

## Bear Encounters

Once a bear has noticed you and is paying attention to you, additional strategies can help prevent the situation from escalating.

- **Identify yourself** by talking calmly so the bear knows you are a human and not a prey animal. Remain still; stand your ground but slowly wave your arms. Help the bear recognize you as a human. It may come closer or stand on its hind legs to get a better look or smell. A standing bear is usually curious, not threatening.
- **Stay calm** and remember that most bears do not want to attack you; they usually just want to be left alone. Bears may bluff their way out of an encounter by charging and then turning away at the last second. Bears may also react defensively by woofing, yawning, salivating, growling, snapping their jaws, and laying their ears back. Continue to talk to the bear in low tones; this will help you stay calmer, and it won't be threatening to the bear. A scream or sudden movement may trigger an attack. Never imitate bear sounds or make a high-pitched squeal.
- **Pick up small children** immediately.
- **Hike and travel in groups.** Groups of people are usually noisier and smellier than a single person. Therefore, bears often become aware of groups of people at greater distances, and because of their cumulative size, groups are also intimidating to bears.
- **Make yourselves look as large as possible** (for example, move to higher ground).
- **Do NOT allow the bear access to your food.** Getting your food will only encourage the bear and make the problem worse for others.
- **Do NOT drop your pack** as it can provide protection for your back and prevent a bear from accessing your food.
- If the bear is stationary, **move away slowly and sideways**; this allows you to keep an eye on the bear and avoid tripping. Moving sideways is also non-threatening to bears. Do NOT run, but if the bear follows, stop and hold your ground. Bears can run as fast as a racehorse both uphill and down. Like dogs, they will chase fleeing animals. Do NOT climb a tree. Both grizzlies and black bears can climb trees.
- **Leave** the area or take a detour. If this is impossible, wait until the bear moves away. Always leave the bear an escape route.
- **Be especially cautious if you see a female with cubs**; never place yourself between a mother and her cub, and never attempt to approach them. The chances of an attack escalate greatly if she perceives you as a danger to her cubs