

Outdoor Recreation in *Bear Country*

It's important to know some basic facts about bears if you enjoy outdoor activities in bear country. Take steps to ensure that you, your family and companions are "bear smart" when hiking, fishing, camping, cycling, canoeing and OHV or horseback riding.

The Alberta BearSmart program aims to prevent human-bear conflicts. By following BearSmart tips, you will help to ensure not only your own safety, but also the future of Alberta's bear populations. Careless human activities can easily result in the death of a bear. Bears contribute to the ecological balance as an important part of our province's natural environment.



Why be *BearSmart*

Although serious conflicts are rare, encounters between people and bears have been increasing in Alberta. Since 2000, there have been more than 30 serious conflicts involving black and grizzly bears, with three human fatalities. An average of about 2,350 bear-related occurrences are reported each year. Encounters, property damage and possible injuries can

be prevented. **What you do...really matters.**

Contrary to common belief, **there is no such thing as a "good" human-bear encounter.** All encounters may result in bear behaviour that is dangerous to them and to people. The only way to make Alberta safer for people and bears is to prevent these encounters. Relocating "problem bears" is not always the answer, because relocation lowers the bear's chances for survival.

By taking actions as simple as staying in a group, making noise, and managing your garbage correctly, you can be part of the Alberta BearSmart solution. As someone who enjoys outdoor recreation in bear country, you have an important role in preventing and reducing human-bear encounters.

For More Information

Alberta BearSmart guides focus on:

- residents in bear country
- outdoor recreation
- hunting
- farming and ranching
- industrial worksites in bear country

For more information, visit Alberta Sustainable Resource Development's website at www.bearsmart.alberta.ca

If the presence of a bear is a public safety concern, promptly call the nearest Fish and Wildlife or Parks and Protected Areas office (310-0000 toll-free), or the 24-hour Report A Poacher line at 1-800-642-3800.

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Alberta



BearSmart

Bears and Outdoor Recreation





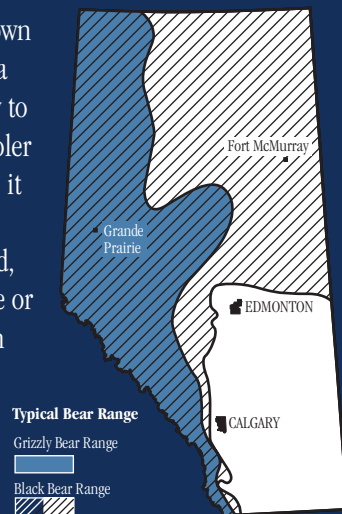
Be Scents-ible about Bears!

Bears live to eat, consuming up to 25,000 calories a day (10 times more than the average person). While they prefer natural vegetation, they will eat almost anything from juice boxes and pop cans to fish parts and cosmetics. They will do almost anything to obtain food. That's why it's so important to eliminate access to food and other attractants when you picnic, camp, fish or enjoy other outdoor activities.

Bears have a keen sense of smell and are driven to investigate. They are attracted by scents as diverse as toothpaste and insect repellent.

Bears have been known to repeat actions. If a bear figures out how to open your picnic cooler or food storage area, it may try again. Carelessly stored food, an unclean campsite or table scraps are open invitations to bears.

In recent years, some bears have been spotted outside of typical range.



What You Do Really Matters!

Improve your safety and enjoyment of the outdoors in bear country by doing the following:

- Cook, eat and dispose of food and dishwater properly. Do not cook or eat in or near your tent. Dispose of garbage and fish remains in proper garbage containers.
- Store food properly. If you are camping away from facilities, the best solution is to hang supplies between two trees with a rope, 3-4 metres off the ground. Cook and store food at least 100 metres away from your camp.
 - Pick your campsite with care. Stay away from dense bushes or trees, lakeshores, stream-banks and animal trails, and natural food sources such as berry bushes. At night, move around with caution and always use a flashlight.
 - When on the move, be constantly aware of the need to avoid bears and to alert bears of your presence. Make noise before venturing around blind corners and dense shrubs, when going into the wind or along streams and rivers.
 - Don't leave children alone. Keep them close to the group, as they are small, make erratic movements and can be particularly at risk.
- When mountain biking, remember that the mountain bike is quick and quiet. Ride with friends and make as much noise as you can.
- Always carry bear spray. Know how to use it and keep it handy. Having noisemakers such as bear bangers or an air horn is also a good idea.

DID YOU KNOW?

Watching or photographing bears at short ranges (under 200 m) is harmful to bears and people. It encourages bears to become conditioned or "habituated" to people.



Checklist

In Campgrounds

- Store your food and toilet articles (toothpaste, soap, deodorant, etc.) safely. Never take these items into your tent or tent trailer.
- Don't burn or bury scrap food. Seal garbage in plastic bags for disposal in bear-resistant bins, or pack it out.
- Always keep pets on a leash.

Day Trips

- Watch for signs of recent bear activity (tracks, scat, rolled logs and rocks, torn stumps, claw-marked trees, diggings, anthills torn open). If you see these signs, leave the area and return to your vehicle/campsite.
- A loud shout every few minutes is more effective than wearing bear bells.
- Pack out all of your garbage in sealed bags.

Overnight Trips

- Before you depart, leave information about your destination and estimated return time.
- Use dried foods and a portable camp stove.
- Be sure bear spray is accessible at all times, particularly when you are sleeping.
- Ensure that the cooking area is well separated from your sleeping area. Avoid sleeping in the clothes you wore while cooking.

Fishing

- Clean fish at fish-cleaning stands or well away from camp.
- Seal the fish in plastic bags and wash your hands.

When to be BearSmart

Make your presence known to bears as you go about your outdoor activities. Make noise to avoid startling a bear. Be aware your behaviour can have an impact.

Seasons/Weather: The prime time for bear activity is from May until October. Black and grizzly bears look for different types of food according to the season. Avoid clover patches in early summer. Avoid berry patches in summer and fall. Be cautious when traveling in noisy conditions, such as storms, high winds and rain, or near lakes and watercourses, because you may startle a bear that did not hear you approaching.

Time of Day: Although bear encounters can occur at any time, bears are most active from dusk until the early morning. Be sure to make enough noise for a bear to hear you coming, so it has a chance to move away.