

Introduction

Workers may encounter bears, cougars, moose or other dangerous wildlife in the course of their work. Animals that live in parks and forests are wild, even though they may look or act tame.

The consequences of approaching wildlife can be serious. You are responsible for your own safety as well as the safety of wildlife.



Critical Task Inventory

- Working Near Wildlife
- Encounter Avoidance
- Bear Identification
- Identify Bear Behaviour
- Identify Type of Encounter
- Survival Strategies – Bears
- Survival Strategies - Cougars

Safety Equipment Summary

Image	Description	Standard
	Whistle	Recommended

Working Near Wildlife

There is always a potential for a wildlife encounter when working in the forest, especially in the spring.

Precautionary Measures

- Be aware of your surroundings and signs of wildlife (e.g. tracks, scat, damaged trees).
- Avoid wildlife kill areas as bears may aggressively protect them.
- Avoid mother moose with calf. Some savvy bush workers feel the moose is the most dangerous creature in the forest.
- Report wildlife sightings and aggressive behavior to the Supervisory Staff.

Encounter Avoidance

Introduction

The first rule of wildlife safety is to avoid encounters. People can modify their behavior so they don't attract wildlife to their worksites.

Safety Essentials

- Respect all wildlife – all are potentially dangerous.
- Never approach or attempt to feed wildlife.
- Put all garbage in approved garbage receptacles. If there are no receptacles, pack out what you pack in.
- Never bury food or garbage.
- Pack out any leftover food.

Tenting Precautions

- Do not store toiletries, like shampoo or toothpaste in your tent.
- Never bring food to your tent – let alone store it in there.

Make Noise

- Many bear encounters occur because the bear did not know you were there. Make a little noise while you are walking or working and you could very well avoid an encounter.
- Work in pairs if there is an indication of bears in the area.
- Bear bells are recommended, but they may drive you and your co-worker crazy. Talking, singing or make other noises is a great alternative to let the bears know you are around.
- It is recommended that you carry a whistle as it can be used to help signal others in an emergency.



Personal music players are not recommended. You just can't hear what is going on around you.

Bear Identification

There are two types of bears: black bears and grizzlies. In the event of an encounter, it is important to know which type of bear you are dealing with as it can affect the way in which you should respond.

Know how to tell the difference between a black bear and a grizzly bear. The information below describes the differences between the two types of bears.

	Black Bear	Grizzly Bear
Colour	Although typically black, black bears can also be brown or even grayish. Colour is not a good indication of bear type.	Grizzly bears are typically brown but their colour can also vary.
Size	Black bears are typically smaller, but size is not a good indication. Mature black bears weigh from 220 to 440 lbs. but can get up to 600 lbs.	Grizzly bears weigh from 330-1100 lbs.
Body Profile	Black bears have a relatively straight back profile. 	Grizzly Bears have a hump on their back over their front shoulders. 
Face Profile	Black bears have a straight nose profile. 	Grizzly bears have a dishd nose profile. 

Bear Identification (continued)

	Black Bear	Grizzly Bear
Face Front View	<p>Black bears have large, pointy ears.</p> 	<p>Grizzly bears have small, rounded ears.</p> 
paws	<p>A black bear's claw prints are close to the foot pads.</p> 	<p>A grizzly bear's claw prints are far from the foot pads in the center of the print.</p> 

Identifying Bear Behaviour

Understanding a bear's body language will help you better assess its intentions.

Standing on Hind Legs

A bear rising on its hind legs may simply be trying to better assess the situation either visually or through smell. Standing tall is not necessarily a threatening gesture.



Charging

There are two types of charges, a real charge and a false charge. A charging bear will frequently veer away if you stand your ground. Some bears will make multiple false charges with each one getting a little closer.



Jaw Popping

A threatened bear may make a popping or "woofing" noise with its jaw.

Profile View

A bear may turn sideways to better display its size. It is trying to show you it is too big for you to mess with.

Identify the Type of Encounter

There are several types of bear encounters:

- Casual
- Defensive
- Predatory

Understanding what kind you are having can help you decide the safest strategy to deal with the situation.

Casual Encounter

Casual encounters are when there is little or no threat of an attack. In these instances, the bear typically runs away.

Defensive Encounter/Attack

Bears looking to protect a food cache or their young can become aggressive. The presence of bear cubs almost ensures that the bear will act to protect its young. Defensive encounters can be handled by showing the bear that you are not a threat.



Predatory Encounter/Attack

On rare occasions, bears will stalk people as prey. Bears who seem to be following you or sneaking around you are displaying predatory behavior.

Importance of Attack Identification

As bear attacks go, a defensive attack is much more "preferable" than a predatory attack. With a defensive attack you need to convince the bear that you are not a threat and that you will leave peacefully. With a predatory attack you are definitely in a potentially dangerous situation.

Identify Type of Encounter

	Explanation	Warning Signs
Defensive Encounter /Attack	Defensive encounters are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When a mother is protecting her young. • When a bear is protecting a food cache. • When a bear is threatened by your presence in its territory. • When a bear is surprised by your appearance. 	Some conditions are indicative of a defensive encounter or attack situation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Animal carcass in area. • Young bears seen in area.
Predatory Encounter /Attack	Predatory encounters are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the bear perceives you as food. 	If a bear is stalking you, you are likely faced with a predatory attack. The bear is looking at you as a potential source of food.

Survival Strategies - Bears

Step #1

- Don't panic! Easier said than done, but a bear can be startled or provoked by quick movements.

Step #2

- Don't make eye contact, this can be seen as threatening to the bear. Instead, lower your gaze and slowly back away. Assess the bear's reaction and determine the type of bear and type of an encounter this might be.
- Do not run. In the short run, a bear can outrun a racehorse. A bear can reach speeds of 50-60 km/h and can run both uphill and downhill with ease.

Step #3

- Once the type of attack and the type of bear have been determined, you can decide on the best course of action.

Survival Strategies

	Explanation	Warning Signs
Black Bear	Your goal is to not be seen as a threat to the bear. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shy away. • Do not run. • Move toward other nearby people. • Do not climb a tree. The black bear can follow you up a tree. • Drop your daypack or anything else that may distract the bear. 	With black bears, playing dead is not a viable option. Sometimes a Black Bear will start chewing on its prey (you). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make noise. • Stand your ground. • Fight with your hand tools if you have to.
Grizzly Bear	Same as a black bear but, worse comes to worst, you can play dead.	Same as black bear or play dead.
Climbing Trees	Black bears can climb trees quite easily and grizzlies have a reach of about 4 metres. If sufficiently motivated, a grizzly can climb – or just push the tree over.	



How to Play Dead

- If you are physically attacked by a grizzly bear, play dead. If you are physically attacked by a black bear, DO NOT play dead.
- Lie on your side curled in a ball with legs drawn into your chest and your head buried in your knees.
- Clasp hands behind your neck.
- Keep legs tightly together.
- Stay in this position and try not to struggle.

Grizzly Bear Reactions to Playing Dead

If you play dead during a grizzly attack the bear will typically bat you around until it is satisfied that you are dead. The grizzly may throw some debris over the "carcass" and urinate on it. Grizzly bears typically wait until their prey is a little decomposed before they start eating. Wait until you are certain the bear has left before getting up and looking for help.

Survival Strategies - Cougars

Cougars are very different than bears. Your response to an encounter needs to be different.

Encounter Response

- Directly face the cougar and slowly back away. Maintain eye contact while you move away.
- Always leave the cougar a path for retreat.
- Cougars don't bluff charge like bears. If a cougar charges get ready for impact.
- Make yourself large. Raise and wave your arms above your head to make yourself look big. This might intimidate the cougar.
- You could also throw rocks and yell at it. Aggression may scare the cougar away.
- Arm yourself with a large stick, speak loudly and firmly. Convince the cougar that you are a threat, not prey.
- Don't run away. Cougars are predators and running may trigger the cougar's attack instinct.
- Don't play dead if attacked by a cougar.
- If attacked, fight back.

