

# BEARS



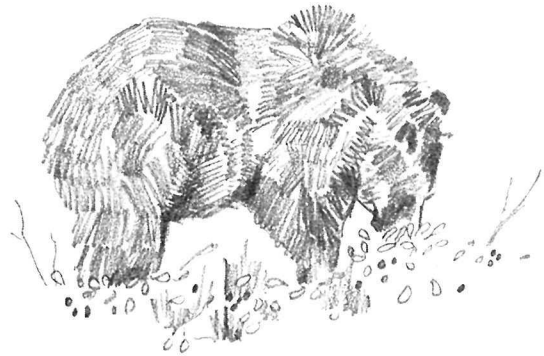
*—Living With Them  
On Your Hike Over  
the Chilkoot Trail—*



Klondike Gold Rush  
National Historical Park

## BEARS

The entire Chilkoot Trail traverses bear country. Bears have lived in these forests and tundra lands for thousands of years; we human beings are recent visitors to their territory. On your hike you can minimize chances of bear confrontations by understanding and respecting their characteristics and life style. Your chances of being injured by a bear in the backcountry have been calculated at one-fiftieth the chances of injury in a highway accident.



Most of the bears seen on the Chilkoot Trail are black bear (*Ursus americanus*). Many of these are cinnamon-colored, and you may mistake them for brown bear. Color is not a reliable guide for differentiation of species. A chart on the reverse side of this pamphlet will explain how to identify the two. Black bear have been seen the length of the Chilkoot Trail, from the logging road to the Scales (mile 16). The bears you see below treeline are most likely black bear; they are most comfortable in a forested environment. Black bear are extremely curious animals, and are more likely to investigate human presence than brown bear.

Brown (or grizzly) bear (*Ursus arctos*) are sighted infrequently along the Chilkoot Trail. These bears, seen primarily above treeline, do not readily adapt to the presence of human beings.

Salmon spawning, in September and October, draws brown bear to the river along the logging road up to Finnegan's Point. During this season you will see prints and scat along on this section of trail.

Please report all bear sightings to the U.S. National Park Service Rangers at Sheep Camp or to the NPS Visitor Center in Skagway.



Bears that have learned to associate human beings with food and have lost their natural fear of people are commonly called garbage bears. Bear maulings often result from the actions of thoughtless hikers who leave food and trash in their wake. Here on the Chilkoot Trail, we have no garbage bears yet. We'd like to enlist your help in ensuring that we never have any.



Bears will eat almost anything. A typical bear's diet will depend on what is locally available: nuts, berries, tubers, insects and insect larvae, grasses, grubs, eggs, rodents and other mammals, carrion, and spawning salmon are all consumed.

New food sources will **always** be investigated by bears, which are naturally curious. Their sense of smell is extremely keen. The fragrant aromas created by litter, leftover food, and other garbage **will** attract a bear. Half-buried food cans, tin foil, paper wrappers, half burned food, packages of food hidden under rocks, leftovers scattered in a stream— all these will attract a bear and encourage it to frequent **your** camping area.

**ALL BEARS SHOULD BE TREATED AS THOUGH THEY ARE DANGEROUS.**

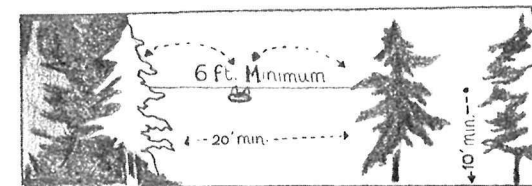


## CAMPING ALONG THE CHILKOOT TRAIL

- Avoid camping on bear trails or near food sources. No camping is allowed on the logging road below Finnegan's Point between September 1 and December 1: this is salmon-spawning season. If a bear wanders through your camp while you're setting it up, it may come back later. Move your camp before dark. Fresh bear sign—scat and earth movement—signal you to camp elsewhere.

- Cooking and eating are best done 200 feet from your tent, or in the shelters. This keeps food odors from getting trapped inside your tent and lingering in your camp. Don't bring bacon or fresh fish into the backcountry! They are very attractive to bears.

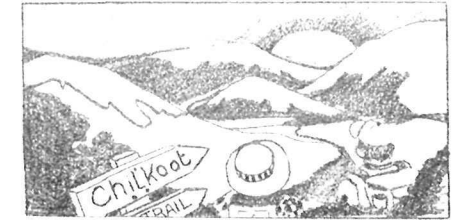
- Clean up scrupulously after meals. Wash all utensils, and store food out of bear reach: either in metal storage cabinets at the shelters, or hung up, out of reach.



- Before leaving a campsite, pick up all paper, trash, and food. Pack out everything you packed in. Intentionally leaving food or garbage in such a way that it attracts bears is illegal in Alaska.

**PLEASE**—ensure your own safety as well as the safety of those who follow. Keep a clean camp. The litter that one careless hiker leaves behind may create a hazardous situation for every following hiker. Help keep bears wild. Once a bear has become a garbage bear, it usually has to be destroyed. Transplanting a problem bear is only a temporary solution; the bear often returns. One hiker's carelessness can cause the unnecessary death of a bear.

## HIKING ALONG THE CHILKOOT TRAIL



There are several things you can do to minimize your chances of encountering a bear:

- Hike only during the day; bears are most active during twilight and at night.

- Hike with a friend, and make enough noise to let the bears know you're headed their way. Bells and cans filled with pebbles are both effective noisemakers when dangled from your pack.

- Take photographs of bears only at long distances.

- Dogs and bears do not get along. We recommend you leave your dog at home.

- Use extra caution when your visibility is limited and on windy days. Chances are higher that you'll surprise a bear along the trail.

- A berry patch or a fishing hole may be a bear's territory. If you see bear sign there, expect to see a bear.

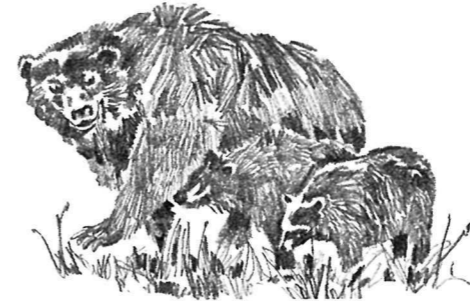


Bears are territorial and establish boundaries around their spaces. If you surprise a bear at close range (less than 200 feet), you may be intruding. Human beings are startled by the sudden entrance of an unexpected person, and so are bears.

A sow with cubs, when surprised at close range, is especially dangerous. Her primary concern is her offspring. Don't get between a sow and her cubs. Cubs are curious, and may approach you. Back off! The sow will defend them ferociously from any threat.

# BEARS

## HANDLING A CONFRONTATION WITH A BEAR



### ALL BEARS SHOULD BE TREATED AS THOUGH THEY ARE DANGEROUS.

If you meet a bear along the trail, give it space. Always leave an escape route open for it. DON'T RUN. This may trigger a chase instinct, just like that of a dog. Stay calm while you assess the situation. Quick, panicky movements may also cause the bear to panic. Give the bear plenty of space. Back off slowly, out of sight. Cornering a bear may encourage it to attack. If you can't detour around the bear, then back off and wait for it to leave.

Speaking to the bear, which can't see well, may help it to understand what you are. Don't imitate bear "talk" or positions—you may be mirroring the bear's hostile challenge.

A bear standing on its hind legs, swinging its head to and fro, is trying to identify you. Talk and wave your arms to help it. It will usually run away when it knows what you are.

If a bear stands its ground and begins a series of woofs (like air being forced out of a bellows), it is challenging you for space. Likewise, when a bear turns sideways to you, and seems to be ignoring you, it is asking you to leave. You are no match—back off, slowly, always facing the bear.

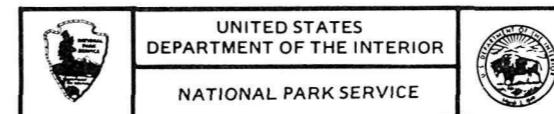
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Illustrations by Mark Joneshill  
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	<b>Black Bear</b> ( <i>Ursus americanus</i> )	<b>Brown Bear</b> ( <i>Ursus arctos</i> )
Characteristics		
Profile	Straight facial profile, tapered nose with long nostrils. Straight shoulder and back profile.	Face is dished or concave. Head is massive in relation to body. Hump on back formed by muscles of forelegs.
Footprints	Claws are short on both front and hind feet. Claw marks, when visible, close to toes.  3.5 x 7 inches 	Claws on front feet long and appear farther from toe pads. Claw imprints usually visible.  5.5 x 10 inches 
Color	Varies tremendously in both species, ranging from blonde through brown to black in black bear, almost black in brown. Hairs on brown frequently are tipped with white.	
Weight	Averages 200-475 pounds.	Averages 325-1000 pounds.