



FROST CREEK

EAGLE, CO

LIVING WITH WILDLIFE

LIVING IN BEAR COUNTRY

Colorado has been home to bears since their earliest ancestors evolved in North America. These large, powerful animals play an important role in the ecosystem.

Today, increasing numbers of people routinely live and play in bear country. For many people, seeing a bear is rare and the highlight of an outdoor experience. Learning about bears and being aware of their habits will help you fully appreciate these unique animals and the habitat in which they live.

BLACK BEARS AT A GLANCE

Black bears are the most common and generally the smallest of North American bears. Others include the grizzly/brown and the polar bear. Today, only the black bear is known to exist in Colorado. Although we do not know exactly how many black bears live in Colorado, population estimates range from 8,000 to 12,000 bears. A black bear may live to be 20 years in the wild, although very few do, and up to 25-30 years in captivity. Black bears are very agile, can run in bursts up to 35 mph and can run up or down hills quickly and easily. Their short curved claws help them to climb trees. Black bears are strong swimmers.

Threats to black bears include accidents, disease, motor vehicles and starvation. Natural enemies include other bears and mountain lions. Humans are responsible for the deaths of most black bears: loss of habitat, feeding, illegal killing, destruction of bears that pose a threat to people or livestock and property, and hunting. Prior to 1935, there was unlimited hunting of black bears. The designation of bears as game animals in 1935 provided for their management. Current regulations protect cubs and females with cubs.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

- *Ursus americanus*, meaning “American black bear” is the bear’s scientific name. Despite the common name, black bear, they aren’t always black. They may be honey-colored, blond, or black. They may have a tan muzzle or a white spot on their chest. Most Colorado black bears are some shade of brown, and they sometimes appear cinnamon-colored, leading some people to mistake them for grizzly bears.
- A black bear’s body appears heavy and supported by short, powerful legs. The highest point of a black bear is the middle of its back. There is no prominent shoulder hump as there is on the larger grizzly bear.
- Black bears vary in size and weight, with males generally being larger than females. Adult males average 275 pounds while the adult female may average 175 pounds. Depending on the season, food supply and gender, they may weigh anywhere from 125 to 450 pounds. Black bears measure about 3 feet high when on all 4 feet or about 5 feet tall standing upright.

SIGNS AND SOUNDS

- Black bear tracks are very distinctive – the hind foot print resembles that of a human. All bears have 5 toes, with the front foot short and about 4-5 inches wide. The hind foot is long and narrow measuring about 7 inches. Claw marks may or may not be visible.
- Bears use trails just as people do since it's easier to travel on a trail than through underbrush. Being aware of tracks, droppings and other bear signs (claw marks on trees, rotten logs ripped apart and hair on tree bark from rubbing), will allow you to determine better the presence of bears.
- It's easy to recognize a black bear's sizable droppings or plant leaves, partly digested berries, seeds or animal hair
- Black bears are solitary. They don't associate with other bears except sows with cubs or during breeding. Bears may gather at a place with abundant food – for feeding
- Bears are intelligent and curious. They can see colors, form and movement. Although their vision is good, they generally rely on their acute senses of smell and hearing to locate food and warn them of danger.
- Adult black bears make a variety of sounds. However, the commonly heard sounds are woofing and jaw-pooing. The young ones whimper or bawl.

HABITAT

- Black bears have long been viewed as forest dwelling animals. However, an unbroken expanse of forest doesn't provide enough food for black bears. They need berry patches and stream bottoms to satisfy their appetites for plants and insects.
- In Colorado, the largest black bear populations are found in areas dominated by Gambel's oak and aspen near open areas of chokecherry and serviceberry bushes.
- Every bear has a home range where it finds all it needs. It travels to different areas of its home range as snow recedes, plants sprout and berries ripen.
- In general, black bears may range from 10 to 100 square miles. Adult males occupy the largest areas, while females usually establish their home range close to their mothers.

HUNTING AND FEEDING HABITS

- Bears may be active anytime, day or night, most often during morning and evening twilight. When not feeding or looking for food, rest in day beds – next to a log in a windfall, in dense brush or in the depression left by an uprooted tree.
- Black bear are omnivores – they eat both plants and animals. About 90% of a bear's diet is made up of nutritious plants, while about 10% of its diet consists of animals.
- Bears will eat broad-leafed flowering plants, berries, nuts, insects, carrion (dead animal carcasses) and grasses. They opportunely eat anything edible.
- In late summer, black bears are trying to fatten up for winter hibernation. During this period, they may be actively feeding for up to 20 hours per day and may ingest 20,000 calories daily.

BEARS AND WINTER

- Since little food is available during winter, bears would have difficulty surviving if they remained active, so they hibernate. In Colorado, female bears enter their dens in late October and males in early November.
- Black bears commonly den in rock caverns, excavated holes beneath shrubs or trees, in hollow logs or rotten trees and in brush thickets. Rock caverns are the most common kind of den in western Colorado.
- A hibernating bear's heart rate and breathing slow, and its body temperature drops 4 -12 degrees F. During this time, bears do not eat, drink or eliminate body wastes. They maintain their energy levels and water balance by using stored fat.
- When bears leave the den, snow may still be on the ground, but green-up has usually begun at lower elevations. Many bears will move to lower areas in spring. Also, it's a couple of weeks before the bear's digestive system becomes active. During this critical period, the bear must rely on the remaining stored fat.

MATING AND BREEDING

- In Colorado, male bears are capable of breeding at 3 years of age. A few female bears may have cubs at 3 or 4 years, although 5 years is more common.
- Bears mate in early summer, but development of the fertilized egg is delayed until November. If the female enters the den in poor condition, it is believed she will reabsorb the fertilized egg rather than continue development of a fetus.
- The female bear generally does not breed again while her cubs are with her.

BIRTH TO MATURITY

- After a 2-3 months' gestation period, 1 to 5 (usually 2) tiny cubs are born in midwinter. They are blind, toothless and covered with a very fine hair at birth.
- Nurtured with their mother's rich milk, they grow from less than 1 pound at birth to an average of 10-20 pounds by the time they emerge from the den in mid-May.
- Care of the cubs' rest solely with the female. The cubs watch their mother and learn by mimicking her. Most black bear cubs stay with their mother for 1 year. The young may climb trees for protection or when they are threatened.
- By the time the black bear cubs' second spring arrives, they have become more self-reliant. Littermates may stay together through the summer and perhaps even den together. Cubs will usually not reunite with their mother. Some cubs separate from their mother in their first autumn and become independent.



WHEN BLACK BEARS MEET PEOPLE

Where bears and people share habitat, following these simple precautions will reduce your risk of conflicts. Learn as much as you can about bears and their habitat. When you are in bear country, know what areas a bear may use during the different seasons. Watch for bear sign (tracks and droppings). Be aware of your surroundings and try to determine if bears may be present.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU LIVE IN BEAR COUNTRY

If you choose to live, or have a summer home in bear country, make sure you don't contribute to resident bears becoming "garbage" bears. Most conflicts between bears and people are linked to careless handling of food or garbage. Don't let your carelessness cause the unnecessary death of a bear. Learn to live responsibly with Wildlife!

Black bears eat almost anything. They will eat human food, garbage, hummingbird food, and pet and livestock food when available. Once a bear has found the easily accessible, consistent food source that human settlements can offer, it may overcome its wariness of people and visit regularly, increasing the chance of a human/bear encounter. You and your neighbor can make a difference. Your actions may prevent the unnecessary death of a bear!

- Make your property safe by keeping garbage out of reach and smell of bears. Use bear-proof trash containers. Contact Colorado Parks and Wildlife for designs. Be sure garbage cans are emptied regularly. Periodically clean garbage cans to reduce residual odor- using hot water and chlorine bleach or by burning. Store trash in a closed garage or shed. Use a chain link enclosure with a top if a garage or shed is not available.
- If you have pets, do not store their food or feed them outside. Clean your BBQ grill of grease and store inside. Hang bird seed, suet and hummingbird feeders on a wire between trees instead of on your deck or porch. Bring all bird feeders in at night. Do not put fruit, melon rinds and other tasty items in mulch or compost piles.
- As you might guess, beehives attract bears. You can protect your bees, honey and equipment if you surround the hives with fences designed to keep bears out. Contact Colorado Parks and Wildlife for designs.
- Most bears sighted in residential areas within bear habitat do not cause any damage. If a bear doesn't find abundant food, it will move on.

WHAT TO DO WHEN CAMPING AND HIKING IN BEAR COUNTRY

Although black bears are generally shy and avoid human contacts, there are some precautions you can take to avoid encounters if you camp and hike in bear country. You are responsible for doing all you can to prevent conflicts with bears. If a bear gets food from you, it's likely to behave aggressively toward the next person it meets. Don't reward a bear for associating with people.



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CAMPING:

- **KEEP YOUR CAMP CLEAN.** Store your food and garbage properly at all times. Keep your tent and sleeping bag free of all food smells. Store the clothes you wore while cooking or eating with your food. Burn all grease off grills and camp stoves. Wipe table and clean up eating area thoroughly.
- **STORE YOUR FOOD SAFELY.** Store all your food and cooler in your car trunk or suspended from a tree – at least 10 feet off the ground and 4 feet out from the tree trunk. Don't underestimate the ingenuity of a bear!
- **DISPOSE OF GARBAGE PROPERLY.** Put in a bear-proof garbage cans where available or secure it with your food then pack it out. Don't burn or bury garbage. Bears will dig it up.
- **SLEEP WELL AWAY FROM FOOD AREAS.** Move some distance away from your cooking area or food storage site.
- **STORE ANY TOILETRIES SAFELY.** Store them with your food- the smell of toiletries may attract bears. Abstain from sexual activity. Practice good personal hygiene.

HIKING:

- **ENJOY THE WOODS!** Hiking at dawn or dusk may increase your chances of meeting a bear. Use extra caution in places where hearing or visibility is limited: in brushy areas, near streams, where trails round a bend on windy days. Reduce your chances of surprising a bear by making noise – talk or sing.
- Make sure children are close to you or within your sight at all times. Leave your dog at home or have them on a leash.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU MEET A BLACK BEAR

- There are no definite rules about what to do if you meet a bear. In almost all cases, the bear will detect you first and will leave the area. Bear attacks are rare compared to the number of close encounters. However, if you do meet a bear before it has had time to leave an area, here are some suggestions. Remember: Every situation is different with respect to the bear, the terrain, the people and their activity.
- **STAY CALM.** If you see a bear and it hasn't seen you, calmly leave the area. As you move away, talk aloud to let the bear discover your presence.
- **STOP.** Back away slowly while facing the bear. Avoid direct eye contact as bears may perceive this as a threat. Give the bear plenty of room to escape. Wild bears rarely attack people unless they feel threatened or provoked.
- If on a trail, step off the trail on the downhill side and slowly leave the area. Don't run or make any sudden movements. Running is likely to prompt the bear to give chase and you won't out-run a bear.
- **SPEAK SOFTLY.** This may reassure the bear that no harm is meant to it. Try not to show fear.
- Coming between a female and her cubs can be dangerous. If a cub is nearby, try to move away from it. Be alert – other cubs may be in the area.



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- Bears use all their senses to try to identify what you are. Remember: Their eyesight is good and their sense of smell is acute. If a bear stands upright or moves closer, it may be trying to detect smells in the air. This isn't a sign of aggression. Once it identifies you, it may leave the area or try to intimidate you by charging to within a few feet before it withdraws.
- **FIGHT BACK** if a black bear attacks you. Black bears have been driven away when people fought back with rocks, sticks, binoculars and even their bare hands.

WHO DO YOU CALL?

Colorado Parks and Wildlife is reasonable for managing, conserving and protecting wildlife. Your concerns about wildlife are our concerns as well.

If you have a potentially life-threatening situation with a black bear or if an injury occurs, please contact Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Monday through Friday, 8AM – 5 PM as listed below. After hours contact the Colorado State Patrol or the Eagle County Sheriff's Department. To report property damage, please contact the Division during normal business hours. Your information is very valuable to us.

Northwest Region Service Center: Glenwood Springs - Phone - (970) 947-2920

LIVING IN LION COUNTRY

Much of Colorado, including the Front Range, is prime mountain lion country. This simple fact is surprise to many residents and visitors. These large, powerful predators have always lived here, preying on plentiful deer and playing an important role in the ecosystem.

You may live in or recreate in lion country. Like any wildlife, mountain lions can be dangerous. With a better understanding of mountain lions and their habitat, we can coexist with these magnificent animals.

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT MOUNTAIN LIONS

A mountain lion, commonly known as a cougar, panther or puma, exists only in the Western Hemisphere and is one of North America's biggest cats. In Colorado, population estimates range from 1,500 to 3,000 mountain lions. A lion's natural life span is probably about 12 years in the wild and up to 25 years in captivity. Lions are very powerful and usually kill large animals, such as deer and elk. Natural enemies include other large predators such as bears, lions and wolves. They also fall victim to accidents, disease, road hazards and people.

The status of the mountain lion in Colorado evolved from that of varmint, on which a \$50 bounty was offered from 1929, to designation as big game species in 1965. The change in legal status reflected growing public appreciation and concern for sound mountain lion management.



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PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

- The lion's scientific name, *Felis concolor*, means "cat of one color." Mountain lions in this area are usually tawny to light-cinnamon in color with black-tipped ears and tails.
- Mountain lions vary in size and weight, with males being larger than females. Adult males may be more than 8 feet in length and weigh an average of 150 pounds. Adult females may be up to 7 feet long and weigh an average of 90 pounds.
- Mountain lions are easily distinguished from other wild cat species in Colorado. Lions are much larger than lynx or bobcats and have a long tail, which may measure one-third of their total length.

TRACKS

- In an unhurried walk, lions usually place the hind paw in the imprint made by the front paw. They have 4 toes with 3 distinct with 3 distinct lobes present at the base of the pad. Generally, claw marks are not visible since their claws are retractable.
- Generally, the lion is a solitary animal. Adult males almost always travel alone. If tracks indicate two or more lions traveling together, it probably a female with kittens.

HABITAT

- The mountain lion's habitat ranges from desert, chaparral and badland breaks to subalpine mountains and tropical rain forests.
- In Colorado, lions are found in areas of pinyon pine, juniper, mountain mahogany, ponderosa pine and oak brush. Lions generally will be most abundant in areas with plentiful deer.
- Individual lions range in areas varying in size from 10 – 370 square miles. Females with young kittens use the smallest areas; adult males occupy the largest areas.
- Size of the home range depends on the terrain and how much food is available. Boundaries of male home range are marked with piles of dirt and twigs, called scrapes, which signal to other lions that this area is occupied.

HUNTING AND FEEDING HABITS

- Lions are most active from dusk to dawn, although they travel and hunt in daylight. Lions prefer to eat deer; however, they also kill elk, porcupines, small mammals, livestock and variety of domestic animals such as pets.
- Mountain lions prefer to kill their own prey. Like most cats, they take their prey by ambush rather than by a long pursuit. After spotting prey, a lion stalks using available cover, then attacks with a rush, often from behind.
- Lions usually kill with a powerful bite below the base of the skull, breaking the neck. Lions will drag the carcass away to feed and then cover the carcass with dirt, leaves or snow and may return to feed on it over the course of a few days. Generally, they move the carcass and recover it after each feeding.
- Lions feeding on a kill can be dangerous to people. Lions that have been fed by people or seem "tame" may become aggressive, unexpectedly.

MATING AND BREEDING

- Female lions generally reproduce when they are about 2-1/2 years old.
- Courtship begins when a roaming female in heat makes frequent sounds and leaves a scent that attracts males. After locating the female, the male accompanies her for just a few days when mating occurs.
- Breeding can take place throughout the year but most females give birth between April and July, following a 3-month gestation period.

BIRTH TO MATURITY

- The female gives birth to an average of 2 to 3 young, called kittens. She usually chooses a secluded spot beneath an uproot tree or a rocky depression. Care of the kittens rests solely with the female. She defends them vigorously against male lions, which may kill them.
- Newborn kittens are about 1 foot long and weigh about 1 pound. They are covered with blackish-brown spots and have dark rings around their short tails. The young stir only to nurse until they are about 2 weeks old, when their eyes open and they become alert and playful. Weaning occurs at about 2 months.
- Kittens learn hunting skills through play and cooperation, and by watching their mother. When the young are about 6 weeks old, she begins taking them to her kills to feed.
- As the kittens mature, their spots fade. At 6 months, they weigh over 30 pounds and are becoming capable hunters. Kittens remain with their mother for another year, improving their hunting skills.

WHEN MOUNTAIN LIONS MEET PEOPLE

Generally, lions are calm, quiet and elusive. They tend to live in remote, primitive country. Lions are most commonly found in areas with plentiful deer and adequate cover. Such conditions exist in mountain subdivisions, urban fringes and open spaces. Consequently, the number of mountain lion/human interactions has increased. This increase is likely due to a variety of reasons: more people moving into lion habitat, increase in deer populations and density, presumed increase in lion numbers and expanded range, more people using hiking and running trails in lion habitat and a greater awareness of the presence of lions.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU LIVE IN LION COUNTRY

We can live with these incredibly efficient predators if we respect mountain lions and their habitat. To reduce the risk of problems with mountain lions on or near your property, we urge you to follow these simple precautions.

- Make lots of noise, if you come and go during the times mountain lions are most active – dusk to dawn.
- Install outside lighting. Light areas where you walk so you could see a lion if one were present.

- Closely supervise children whenever they play outdoors. Make sure children are inside before dusk and not outside before dawn. Talk with children about lions and teach them what to do if they meet one.
- Landscape or remove vegetation to eliminate hiding places for lions, especially around children's play areas. Make it difficult for lions to approach unseen.
- Planting non-native shrubs and plants that deer often prefer to eat encourages wildlife to come onto your property. Predators follow prey. **DON'T FEED ANY WILDLIFE!**
- Keep your pet under control. Roaming pets are easy prey and attract lions. Bring pets in at night. If you leave your pet outside, keep it in a kennel with a secure top. Don't feed pets outside; this can attract raccoon and other animals that are eaten by lions. Store all garbage securely.
- Place livestock in enclosed sheds or barns at night. Close doors to all outbuildings since inquisitive lions may go inside for a look.
- Encourage your neighbors to follow these simple precautions. Prevention is far better than a possible lion confrontation.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU MEET A MOUNTAIN LION

People rarely get more than a brief glimpse of a mountain lion in the wild. Lion attacks on people are rare with fewer than a dozen fatalities in North America in more than 100 years. Most of the attacks were by young lions, perhaps forced out to hunt on their own and not yet living in established areas. Young lions may key in on easy prey, like pets and small children.

No studies have been done to determine what to do if you meet a lion. But based on observations by people who have come upon lions, some patterns of behavior and response are beginning to emerge. With this in mind, the following suggestions may be helpful. Remember: Every situation is different with respect to the lion, the terrain, the people and their activity.

- When you walk or hike in mountain lion country, go in groups and make plenty of noise to reduce your chances of surprising a lion. A sturdy walking stick is a good idea; it can be used to ward off a lion. Make sure children are close to you and within your sight at all times. Talk with children about lions and teach them what to do if they meet one.
- Do not approach a lion, especially one that is feeding or with kittens. Most mountain lions will try to avoid a confrontation. Give them a way to escape.
- **STAY CALM** when you come upon a lion. Talk calmly yet firmly to it. Move slowly.
- **STOP** Back away slowly only if you can do so safely. Running may stimulate a lion's instinct to chase and attack. Face the lion and stand upright.
- **DO ALL YOU CAN TO APPEAR LARGER.** Raise your arms. Open your jacket if you're wearing one. If you have small children with you, protect them by picking them up so they won't panic and run.
- If the lion behaves aggressively, throw stones, branches or whatever you can get your hands on without crouching down or turning your back. Wave your arms slowly and speak firmly. What you want to do is convince the lion you are not prey and that you may in fact be a danger to the lion.



- **FIGHT BACK** if a lion attacks you. Lions have been driven away by prey that fight back. People have fought back with rocks, sticks caps or jackets, garden tools and their bare hands successfully. Remain standing or try to get back up.

WHO DO YOU CALL?

Colorado law states the Colorado Parks and Wildlife is responsible for managing, conserving, and protecting most wildlife. Your concerns about wildlife are ours too.

If you have an encounter with a lion or an attack occurs, please immediately contact the Colorado Parks and Wildlife, Monday through Friday, 8AM – 5PM, as listed below. After hours, contact the Colorado State Patrol or Eagle County Sheriff’s Department. To report a sighting, please contact the division during normal business hours. Your information is very valuable to us.

Northwest Region Service Center: Glenwood Springs - Phone - (970) 947-2920

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT MOUNTAIN LIONS

For the most part, people and wildlife can coexist. Coexisting with wildlife is an enjoyable part of living in Colorado. The key is to respect the wildness of wildlife. You can learn more about lions by reading any of the following books:

- America’s Great Cats, 1986, by Gary Turbak and Alan Carey, Northland press, Flagstaff, AZ
- Soul Among lions: The Cougar as Peaceful Adversary, 1989, by Harley G. Shaw, Johnson Books, Boulder, CO
- The Puma: Legendary Lion of the Americas, 1987, by J. B. Tinsley, Texas Western Press, El Paso, TX
- The Wonder Series: Mountain Lion, A Story and Activities by Sandra Chisholm Robinson, Denver Museum of Natural History, CO