

Grizzly and Black Bears of the Yellowstone Ecosystem



Remember:

- Grizzlies are expanding their range outside of the "recovery zone"
- Telling the two species apart is important for both you and the threatened grizzly; look at shoulders, face, ears, and claws because color and size are not reliable differences.
- Bears are wild animals that don't like surprises and are attracted to food and odors; take precautions avoid confrontations.
- Pepper spray is an effective deterrent to an aggressive bear.

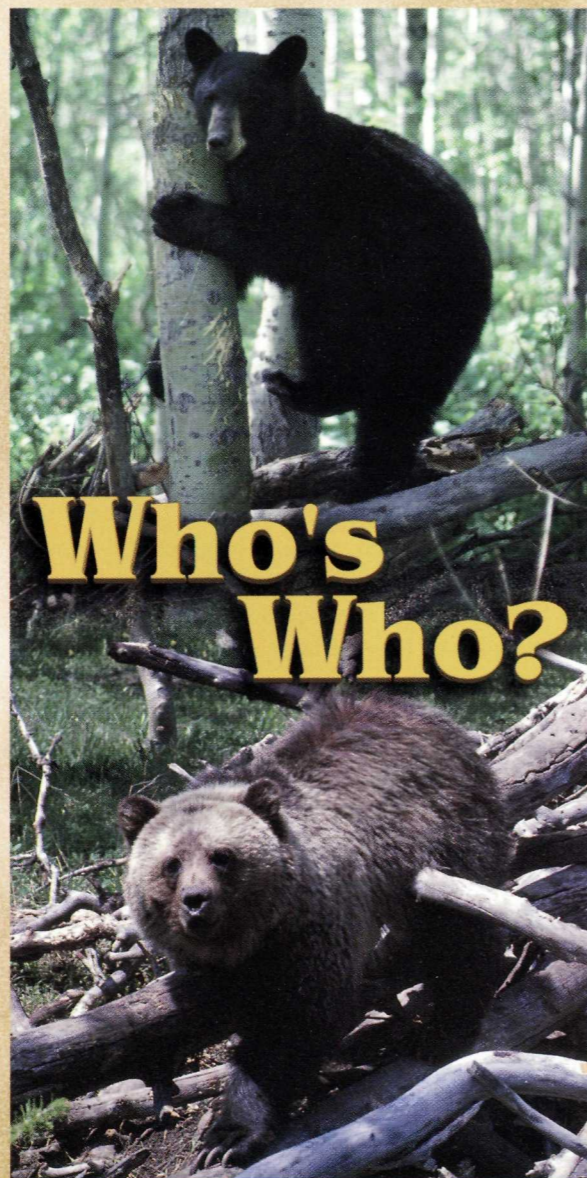
The future of the grizzly depends on you.

- Illegal shooting a grizzly bear is a federal felony that can bring criminal and civil penalties. Unnecessary grizzly deaths hinder efforts to recover the population.

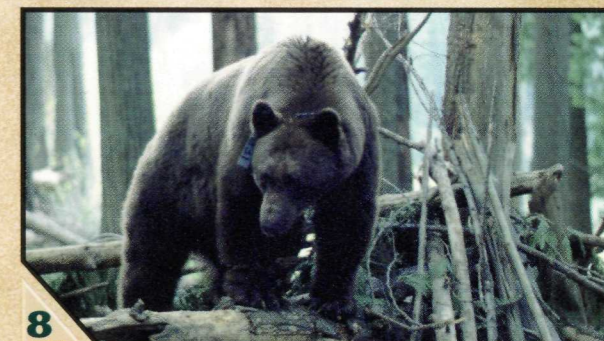
This publication was developed in partnership between Safari Club International, the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.



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Can you tell which is a grizzly bear and which is a black bear?



(Answers Inside...)

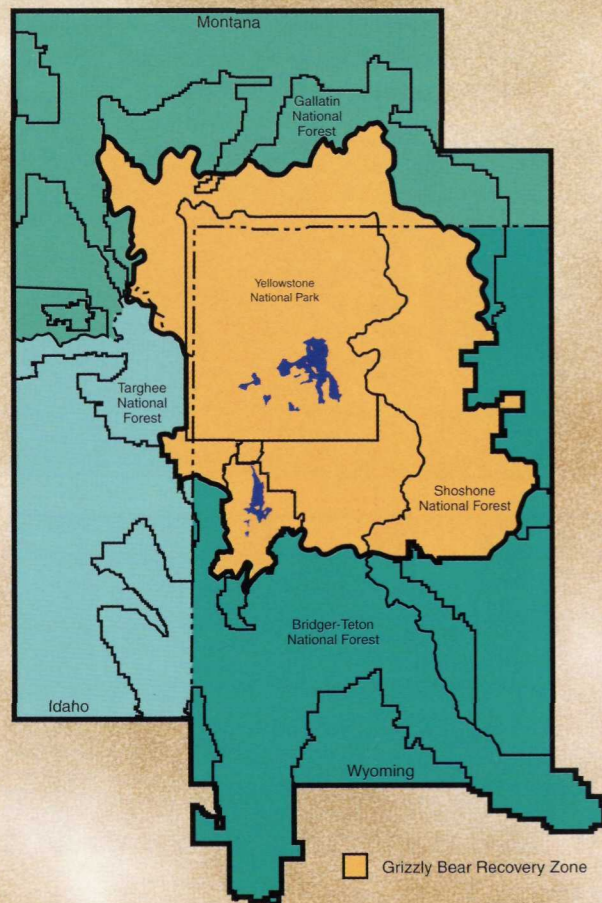
The Yellowstone Ecosystem is home to both the grizzly bear and the black bear. Several hundred grizzly bears live in the Yellowstone Ecosystem. Throughout the contiguous U.S. it is listed as a "threatened" species under the Endangered Species Act.

Black bears, on the other hand, are abundant throughout the Yellowstone Ecosystem.

For the sake of both people and grizzlies, it's critical for outdoor recreationist and hunters to be able to tell the two species apart.

Because the grizzly is federally protected, shooting one is illegal and can have costly consequences. Hunters are responsible for telling the difference between black bears and grizzlies and being sure of their target. The future of the grizzly bear depends on you.

The map below highlights the Grizzly Bear Recovery Zone in the Yellowstone Ecosystem. As the grizzly expands it's range beyond the recovery zone,



Note: Color and size alone can't be used for identification.

hunters will have to be increasingly aware of how to tell the difference between grizzly and black bears.

KNOW YOUR TARGET BEFORE YOU SHOOT!

Grizzly and black bear identification is based on several physical characteristics.

Despite the names "grizzly" and "black," coat color is the least reliable identifying feature, since not all grizzly bears are "grizzled" and not all black bears are black. Grizzly bears can be light-colored and many shades of brown, including brown so dark it looks black. Not all grizzlies have the silver-tipped guard hairs that give the animal a frosted or grizzled appearance. Black bears can be blond, cinnamon, dark brown, or black.

Size is also not a reliable indicator of species. Most people overestimate the size of grizzlies. A typical adult female grizzly bear weighs 200-350 pounds and adult males weigh 300-550 pounds. An adult male black bear can easily weigh as much or more than a female grizzly, and definitely more than a young or sub-adult grizzly of either sex.

The distinguishing characteristics are shoulders, face profile, ears, and claws.

Grizzly bears have well-developed shoulder muscles for digging and turning over rocks when they forage for food. These muscles often appear as a shoulder hump, even when the animal is standing still, walking, or running. Black bears lack this distinctive hump.

Grizzly bears have a concave face profile, or noses that seem to dip or dish inward in the middle. Black bears have a fairly straight face profile from forehead to nose tip, sometimes called a "Roman" nose. The concave shape of the grizzly profile makes the face appear broader than that of the black bear.

Grizzly bears tend to have smaller, more rounded ears. Black bears' ears tend to be larger, more erect, and more pointed.

Grizzly bears have long, gently curved claws adapted for digging. Black bears have shorter, more sharply curved claws adapted for climbing trees and tearing logs apart when foraging for insects.

All of these characteristics can vary with the sex and age of the bear; for example, young grizzlies' ears may appear larger because they're still "growing into them." Body position, behavior, and light conditions can also vary what is seen; for example, a black bear engaged in digging may appear to have a shoulder hump.

Proper identification should include as many of these characteristics as possible. Responsible hunters always make sure of their target; they don't shoot when the light is poor or when a brief glimpse of a fleeing animal makes identification difficult.

Food and odors attract bears

Bears will eat just about anything. Keep a clean camp, store food and garbage in a vehicle trunk or, especially with game meat, hang from a tree branch or line at least 10 feet above ground and 4 feet out from the trunk. Never bury garbage.

Bears don't like surprises

Make your presence known by making noise (talking, singing), especially in areas where visibility or hearing is limited (like heavily vegetated streamside areas). Travel with a partner and use extreme caution after dark.

Bears are wild animals

Enjoy bears at a distance. Bears usually avoid people, but both grizzlies and black bears can be unpredictable. A female in particular may be quickly provoked if she believes her cubs are being disturbed.

If you encounter a bear, move away slowly, do not run, and avoid eye contact. Give the bear plenty of room for an escape route. If the bear has not noticed

you, slowly move out of the area.

If a black bear charges, try to scare the bear by clapping hands, yelling, screaming, or throwing rocks. In the unlikely event that a black bear sees you as prey and attacks, fight back. In the even more remote possibility that the attack continues, as a last resort, curl into a ball or lie flat on the ground on your stomach and play dead.

If a grizzly bear charges, drop a coat or other non-food item to distract the bear. Curl into a ball or lie flat on the ground on your stomach and cover your neck and head with your hands and arms. Don't look up or move until you are absolutely sure the bear is gone.

The differences between responses to attacks are based on the typically more defensive nature of grizzlies and the sometimes predatory nature of black bears. Any bear can be dangerous and situations vary. Young grizzlies sometimes climb trees or can be predatory, and black bears can be defensive.

Carry bear repellent pepper spray. It has proven effective in warding off an attack or aggressive threats at close quarters.

Answers to photo quiz:

1. Black bear. Ears larger, more pointed; shorter claws; face narrow.
2. Black bear. Ears larger, more pointed; face narrow; no shoulder hump.
3. Grizzly bear. Long claws, but little else helps identify this yearling bear!
4. Black bear. Ears larger, more pointed; no shoulder hump.
5. Grizzly bear. Face broad; ears smaller, more rounded; coat grizzled.
6. Grizzly bear. Face broad; ears smaller, more rounded.
7. Grizzly bear. Face broad; shoulder hump; ears smaller, more rounded; coat grizzled.
8. Black bear. Ears larger, more pointed; claws not evident; no shoulder hump, just body position.

How about the bears on the cover? Did you know the top one is a black bear and the bottom one is a grizzly? Check out the bears on the back cover. The top one is a grizzly and the bottom one is a black bear.

(Photos by Wayne Kasworm, Mike Madel, Richard Mace, Tim Manley, and Keith Aune.)

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