

Bear Facts

Bears make national parks wild and special. You may encounter black bears as they forage for food and raise their young here in Rocky Mountain National Park. Black bears are wild but their behavior is quite predictable.

As visitors to their home, your behavior may have life or death consequences for Rocky's bear population. With a few changes of habit, you can have a safe visit and keep your property intact and out of the paws of bears. Your actions and reactions in bear country are what count.

Get the Bear Facts:

Black bears are smart. Bears learn quickly to identify food, packaging and food containers. Once they find an easy meal, they'll be back for more.

Black bears are nosy. Bears are curious and follow their noses to food. Bears can smell food five miles away!

Black bears are naturally shy. They usually avoid people, but once conditioned to human food, they may become aggressive.

Black bears are busy bodies. They can be active anytime, anywhere, particularly near campsites and trailheads.

Black bears have big appetites. They are mostly vegetarian, eating up to 20,000 calories per day. They aren't picky either - anything slightly edible will do.

Black bears are colorful. They can be blonde, cinnamon, brown, or black.

Car Campers and Day Users

Food Storage Regulations:

When bears become habituated to human food and garbage, they can become aggressive, dangerous, and may break into cars, RVs, and tents. If something has a scent, odor, or looks like a food container, a bear will investigate.

Park regulations require all food items including garbage be properly stored. "Food items" are defined as food, garbage, drinks, toiletries, cosmetics, and pet food and bowls. In addition, coolers, dirty stoves, grills, utensils, and cookware must be washed, stored, and treated like food. These items must be stored by one of the following methods when not in use:

- In park-provided food storage lockers when available, or
- In the trunk of a vehicle, or
- If your vehicle does not have a trunk: Place food items as low as possible in the passenger compartment, covered up and out of sight.
- In all vehicles close and lock doors and windows.

In addition, bird feeders and pet food attract bears. Bird feeders are always prohibited. Pet food must be stored, and treated as food.

Improperly stored or unattended food items will likely result in confiscation of and/or issuance of a Violation Notice.



Additional Recommendation for CAMPERS:

- Keep a clean camp.
- Inspect campsites for bear signs and for careless campers nearby. Please notify a park ranger of any potential problems.
- Avoid leaving pets unrestrained or unattended and tied to an object because they may incite, interest, or attract bears.



Black Bear Encounters

Know what to do if you encounter a black bear:

- Stay calm
- Children react unpredictably to bears; pick them up and keep them calm.
- Never approach or feed a bear
- Never run or climb trees; slowly walk backwards, keep your eye on the bear
- Leave immediately if:
 - ◇ there are cubs
 - ◇ the bear huffs, pops its jaw or stomps a paw
 - ◇ the bear doesn't leave the area
- In other situations, let the bear know you are present:
 - ◇ give the bear an escape route
 - ◇ talk calmly or clap/shout if the bear is far away
 - ◇ if a bear stands up he is just trying to identify you
- If the bear approaches:
 - ◇ Stand your ground and yell
 - ◇ Throw rocks toward, but not at the bear
 - ◇ Firearms should not be considered a wildlife protection strategy. Bear spray and other safety precautions are the proven methods for preventing bear and other wildlife interactions.
 - ◇ If the bear makes contact and attacks **fight back!**
- Report your bear encounter to park staff.

You can prevent unwelcome bear encounters!

Hikers

- Be proactive:**
- Hike in groups and keep children between adults.
 - Make noise – it’s not wise to surprise a bear.
 - Carry bear spray where you can reach it and know how to use it.
 - Don’t linger near berry patches, streams, or areas with bear sign (scat, ripped logs, claw marks).
 - Give bears a wide berth; change your route if necessary.



Backcountry Campers

- Food Storage Regulations:**
- From May 1 through Oct. 31: All food items and garbage must be stored inside a commercially made carry-in/carry-out bear-resistant canister in backcountry areas below tree line. Other methods of food storage are no longer permitted in the backcountry during this period.
 - From November 1 to April 30: The park recommends storing food and garbage using a bear-resistant canister. If not in a canister, you are required to hang food and garbage by the counter-balance method using two stuff sacks and 40 feet of rope.
 - Bear-resistant canisters should be stored 70 adult steps from your tent camping area. (NOTE: Food storage lockers are not available at backcountry sites.)



Acceptable bear resistant canister for food storage.

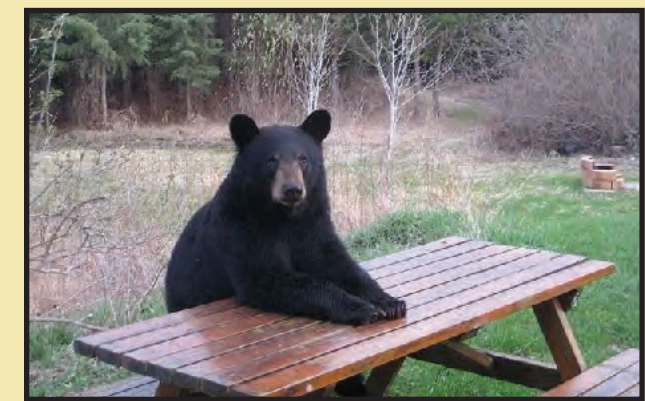
Improperly stored or unattended items will likely result in confiscation of and/or issuance of a Violation Notice.

Seeing a wild bear is an unforgettable experience! Black bears eat, sleep, and live here. They are part of your natural heritage. Rocky Mountain National Park is an important place for bears. And we hope it is a special place for you. We care about bears. Will you?



Help ensure these cubs have a place to live and grow.

Bears and You!



Don't let this happen to you.



Grizzly bears are not present in Rocky Mountain National Park or in the State of Colorado. Grizzly bears and black bears respond differently to humans. Be sure to “get the facts” on this species if you will be traveling to grizzly bear country.



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