

Despite its reputation for ruthlessness, the grizzly bear remains a tremendously intriguing animal. A female grizzly mothers her cubs just as affectionately as other bears do, caring for her offspring the whole first year of their lives. The male lives like a true wilderness monarch, solitary and supreme over a home range which extends many miles into the surrounding wilderness.

The characteristic features of *Ursus arctos* quite naturally are those most menacing: a dish-shaped face, a hump that rises slightly from behind the head, and long claws exposed and only slightly curved at the ends. The animal's coat of heavy fur is blackish-gray, brown, buff, or pale yellow. Often the hairs are frosted at the ends. The grizzly stands 75 to 120 centimeters (2½ to 4 feet) high at the shoulder and weighs from 130 to 450 kilograms (300 to 1,000 pounds), the weight carried upon the entire foot—sole and heel touching the ground—as in man.

The grizzly roams any time of the day or night. If the animal has a preferred period of activity, it seems to be twilight.

To satisfy its big appetite the animal grazes on tundra grass and digs for plant roots. It lays open whole underground tunnel systems in search of mice and ground squirrels, and strips blueberry bushes of leaves and berries. A skilled fisherman, the grizzly can land a catch of salmon just by flailing its strong forearms through the shallow waters of a stream. The grizzly also eats carrion, especially in spring when winter-killed moose or Dall sheep are available and the bear is hungry from a long winter sleep.

Grizzlies once ranged throughout Western North America, but the pressures of civilization have considerably diminished their numbers. The present population is restricted to the northern mountains of Canada and Alaska and a few protected parks in the American Rockies.



# Grizzly Bears

The grizzly bear's reputation for ferocity is well deserved. Read this flyer now, so you will know something about the grizzly and how to avoid confrontations that might be tragic.

# beware



**Always be cautious and alert. Treat grizzlies with respect in their natural setting.**

The grizzly is a true part of this wild country. You are treading on his home ground, and you could meet him anywhere. Each bear has individual characteristics and behavior patterns. No pattern of behavior applies to all individuals of any species, but it is certain that a careless and disrespectful visitor increases the possibility of conflict with a grizzly.

**Do not approach a grizzly closely or take one by surprise.**

These large, powerful animals are particularly dangerous partly because they are so unpredictable. As with any animal, survival is their most compelling instinct. When threatened, grizzlies will attack to defend themselves, their young, and their territory.

**While hiking, make noise often and avoid dense brush. Let the bear know where you are. Whistle, talk, ring a bell, or shake a few pebbles in a can. A variety of noises helps.**

Bears will normally avoid people. Their vision is poor, but their senses of smell and hearing are excellent. Even so, surprise meetings can happen, for the noises you make may be muffled by the sound of river water or the wind.

**Do not take your dog into the back country. This is a regulation as well as a precaution.**

In bear country, your dog can be a serious liability. Even wolves find it difficult to drive bears away. Your pet, when hard pressed, will run to you and perhaps bring his opponent with him.

**Never approach a bear cub.**

A small, cuddly looking cub means that a watchful mother grizzly is always nearby. She knows no fear when she turns aggressively to protect her young. By then it probably will be too late to get out of her way, for a grizzly can outrun the fastest man.

**Use a telephoto lens.**

Advancing for a close-up shot with a normal camera lens will bring you within breathing distance of disaster. Don't do it. When you spot a grizzly, stop where you are and take a long-distance shot.

**Keep your campsite clean.**

Bears are omnivorous—they eat almost anything. The odor of camp food attracts them over long distances. To safeguard your campsite, keep food sealed in plastic bags or tins and cached beyond your camp area. Do not store food in your tent. Try to eliminate food odors from yourself by washing your hands and face before retiring. Wash your cans and carry out everything you carried in, leaving nothing buried in the ground.

Be cautious, but not fearful. You have come here to enjoy Mount McKinley's natural scene and all of its natural occupants. While efforts have been made for your safety, certain inherent dangers are associated with wilderness. There can be no guarantee of your safety. Respect the wild country and its inhabitants.

Mount McKinley National Park is administered by the National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. As the Nation's principal conservation agency, the Department of the Interior has responsibility for most of our nationally owned public lands and natural resources. This includes fostering the wisest use of our land and water resources, protecting our fish and wildlife, preserving the environmental and cultural values of our national parks and historical places, and providing for the enjoyment of life through outdoor recreation. The Department assesses our energy and mineral resources and works to assure that their development is in the best interests of all our people. The Department also has a major responsibility for American Indian reservation communities and for people who live in Island Territories under U.S. administration.

**National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior**