

# THE SCOOP ON POOP

- A grizzly bear scat is often much larger in diameter than a black bear's. If it is greater than 5cm, it may be a grizzly scat.
- You can tell a lot about what a bear has been doing by examining their droppings. Learning to identify scat can help keep you a safe distance away from bears.
- A bear that has been eating salmon can have a very runny scat that is deposited in a heap, perhaps resembling an uncooked pancake. Salmon scat tends to have a strong smell, unlike a scat that is mostly waste from vegetation or berries (which can even smell a bit sweet).
- Often, you can still see remnants of what the bear was eating, especially berries. Bears absorb most of the nutrients through the skin of the berry.
- When a bear deposits a berry scat, it is all ready to grow into a berry shrub complete with its own seeds and fertilizer.
- Sometimes, you can find fur and bones of an animal that was consumed; or even the legs and bodies of insects.
- A fresh scat is usually well defined. Rain will deteriorate the consistency of the scat. And winter weather, especially snow, will cause the scat to become moldy and white in appearance by the following spring.
- Look for the remains of roots or tubers in the poop. Since a black bear doesn't have long claws necessary to dig them up, it's most likely a grizzly scat if they are known to live in that area.
- Scat can help you determine the seasonal diet of the bear. Early in the season, bears will consume grasses, roots or perhaps a winter-killed animal. During the summer, you may find seasonally ripe berries indicated by the full husk of the berry and visible seeds. By fall, when the salmon are running, the scat will show fish remains.
- The high nitrogen content of salmon scat helps to fertilize the soil, helping trees grow.
- Fresh scat might still be steaming. Older scat may have insects feeding on it. If the scat has been deposited on grass, the grass below the scat will be yellow or brown after time has passed. These are all good clues to help make sense of things.
- If there is a concentration of scat in an area, this may indicate that a bear is living and sleeping nearby.
- Sadly, sometimes there may be garbage in a scat. This may indicate that the bear has visited a human settlement in search of food or that they have incidentally found some trash on the trail left by a hiker or camper.

**Bear poop comes in a variety of shapes, sizes, consistencies, and scents. It depends on how big the bear is – an adult's scat is much larger than a cub's scat – and on what the bear was eating.**

## BECOME A SCAT DETECTIVE!

See if you can tell what the bear was eating in the photos. Was it likely an adult or a cub, or can you tell? How fresh or old does the scat look? What was the bear eating? Does this indicate a seasonal variation in food?



**1** There's lots of vegetation in this scat, like grasses and sedges.



**2** Though it's white, this scat still looks fresh; the bear has probably been feeding on the dried seeds of wild celery and cow parsnip plants.



**3** This scat looks like it's exclusively composed of a salmon diet.



**4** There is clear evidence that this bear has been eating berries. S/he has also been eating grass.



**5** This girl's rubber boots give an indication of scat size. The slugs feeding on it indicate that it is more than a few hours old. The bear was likely also supplementing his/her salmon diet with a bit of greenery. It's important for bears to eat their veggies too!