

Prevent human-bear conflicts

In a vehicle



← 100 m →



- Stay in your vehicle.
- Keep a distance of at least 100 m, about the length of 7 school buses.
- Drive slowly and do not block other traffic.

Viewing and taking pictures

- Use binoculars or spotting scopes and long telephoto lenses when taking photos. Avoid flash photography which can disturb bears.
- Avoid noises or actions that might stress bears (barking dogs, loud talking and laughing, diesel engines).
- Do not call out or whistle to attract the bear's attention for a photo. If a feeding bear is constantly looking up to see what the disturbance is, you are interrupting their feeding time and consequently their long term survival. It is not just about the one time you are there trying to get your photo; it is the cumulative effect of everyone's actions.

Walking and hiking

- Stay on designated trails.
- Keep a safe distance (100 m/yds or about the length of 7 school buses).
- Learn to recognize the alarm signals and behaviours of bears indicating that you are too close (as noted under "Bear Talk").
- Be predictable. Unpredictable actions might stress bears and cause a defensive response.
- Always try to hike during daylight hours and in a group. There is no record of a bear attacking a large group of people.
- Talk or sing to alert bears of your presence so they have an opportunity to retreat.
- Put the iPod away and pay attention to your surroundings.
- If in a group, do not surround the bear. Always allow the bear an avenue of escape.
- Keep dogs on a leash and under control at all times.
- Stay alert and watch for bears and bear signs. Tracks, trampled vegetation or scat are all signs that bears may be nearby. Be especially alert where bear foods (e.g. berries) are abundant. Avoid animal carcasses, as bears often defend a valuable food cache.
- **NEVER feed a bear or leave food or garbage around. When a bear makes the link between food and people, they become a danger and may have to be killed.**

Practice prevention and show respect for bears.

Never feed bears. It is unsafe, illegal and often leads to disaster for animals if they continue to seek human food sources. If you see someone feeding a bear or to report a human-bear conflict, call:

1-877-952-7277 (RAPP) or # 7277 on your cell.

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The **Get Bear Smart Society** is a registered Canadian charity that strives to help people and bears safely and respectfully coexist wherever their homes and ranges overlap.

To learn more about living with bears, visit us online at getbearsmart.com or email info@bearsmart.com.

Photos: Sylvia Dolson

With generous support from:



Bear Viewing Guide



getbearsmart.com

Respect our Bears – Keep them Wild

Seeing bears in their natural habitat can be an exciting and memorable experience. Our goal is to live in harmony with bears by respecting them in their home. That means, we must allow bears to behave naturally and avoid disturbing them while they are eating, mating or rearing their young. Following these simple bear viewing guidelines will help keep them wild and you safe!

B.C. is home to black bears and grizzlies!

The American black bear (*Ursus americanus*) is the more common of the two with approximately 60-80 residing in Whistler and more in the surrounding area.

You're less likely to see a Grizzly (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), but they do roam the Callaghan Valley, other areas outside of Whistler and Squamish as well as the Pemberton area.

Black bear or grizzly? Know the difference!

Colour is not a good indicator. Black bears range from pure black to various shades of brown.

Grizzlies range in colour from dark brown to almost blonde. The main differences are the shape of their backs and faces.



Black bear



Grizzly

Illustrations courtesy of BeBearAware.org

Learn bear talk

Bears communicate their intentions to people. Paying attention to what bears have to say should keep you out of trouble.

The best advice anyone can give you is to learn as much as possible about bears and how they communicate. Bear behaviour can be predictable. The more you can learn about bears and how they behave, the less likely you will be to have a negative encounter or misinterpret interactions.

If you encounter a bear...be bear smart!

You can often tell if there's a bear in the area. Bear signs include tracks, droppings (scat), or fur on tree bark. Trees may be clawed, bitten or rubbed. You may find recently overturned rocks or logs, rotted wood that has been torn apart, fresh diggings and crushed vegetation.

You can tell how a bear is feeling about your presence by reading their body language.

A relaxed bear is one that doesn't pay much attention to you. They may not have seen you, or you may be far enough away that they do not perceive you as a threat.

What to do: *Stay still and enjoy the show!*

When a bear stands up on their back legs, they are likely curious and trying to identify you.

What to do: *Talk quietly to let the bear know that you are not a threat. Slowly increase your distance from the bear.*

Remember: bears are wild animals and while they may tolerate the presence of humans, they should never be approached or fed.

Bears will let you know you've stressed or disturbed them by displaying any or all of the following behavior: moving away, climbing a tree,



salivating, yawning, skittishness or jumping at sounds or movements. A female bear will often tree her cub(s) when she feels threatened. If you have invaded a bear's personal space, they will huff (expel air loudly) and clack their teeth. Bears may also slap the ground, lunge toward you or make short charges.

What to do: *Back away, leave the area and allow the bear their personal space.*

Bears are highly intelligent animals, sensitive to their surroundings and experiences with people.

Bear facts

- All bears can be dangerous in certain situations.
- Bears are fast runners – on the flats, uphill or downhill. They can run 15 m per second – faster than an Olympic sprinter!
- Bears are strong swimmers and good climbers.
- Bears have good eyesight, good hearing, and a keen sense of smell.
- Bears generally avoid contact with humans, but in rare cases they may approach hikers or campers, especially when they are attempting to access your food.



Tip: Use a professional tour guide and be mindful that you are entering the bear's habitat.