



Black Bear Country Safety Guide



Reduce Bear Attractants

Bears thrive best on natural foods, but they will take an easy meal. These items attract bears:

- Human food, dishes, pots, pans
- Garbage
- Toiletries and cosmetics
- Coolers, even when empty
- Pets and pet food
- Recycling (even rinsed containers)
- Barbeques and camp stoves
- Composters
- Gasoline
- Birdseed and peanuts (all bird feeders)



When camping:

Keep yourself and your campsite odour free. Keep sleeping bags, tents and sleeping clothes free of food, all toiletries, food odours and beverages. Store items with strong odours in vehicles, designated food storage lockers or elevated food caches.

Store food, pet food, and garbage away from your tent. Keep these in a bear proof place (vehicle, hard-sided trailers, food lockers, backcountry elevated food caches).

Wash and store all dishes and food utensils immediately after use. Dump strained dish water in appropriate areas (frontcountry: chemical flush toilets or pit toilets; backcountry: pit toilets or far away from your camp and any water source). Dispose of strained solids in garbage.

Pack out garbage. Do not burn or bury it. Store your garbage the same as food.

Dispose of fish parts. Dispose in the deep part of a lake or river, never along stream sides or lake shores.

At The Pine Lake Campground and Day Use Areas

Store garbage/recycling, food, pet food and any items with strong odours in secure bear-proof areas in your vehicle or in food storage lockers (where available).

Make use of available bear-proof garbage and recycling bins.

Thoroughly clean campfire grills and keep a clean site.



If you see a bear while driving:

Slow down and consider not stopping.

Bears need to forage undisturbed in order to gain enough fat to survive the winter. Your decision to pass by gives bears space they need to make a living in this challenging landscape.

At all times...

- Stay in your vehicle.
- Observe and photograph bears from a safe distance. A safe distance is one where your presence does not change the behaviour of the bear.
- Never feed a bear!

If you stop...

- Watch for a few moments, take a quick photo and then move on!

Bear Behaviour



Why bears behave the way they do

Give bears space as they generally prefer to avoid people. A bear's natural avoidance behaviour can shift to aggression because of the following factors:

- You surprise them.
- They are protecting young.
- They are protecting a food source.
- Your dog provokes them.
- The bear has lost its natural fear of humans.
- The bear feels trapped.

Bears might appear to be slow moving or unconcerned with your presence but they can be unpredictable and potentially dangerous. Be aware of your surroundings. Take responsibility for your safety and actions. Black bears can run at speeds up to 50 km/hr.

Contact Information

Wood Buffalo National Park Visitor Centre
1-867-872-7960
wbnp.info@pc.gc.ca
parkscanada.gc.ca/woodbuffalo

For wildlife conflicts and in case of emergency:
1-867-872-0404

Avoiding a Bear Encounter

Never approach bears.
Give wildlife space.



Travel as part of a group if possible and keep children close by.

Make noise! Let bears know you're there. Call out, clap hands, sing or talk loudly – especially near streams, dense vegetation and berry patches or on windy days and in areas of low visibility. Research shows bear bells are not enough.

Watch for bear signs. If you see fresh tracks, droppings, digging, or torn up logs, leave the area.

Keep your dog on leash at all times. Dogs can provoke defensive behaviour in bears and other wildlife.



If you come across any dead animals, leave the area immediately and report it to park staff.

Please obey area closures, they are for the safety of everyone.



Cyclists and Trail Runners

Your speed and quietness put you at risk for sudden encounters with bears. Make noise and stay alert.

Handling a Bear Encounter

STAY CALM

Don't alarm the bear with loud noises or sudden movement. Remain still and stand your ground while you assess the situation. Bears may show stress by 'woofing', growling, and snapping their jaws. Bears may bluff charge. It's difficult, but important to remain calm if a bear reacts to you this way.

SPEAK TO THE BEAR

Let the bear hear your voice. Talk calmly and firmly. This lets the bear know you are human, and not a prey animal. If a bear rears on its hind legs and waves its nose about, it is trying to identify you.

BACK AWAY SLOWLY, NEVER RUN

If a bear charges, stand your ground as it may be a bluff charge. You can't outrun a bear.

MAKE YOURSELF LARGE

Pick up small children and stay in a group.

DON'T DROP YOUR BACKPACK

It can provide protection in the event of an attack.

LEAVE THE AREA OR TAKE A DETOUR

If this is possible, wait until the bear moves away. Always leave the bear an escape route.

USE YOUR BEAR SPRAY AS A LAST RESORT

If you think the bear is going to attack and is coming very close to you, use your bear spray. The bear has to be in close range (approximately 10 m) for your spray to be effective. Use only if the bear acts aggressively.



Handling a Black Bear Attack

Black bear attacks are extremely rare. A black bear may attack if it:

- Feels threatened – if it perceives you to be a threat to it, its cubs or if it is defending food. This is a **defensive bear** that wants more space between you and it. Defensive bear warning signals include;
 - excessive salivating, exhaling loudly, huffing, moaning, clacking and popping sounds with its mouth, teeth and jaws,
 - lowering head and drawing ears back while facing you and
 - charging forward and/or swatting the ground with its paws (bluff charge).
- Is a **predatory bear** – this is a bear who may stalk you and see you as a potential food source, attack you in the night or in your tent.

If the bear attacks:

- **Fight back** with everything you have – in a predatory attack, your life is at risk. Use whatever tools are at hand (branch, rock, camping gear). Let the bear know you are not easy prey.
- **Try to escape into a building or a car.**
- **Do not play dead** except in the rare instance when you are sure a mother bear is attacking you in defense of cubs and your initial attempts to deter the bear have been unsuccessful.

*Please note there are only black bears living in the park. There are different recommendations for areas with grizzly bears.

Research shows that bear spray can be an effective tool in deterring a black bear attack. Know how to use it and keep it handy.

