

## The Bear Necessities

### Travel Smart

**always be "bear aware"**, At trailheads look for posted signs about recent bear activity. Watch ahead for bears or for tracks. Don't surprise bears. Make plenty of noise when traveling. Hiking in groups is safer than hiking alone.

**Dogs can be trouble in bear country.** Their investigations have brought bears back to their owners more than once. It is best to leave your dog at home or keep it on a leash.

**Know the difference between black and brown bears.** Both black bears and brown or grizzly bears live in areas where there are state parks. Use more than the fur color for identification. There are cinnamon black bears and black brown bears.

**Camping** Please help prevent trouble for those who will follow you!

- **Never leave food out when not in use**, store food in your vehicle or a bear-proof locker.
- **Use bear-proof garbage cans** or dumpsters for your garbage.
- **Keep your camp clean and odor free.**

### In the Backcountry:

● **Choose your campsite carefully.** Do not camp near a trail, salmon stream, animal carcass or garbage, or any backcountry metal firepit (others may have left food odors). Do camp in a tent in an open quiet area where you can see and hear nearby wildlife, and where they can see and hear you.

● **Cook at least 100 feet away from camp, downwind.** Do not cook near your camp, cook smelly foods, sleep in clothes with food odors, or bring any food or lotions into your tent; store food, pots, lotions, clothes with food odors, and trash away from camp. If there are trees, cache your food out of a bear's reach (see below). If there are no trees, hang food off of a rock face or a bridge, or store it out of a bear's sight off the trail and downwind of camp.

● **Pack out all trash.** Do not bury garbage - bears have very keen noses and can find buried garbage.

● **Use a tent.** Do not sleep in the open.

**Food Cache** - All you need is 100 feet of light line, a small weight to attach to the end of it (a plastic bag with a rock in it works fine), and food bags that you can tie to the line. You'll never have to climb a tree again!



**1.** Select 2 trees at least 20 feet apart. Throw the weighted end of the rope over a branch about 17 feet above the ground.

**2.** Tie the line to the trunk of the first tree. Throw the weighted end of the line over the branch of the second tree.

**3.** Attach your food bag to the middle of the line, and pull it up and adjust so it is centered, at least 12 feet above the ground.

**4.** Tie the other end of the line to the second tree. To access food, just let it down. To re-cache it, pull it back up.

**Close Encounters** Statistics show the best ways to react to bears when you see them.

**If you see a bear that is far away or doesn't see you...**

turn around and go back, or circle far around. Don't disturb it.

**If you see a bear that is close or it does see you...**

STAY CALM. Attacks are rare. Bears may approach or stand on their hind legs to get a better look at you. These are curious, not aggressive, bears. BE HUMAN. Stand tall, wave your arms, and speak in a loud and low voice. DO NOT RUN! Stand your ground or back away slowly and diagonally. If the bear follows, STOP.

**If a bear is charging...**

almost all charges are "bluff charges". DO NOT RUN! Olympic sprinters cannot outrun a bear, and running may trigger an instinctive reaction to "chase". Do not try to climb a tree unless it is literally right next to you and you can quickly get to at least 30 feet up. STAND YOUR GROUND. Wave your arms and speak in a loud low voice. Many times charging bears have come within a few feet of a person and then veered off at the last second.

**If a bear approaches your campsite...**

aggressively chase it away. Make noise with pots and pans, throw rocks, and if needed, hit the bear. Do not let the bear get any food.

**If you have surprised a bear and are contacted or attacked...**

and making noise or struggling has not discouraged an attack, play dead. Curl up in a ball with your hands laced behind your neck. The fetal position protects your vital organs. Lie still, and be silent. Surprised bears usually stop attacking once you are no longer a threat (i.e. "dead").

**If you have been stalked by a bear, a bear is approaching your campsite,**

or an attack is continuing long after you have ceased struggling, fight back! Predatory bears are often young bears that can be successfully intimidated or chased away. Use a stick or rocks or your hands and feet.

## Protection

Most people who hike in Alaska's wilderness don't carry a weapon. They know that the best defense is common sense. Traveling and camping carefully are all that they need. If you feel the need for additional protection, consider carrying "pepper spray", a bear deterrent made from the juice of red-hot peppers. This incapacitating spray teaches bears a lesson without permanently maiming them. It's available at local sporting goods stores and at visitor centers. Be familiar with the characteristics of the brand you choose and its warnings.

You are allowed to carry a gun for protection in state parks. Remember, though, that more people are hurt by the guns they carry than are hurt by bears. Select a gun that will stop a bear (12-gauge shotgun or .300 mag rifle) and practice firing it at a rifle range. ***Any bear shot in self defense must be salvaged and turned over to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game***



**Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation**

Alaska Department of Natural Resources