



U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Mountain-Prairie Region, P.O. Box 25486
Lakewood, Colorado 80228
phone 303/236-7905, fax 303/236-3815
website: www.rb.fws.gov



How to Avoid Bears

While seeing a bear is a memorable experience, your safety and the survival of bears depends on you keeping your distance! Before you head into bear country, take time to learn about bears and how to best avoid them.

- **Before you go:** Check with the local forest, park, or game and fish department office to get the most recent report on bear activity in the area. Be sure you know about any special food storage regulations.
- **Pack smart:** Avoid bringing odorous foods, like bacon or tuna, or scented toiletries. Dry, sealed foods are lighter and less aromatic. Bring 100 feet of rope, storage bags, and carabiners for hanging food.
- **Use bear-resistant containers:** A good method for storing food and other odorous items that attract bears, these containers can be purchased or rented from outdoor shops. *Coolers, backpacks, wooden boxes, and tents are NOT bear resistant!*
- **Be alert:** Learn to recognize and watch for signs of bears in the area, like tracks, scat, and diggings. Use binoculars to scan the areas ahead. Bears often use the same trails hikers do, and are attracted to sources of food like berries patches or carcasses.
- **Hike smart:** Stick together in groups, rather than hiking alone. Groups of three or more hikers have rarely been injured by bears. Avoid hiking after dark, or at dawn or dusk, when bears are most active. Use extra caution in places where visibility or hearing is limited such as bushy areas near streams.
- **Alert bears to your presence:** If a bear hears you coming, it will usually avoid you. Make a habit of talking, singing, or clapping your hands so that a bear knows you are in the area; bells are less effective. Whistling is not recommended – it may sound like an animal noise and draw a bear near you.
- **Camp smart:** Avoid camping where there are signs that bears have been in the area. Do not leave food or other bear attractants in the open or in tents. Don't burn or bury garbage – hang it at least 10 feet off the ground and 4 feet from any vertical support, or store it in a bear-resistant container. Cook at least 100 yards from your sleeping area, and do not sleep in clothes you wore while cooking or eating.
- **View and photograph all wildlife from a distance:** You should never come closer than 100 yards to a bear. *Never* approach a bear, even if it looks calm. Use binoculars or a telephoto lens for close-ups.
- **If you go fishing:** Don't leave fish entrails on shorelines of lakes and streams; sink them in deep water. Failing to dispose of entrails increases the danger to yourself and others using the area after you.
- **Carry bear spray and know how to use it:** If you do inadvertently encounter a bear, you should remain calm, move slowly, and attempt to leave the area immediately. If a bear charges you, responsible use of pepper spray is the best way to deter an attack.