

San Bernardino National Forest

Be Bear Aware

Black Bear Safety Techniques

The North American Black Bear is the only species of bear found on the San Bernardino National Forest. They can be brown, blonde, or gray, as well as black. Seeing a wild black bear is an exciting and memorable experience. When visiting, recreating or living in or near black bear country, it is always important to be aware that you may *encounter a bear at any time*. Most conflicts between people and black bears are the result of *people approaching and feeding bears, or allowing a bear to obtain garbage and pet/livestock feeds*. Learning the appropriate **Black Bear Safety Techniques** will minimize the possibility of an encounter.

You are responsible for your safety and the safety of the bears. Please help keep our black bears wild by not approaching or feeding them.

Please select any of the following topics to learn more about black bear safety.

Black Bears At A Glance



Black bears can be found across most of North America, whereas grizzly/brown bears are found only in the northwestern states, Alaska and western Canada. Black bears that reside in the Southwest primarily live in the pine forests and chaparral (brush) zones, and occasionally wander into lower elevations.

- **Colors:** Black, brown, blond or cinnamon.
- **Size:** Adults measure about 3 feet at shoulders and 5 to 6 feet when standing upright.
- **Weight:** Adults weigh 125 to 425 pounds Males are generally larger than females.
- **Lifespan:** Approximately 20 years for wild bears.
- **Eyesight:** Similar to humans.
- **Sense of Smell:** Excellent, can span miles.
- **Attributes:** Very agile, climb trees well, good swimmers, and can run as fast as 35 mph.

Healthy wild black bears rely on berries, insects, vegetation, fish and carrion to survive. They generally mate during May and early June. They hibernate primarily due to lack of food, usually between November and April, though this varies. Healthy mothers produce 1 to 2 cubs every 2-3 years. To learn more go to www.bebearaware.org 

Black Bear Encounters



Black bears should always be considered unpredictable and potentially dangerous. A black bear will usually detect your presence and flee the area before you notice unless the bear has been conditioned to people and their foods.

- If a black bear is **visible, but not close**, alter your route so that you will move away from its area.
- If a black bear approaches, do not run. Remain calm, continue facing the bear and slowly back away. If the bear continues to approach, try to group together and pick up small children. Try to scare the bear away by shouting and acting aggressively.
- If a black bear **attacks**, it is suggested to fight back using everything in your power fists, sticks, rocks, and E.P.A. registered bear pepper spray.

Please Don't Feed Bears



- Bears should never obtain human food, pet/livestock feeds, or garbage. Bears that receive these "food rewards" may become aggressive towards humans or cause property damage. To protect people and their property, these bears may have to be destroyed.
- Wild bears have a natural fear of humans and will attempt to avoid people and developed areas fed bears do not!
- Wild bears rely on natural foods such as berries and fish. Fed bears will abandon vital food sources for human foods and garbage!
- Wild bears quickly become conditioned to handouts and will teach their cubs to do the same.
- Wild bears fed along roads tend to stay near the road - increasing vehicle-animal accidents.

Bear Pepper Spray



Bear Pepper Spray is not a substitution for following appropriate safety techniques.

- Bear pepper spray is not the same as personal defense spray, it must be E.P.A. registered.
- Bear pepper spray must contain 1.3%-2% capsaicin and related capsaicinoids. Suggested spray distance is at least 25 feet in a cloud pattern lasting 6 seconds or more.

Hiking In Bear Country



- Let someone know where you are going and when you plan to return.
- Carry bear pepper spray.
- Read all signs at the trailhead.
- Hike in a group, and keep children close at hand.
- Make your presence known (call out).
- Hike during daylight hours & stay on the trail.
- Watch for bear signs: scat, claw marks, diggings, logs or stumps torn apart, etc.

- Avoid taking pets, they may attract bears to you.

Camping In Bear Country



- Always keep a clean camp.
- Use a designated camping area.
- Don't leave food out when not in use. Store it in bear-resistant storage unit, hard shelled vehicle or car trunk.
- Use bear-resistant trash receptacles.
- Set up tents with space between them.
- Keep pets on a leash.
- Keep your sleeping area, tent and sleeping bag **completely free of food and food odors** and personal products that are **scented**, like toothpaste, lotion, and makeup.
- Do not sleep in the same clothes you cooked in.
- Keep a flashlight and bear pepper spray readily available.

Specia Backcountry Tips



- Select a campsite away from berry patches. spawning streams and animal trails.
- Place sleeping tents at least 100 yards from food storage and cooking areas.
- Keep a flashlight and bear pepper spray readily available.
- Store all food, pet/livestock feeds, odorous items and garbage by hanging at least 10 feet from the ground and 4 feet from top and side supports.
- Strain food particles from dishwater. Pack everything out never bury or burn garbage.

Residential Areas



Minimize odors and the availability of food rewards throughout your yard and community.

- Put out garbage on the day of pick-up, not the night before. Store in sturdy building or place in a bear- resistant trash receptacle.
- Do not leave pet food out. Hang bird feeders out of reach of bears.
- Keep bar-b-ques clean and grease free. Store with livestock/pet feed inside a sturdy building.
- Pick all ripe fruit from the tree and surrounding ground as soon as possible.
- Vegetable gardens and compost piles may attract bears. Do not put meat, fish or other pungent scraps in compost pile. Add lime to reduce odors and accelerate decomposition.
- An electric fence is an effective way to keep bears out of orchards, gardens, compost piles, and beehives. Follow appropriate safety precautions.

Bear activity may intensify in spring when bears are hungry and emerging from their dens, in the fall when bears are bulking up for hibernation, and during drought periods. This is due to the scarcity of natural foods.

The National Be Bear Aware & Wildlife Stewardship Campaign

This national campaign is dedicated to promoting safe and responsible stewardship of our wildlife treasures, especially bears, in order to reduce the growing number of human/wildlife confrontations.

This campaign provides teachers, college students, youth groups and hunting/guiding organizations with educational materials and training programs needed to teach residents and outdoor enthusiasts the latest safety skills and techniques for hiking, camping, hunting, viewing, photographing and living with wildlife safely and responsibly.

Since 1980, the Center for Wildlife Information has worked in partnership with state and federal wildlife and land management agencies. The educational concepts and materials have been tested in places such as Yellowstone National Park and Shoshone National Forest, and through hunter education programs.

Through a mentoring program, fourth graders and young Scouts studied the safety techniques to be included in the document and prepared rough prototypes. Eagle Scouts, high school and college students reviewed these prototypes and improved upon them until they were ready for final product review by state and federal wildlife and land management agencies.

Graphic arts and printing students across the United States were responsible for the design and layout of the materials and for preparing the files for production.

We can all make a difference. Join with this national campaign to preserve wildlife long into the future so that generations to come will have the opportunity to enjoy wild animals as we have. All educational support materials and instructors' guides are provided at no cost to individuals or groups willing to serve as training facilitators.

Dear Teacher or Youth Group Leader

The opportunity to hike, camp and view wildlife on our public lands is a great adventure. With this experience comes the individual responsibility to be properly informed about the appropriate safety techniques to avoid human/wildlife conflicts. This is especially important in the areas that bears, mountain lions and rattlesnakes call home. This Hiking & Camping in Bear, Mountain Lion and Rattlesnake Country Train the Trainer Program is designed to empower teachers, youth group leaders, hunters, outfitters and guides with the training needed to train others. Through this program participants learn the latest safety techniques for hiking and camping, and for viewing and photographing wildlife. It is important that we create enthusiasm for wildlife, but we must also provide the knowledge to enjoy the great outdoors safely and

responsibly. Through this program participants learn how to be responsible for their own safety and preserve our wildlife heritage.

Concept:

Provide an educational activity that informs the students about the increasing number and causes of human/wildlife encounters that may result in serious injuries and sometimes death to both people and wildlife. The students will learn the latest safety techniques to use when hiking, camping and living around wildlife.

These lessons will be put into practice through hands-on field activities. This lesson gives students the knowledge and the opportunity to provide a community service through a stewardship program used to mentor other students and community organizations.

Instructional Levels:

Older students learn the safety techniques, then teach and mentor younger students.

Community Involvement:

Students can conduct presentations to other local organizations and civic groups such as: Boy & Girl Scouts, Youth Groups, 4-H clubs, Rotary clubs, Kiwanis, Jaycees.

Purpose:

Some people lack the safety techniques and basic skills to reduce the possibility of confrontations with wildlife. This activity is meant to offer these skills to our current and future generations.

Objectives:

Wildlife Stewardship: Wildlife safety techniques to avoid confrontations with wildlife when hiking, camping, photographing or viewing wildlife.

Educational:

All subject areas are incorporated into this interdisciplinary unit. Math skills, creative communication, scientific exploration, social interaction, and group & community involvement are stressed.

Main Wildlife Species:

Bears mountain lions/cougars, rattlesnakes. Other species will be included.

Time:

2 to 6 class periods Field trip of 2 hours.

Age:

Mentors are high school students Participants are 4th-8th grade students.

Skills:

Evaluate, reason, draw conclusion, identify group interaction question.



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C A M P A I G N

More Information About Being Bear Aware

[California Department of Fish and Wildlife \(CDFW\) - Black Bear Conservation](#) 

[Center for Wildlife Information](#) 

Be Bear Aware Campaign 

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