_wpnonce=325e93d3b6))

Like

It has been unusually dry in our area, and the bears may be looking for additional food sources. [Reply](#)

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9025&\\_wpnonce=837f10712f](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9025&_wpnonce=837f10712f))

Like

heidi: that's an observation i really, really hope is wrong. [Reply](#)

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9026&\\_wpnonce=104de7fb5f](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9026&_wpnonce=104de7fb5f))

Liked by [1 person](#) (#)

I have known Erin since she was a little girl. She was a pretty woman and very athletic in the back country. Erin was no stranger to bears. Her father was a Chugach State Park ranger. Their house is located on the Chugach State Park boundary. [Reply](#)

Her parents, recent husband, and many friends were all devastated by the accident.

Sometimes bad things and good things happen and there is no rational explanation for these occurrences.

I will continue to shoot bears in my yard with rubber-tipped arrows. I have never carried bear spray but I have found many cans that were lost.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9016&\\_wpnonce=9697e1ca4b](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9016&_wpnonce=9697e1ca4b))

Liked by [1 person](#) (#)

Dick: i know. i was going to call you and talk to you [Reply](#)  
this, but couldn't bring myself to do it. it's been a tough week. some of this hits too close to home, and i had too many friends and acquaintances too close around what went down at Bird Ridge. the response at Pogo actually appears to have been faster than at Bird, and they still couldn't save Erin. tragic. and, of course, there's my own history which has made me almost crazily aggressive around bear ever since.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9028&\\_wpnonce=33ac8d30a9](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9028&_wpnonce=33ac8d30a9))

Liked by [1 person \(#\)](#)

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★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9015&\\_wpnonce=3eb0f1fc9e](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9015&_wpnonce=3eb0f1fc9e))

Liked by [1 person \(#\)](#)

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I would like to comment further on the issue of the [Reply](#)  
effectiveness of bear spray in the incident at Pogo. First, the bear spray was newly purchased. Second, the spray was not in

their packs but rather on their belts. Lastly, we think the bear spray likely saved Ellen Trainor's life. When I stated that the bear spray was ineffective, I meant that it did not send the bear high tailing it never to be heard from again, and it obviously did not save Erin. The bear did react to being sprayed, however, and it did retreat. It just came back, and our crew could not use the time it bought to extricate themselves from the situation.

Steve Murphy

ABR, Inc.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9007&\\_wpnonce=cbee82a370](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9007&_wpnonce=cbee82a370))

Liked by [1 person \(#\)](#)

thanks for the clarification. i'm going to fix the pack Reply  
part of the story. i think the evidence is pretty clear here, particularly from Rob Foster's encounter and the Herrero study about bear's locking onto a target, that when a black bear decides someone is prey they are in serious danger. let's all say a prayer for Erin and the family. awful, awful tragedy.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9010&\\_wpnonce=c4e7edff58](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9010&_wpnonce=c4e7edff58))

Liked by [1 person \(#\)](#)

Craig, what about wasp and hornet spray. You have a 20 ft spray

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9132&\\_wpnonce=dcb67d020c](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9132&_wpnonce=dcb67d020c))

Like

While attending a park ranger academy I was pepper s Reply  
directly in the face at close range after sprinting for a 1/2 mile.  
I then had to fight with, detain and handcuff an aggressive

“suspect.” My reaction to the spray was instantaneous — my eyes slammed shut and I could barely breathe — yet somehow I managed to get through the drill. The point is: you can fight your way through the pain, and lots of people do.

There were also a few participants who showed little reaction to the capsicum and one very fair skinned young woman who was completely immune to it. She was sprayed three times in total, and still nothing. So, it would seem logical that bears too have varying reactions to the effects of capsicum and also have the ability to fight through it.

At best, a direct hit with the bear spray will startle a predatory bear long enough to make a hasty escape. At worst, it won't work at all. Everyone traveling in bear country should carry an appropriate firearm, in an easily accessible body holster, and train themselves to use it. A firearm really is an essential tool to stop a determined predator.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9006&\\_wpnonce=45a51263ca](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9006&_wpnonce=45a51263ca))

Liked by [2 people \(#\)](#)

Unfortunately, my understanding is Pogo Mine polic Reply  
not allow sub-contractors to “pack”, even when working  
duch remote sites with no way out (excrpt maydsy to  
helicopter to come). Ifvthis is the case, then the mine should  
be providing an armed guard in such remote areas – seems  
like pure negligence!

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9012&\\_wpnonce=ee99f3dd87](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9012&_wpnonce=ee99f3dd87))

Liked by [1 person \(#\)](#)

i don't know that i would call it “pure negligence,” Cindy.  
i've always thought it unfair to blame anyone for

anticipating events that hard to anticipate. but if there is a “no guns” policy (and i’m checking on that), it probably should be changed or bear guards should be employed as they are elsewhere in Alaska. i, by the way, shoot good and could use a job that actually pays money.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9013&\\_wpnonce=39944910f5](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9013&_wpnonce=39944910f5))

Liked by [1 person](#) (#)

Craig, “anticipating events that hard to anticipate”...we all assume the risk once we leave the parking lot and head into the woods.....I believe that Cindy is fully correct in her determination that the mine was negligent (and should be held accountable)...even lodges in Alaska supply their staff with appropriate firearms for bear country...this is something that is very anticipatable might occur every step in the back-country of Alaska.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9055&\\_wpnonce=652368f3c7](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9055&_wpnonce=652368f3c7))

Like

I’ve read that they were given the option to carry guns but opted for bear spray

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9148&\\_wpnonce=a386b002a2](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9148&_wpnonce=a386b002a2))

Like

Unfortunately, my understanding is Pogo Mine polic Reply  
not allow sub-contractors to “pack”, even when working  
such remote sites with no way out (except a mayday to  
helicopter to come). If this is the case, then the mine should  
be providing an armed guard in such remote areas – seems  
like pure negligence!

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9014&\\_wpnonce=d5d0467b2b](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9014&_wpnonce=d5d0467b2b))

Like

---

I had a crazy guy empty his bear spray me in the face. Reply  
feet on an Eagle River trail a couple year ago- and I could  
still function blinded till rolling and rinsing my face in the  
creek- painful, slowed me down a little- if I was a bear in  
aggression mode I don't think it would have slowed me  
down. Bear spray is a nuisance

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9077&\\_wpnonce=0be34b4cb4](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9077&_wpnonce=0be34b4cb4))

Like

---

Here's what Herrero's 1998 study on Field Use of Cap. Reply  
Spray As A Bear Deterrent said about the 4 incidents when  
bear spray was used against "aggressive" black bears,  
including 1 predatory incident: "In all four incidents the spray  
apparently changed the behavior of the bear, however, in no  
cases did the bear leave the area after being sprayed. In 1 case  
the bear was shot and killed after being sprayed. In another  
case, the bear left after a shotgun was fired. In the other 2  
cases, the person left. In 1 the bear didn't follow, but in the  
other the bear followed the person but was finally able to make  
it to camp, but only after firing a bear banger." Bear spray also  
had a poor record against curious black bears, and bears  
seeking food or garbage. I would never trust bear spray for  
protection against black bears. In particular, I want a firearm in  
hand against predatory black bears. It's criminal that biologists  
and agencies do not warn the public about the danger of  
relying on bear spray for protection against black bears.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9001&\\_wpnonce=f000a45af1](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9001&_wpnonce=f000a45af1))

Liked by [2 people](#) (#)



jesus, Dave, we're finding ourselves in total agreement. Reply  
what the hell. i'd only temper what you say a little. i'd find  
bear spray as effective as a stout stick and possibly easier to  
use. the Rob Foster incident is revealing in that regard. i'm  
not sure it would have turned out any differently if he'd been  
forced to pick up a tree limb with which to club the bear,  
which in fact was the case with the late Jeff Nissman in a  
case up here some years back. he drove it off after being  
pursued for considerable time. but in both cases, i'd much  
prefer to have a gun.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9011&\\_wpnonce=b9e478f187](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9011&_wpnonce=b9e478f187))

Liked by [1 person \(#\)](#)

Any bear exhibiting predatory behavior should be shot on  
site. You may haze the bear into leaving but the next  
person might not be so lucky.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9052&\\_wpnonce=7ac8c737f2](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9052&_wpnonce=7ac8c737f2))

Like

How many encounters with bears are there every year? Reply  
America? Hundreds I am guessing...having a study based  
on 4 encounters is like making your judgment with 4% of  
the cases of one year evaluated. I personally have seen bear  
spray work on black bears (as well as projectile rocks do)...I  
believe there is no substitute for making noise while in bear  
country and carrying a firearm with 180 grain bullet or  
more...with that said, for those unwilling to carry a firearm,  
I believe bear spray must be deployed when the bear is close  
enough for a good shot to the nose....spraying the body or  
top of the bear's head will do no good...large rocks to their  
head at close range seem to help many times also.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9057&\\_wpnonce=04fb7eb6ec](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9057&_wpnonce=04fb7eb6ec))

Like

Steve: you're right. it seems all about getting the spray in their eyes, noses, and respiratory system. pretty easy with a wide-eyed, mouth-open, nose-flaring grizzly in full charge. not as easy with a sneaky, head-down, nostrils shut, squinty eyed black bear.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9060&\\_wpnonce=3729ff6af4](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9060&_wpnonce=3729ff6af4))

Liked by [1 person](#) (#)

Before writing that bear spray was not affective in this [Reply](#) maybe some basic fact checking (which I did not see in this article). How old was the can of bear spray? Was it past the expiration date? Had it been dropped or partially dispensed? How far away was the bear when sprayed? The potency of bear spray lasts forever. But the pressure of the propellant does not last forever. I've seen old bear spray come out of the can like red whipped cream. If there is not adequate pressure in the can to reach the bear and densely fog the bear's face, it will not work as advertised.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=8989&\\_wpnonce=da4926bb2c](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=8989&_wpnonce=da4926bb2c))

Like

good questions, Tim. i'm not sure the first two matte [Reply](#) however. Tom Smith has actually been testing a whole lot of old cans and finding that despite the warning dates (which the manufactures put on their for liability reasons sans any serious testing), the old ones he's tested so far work fine. your experience would appear unique but worth noting. i'm not sure about the third question, but i'll check. the exact

distances are lost in the fog of war, but the bear was described as engulfed in the cloud, which certainly rules out the “red whipped cream” problem. i was on deadline and ran with what i had because there is past evidence of bear spray not working so well on black bears as Herrero noted. i also known people who’ve used it on black bears – and this problem seems specific to black bears – which did not react much. i do not know of anyone, nor did Herrero, who used it on a grizzly that didn’t react, although ADF&G, Larry van Daele i think, noted years ago that when it was used to try to keep grizzlies off a salmon weir on Kodiak Island they pretty quickly learned to simply slam their heads underwater, wash out the spray and get back to dining on salmon. meanwhile, as to black bears, this from Brad Benter, a wildlife biologist, on my Facebook page: “I’ve sprayed two different black bears at close range, both times with little to no reaction. Once in the field on a weather port platform above the bear, with safe retreat, once from a deck of a house, also with safe retreat. I believe it is better than nothing, but I also don’t count on it working.” i have heard similar reports over the years, and as Herrero noted it showed up as obvious in the data. pepper spray is not fool proof on black bears, but it does appear it will usually buy you some time.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=8990&\\_wpnonce=dbaff06885](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=8990&_wpnonce=dbaff06885))

Like

I sprayed a black bear at about 3 feet. It made lots of noise and jammed its face in the dirt before taking off running. It ran into the side of my pickup and then into the back of my cabin and then into a 3’ cut bank where it did a

complete somersault on its back. It finally ran off into the woods obviously still not being able to see. I carry it every day out where I can get to it. People get to complacent even if they are experienced in the woods. Having it in the backpack isn't how it is meant to be carried.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=8994&\\_wpnonce=004cd42dad](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=8994&_wpnonce=004cd42dad))

Liked by [1 person \(#\)](#)

i carry it all the time, too; Scott. and i'd say they closer you are to a black bear when it's fired, the better it works. but there's some evidence it doesn't always work, and in this case, i find it hard to fault the women for having the spray in their packs. they were working in an area of relatively low bear densities. the risk of bear attack was low, and you really have to have the spray in your hand in a situation like they encountered if it is to be useful. that's a problem if you're working. maybe if it was in a chest holder or on a waist band, she could have gotten too it sooner, but would that have changed anything is the question? i've talked to enough people who sprayed black bears with little reaction to wonder about the ability to drive an adrenaline-charged bear off what it believes is a kill. <http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/northern-ontario-biologist-dances-with-bear-1.1383190>

(<http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/sudbury/northern-ontario-biologist-dances-with-bear-1.1383190>)

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=8995&\\_wpnonce=35e212037c](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=8995&_wpnonce=35e212037c))

Like

wonder if either of these ladyies where having their menstrual cycle? seem to me there is some evidence/data

that suggests bears react to this scent. it is bear breeding season.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=8996&\\_wpnonce=7475348d46](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=8996&_wpnonce=7475348d46))

Like

Allen: that idea was long ago debunked.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=8997&\\_wpnonce=6342bac7d6](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=8997&_wpnonce=6342bac7d6))

Liked by [2 people](#) (#)

re: Kodiak bears, salmon weirs, and spray. That's the gist of it. If you think back to 1989, you wrote an ADN article based on a memo I sent to Roger Smith (Larry's predecessor). I was the tech working on the weir. I went out to the field with 3 large cans, used 2 of them, and the 3rd was packed without propellant. At the time bear spray was still a new product in Alaska, and it was being doled out by the case to oil spill workers. Funny that almost 30 years later there's still so much myth and mystery about the effectiveness of bear spray.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9022&\\_wpnonce=18b89194e9](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9022&_wpnonce=18b89194e9))

Like

Bruce: glad to see you're still kicking. those observations have always stuck with me. so, too, the data Herrero combed out on the limited effectiveness of bear spray on black bears. i know a physiologist who has a pretty good theory on why that might be. think it's worth a story?

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=9027&\\_wpnonce=4631e1a105](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=9027&_wpnonce=4631e1a105))

Liked by [1 person](#) (#)

Reply

Is Rabies being considered and ruled out? Although rare, it may answer why this is happening?

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=8985&\\_wpnonce=5bbaa497af](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=8985&_wpnonce=5bbaa497af))

Like

i'm sure they'll check for it, but there has NEVER b Reply  
 predatory black bear attack involving a rabid bear, and there have been a good number of attacks in the style of these two.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=8987&\\_wpnonce=38554168a6](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=8987&_wpnonce=38554168a6))

Like

two biologists..... ?

Reply

How about some spell check while reading and thinking, what a tragedy....

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=8979&\\_wpnonce=3a4c3cda58](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=8979&_wpnonce=3a4c3cda58))

Like

sorry, John. craigmedred.news is a one person show Reply  
 one person was in a big hurry because he'd worked 12 hours straight and needed to get to the airport to pig up the woman who keeps a roof over his head because financially this journalistic model has what one might call issues.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=8988&\\_wpnonce=0a3194b47b](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=8988&_wpnonce=0a3194b47b))

Like

I've personally witnessed humans not being affected by Reply  
 control pepper spray for up to ten minutes after being sprayed. So for bears to shrug it off, is not surprising.

★ ([https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like\\_comment=8977&\\_wpnonce=6f449246ae](https://craigmedred.news/2017/06/22/bear-ignored-spray/?like_comment=8977&_wpnonce=6f449246ae))