



**Waterton Lakes
National Park**
parksCanada.gc.ca

Keep the wild in **Wildlife**



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How to safely
enjoy and help
protect wildlife



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National parks help protect uniquely Canadian landscapes and the ecosystems that animals depend on for their survival. When our actions reduce an animal's wildness, the natural character of our national parks diminishes.

Whether you plan to drive the roads, hike the trails, or relax in town, take time to learn the important precautions wild areas demand. Your responsible behaviour contributes to the survival of wildlife—and your own safety!

Kindness Kills Wildness

Feeding or approaching animals too closely causes them to lose their natural fear of people. Once habituated, animals are likely to become increasingly aggressive. Feeding may also:

- Attract animals to roadside areas where they can be injured or killed by vehicles.
- Lead to eating garbage. Animals eat almost anything which has the smell of food.
- Affect your health. No one can predict when threats to human health due to direct contact with wildlife can occur. Known hazards include rabies and tick-related diseases.



It is illegal to feed, entice, or disturb any wildlife in a national park.

How Close is Too Close?

We recommend you keep at least three bus lengths (30 metres/100 ft) away from large animals and about three times that distance (100 metres/325 ft) away from bears. Here are some more tips for wildlife watchers and photographers:

- Don't entice wildlife by feeding, reaching out or simulating calls (eg. elk bugling).
- Keep the animal's line of travel or escape route clear. If it approaches you, move away.
- Retreat immediately if you notice signs of aggression or any behaviour change.
- Avoid direct eye contact. This makes animals feel threatened.
- Leave nesting birds, denning animals and newborn or young animals alone.



Getting the Perfect Shot

People searching for good photo opportunities have a special responsibility to wildlife and fellow visitors. Here's how you can help:

- Photograph wildlife from a vehicle or observation area. Don't surround, crowd or follow an animal. If you don't have a telephoto lens, show the animal in its natural surroundings, or crop and enlarge the image later.
- Don't make sounds to startle or move animals to gain a better shot.
- Never put people (especially children) at risk by posing them with wildlife.

Kids and Wildlife

Your children are the same size as some predators' prey. For their safety:

- Keep children in immediate sight and within close reach at all times.
- Children should avoid playing in or near areas with dense cover.
- Never encourage children to pet, feed or pose with wildlife.
- When fed or teased, even small animals can become very aggressive and may bite.



When you go into the woods today...

To stay safe and protect wilderness, travel with two goals in mind: limiting your impact by avoiding encounters and managing your food, food smells and garbage.

- Make noise. "Bear bells" are not loud enough—clap, call out or sing instead. Cyclists, who travel quickly and quietly along trails, are most at risk of surprising wildlife.
- Be particularly alert in dense forest or thick vegetation, near running water and when travelling into the wind. Bears or cougars may not be able to hear or smell you.
- Travel in groups of three or more and keep children within reach.
- Watch for sign. If you see fresh tracks, diggings, droppings, or come across a dead animal—leave the area. Don't linger in feeding areas such as berry patches.
- Keep pets on a leash. Your pet may come running back to you with a bear, cougar or coyote in pursuit.
- Camp in designated areas only.



Visitor centre staff can provide information on current sightings, warnings, closures and safety tips. Wilderness Passes are required for all overnight trips and can be purchased there.

The chance of seeing wildlife in the wild is one of the most exciting things about the mountain national parks. However, it is important to treat wild animals with the respect they deserve.

Approaching them too closely threatens their survival. Once animals become accustomed to being around people, they are in danger of losing that very thing that makes them special — their wildness.

Day to Day Living... with Wildlife in Mind

Whether you're in towns, campgrounds, or picnic areas, animals can travel through at any time.

- Store all food, food-related items and pet food inside a closed, hard-sided vehicle or special bear-resistant container. Ice chests, coolers, boxes, cans, tents and soft-sided campers are not bear-resistant!
- Wild animals are attracted to a range of smells that include cosmetics, toiletries, wash basins, cooking stoves, and empty pet food bowls.
- Leave smelly cosmetics at home. Store toiletries and personal items with food.
- Dispose of wastewater in the proper facilities.
- Keep your pets on a leash at all times. They look like prey and can lead predators to you.
- Removing branches from trees or the ground destroys habitat and cover for birds and small animals.
- Deposit all garbage in wildlife-proof trash containers.



Along the Road...

Hundreds of large mammals are killed on roadways in the mountain national parks. These accidents often result in injuries to the driver and/or passengers. Roadways attract wildlife because they provide easy travel and roadside forage. To prevent collisions with wildlife:

- Be alert. Use quick glances to scan ahead for animal movement or shining eyes.
- If you spot one animal, look for others. Animals often travel in groups.
- Improve visibility. Keep your windshield and headlights clean.
- Stay within posted speed limits. Slow down at corners and dense vegetation.
- Be extra cautious at sunrise and sunset. Animals are most active at these times of day.



Be Alert!

An animal can run in front of you in an instant.



Animal Jams

If you come across a traffic jam caused by roadside wildlife:

- Slow down. You have more reaction time when you travel slowly.
- Be aware of traffic, both in front of and behind you.
- Watch the road. Both wildlife and people, particularly children, may suddenly run onto the road.
- Keep moving. Accept that in heavy traffic situations, your passengers may get a quick look, but you may not.
- Pull over onto the road shoulder only if it is safe to do so. Never stop in the middle of the road, close to a hill, curve, or tunnel, or in heavy traffic.
- Remain in your vehicle, safe from both wildlife and traffic. Then move on after a few moments.



Slow Down —
consider not stopping.

Safe Travel in Bear Country



The Canadian Rocky Mountains are home to both grizzly and black bears. You can run into a bear anywhere here, be it on a busy trail close to town or in the remote back-country. Bears generally prefer to avoid people. However, encounters between bears and people do occur.

Knowing how to avoid an encounter with a bear is the best way to safely enjoy the parks. In the event you do come across a bear, it is important to know a bit about bear behaviour. How we respond in an encounter with a bear really depends on the type of interaction that is taking place.

AVOID AN ENCOUNTER

Bears are extremely sensitive to the stress of human activity. You can help protect these animals by avoiding encounters with them.

Make noise!

Let bears know you are there. "Bear bells" are not loud enough. Call out, clap hands, sing or talk loudly—especially near streams, dense vegetation and berry patches, on windy days, and in areas of low visibility.

Watch for fresh bear sign.

Tracks, droppings, diggings, torn-up logs, and turned-over rocks are all signs that a bear has been in the area. Leave the area if the signs are fresh.

Keep your dog on a leash at all times or leave it at home.

Dogs can provoke defensive behaviour in bears.

Larger groups are less likely to have a serious bear encounter.

We recommend hiking in groups of three or more. Keep children within reach.

Use officially marked paths and trails and travel during daylight hours.

If you come across a large dead animal, leave the area immediately and report it to park staff.

Dispose of all fish offal in fast moving streams or the deep part of a lake, never along stream sides or lakeshores.

IF YOU SEE A BEAR

Stop and remain calm. Get ready to use your bear spray. Don't run away. **OBSERVE:**

Is the bear **UNAWARE** of your presence?

Move away quietly without getting its attention.

Is the bear **AWARE** of your presence?

Bears may bluff their way out of an encounter by charging and then turning away at the last second. Bears may also react defensively by woofing, growling, snapping their jaws and laying their ears back.

Stay calm.

Your calm behaviour can reassure the bear. Screams or sudden movements may trigger an attack.

Speak to the bear.

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! Running may trigger a pursuit.

Make yourself appear **BIG**.

Pick up small children and stay in a group.

Do not drop your pack.

It can provide protection.

If you must proceed, make a wide detour around a bear or wait at a safe distance for it to move on.

This is also Cougar Country

Cougars are not often seen because they are solitary, elusive and active mainly at night. They may be more active in areas that have habituated deer, like towns and campgrounds.

Avoid meeting a cougar by travelling in groups and making lots of noise.

Keep children close to you. Free-roaming pets may attract and be attacked by cougars.

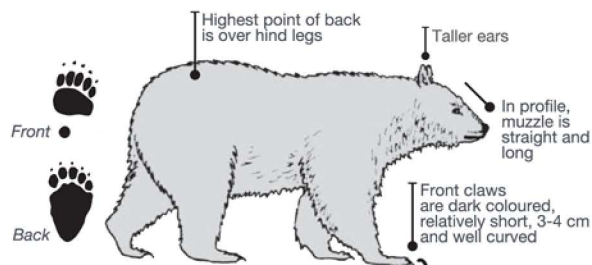
If you encounter a cougar:

- Immediately pick up small children.
- Face the animal, and retreat slowly—do NOT run or play dead.
- Try to appear bigger by holding your arms or an object above your head.
- Actions such as shouting, waving a stick and throwing rocks may deter an attack. Be aggressive.

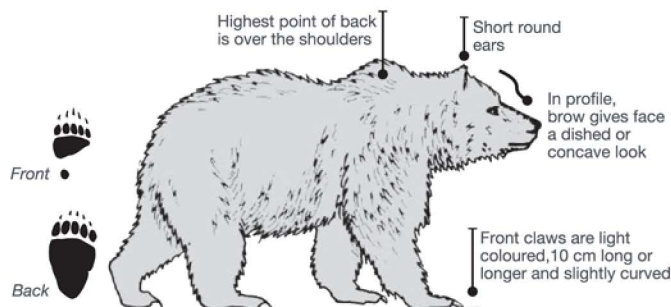


Parks Canada, Waneeta Fisher

BLACK



GRIZZLY



Bear graphics used with permission from Environment Yukon

IF THE BEAR APPROACHES

Stop and remain calm. Get ready to use your bear spray. Do not run away. Assess the bear's behaviour and determine why it is approaching.

Is it DEFENSIVE?

The bear is feeding, protecting its young and/or surprised by your presence. It sees you as a threat. The bear will appear stressed or agitated and may vocalize.

Try to appear non-threatening.

Talk in a calm voice.

When the bear stops advancing, start slowly moving away.

If it keeps coming closer, stand your ground, keep talking, and use your bear spray.

If the bear makes contact, fall on the ground and play dead. Lie still and wait for the bear to leave.

Is it NON-DEFENSIVE?

A bear may be curious, after your food, or testing its dominance. In the rarest case, it might be predatory—seeing you as potential prey. All of these non-defensive behaviours can appear similar, and should not be confused with defensive behaviours.

The bear will be intent on you with head and ears up.

Talk in a firm voice.

Move out of the bear's path.

If it follows you, stop and stand your ground.

Shout and act aggressively.

Try to intimidate the bear.

If it approaches closely, use your bear spray.

Cyclists and Trail Runners!

Your speed and quietness put you at risk for sudden bear encounters.

- Slow down through shrubby areas and when approaching blind corners.
- Make noise, travel in groups, be alert and always watch ahead.
- Report bear encounters to Parks Canada staff.

HANDLING AN ATTACK

Most encounters with bears end without injury. If a bear actually makes contact, you may increase your chances of survival by following these guidelines. In general, there are two kinds of attack:

DEFENSIVE

This is the most common type of attack.

Use your bear spray.

If the bear makes contact with you:

PLAY DEAD! Lie on your stomach with legs apart and position your arms so that your hands are crossed behind your neck. This position makes you less vulnerable to being flipped over and protects your face, the back of your head and neck. Remain still until you are sure the bear has left the area.

These defensive attacks are generally less than two minutes in duration. If the attack continues, it may mean the attack has shifted from defensive to predatory—**FIGHT BACK!**

PREDATORY

The bear is stalking (hunting) you along a trail and then attacks. Or, the bear attacks you at night. This type of attack is very **RARE**.

Try to escape into a building or car.

If you cannot escape, do not play dead.

Use your bear spray and **FIGHT BACK!**

FIGHT BACK! Intimidate that bear: shout; hit it with a branch or rock, do whatever it takes to let the bear know you are not easy prey. This kind of attack is very rare, but it is serious because it usually means the bear is looking for food and preying on you.

Bottom line? It is very difficult to predict the best strategy to use in the event of a bear attack. That is why it is so important to put thought and energy into avoiding an encounter in the first place.

Bear Spray

Carry bear spray with you at all times on the trail, and know how to use it.

Research indicates that bear spray can be effective with some bears when used properly. Familiarize yourself with the proper use of bear spray and keep it readily accessible.



Beware the Brown-Eyed Beggar!

Who could resist those liquid brown eyes?
Those expressive ears? And she's obviously so hungry!

Don't be fooled. When deer become accustomed to human food and touch, they lose their natural fear and this causes problems for both them and us. Deer that are fed by people learn to aggressively beg for food, then they teach their offspring.



Moochers and Munchers

Placidly munching grasses or mooching for snacks, deer and bighorn sheep appear tame. In fact, they startle easily and may suddenly strike out with their hooves, antlers or horns. As they get used to people, they become aggressive. They may persistently beg for or boldly take food and food-related items.

- If they approach, move away to maintain a safe distance.
- You contribute to the problem by enticing them, by allowing them to take food, or by posing with them. This will increase risk to others—particularly children.
- Dogs, both large and small, have been trampled and killed by deer protecting their fawns during the spring. When walking dogs, keep them closely leashed and steer well clear of all deer. They may attack, even when unprovoked.



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Give Them the Space They Need

Please do your part to limit the impact that so many people have on park wildlife. Give all the animals you see the respect they deserve and the space they need. Enjoy a safe visit and ensure that future generations have the chance to see wildlife that is truly wild.

For more information:

- www.pc.gc.ca/mtn-bears
- Talk to Parks Canada Visitor Centre staff
- Check out the selection of books on bears and other wildlife at the Waterton Natural History Association