

Bear Awareness

Wild animals naturally fear people; as long as you keep your distance, they will generally not bother you, unless the animal has become accustomed to human contact. When bears have easy access to human food sources, including trash, it has been observed that their behavior changes. In these cases, bears are no longer cautious and fearful around people, and this may result in property damage and even threaten human safety.

Black Bear Facts

- The only species of bears in California and Nevada are Black Bears. However, they do range in color from blonde to black, with cinnamon brown being the most common color.
- There are an estimated 25,000 to 35,000 black bears in California and 200 to 300 in Nevada.
- Black Bears will seek to avoid confrontation with humans. If encountered, always leave them an escape route.
- Males are much larger than females and can weigh up to 500 pounds, although the average weight is about 300 pounds.
- Black Bears can sprint up to 35 mph and they are strong swimmers and great tree climbers.
- Black Bears are omnivores. A typical wild bear diet consists of berries, plants, nuts, roots, honey, honeycomb, insects, larvae, carrion and small mammals.
- As winter approaches, bears will forage for food up to 20 hours a day, storing enough fat to sustain them through hibernation. Bears often hibernate in large hollow trees 40 to 50 feet off the ground!
- Bears that are accustomed to people can become too bold and lose their fear of humans. To avoid this behavior, do not let bears become habituated to human sources of food.

There are simple steps that you can follow to protect local bears and other wildlife from a potentially deadly encounter. Remember, we must all act responsible in bear country to keep the bears Alive and Wild.

In Town: Keep in mind that bears and other animals are attracted to anything edible or smelly. Take precautions by using the following guidelines:

- Utilize public trash receptacles and dumpsters while visiting local parks and recreational facilities. Pay special attention when securing receptacle or dumpster lids.
- Keep bear-proof trash receptacles and dumpsters closed, latched and locked at all times.
- Do not leave trash, groceries or pet food in your car. If you absolutely must leave edible or smelly items in your car, then make sure the items are in airtight containers and locked in your trunk.
- Stow all edible or smelly products, including food, suntan lotion, insect repellent, soap, toothpaste and candles properly. Keep these products inside your home or secured in bear lockers while camping.

At Home or Work:

- Do not run. Assert your dominance by standing tall and making loud noises to scare the bear away.

- Never place trash and recycling at your curb prior to 5 am of your collection day.
- If the property uses a shared dumpster for trash and recycling, or if the property is commercial, make sure to close, latch and lock the dumpster lid. Never leave dumpster lids open and unsecured.
- Periodically disinfect trash containers to remove odors.
- Always remove the key from a bear canister after making sure the container is properly secured.
- Harvest fruit off trees as soon as soon it is ripe, and promptly collect the fruit that falls to the ground.
- Keep bird feeders off decks and inaccessible to bears.
- Keep barbecue grills clean.
- Securely block access to potential hibernation sites, such as crawl spaces under decks and buildings.
- Keep doors and windows closed and locked when you are away from the property.

Anywhere:

- Be sure to allow the bear free clearance if it attempts to get away.
- Never get between a mother bear and her cubs.
- Slowly walk away from any bear and make loud noises.
- Although attacks are very rare, if you are attacked, **FIGHT BACK AGGRESSIVELY!**
Do not roll up in a ball and play dead.

A Fed Bear is a Dead Bear!

Once habituated to human sources of food, bears will seek them out, creating conflicts with humans. The bear's behavior will not stop voluntarily, and unless the nuisance behavior can be corrected, bears may be killed for various reasons including property damage or due to collisions with vehicles. In order to avoid these deaths, the food source must be removed.

Prevention is the Key

Bears that visit human occupied areas are usually in search of food. You will be less likely to have encounters with bears if the recommended precautions are taken, so that bears do not associate humans with a source of food. Once they do, they become habituated to humans. Relocating habituated bears relocates the problem, it does not solve it. It is illegal in California and strongly discouraged in Nevada to feed bears, and many communities have ordinances penalizing those who feed wild animals.

