

TOMAHAWK SCOUT RESERVATION

BEAR MANAGEMENT PLAN

Tomahawk offers many wonderful wilderness experiences. One of them can be seeing a bear. Encounters with black bears are remembered and retold for years to come. Seeing a bear is proof that we still have extensive enough forests for this wide-ranging animal. Keeping our campsite clean helps to insulate bears from the effects of our increasing use of the wilderness, and helps prevent bears from being needlessly relocated or killed as nuisances.

The following plan has been developed to combat problems associated with Black bears at Tomahawk Scout Reservation. These procedures must be followed while at camp. They are good camping procedures for Scouts to learn and are for your protection and that of others coming to Tomahawk later in the summer. Please make sure that everyone in your troop knows and practices these procedures.

FOOD

Food is what Bears want. We must make it hard for them to find any in the camp! An excellent reference on campsite living and bear protection is the *Official Scout Handbook* (11th edition pages 139 & 263) or the *BSA Fieldbook* (3rd edition page 98).

Food must not be kept unprotected in the campsite!

- After the evening meal, bring all staples (bread, peanut butter, food items, and cleaning supplies) to the designated storage building in your camp, or store in a troop trailer or trunk of a vehicle.
- No candy may be stored in the campsite. Encourage Scouts to eat what they buy and not stockpile a supply.
- Bear bags and bear boxes may be used in campsite to store small quantities of food in sealed containers. Bear bags should hang at least 12 feet above the ground and 10 feet from the tree trunk. Do not hang the bag above your tent!

GARBAGE

Garbage must not be kept in the campsite!

- After each meal (at least once daily), bring all your garbage to the dumpsters. The dumpsters have "bear-proof" bars that must be reinstalled after you deposit the garbage.
- A clean campsite is a must. Wash your tables, dishes and patrol boxes after each meal. Clean up any spilled food from the ground and include with the garbage.

PERSONAL HYGIENE

Keeping clean is an important part of protecting yourself from bears. Bears are looking for food. Food odors on your body or clothes may draw bears into your campsite. Take the following steps as a precaution:

- Wash your hands and face every night.
- If you have been cooking, change clothes before you retire and hang them on a line to air out or place in a bear bag.
- Shower on a regular basis!
- Place "smellables" in a bear bag or box. They include toothpaste, soap, deodorant, and other personal products that have an odor.

BEAR SIGHTINGS - WHAT TO DO NEXT

Although some bears become familiar with people, they are still wild animals. If it is just passing through, let it pass. If it lingers, gather a group and make loud noises to try to scare it away. Do not throw anything at the bear or bears.

Knowing why the bear is lingering in your campsite is an important part of the assessment process. Often a bear is lingering because her cubs are in a tree (scared by Scouts or sleeping). When this happens, leave the area for a while (30 minutes to an hour). The bears will leave when things have quieted down.

We can enjoy this wilderness experience if we all take these procedures seriously. Please share this information with your Scouts.

IF A BEAR ENTERS YOUR CAMPSITE . . . DON'T PANIC! **DON'T APPROACH IT! DON'T FEED IT!**

A black bear in camp requires caution, but is not cause for great alarm. Most are timid enough to be scared away by yelling and other loud noises.

When a bear is sighted in your campsite, Troop Leaders should do the following:

1. Safety of Scouts comes above all else. Do not jeopardize personal safety for property or equipment.
2. Gather your group together in the campsite. You will find safety in numbers and more easily scare the bear away as a group.
3. Make noise, yell, bang pots and pans together, etc.! Noise may scare the bear from your campsite. Studies have shown that bears scare most easily before they have begun to eat. Once they find food, it is harder to move them out of your campsite. Swift action is important. Never get closer than 20 feet from the bear.
4. Do not throw objects at the bear. You will agitate the bear and may hurt him or yourself.
5. If the bear does not leave the area after making noise, all campers should vacate the campsite for at least 30 minutes. Usually the bear will leave after checking the area and not finding food.
6. Station people at the paths into the site so that an unknowing person does not encounter the bear. If the problem persists, contact a staff member.
7. If a bear enters your tent while you are sleeping, start talking with a calm voice and let the bear know that you are awake. Do not try to hit it or provoke it.

BLACK BEAR CHARACTERISTICS

- Color:** Body fur black, brown, or blonde. Brown muzzle. White chest patch uncommon. Eyes brown (blue at birth). Skin is light grey.
- Adult Weight:** Males - 125 to 500 pounds depending on age and season. Females - 90 to 300 pounds
- Adult Height:** 50 to 80 inches, nose to tail
- Litter Size:** Typically 2 cubs. Litters as many as four have been seen at Tomahawk in recent years. Mother typically raises cubs for 17 months and has a new litter every 2 to four years, depending on food supply.
- Life Cycle:** After being raised by the mother bear, adolescent bears are left on their own at 17 months. These "teenagers" often lack food gathering skills and are naive about humans. These young bears are frequent campsite and dumpster visitors. In the wild, bears can live 20 to 30 years or more, but have an average life span of 6 years due to hunting.
- Features:** Bears have excellent senses. They have color vision, a keen sense of smell and hearing that exceeds human frequency range and sensitivity. Bears are one of the more intelligent mammals. They can generalize to the simple concept level, and have excellent long-term memory.

Source: Information contained is a summary of "Watchable Wildlife: The Black Bear" published by the United States Department of Agriculture and prepared by the US Forest Service North Central Experiment Station. Copies of the pamphlet are available from the North Central Station Distribution Center, One Gifford Pinchot Drive, Madison WI 53705-2398.

Tomahawk staff members role in Bear Management Plan:

1. Tomahawk's has a comprehensive bear management plan which has been in place since 1997.
It has been reviewed annually and input was given by the Wisconsin DNR. Only adult staff who are trained to deal with bears will directly intervene in a bear situation.
2. Staff will receive specific training on how to handle bear sightings and problems.
 - a. Bear sightings and problems will be documented. Information gathered includes:
 - i. Location of sighting.
 - ii. Activity of bear (time of day, what it was doing when sighted).
 - iii. Bear's characteristics (size, color, tags, etc.).
 - iv. Bear's fear of humans
 - b. Information will be forwarded to DNR for assistance with removing problem bears.
 - c. A bear response team (adult staff) will be formed in each camp and reservation-wide.
3. Trained staff will investigate reported bear sightings. Campsite or area should be clear of people before any movement of bears or other intervention is attempted.
4. Efforts to train and educate campers will continue.
 - a. Orientations will include greater detail on bear safety and camping procedures.
 - b. Food/eating areas will be separated from sleeping areas as much as possible.
 - c. Campsites will be periodically inspected for rule compliance.
 - d. Consequences for non-compliance may include fines and/or dismissal from camp.
 - e. Bear boxes will be installed in all campsites.
5. The DNR is on 24 hour call for problems. They have shown excellent response time.
6. Problem bears may be trapped by the USDA. Bears that linger in campsites, cause repeated property damage, or those that have no fear of humans may warrant removal.

The Black Bears of Northern Wisconsin

Tomahawk Bear Management Plan

Black bears are the bears that people most often encounter. Black bears live in forests over much of North America, unlike Grizzly Bears that live only in Alaska, northern and western Canada, and the Northern Rocky Mountains.

REACTIONS TO PEOPLE

Black bears usually retreat before people are aware of them. Their hearing is more sensitive than humans, and their broad, soft foot pads allow them to move quietly through the woods. Bears can stand on their hind legs to see farther, run faster than 25 mph or climb trees as fast as squirrels. Bears generally prefer to forage for wild foods away from people, but are quick to seek food in campsites and garbage cans when wild nut and berry crops fail.

Campground bears may nip or cuff people that crowd around them, try to pet them, or tease them with food. Full-blown attacks by black bears are rare. Black bear attacks are usually not at campgrounds and are usually not by black bears that are familiar with people. The campground killings that have been so widely publicized have been almost exclusively by Grizzly Bears. Recorded killings by black bears this century total 28 across North America. Most of these killings were unprovoked acts of predation.

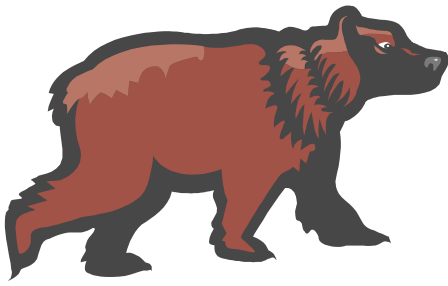
Unlike Grizzly Bears, Black Bear mothers seldom attack people in defense of cubs. Black bear mothers typically bluff charge or retreat. Misunderstandings about black bear behavior has led to much unnecessary panic when black bear cubs are involved.

COMMUNICATION

Bears usually do not vocalize, unlike bears in the movies. When the need arises, they communicate with grunts and blowing. A common defensive display is to blow or huff and make a short lunge and slap the ground. A more aggressive move is to blow and bluff charge. All these are a bear's way of saying "Move back." Any of these displays can occur when a bear feels crowded but is reluctant to leave food or cubs. Research has shown that these actions are not preludes to attacks and that aggressive behavior by people (yelling and making noise) will put a bear into retreat.

FINDING FOOD

The black bear uses its uncanny sense of smell to find food. They also have very sharp vision and use sight as much as smell to find food. Bears have color vision and do much of their foraging for natural foods by day. Their night vision allows them to feed on garbage and camper's food at night to avoid people. Black bears are quick to learn new feeding methods and have an excellent memory of feeding areas.



***THEY MAY LOOK FRIENDLY, BUT
THEY ARE NOT!***

***UNWANTED VISITORS CAUSE PROPERTY
DAMAGE AND CAN HURT YOU...***

BE A GOOD CAMPER BY TAKING THE APPROPRIATE STEPS.

CAMPSITE SANITATION and BEARS & RACCOONS

It is essential that campsite areas be kept clean. Not only is this a good camping practice, but it is the essential key to coexisting in the wilderness with the many animals who share the woods such as bears, raccoons, skunks, and deer.

Please follow these steps to protect your campsite from being "invaded" by the wildlife that share our forest.

1. Store food in patrol boxes and other animal proof containers. **Never store food in your tent.**
2. If bears have been reported in your campsite area, use "bear bags" to protect food supply or store food in vehicles or troop trailer at night.
3. Remove trash from the campsite every evening. Place trash in the dumpsters located in a central area of your camp.
4. If you spot a bear in your site, attempt to scare it away by banging pots and pans, yelling and clapping your hands. Never run towards the bear!
5. Report problems with bears and raccoons to your camp director.



❖ **NEVER LEAVE FOOD IN YOUR TENT!**

❖ **KEEP A CLEAN CAMPSITE!**

❖ **PUT FOOD AND OTHER "SMELLABLES" AWAY!**