

It's simple...
and it works

It's a fact—food storage saves bears. Ask a ranger for instructions, help, or advice on how to do it right. Together we can keep bears wild and alive.



**DON'T BE
BEAR
CARELESS!**

For further information on bears and other aspects of these parks, contact:

Yosemite National Park
Public Information Office
Yosemite National Park, CA 95389
(209) 372-0265

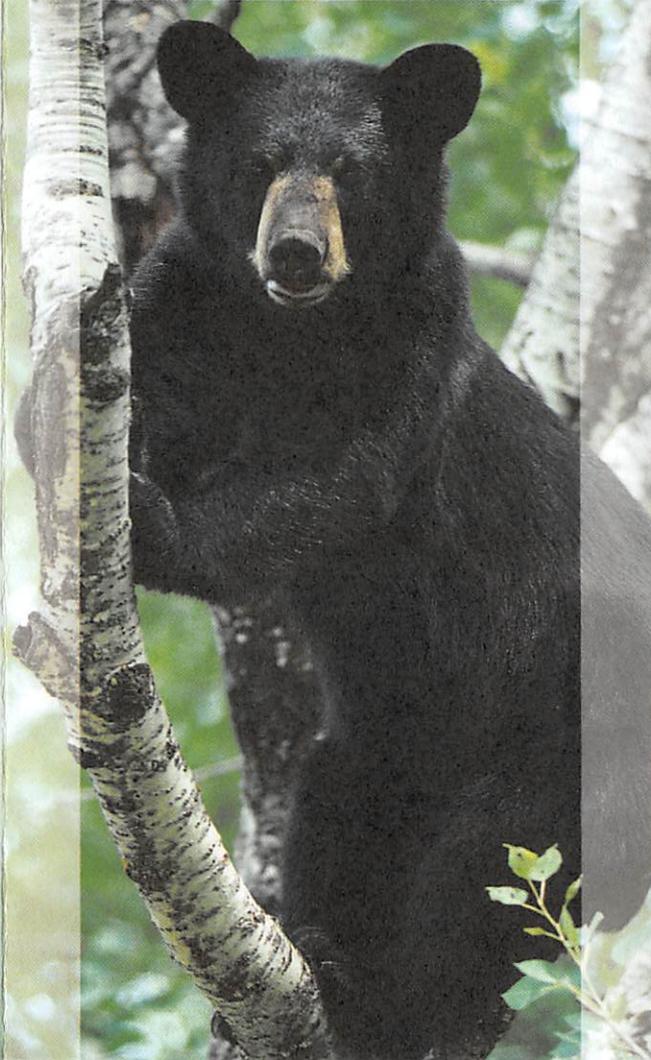
Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks
Visitor Information
Three Rivers, CA 93271
(209) 565-3134



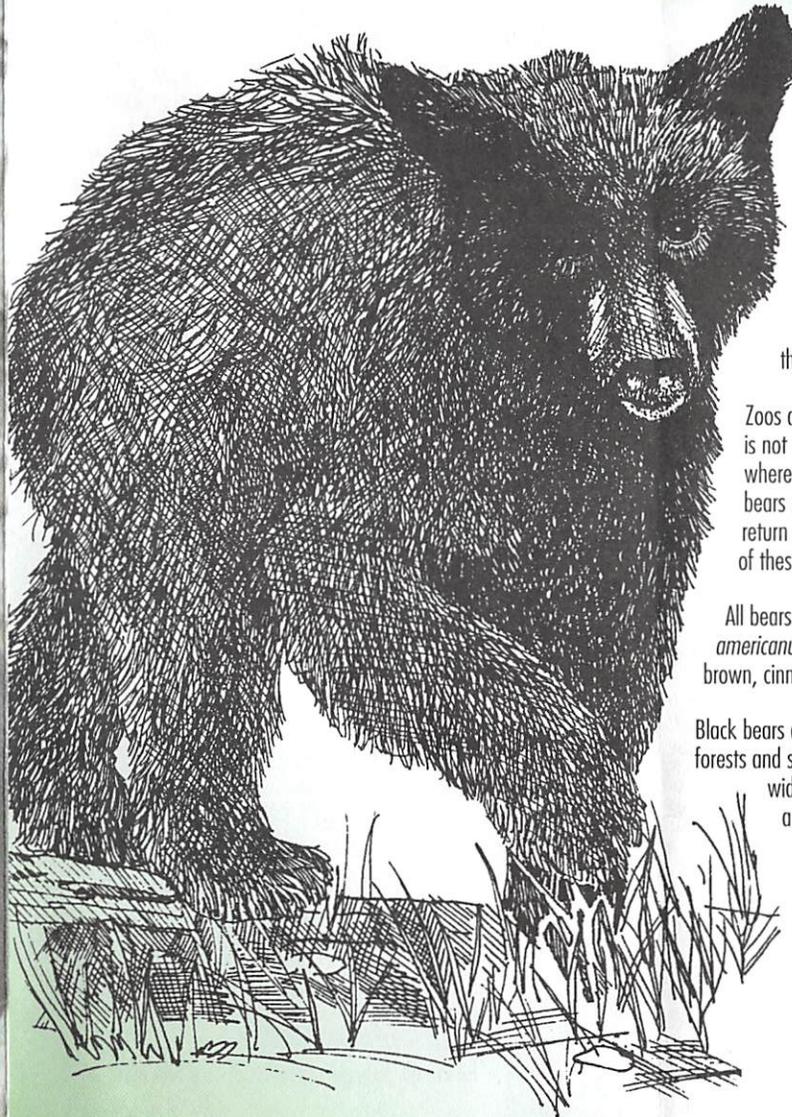
U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service
With assistance from the Yosemite Association and PBN, Inc.

Cover photo © 1993 Daniel J. Cox, DJC & Associates

The bears
are not
to blame...



We are.



We call it a bear problem, but the bears are not to blame. Each year black bears must be killed in Yosemite, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon national parks as a direct result of human carelessness and improper food storage.

Driven by their powerful sense of smell, black bears are drawn by the odors of human food. Once bears get this food, they continue to seek it out—from backpacks, picnic tables, ice chests, and cars. They cause thousands of dollars in property damage searching for human food and garbage. When their instinctive fear of people fades, these unnaturally aggressive, destructive bears must be killed.

Zoos do not want these bears and moving them to another area is not a solution. Bears can only be relocated within the parks, where good bear habitat has bears already in it. The relocated bears must therefore move on to find new territory. They usually return to where they were trapped or die trying. Eventually, many of these bears must be killed.

All bears in the Sierra Nevada are American black bears, *Ursus americanus*. This name can be misleading, as they may be black, brown, cinnamon, or even blonde.

Black bears are at home in these parks. Their natural habitat is the forests and shrublands below 8000 feet in elevation. They eat a wide variety of food—grasses, insects, acorns, carrion—and, too often, human food.

Truly wild bears usually shy away from humans. But these intelligent animals learn quickly. Just one experience with human food can change their natural behavior. Yet the bears are not to blame.

**DON'T BE
BEAR
CARELESS!**



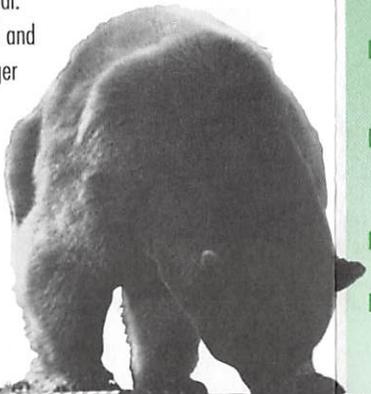
Don't be bear careless!

Why keep bears wild?

National parks were created to preserve wild landscapes for you, your children, and your children's children. These parks have become touchstones, havens, and natural laboratories in a world that is running out of wild places.

Access to human food takes the "wild" out of wildlife. Black bears often stop their natural daytime foraging and become nocturnal, seeking our food while we sleep. Other bears visit picnic areas during the day. They have learned to steal food from backpackers, so bears now frequently room at elevations above 8000 feet where there is little natural food for them. With human food, bears grow unnaturally large and have more cubs than normal.

When fed on our food and garbage, bears are no longer part of the Sierran wilderness and beauty—they become unnatural, destructive intruders.



TO STORE FOOD PROPERLY:

- Store all food and related supplies in metal storage boxes where provided. Bears recognize ice chests and cans, so store them the same as food. Also store grocery bags, garbage, and scented articles such as soap, sunscreen, hairspray, and toothpaste. Seal foods in containers to minimize smells.
- When storage boxes are not available, put all food and related supplies, including ice chests, in vehicle trunk with food sealed in air-tight containers.
- In vehicles without trunks, all food and related supplies, including ice chests, must be stored out of sight. Cover them completely to hide them from view. Close windows tightly.

In Picnic Areas:

- Store all food and related supplies properly, including ice chests.
- Never leave food unattended.
- Dispose of all garbage properly.

In Campgrounds:

- Store all food and related supplies properly, including ice chests.
- Never leave camp unattended if food is not stored.
- Store food day and night. Bears may enter campsites during the day, even if people are there.
- Keep a clean camp. Put trash in bear-proof cans and dumpsters regularly.

Day-hiking:

- Store all food and related supplies left at trailhead properly, including ice chests.
- Don't leave your backpack and walk off to take a photograph. Bears know packs are a source of food.

Lodging:

- In hard-sided cabins and rooms, store all food and related supplies indoors.
- In canvas tent-cabins at Yosemite, all food-related and scented items must be stored in lockers where available or properly stored in vehicles.
- Put all garbage in bear-proof cans and dumpsters.



In recent years bears conditioned to human food have caused up to \$186,289 in property damage per year in Yosemite alone.

Backcountry:

- Plan ahead to store food in one of these three ways, listed in order of effectiveness:
 - 1) Rent or buy National Park Service-tested bear-resistant portable food canisters (available at park concession retail outlets);
or
 - 2) When available, use installed devices such as metal storage boxes, poles, or cables (check locations before departure);
or
 - 3) Carefully hang food by the counter-balance method (see Keep It Wild or Backcountry Basics wilderness newspapers). Only use this option if the others are not available and practice it before your trip!
- Store all food and related supplies left at trailheads properly, including ice chests. If metal storage boxes are available, you must use them. Even if no boxes are available, it is strongly recommended that no food be left in vehicles.

Note: These regulations and precautions help decrease the chance of personal injury or property damage. However, bear damage and confrontations are still possible, even when all guidelines are followed.

Bear Encounters...

Never approach any bear, regardless of its size. If you encounter a bear, act immediately. Throw objects at it from a safe distance. Yell, clap hands and bang pots together. If there is more than one person, stand together to present a more intimidating figure, but do not surround the bear. Use caution if you see cubs, as the mother may act aggressively to defend them.

When done together, these actions have been successful in scaring bears away. But never try to directly retrieve anything once a bear has it. Report incidents and sightings to a ranger.



Store food properly
IT'S THE LAW!