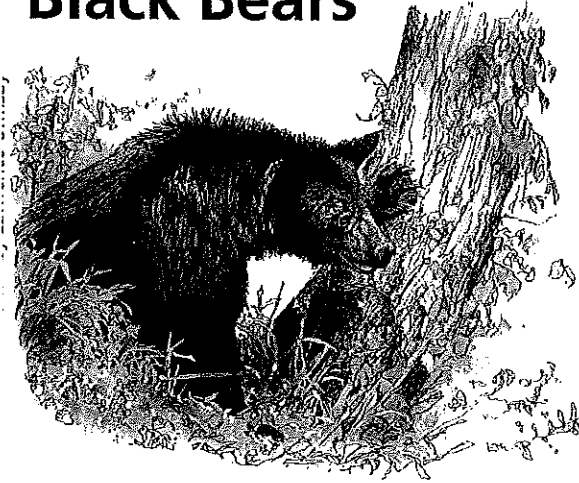




Black Bears



Some people may find the life of a bear appealing; it is a life concerned with three tasks—exploring, eating, and sleeping.

Black bears, the type found in Yosemite, have a home range of 10 to 50 square miles. Throughout their non-hibernating months, they are always on the move, exploring their home range in constant search for food. After tiring of one food source, they will move on to seek another.

Bear food sources vary seasonally. In spring, they rely on freshly sprouted grasses. Summer brings berries to gorge on. In fall, they devour acorns. Throughout the year, bears rip open insect-infested logs, eating the ants and termites inside.

After a good meal, a bear will often lie down for a rest. Indeed, most bears are crepuscular, meaning they are awake, active, and eating during the cool early morning and late afternoon hours. They rest during much of the day and night. Some bears easily adapt to nighttime activity, looking for food whenever it is most easily found.

A Bear's Life

In Yosemite, bears typically hibernate from December to April, depending on weather and food availability. In late January or early February, bear cubs are born, weighing less than one pound. In April, bears emerge from their dens in search of food. The cubs, usually born in pairs, follow their mother's every move and learn what to eat and what to avoid. They remain with their mother through the summer and then den with her for their first winter hibernation. Shortly after emerging for their second spring, cubs (then called yearlings) separate

from their mother, who begins to mate again.

Despite their large size (adults typically weigh 200-350 pounds) and incredible strength, black bears usually shy away from people. If you do see a bear in its natural habitat, for example a forest or meadow, be sure to keep your distance. Bears can become comfortable with people and lose their natural fear of us. This results in bears roaming parking lots and campgrounds, placing both the bear and people in danger.

The Appeal of Human Food

Bears are attracted to our food because it is high in calories. Since bears are trying to gain weight constantly—spring, summer, or fall—they are opportunistic in their eating habits, always interested in the quickest, easiest way to find food.

Because bears are intensely curious and have a superb sense of smell, a bear's

definition of food differs from yours. In Yosemite, "food" includes any item with a scent, regardless of packaging. This includes canned and bottled goods, drinks, soaps, cosmetics, toiletries, trash, ice chests (even when empty), and unwashed items used for preparing or eating meals.

Proper Food Storage

- During the day, you may leave food inside your car (with the windows closed), but be sure you remove all food before dark. It is illegal to store food in your car after dark.

- If you are hiking or picnicking, keep your food within arm's reach all the time. Remember that bears are active both day and night. If they see food unattended, they will try to take it.

- In campgrounds and tent-cabin areas, you must store all food in a food locker or in a motorhome with windows closed and the food out of sight.

- In hotel rooms and hard-sided cabins, store your food inside your room or cabin. Be sure to keep the windows closed when you are not inside.

- While backpacking use a bear-resistant food canister, which you can rent wherever you get your wilderness permit.

You may be cited (up to \$5,000) and your food and/or car may be impounded if you fail to store your food properly.



Illustration by Lawrence Ormsby

Bear Encounters

If you see a bear in any developed area or if a bear approaches you, act immediately to scare it away; make as much noise as possible by yelling or banging pots together. If you are with other people, stand together to present

a more intimidating figure, but do not surround the bear. Your goal is not to harm the bear, but to scare it from the area and restore its natural fear of people. Report all bear sightings to a ranger or by calling 209/372-0322.

If a Bear Gets Your Food

Bears that learn they can eat an entire day's worth of calories in just a few minutes quickly lose their fear of people. They may begin to approach—or even chase—people to get food. Tragically, when a bear becomes too aggressive, the National Park Service is forced to kill the bear.

Help us avoid this tragedy. Be sure you keep your food stored properly and know what to do if you see a bear. Keeping bears away from people and our food keeps them alive and free to forage for their natural foods, which are

abundant throughout Yosemite. You can do your part and make a difference in helping to keep Yosemite bears wild.

KEEP BEARS WILD



YOSEMITE WILD BEAR PROJECT