

THE BARE FACTS ON BEAR ENCOUNTERS



Following the bear-safety order and other safety tips in this handout will help lower your chances of enticing a bear into your campsite. But, if you encounter a bear:

- Remain calm - black bears rarely attack humans. Back away slowly and leave if you haven't been spotted - do not run.
- Never approach a bear of any size - that includes cubs - their protective and powerful mothers are usually not far away.
- If a bear visits your campsite, try to scare it away by making noise. If this doesn't work, leave immediately.
- Don't be alarmed if a bear stands on its hind legs. This is not necessarily aggressive behavior - bears will often stand up to get a better look at you or to smell you.
- If a black bear charges, don't run. It's better to stand your ground. Black bears often "mock charge" by running towards you but stopping short. (This advice is hard to follow in the heat of the moment - if you feel like you must move, back away slowly facing the bear as it charges.)
- In the worst-case scenario that a black bear should attack, try to distract it by dropping a backpack or item of clothing. If that doesn't work, fight back vigorously.

WHAT IS A BEAR-RESISTANT CONTAINER?

Bear-resistant containers should be constructed of solid, non-pliable material that - when secured or under stress - will not have any cracks, openings or hinges that would allow a bear to gain access by biting or clawing (a cooler is NOT bear resistant).

Bear-resistant containers may be purchased at selected retail outlets in Southwest Colorado. For information on which containers are considered bear resistant or where to buy them, please contact the agencies listed below.

For information on bear-safe camping on public lands in Southwest Colorado:



San Juan Public Lands Center
15 Burnett Court
Durango, CO 81301
970 247-4874
www.fs.fed.us/r2/sanjuan

For information on black bears or other wildlife of Southwest Colorado:

Colorado Division of Wildlife
151 East 16th St.
Durango, CO 81031
970 247-0855
www.wildlife.state.co.us



DON'T INVITE A BEAR TO DINNER



Bear Safety Regulations on the San Juan National Forest



STORE FOOD SAFELY - IT'S THE LAW!

When you're camping in one of the below campgrounds or recreation areas on the San Juan National Forest, you must store food that is not in the process of being cooked, eaten or transported in either an approved bear-resistant container or in a bear-resistant manner. The same applies for food containers and packaging, cooking utensils, garbage, and items such as pet food and bird feeders (both hummingbird and birdseed feeders).

APPROVED METHODS OF STORAGE

- inside a hard-sided vehicle or camper;
- hung at least 10 feet above the ground and 4 feet out from a tree or other support;
- inside an approved bear-resistant container (see back side for more information);
- within an electrified enclosure.

AFFECTED RECREATION SITES

Vallecito/Lemon: Vallecito, Middle Mountain, Transfer Park, Florida, Miller Creek, Pine River;
Durango/Silverton: Haviland Lake, Chris Park, Junction Creek, Sig Creek, So. Mineral Creek;
La Plata Canyon: Kroeger and Snowslide, and all dispersed campsites;
Pagosa Springs: Bridge, Cimarron, Lower Piedra, East Fork, Teal, Ute, West Fork, Williams Creek, Wolf Creek.

This regulation is enforced annually from April 15 - Nov. 15. It is designed to protect human life, decrease property damage and prevent the needless destruction of bears. (Violations are punishable by fines up to \$5,000 for an individual or \$10,000 for an organization, and/or six months in jail.



Black bears eat mostly flowering plants, berries, nuts and forbs, but as omnivores, they also eat insects, carrion - and

human food and trash, if available.

Up to 80% of all reported encounters between bears and humans can be attributed to a food source. Bears have a keen sense of smell and

are taught through your behavior to associate humans with food. This usually means damage to your belongings and a possible death warrant for the bear.

When a black bear poses a threat to people, livestock or property, it is moved only once. A second report and capture means it must be destroyed.

THE BEARS ARE NOT TO BLAME

BACKCOUNTRY SAFETY

Although the bear-safety regulations are not enforced in the backcountry outside of developed recreation areas, it's highly recommended that you follow the same bear-safety advice:

- Suspend food, garbage, clothes worn while cooking or eating, and toiletries from a tree at least 10' off the ground and 4' away from the trunk in an area well away from your sleeping area.
- Be clean - burn grease off grills and campstoves, practice good personal hygiene.
- Pack out trash - burying or burning it will only attract bears into the next visitor's campsite.
- If a black bear pays a visit, try to scare it away by making noise. If this doesn't work, leave. Never try to retrieve food from a bear or try to entice a bear with food.

• Hike in groups, and keep children, pets and livestock close to you. Avoid hiking at dawn or dusk when black bears are most active. Stay away from animal carcasses or trash.

- Be alert in areas where hearing and visibility are limited. In windy conditions, sing, talk or wear bells so wildlife will know you're coming.

