

Outdoor Awareness

Animals & Insects

MOOSE

Moose cause more injuries in Alaska each year than bears. In summer, cows defend their calves by maintaining a territory around them. Don't get too close. If you do, cows will protect their calf by charging, stomping and kicking with very sharp hooves. If you are charged by a moose, RUN!



Moose Safety Tips

- NEVER feed a moose. It is dangerous, and as of July 1, 1993 it is illegal to feed moose in Alaska, punishable by a fine of up to \$5,000 and up to one year in jail.
- NEVER get between a cow and a calf. Don't walk toward a moose if you can avoid it; try to remain at least 50 feet away.
- NEVER throw anything including snowballs at a moose.
- ALWAYS keep dogs under control or leave them at home (A dog may chase after a moose and suddenly find the moose chasing it. Naturally the dog runs back to its owner, bringing the moose along with it.
- AVOID moose that are in a fenced area or between houses; they may feel cornered.
- TRY to get behind a tree if a moose charges. You can run around the tree better than it can.
- IF A MOOSE ATTACKS you, get down on the ground, cover your head as well as you can, and stay very still. Don't wave your arms after you are on the ground.
- IF A MOOSE CHARGES, another option is to raise your hands over your head and spread out your fingers. Hold your arms still, don't wave them. Sometimes the moose will think that you are another animal bigger than he is.
- REMEMBER-- if you see its ears laid back and/or the hair on its "hump" stand up, it's angry or afraid and may charge.
- IF YOU SEE SOMEONE ABOUT TO BE CHARGED by a moose, making a loud noise or honking a might distract the animal long enough for the victim to take evasive action. Don't run up to the moose.
- REMEMBER MOOSE KICK with their front feet as well as their hind feet

Source: *Moose Safety Tips*, Alaska Fish and Wildlife Protection

BEARS

Alaska has flourishing populations of all three North American bears: brown, black and polar. The two you should be aware of here in Valdez are the Brown and Black bear.



Brown bears are famous for their salmon-fishing antics, their size and their ferocity. On Kodiak Island, browns grow to 1,200 pounds or larger because of the easy supply of salmon and the mild winters. Although many people fear the hump-shouldered bears -- and rightly so -- careful behavior in bear territory makes bruin viewing safe in such widely scattered places as Denali National Park, McNeil River State Game Sanctuary, Katmai National Park, Hyder's Fish Creek and the Anan Creek and Pack Island bear observatories. Occasional browns wander out of Chugach State Park and into Anchorage and its suburbs. The distinction between brown and grizzly bears is geographical. Brown

bears that live close to the coast are called brown bears. Browns living inland and in northern lands, such as Denali, are called grizzlies.

Black bears are smaller than browns and also cover a great deal of the state. Their fur color isn't always black; it may even appear brown, cinnamon or (rarely) blue. Black bears may be seen feeding on salmon at Anan Creek, but they're common enough in Juneau, Seward and parts of Anchorage to be considered pests. A male bear that's ready for hibernation may weigh 240 pounds.



Bear Safety Tips

- **Avoid surprise encounters**

- 1. Don't surprise a bear. Bears are active day and night. Watch for pawprints and scat. A grizzly's paw may leave a mark 15 inches long.
- 2. Be alert always to your surroundings. Make noise, especially when visibility is limited, to let bears know you're coming. Sing and shout as you walk. Avoid whistling or grunting, which a bear may perceive as sounds of food or threat.
- 3. Never run. Running might encourage a bear to chase you. Brown bears can run 30 mph and can gallop up a hillside. You can't.
- 4. If you come face to face with a bear, speak to it firmly but calmly. Wave your arms slowly or clap so that the bear will recognize you as a human.
- 5. Retreat slowly and quietly. Don't make eye contact with the bear.

- **Keep your distance**

- 1. Don't approach bears.
- 2. The minimum safe distance from any bear is 50 yards at Katmai. When it is a sow with cubs, stay 100 yards away. In Denali's open country, the preferred distance is a quarter mile.
- 3. If you're in a bear's path, move out of the way and let it pass. Don't make noise in an effort to move the bear out of your way. Try not to walk on obvious bear or game trails with limited visibility.
- 4. Don't interfere with a bear's foraging.

- **If a bear charges**

- 1. If a bear approaches you, don't run and don't drop your pack. Bears sometimes charge within 10 feet of a person before stopping or veering off. Dropping a pack may encourage a bear to approach people for food. Stand still until the bear moves away, then back off.
- 2. If a grizzly or brown bear makes contact with you, play dead. Curl up into a ball with your knees tucked into your stomach and your hands laced around the back of your neck. Leave your pack on to protect your back. If the attack is short, the bear may think the threat is removed and will walk away, so don't move. If the attack is prolonged, however, fight back vigorously for your life.
- 3. If a black bear makes contact, fight back. Throw rocks, shout and wave.

- **Firearms and pepper spray**

- 1. Backpackers and rafters are allowed to carry firearms on most federal land and in some national parks and preserves. (Katmai and Denali generally don't allow guns, for example, but Wrangell-St. Elias does.) The entire Katmai coastline, Brooks Camp and the Valley of 10,000 Smokes are to be firearms-free. A .300 Magnum rifle and a shotgun with rifled slugs are considered adequate for killing a bear, experts say, but the user must be ready for a quick attack, especially in brush. A .44 Magnum handgun is often considered not powerful enough against a charging bear and may be more dangerous to the hikers than to the bear.
- 2. Pepper spray contains capsicum, an irritant derived from some varieties of pepper. Some people carry it, but like a firearm it must be ready to use on a moment's notice. Unlike a firearm, its effectiveness is greatly affected by wind, rain, distance to the bear and the time the can spent on a shelf. A researcher also determined that improperly applied spray may actually attract bears.
- 3. Having a firearm or spray may provide a false sense of security. Avoiding bear contact through smart hiking and camping practices is a better plan overall.
- 4. "Bear bells" -- an inch wide or more -- are a popular item among hikers, who attach them to belts, hiking sticks and packs. Researchers found that a group of bears at Katmai, however, paid no attention to bear bells jangling near a trail.

Bear Safety Tips (cont.)

- **Food storage**

- 1. Food and beverages should never be left unattended. Food and other items with odors (toothpaste, gum and so forth) should be stored in a food cache or a bear-resistant food container or suspended 10 feet off the ground. National parks such as Katmai, Denali and Gates of the Arctic lend food containers to backpackers, and they may be rented in Anchorage. The containers, which weigh about 3 pounds, are shaped like a can and have a snug lid with a latch.
- 2. Keep backpacks and other gear with you. If a bear comes, it will often investigate, sometimes thoroughly, items left before it.
- 3. Avoid cooking greasy foods or foods that have a rich odor. For example, don't fry up a rack of bacon in bear country or open a can of sardines. Don't sleep in the same clothes you wore while cooking.
- 4. Keep your camp clean. Pack out your garbage.
- 5. In campgrounds, store all the food, food containers, coolers and dirty cooking utensils in a hard-sided vehicle or in campground food-storage lockers when not in use. This is a requirement at Denali and a good idea at all campgrounds.

- **Bears and fishing**

- 1. In Katmai and along streams elsewhere in the state, bears have learned to think of anglers as a source of food. Stop fishing when bears are present. If you keep a fish, take it immediately to a food storage area.
- 2. Always have someone "spot" bears while others fish. If you're playing a fish when a bear approaches, break your line quickly and move out of the water until the bear passes. A splashing fish often attracts a bear. To break the line quickly, lower the rod tip until it's parallel with the taut line, then pull backward quickly to snap the leader or tippet.
- 3. Don't clean your fish in camp.

Sources: Katmai National Park's "Bear Facts," Denali National Park's "Alpenglow" and the Anchorage Daily News.

OTHER ANIMALS & INSECTS

Porcupines injure many dogs and some people each year. While they can't "throw" their quills, they can flip their tails very quickly with a surprisingly long reach. Keep your pet on a leash and keep your distance.

Bees are found in Alaska too and numbers are high after a heavy snow winter. Anyone allergic to bees should carry medication whenever traveling in the backcountry.

From the Division of Parks & Outdoor Recreation