

Biking and Running In Bear Country



Keeping Humans and Bears Safe

You are a visitor in bear country.

Know the Risk

Fast-paced recreation increases your risk of encountering and startling a bear due to your speed and lack of warning noise. Hikers, bikers and runners have been seriously injured by bears. Surprised bears are more likely to be defensive. Increased speed reduces both your ability to see around you and your reaction time.



Prepare

Carry bear spray and know how to use it. Keep it on your person where you can reach it, not on your bike or in your pack. Practice using bear spray before you need it. Practice grabbing the can and disengaging the safety. Follow the manufacturer's recommendations on use. Practicing using bear spray will help you be mentally prepared in an encounter with a bear.

Pay Attention

- Be alert for things like fresh bear tracks or scat, ripe berry patches, and animal carcasses.
- Avoid riding and running in early morning or late evening when bears are most active, and light is limited.
- Don't listen to music, podcasts, or other recordings.
- Use your ears to listen for animal movement and vocalizations. These can be key warnings to help you actively avoid encounters.

It is easier to prevent an encounter than it is to deal with one once it occurs.



Lincoln County Health Department, Libby MT

Slow Down



Slow down in areas with a poor line of sight, in dense brush, and near creeks.

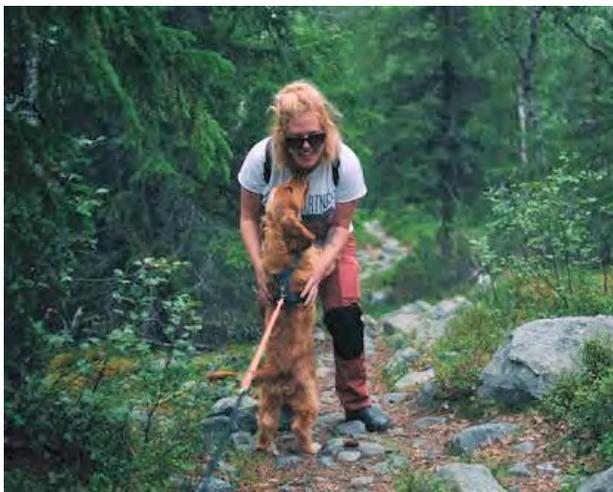
Remember that ambient noise like running water and wind can make it difficult for you to hear animals and for them to hear you.

Make Noise

Alerting animals to your presence before you are close allows them to retreat and avoid an encounter with you entirely. Hit the trail with friends and be “naturally noisy.” People in groups tend to talk and laugh. Keep your group together. If your group falls silent or if you are alone, make regular noises by shouting out, clapping your hands, or using a loud noisemaker. Remember that bears are often engaged in foraging activities and are not always paying close attention to their surroundings.

Dogs and Bears

Dogs can complicate or create bear encounters. Dogs off-leash often range ahead or off the trail well beyond their human companions. Sometimes dogs that find a bear turn and run back to their humans, bringing the bear with them. Barking, even while on-leash, can agitate a bear and make it feel defensive. Consider leaving your dog at home when recreating in bear country or always keep it on a leash or under full control near you.



Food Storage

Food storage orders are in effect on many public lands. Contact local public land management agency offices for details on how attractants must be stored. Don't leave food, or anything with an odor, unattended. Plan to pack out what you packed in.

How to Handle an Encounter

Your response to encountering a bear should be based on its behaviors, not just on what species it is. Do not run, this can trigger a chase response. If you have a bike, keep your bike between you and the bear. Have your bear spray available and ready. Talk calmly and quietly to help the bear identify you as human. Slowly back away. If charged, stand your ground and use your bear spray. When the bear stops advancing, continue slowly backing away. If the bear makes physical contact, protect your head and neck, play dead, use your bear spray.

***You are a visitor in bear country.
Be smart. Be safe.
Share the trail.***

For more information about bear activity, trail conditions, food storage regulations, and access, contact your local Forest Service, State, or National Park Offices.

Contact Us

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