

## Camping, Hiking & Hunting in Bear Country Preventing Conflicts & Avoiding Confrontations

If you spot a bear before it sees you when hiking or hunting, walk quickly and quietly away. If the bear sees you but seems disinterested, do the same. If the bear becomes interested and begins to approach, observe the bear's head and body movements. Back up slowly, avoid eye contact, and speak in a soft monotone. If the bear stands upright, it is trying to get a better look and smell. Standing upright is not necessarily an aggressive display. Never get between a female bear and her cubs; mother bears are extremely protective of their young.

If the bear charges, stand your ground and avoid direct eye contact. Bears often bluff charge by running with their head and ears up and with a stiff legged gait. Aggressive bears will run with their head down and ears back.

Playing dead should only be done if you are sure you are going to be touched by the bear. In this instance, drop to the ground and lie flat on your belly, interlocking your fingers to cover your neck and head. Be sure to stay in this position until you are sure the bear is gone. If you are wearing a pack, leave it on. Should you find yourself being charged by what appears to be an aggressive bear your options are limited. Running from a bear is never an option!

When hiking, avoid bear encounters by using caution. Make noise as you travel and approach areas upwind to increase the opportunity for bears to hear and smell you ahead of time. Learn to recognize areas of heavy bear use based upon tracks, scats and diggings. If you see or smell a carcass, avoid it. Flocks of magpies, ravens or jays often indicate a carcass is nearby.

Use pepper spray only as a deterrent and as a last resort to avoiding a physical encounter. Spraying an area or personal property with pepper spray to repel bears is not recommended. Consumers should be sure to purchase pepper spray that has "Bear Deterrent" on the label and is EPA approved with an EPA registration number.

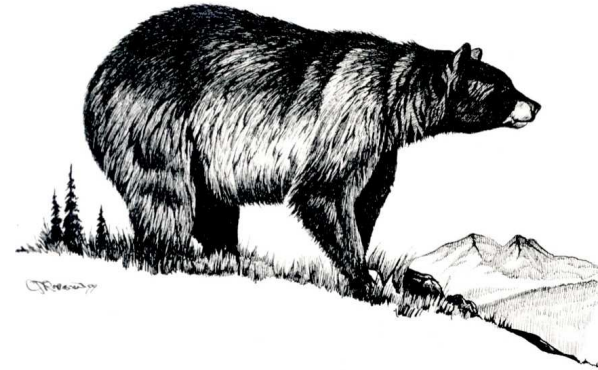
Climbing a tree may be an effective option if you can get at least 20 feet up the tree before the bear reaches the tree. Be extremely cautious of dead or broken branches. Black bears are good tree climbers.

Using a bear deterrent such as bear pepper spray may be the most effective option if certain conditions are in your favor. The spray must be worn on your body in a place where it is immediately accessible, it must be sprayed directly into the bear's face, and the wind must be to your back. Once the bear's attention is directed away from you, immediately leave the area. Firearms have been used effectively in aggressive encounters, but are only recommended if no other options exist. Wounding a bear may increase the seriousness of the situation.

Take The Bear Test:

<http://gf.state.wy.us/services/university/educationexam/bear/>

<http://gf.state.wy.us/services/university/educationexam/huntereducationtest/index.aspx?mem=1>

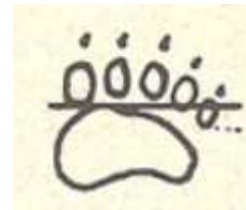


### Bears in Wyoming -

**Bear Identification –** There are no Grizzly Bears on the Bighorns. Black bears have no shoulder hump, although they may appear to when digging. They have a straight face in profile that is not dished like the grizzly. Their claws are relatively short (1 ½ inches at most) and are sharply curved for climbing trees or tearing logs apart. The black bear's ears tend to be more erect, more pointed, and larger in proportion to the head. Color phases that are typical in Wyoming black bears are brown, cinnamon, and black. It is a generally accepted fact that black bears are very good tree climbers and will often take that route when alarmed. Climbing a tree is not a good option in a black bear confrontation.

### Bear Sign –

Learn to recognize bear tracks and scat. Bear scats vary in color and size, and should not be used to identify black bears from grizzly bears. Instead, they should be recognized as bear scats and examined to determine what the bear has been eating. Then try to avoid areas where bears may be feeding.



**Black Bear Front**



**Black Bear Rear**

## BE "BEAR AWARE" IN THE BIGHORNS

### **Bears Don't Like Surprises –**

If you are going to travel in bear country, always be "Bear Aware". Encounters often occur when bears are surprised. In response to this surprise, a bear may bluff charge. This behavior allows the bear to determine the seriousness of a threat. If it feels the need to eliminate the threat, it will charge. Most bear confrontations can be avoided if you let the bear know you are there.

When not hunting, tie bells on your pack or on your shoes and make noise, especially when traveling where visibility and hearing are limited. If you use pack stock, tie bells on them. Horse back riders appear to have fewer problems than people traveling on foot.

Watch for bears in pine tree stands near the timberline in late fall. Be careful about hunting or traveling in dense "dark" timber, including willow patches, where bears often make their day beds. Bears disturbed in their day bed may charge you in confusion.

### **In Camp:**

-- Keep a clean camp. Some Forests in Wyoming have mandatory food storage orders specifying that all foods must be kept unavailable to bears. It is best to always store food and garbage in bear resistant containers, or a hard-sided vehicle. If you don't have a bear resistant food storage container, hang all food, garbage, and other attractants, such as horse or dog food, in a bag, pack, or pannier at least 10 feet above the ground and 4 feet out from the tree trunk or support. Deposit garbage in a bear proof container when one is available or, better yet, pack it out when you leave. Attractants are: Food, beverages, unclean dishes and cooking pans, game meat, carcass parts, processed livestock food, pet food, garbage, toothpaste, etc.

-- Sleep a good distance from your cooking area and food storage site. Keep sleeping bags and personal gear clean and free of food odors. Don't sleep with the clothes you wore while cooking, or take snacks in the tent. Camping or sleeping areas should be established at least ½ mile from a known animal carcass or at least 100 yards from an acceptably stored animal carcass.

-- Don't use perfumes or deodorants. Women are often warned that they should not travel in grizzly country during their menstrual period. There is no evidence that grizzlies are overly attracted to menstrual odors more than any other odor. Proper personal hygiene, such as the use of unscented cleaning towelettes and tampons instead of pads, is recommended.

### **While Hunting:**

Hunters in Wyoming should be alert to the fact that they are hunting in bear country, and in some instances, grizzly bear country.

- Hunt with a partner.
- Carry bear pepper spray, especially in grizzly country. (Western Wyo.)
- Watch for sign (tracks, scat, digging, broken branches of fruit shrubs).
- Watch for bear foods (white-bark pine cone piles, entrails, berry patches).
- Avoid "dark" timber during mid-day when bears may be day-bedded.
- Have a predetermined plan of action for retrieving harvested game.
- Take extra precautions during field dressing. Keep pepper spray unholstered and readily available. Spatially separate the entrails from the carcass.
- Avoid hunting in areas where fresh bear sign is repeatedly observed.
- Avoid gut piles, recently disturbed squirrel middens, heavily tracked areas.
- Game meat that is properly stored should be at least 100 yards from a sleeping area or recreation site, and 200 yards from a trail, hung at least 10 feet off the ground and 4 feet from the trunk or vertical support.
- Game meat left on the ground should be at least one-half mile from any sleeping area or recreation site, and 200 yards from a trail, and in a position that it can be seen from a distance.
- Leave an article of clothing or bell in the tree, something that leaves an unnatural feel to the area.
- Approach carcasses left overnight cautiously, make lots of noise.

Remember, when bears scavenge large animals, they often cover what they can't eat with brush or dirt and may stay close by to defend the carcass for several days.

### **Avoiding or Minimizing Bear Encounters:**

- Bear observed at a distance: no threat, note location, direction of travel, back away slowly and leave the area.
- Bluff charge: avoid the area for a good period of time.
- Mauling or dead bear: leave the scene undisturbed, write down details if possible, contact Game & Fish or U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service immediately.
- Bear in camp: allow bear to leave camp if you are on the outside looking in.
- Bear in camp: use bear pepper spray if bear is overtly aggressive.
- Bear has claimed carcass: leave the scene, report to Game & Fish.