

# *Sasquatch Searcher*



*Bear Behavior and Information*

*By the Sasquatch Searcher*

*Always seek professional advice when it comes to safety*

## Bear Behavior

The best advice anyone can give you is to learn as much as possible about bears and their behavior.

Understanding bear behavior is an essential part of creating safe environments for both bears and people. More often than not, bear behavior is misinterpreted. People all too often interpret what a bear does in terms of their own fear. To truly understand bear behavior, you must interpret bear postures and vocalizations in terms of what the bear fears.

Bear behavior can be predictable. The more you can learn about bears and how they behave, the less likely you will be to have a negative encounter or misinterpret interactions.

Bears are predictable. In fact, bears are usually more predictable than people. If you learn more about bears and how to interpret their behavior, you will be able to react appropriately when you see them and avoid a negative encounter.

Bears are NOT ferocious. They are NOT mean or malicious. Bears are normally shy, retiring animals that have very little desire to interact with humans. Unless they are forced to be around humans to be near a food source, they usually choose to avoid us.

Bears, like humans and other animals, have a "critical space" - an area around them that they may defend. Once you have entered a bear's critical space, you have forced the bear to act - either to run away or be aggressive. The size of the critical space is different for every bear and every situation.

Although black bears and grizzly bears do share some common traits, it's important to understand the difference in the way they react to perceived threats. Each species has evolved different strategies for survival. Black bears, for instance, are usually less aggressive and more tolerant of people. They often live near human settlements, whereas grizzly bears prefer to stay away from human settlements and are often extirpated from heavily used or populated areas.

Black bears are excellent climbers. When a black bear is threatened it usually runs from the perceived threat or goes up a tree. With cubs out of danger, female black bears don't have to make vigorous defenses that risk potential injury. Although black bears tend to retreat from people, they are still incredibly strong animals that can cause injuries.

Today, bears tend to live in habitats that influence their behavioral response to perceived threats. In areas where black bears are habituated to humans they will defend themselves with much more force when threatened. A black bear's first line of defense is retreat, but black bear, especially sows with cubs, can be very aggressive towards other bears and people it perceives as threats.

Grizzlies are not good tree climbers, though it's important to note that they can climb trees. For instance, a mother grizzly usually will aggressively defend her cubs on the ground rather than send them up a tree as a black bear sow will.

Bears are very curious and will inspect odors, noises and objects to determine if they are edible or playable. Standing up on its hind legs allows a bear to get more information from its senses of smell, sight and hearing. It is a sign of curiosity, not aggression.

Bears are usually active from dawn to dusk, but they may be seen any time of day or night. Bears in many places of high human use have become nocturnal in order to avoid people. While others have become habituated to people in order to gain access to their plentiful buffet of improperly stored garbage and other attractants.

Bears can be very social. Bears are often described as asocial when compared to wolves, chimps or lions, but to use the term "asocial" to describe bears is incorrect. While bears do not live in extended family groups or join in hunts, they can co-exist in very close proximity to each other and in fact form alliances and friendships - some adult bears have even been known to mentor younger unrelated bears; young unrelated sub adults hang around in pairs and even groups (likely because there is strength in numbers) . The bears of a region are usually familiar with one another and meetings consist of complex social exchanges. Some bears like each other and other simply don't tolerate one another in their respective home ranges - not unlike people's relationships with each other.

Bears are not territorial. Being territorial means keeping other members of your species away from a given area. Wolves and primates are territorial - bears are not. Bears, like people, share home ranges. This mutual use of land and resources is a basis for bear social behavior.

Bears habituate, or become accustomed, to people just like they do other bears. Because plentiful food resources can be localized-salmon in a stream or berries on a mountainside-bears have evolved behavior that allows them to tolerate each other at close distances. This behavior is transferred to their relationship with humans. If they are not shot or harassed, bears habituate to people the same way they do to each other.

Bears live in a dominance hierarchy based on age, size and temperament. Mature males are at the top of the hierarchy, and sub-adults and cubs at the bottom. Bears establish and maintain their social position and place in the hierarchy by acting aggressively. Single females and sub adults are almost always submissive to mature males but have a loose hierarchy within their own group.

Bears react to new things in their environment. New objects or situations often frighten bears. Behaviorists call this "strange object response." After an initial

fright, bears will often investigate what alarmed them. This is not an aggressive act and shouldn't be regarded as one.

Bears are not always aware. Bears, particularly adult bears, are not always aware of what is going on around them. A bear following a trail doesn't always look ahead. He may be distracted by a yummy food source or may not be able to hear over the loud sounds of rushing water or blowing wind. A bear can literally blunder into an unsuspecting person.

Also beware that people every year are killed by bears, the majority of these attacks have been from black bears, in many regions the local bear population have become habituated to humans and have to regarded them as a food source, by feeding or unintentional feeding. Moreover more people die from black bear attacks than a brown bear or grizzlies bear, this is due to the black bears have lost all fear of people in those areas. Black bears in the wilderness areas are not habituated to humans and are usually hunted, they pose little threat. Now black bears that I call Park bears can be dangerous and you should use extreme caution when in those areas.

When camping in bear country you need to take special precautions to make a safe and secure camp. Camping in these areas mean that you secure all food and drinks into bear proof containers, or make the items inaccessible by placing under your truck or hanging them properly in a tree, I do mean under and secured. Never place any food in your truck, a bear can open up a truck like peeling fruit, they will make a mess of it, I have seen a large boar bear lift my truck up trying to get the cooler stuck under it.

NEVER place food or drinks in your tent, even for a short time, this includes **anything** that is edible or has a strong smell, failure to follow this simple advice could cause extreme dangerous conditions or even death. We at sasquatch searcher make it a rule that nobody puts food or drinks into a tent, if a tent gets the smell of food or spilled soda, we retire that tent and never use it again in bear country, and we set up our food prep area at least 20 yards from our sleeping area. This is also our trash and bathroom area, we keep them all 20 yards apart if we can.

Waking up to a bear woofing at the window of the tent or sniffing your feet, is one wake up call I prefer not to have on a daily basis while camping.

So keep bear safe and have a great time squatching.



If you find a bear with this look you are in serious trouble, this bear is extremely upset and dangerous.



Mother with cubs mean you leave, a sow bear will defend her young.



A lone cub is cute but means trouble leave the area.



This bear is just curious, leave it alone and it will leave you alone.

**The following pictures on the next page is what you are trying not to happen to you while you are in the bear woods, it drives home why you need to carry bear spray and keep a clean camp. Learn all that you can about bear behavior from your local experts to prevent a unwanted accouter. Always ask your local ranger or warden about bear activity in your area.**



We at Sasquatch Searcher hope this never happens to you or any of your family or friends.

This attack just took seconds to happen, always show caution when in the woods. Be safe be alert.