

## BEARS IN YOUR BACK YARD -- PUBLIC HIKE or PICNIC SHELTER PROGRAM

### Resources:

Bear mount	Living with Bears brochures (Colorado Parks and Wildlife)
Bear pelts	Park brochures
Bear tri-fold display	Current <i>Images</i> publication
Bear track replica	First Aid Kit(s)
Bear skull replica	Evaluation Postcards
Bear scat replica	

- Introduction of naturalists and the program
- General program orientation in parking lot or nearby picnic tables – props, handouts
- General physical description
  - Average weight 200-600 pounds
  - Hearing, vision, smell
    - Color variations: black bears can be black, brown, cinnamon, or blonde
  - Breeding and the young
  - Compare some of their senses with those of people
- Intelligence and dexterity
  - Fast – can run up to 25mph
  - Acute sense of smell
  - Learning and teaching cubs
  - Conceptualization, curiosity, tool use (?)
  - Self-awareness, brain size, problem solving, memory (?)
    - Smart – remembers food sources well
- Range and Habitat
  - Historically all of North America
  - Currently 40 states, Northern Mexico, All Canadian Provinces except PEI
  - Estimated Black Bear population in Colorado (8,000 – 12,000)
  - Compared to 539,000 deer (both mule and white tail); 292,000 Elk; 1,600 Moose
  - Can live up to 30 years in the wild
  - Preferred habitat is a thick forest with plentiful food
  - Individuals will feed in a range of 500-600 square miles
- Diet, Feeding
  - 90% of natural diet: berries, nuts, grasses, roots and other plants
  - 10% of natural diet: insects and carcasses
  - Will eat just about anything that smells like food
  - In preparation for hibernation (hyperphagia) they can consume up to 20,000 calories/day (equivalent to about 37 Big Macs!)
- Hibernation
- Bear Love: Breeding and the young
- Signs, tracks, scat

## BEAR ENCOUNTERS

The main goal is to never allow any bear to associate humans, their dwellings (including campsites), and vehicles with food. A bear habituated to humans may often have to be destroyed. (A fed bear is a dead bear)

- Back packing and camping
  - Store food well away from sleeping area (suspended in trees if possible)
    - 12 feet off ground and 6 feet away from any tree trunks
  - Store toiletries (tooth paste, deodorant, etc.) with food
  - Use of bear proof food containers required in certain areas (RMNP for one)
  - Burn any garbage you can and pack out non-burnable items
    - Hang non-burnable garbage with food
  - Wash dishes immediately after a meal – away from campsite
  - Never bring food or cook in a tent
  - Never clean fish near any camp – discard remains well away from camp
- Bear proofing home and yard
  - **Never Ever Feed Bears**
  - **Garbage attracts bears**
    - Don't leave garbage, recyclables, or composting out overnight
      - Study shows putting trash out in the morning cuts chances of a bear visit from 70% to 2%
    - Use bear proof trash container or enclosure (if trash left outside)
    - Clean trash containers regularly (ammonia or bleach)
  - **Odors from the home attract bears**
    - Keep bear accessible windows and doors locked (including garage doors)
  - **Bird Feeders attract bears**
    - Seeds are a natural source of food for bears
    - It is recommended that you not feed birds when bears are active
    - If you do feed birds,
      - Hang feeders 10 ft high & 10 ft away from anything they can climb
      - Keep the ground below the feeder clean
      - Never store bird seed outside or anywhere a bear can get to it
  - **Pet Food attracts bears**
    - Food dishes left outside will be found by bears
    - That big bag of dog chow sitting in the open garage is a no-no
  - **BBQ grills attract bears**
    - Keep them clean – burn off residue
  - **Fruit trees attract bears**
    - Pick fruit as it ripens and clean up fallen fruit
  - **Interesting smells in vehicles attract bears**
    - Food, trash, gum, lip balm, lotions, coolers and even air fresheners

- What to do if you encounter a bear:
  - Sighted at a distance:
    - Do not approach
    - Do not feed the bear
    - Slowly back away – do not turn and run
    - Avoid eye contact
    - Be aware that other bears (especially cubs) may also be in the area
  - If a bear approaches or enters your yard or campsite:
    - Confront the bear but give it a clear avenue of escape
      - Stand up – appear large, wave arms
      - Yell, make noise, bang pots
      - Throw things at the bear – but not food
      - If camping, get out of the tent if a bear approaches
      - At night shine flashlights in the bear's eyes to confuse it
      - Keep livestock and pets away from the bear
      - Bring kids and pets indoors
      - Fight back if attacked
      - Call for help
    - If these tactics don't work – back away and give the bear a wide berth

### **Black Bear compared to Grizzly Bear:**

- Grizzly believe to be extirpated in Colorado
  - It is believed the last Grizzly was killed in South San Juan Mountains in 1979
  - 3 Grizzly Bears reported near Independence Pass in Sept 2006 by experienced hunters (CDOW news Release (9-28-2006))
- Grizzlies have a pronounced hump on their back that black bears don't.
- Grizzlies are typically much larger than black bears; females (300-450 lbs.); males (400-800); can reach 1500 lbs.

# Black Bear Quiz

(VN Chuck Klomp, March 2017)

1. What color is a black bear? **Black, brown, cinnamon, blonde and, rarely, white (Kermode subspecies in coastal British Columbia) "Black bear" is a species – not just a color.**
2. Do black bears hibernate? **Yes**
3. What do black bears eat? **Everything – black bears are omnivorous and very opportunistic. General diet in the wild: 85-90% vegetarian; 10-15% insects and mammal carcasses; anything else smelling of food, including bird feeders, BBQ grills, dog food, garbage, etc.**
4. What eats black bears? **Other black bears -- especially males. Where black bear hunting is allowed, humans also hunt and eat bears.**
5. An average adult male black bear weighs: a. 200 pounds b. **300 pounds** c. 500 pounds
6. Black bear eyesight is 20 times better than that of humans: (True or False) **True** -- their eyesight is better than humans. It is a myth that they have poor eyesight. Black bears do not discern yellow-red-orange color as well as humans. Night vision is acute due to reflective membrane on their eyes.
7. How often do female bears breed? A. Every year b. **Every other year** c. Every three years
8. Bears suffer bone loss during winter hibernation: T or F. **False** -- bears evolved to preserve calcium, although some mammals do lose bone mass; e.g. bats and golden hamsters.
9. How large is a black bear's home range? **Average: Female 2.5-10 sq. miles, Male 10-59 sq. miles. Female bears generally will not share their range with other females, but female ranges may overlap with several male bear ranges.**
10. Black bears are becoming an endangered species: T or F. **False** Black Bears (secure in range) and Grizzly (of least concern). Polar bear (vulnerable). Asia and South American Bears threatened. Bears in certain areas in close contact with humans generally have a poor outcome. Black bear sub-species in Louisiana threatened.

Some Sources:

<http://westernwildlife.org/black-bear-outreach-project>.

<http://www.defenders.org/black-bear/basic-facts>.

<https://www.bear.org/website/bear-pages/black-bear/basic-bear-facts/168-quick-black-bear-facts.html>.