

L I V I N G I N  
**BEAR  
COUNTRY**

Guidelines for bear-proofing  
your property



## Acknowledgments

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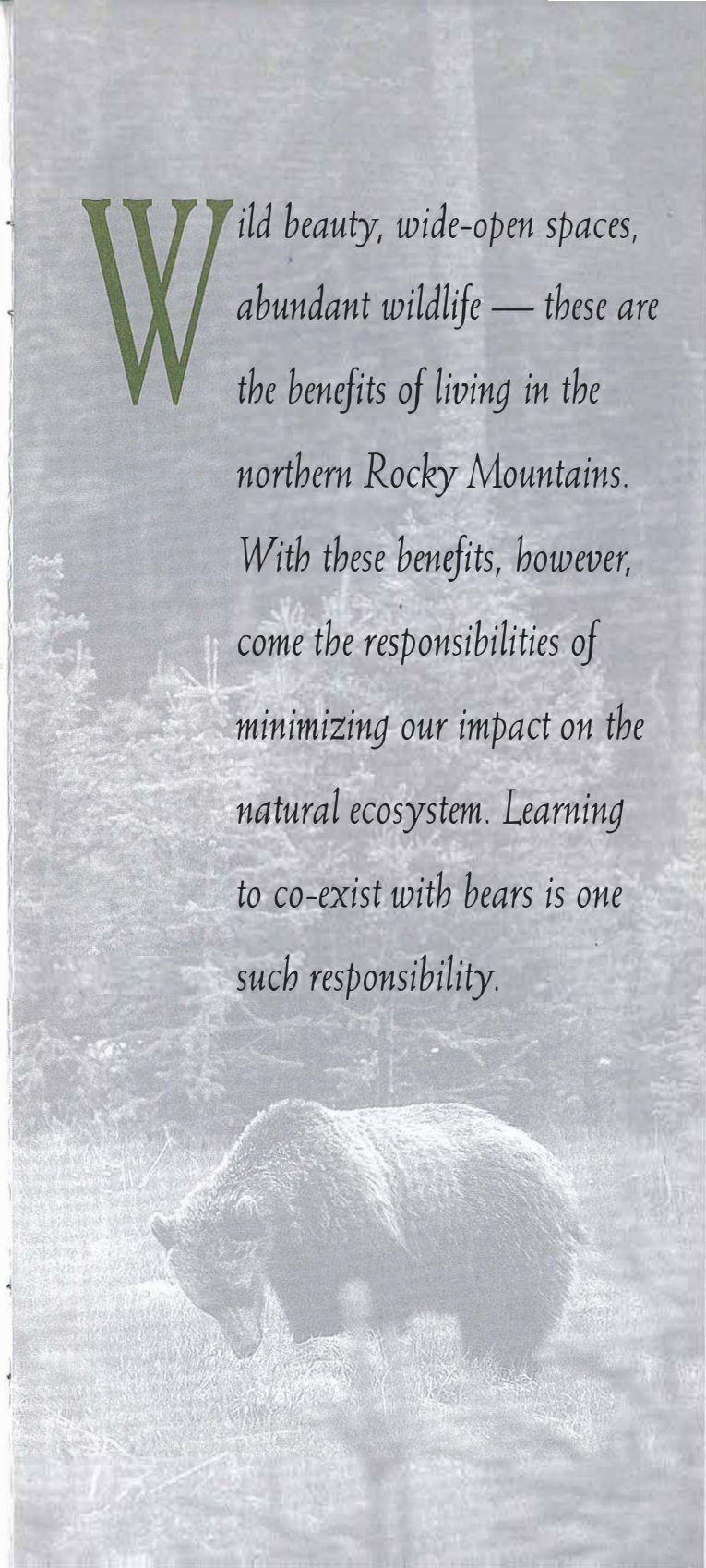
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**W**ild beauty, wide-open spaces,  
abundant wildlife — these are  
the benefits of living in the  
northern Rocky Mountains.  
With these benefits, however,  
come the responsibilities of  
minimizing our impact on the  
natural ecosystem. Learning  
to co-exist with bears is one  
such responsibility.





## Dispose of garbage properly.

### **Don't let garbage pile up or develop strong odors that can attract bears.**

Minimize odors by keeping garbage in tightly closed plastic trash bags. Stash food scraps, especially meat, fish and fruit by-products, in the freezer in an airtight container or wrapped in newspaper until trash collection day.

**Use bear-proof trash and recycling containers.** Plastic and metal trash cans with fitted lids and dumpsters with sliding doors or lift-up lids are not bear-proof. Bear-proof trash and recycling containers feature sturdy construction and self-closing mailbox-top-style lids and are designed to be secured permanently to prevent toppling. Fifty-five-gallon steel drums with locking-ring lids are a less expensive alternative. Ask your state wildlife agency where you can purchase them. Your local garbage service may require you to use bear-proof containers and may even provide them. If you don't have a bear-proof container, keep garbage and recyclables in the house or a secured area such as a roofed enclosure with bear-proof fencing until close to pick-up time on trash day.

When garbage is no longer available at one house, bears will move on to the next, so encourage your neighbors to bear-proof their garbage, too. Advice and financial assistance for obtaining the appropriate containers is available to groups of neighbors working together to keep bears out of their yards. For more information, call:

**National Wildlife Federation  
Northern Rockies Project Office  
(406) 721-6705**

**Don't discard cooking grease in your yard.** Collect it in a glass, plastic or metal container with a lid. When ready to dispose of it, transfer it to a plastic bag, seal the bag tightly and place it in a bear-proof container.

## Be bear-aware when cooking and eating outside.

**Don't leave any food or beverage — including unopened canned items — outside or even on a screened porch.** As soon as you are finished eating, bring all dishes, containers, utensils and uneaten food inside the house.

**Promptly and properly discard or recycle soda cans, used paper plates, cups, disposable containers and napkins.** Anything that has been used to hold or cook food and beverages (especially sugary ones) can attract bears.

**Don't leave food cooking outside unattended.** Bears have been known to snatch sizzling steaks right off the grill.

**Clean outdoor cookers and coolers thoroughly after each use.** Burn off any remaining food particles and scrub the grease from grills, smokers and other outdoor cookers. If cooking over an open fire, remove any unburned food or scraps from the fire pit. Store coolers and cookers inside if possible. Even empty coolers and clean grills can retain trace odors that can entice bears. And bears that have had a taste of what coolers and grills can offer will investigate others they come across.

**Don't leave scented products outside.** Bears will sample anything that smells good, even nonfood items such as suntan lotion, insect repellent, soap and candles.



*This unsecured shed shows the damage done by a bear.*

## **Bear-proof your property.**

**Vehicles:** Don't leave trash, groceries or animal feed in your vehicle. Bears can and do pry open car and truck doors and break windows to get at food or coolers and other items they associate with food.

### **Porches, Windows and Other**

**Entranceways:** Keep doors and windows closed and locked. Food smells can lure bears inside. If you must keep a freezer or refrigerator outdoors, secure it to the wall and padlock the doors so bears can't knock it over and open it. Outdoor lighting can also be used to deter bears from approaching buildings.

**Lawns:** Keep your lawn mowed and weeded. Grasses, dandelions and clover are natural bear foods. Keep the landscape open in the area surrounding your house.

**Gardens:** Consider electric fencing if you have a garden. Vegetable gardens, especially those containing potatoes and root vegetables such as carrots and beets, attract bears. Flower gardens are not as attractive to bears as long they don't contain sweet vetch, dandelions or clover. Never use blood meal as a fertilizer or deer repellent in any garden.

**Compost Piles:** If you must have a compost pile, enclose it with electric fencing. Don't put meat, fish, melon rinds and other pungent scraps in the pile. Better yet, compost only leaves and grass, not kitchen scraps. Keep the pile aerated and properly turned. Add lime to promote decomposition and reduce odor.

**Fruit Trees and Berry-Producing Shrubs:** It's best not to have fruit-bearing trees, which bears can climb and destroy, and shrubs on your property in bear country. However, if you do have apple, crabapple, chokecherry or other fruit trees or berry bushes and don't wish to replace them with varieties that don't attract bears, install electric fencing. Pick fruit as soon as it ripens (or before if you're not going to use it right away). Remove any that has fallen to the ground as soon as possible.

**Bird Feeders:** Don't put out any type of bird feeder during the period bears are active, mid-March to mid-November. (Birds don't need supplemental feeding at this time anyway.) This



includes suet feeders, peanut butter feeders, all types of seed feeders and hummingbird feeders. At a minimum, make feeders unavailable by hanging them at least ten feet from the ground and four feet from any supporting post or tree trunk. Better yet, take them down and bring them in at night. Pick up all waste seed, hulls and shells, or use only shelled seeds and nuts. Store all birdseed indoors. As an alternative to hummingbird feeders (the sugar water solution used to fill them is particularly attractive to bears), plant red or pink native flowers known to appeal to hummingbirds such as petunias, scarlet runner beans, columbines and snapdragons.

**Salt and Mineral Blocks:** Don't set out salt and mineral blocks to attract wildlife to your yard, because bears are among the animals that like them. (Also be aware that the deer, elk and moose these blocks attract can in turn draw mountain lions to your property.)

**Pets:** Don't leave pets unattended outside, especially at night or when a bear is known to be in the area. Store pet food inside. Consider feeding pets (and livestock) at midday so they are finished eating before dusk. Bring pet food bowls inside as soon as pets are finished eating. Don't leave bones and scented chew toys lying around your yard.

**Beehives:** Install electric fencing around hives or place them on a platform with an overhang at least six-and-a-half feet from the ground.

**Livestock:** Bears usually don't bother horses, adult cattle or llamas; however, calves, goats, geese and especially sheep, pigs and chickens

are vulnerable. To keep bears out of corrals and chicken coops, install electric fencing.

Store all livestock feed in a secured area or in a bear-proof container. If an animal dies, remove the body from your property as soon as possible. Haul it to the landfill, have a rendering service pick it up or bury it at least eight to ten feet deep in a remote spot on your land. Don't dump an animal carcass on public property or leave it near a building, road, trail or other developed area.

**Funding for predation prevention efforts and reimbursement for verified losses of livestock to grizzly bears is available.**

The Bailey Wildlife Foundation Proactive Carnivore Conservation Fund administered by Defenders of Wildlife provides financial assistance for electric fencing and other predation prevention measures. For more information, call:

**Defenders of Wildlife  
Northern Rockies Office  
(406) 549-4103**

Defenders also administers The Bailey Wildlife Foundation Grizzly Compensation Trust, which reimburses citizens for verified losses of livestock to grizzly bears. If you believe a bear has killed livestock on your property, call one of the following agencies to investigate and submit a report to Defenders:

**Montana Department of Fish,  
Wildlife and Parks  
406-994-4042**

**Idaho Fish and Game Department  
(Check listings for nearest regional office.)**

**U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Wildlife Services  
208-239-6921**

## How to tell a black bear from a grizzly bear.

Although the grizzly is more powerful, assertive and unpredictable, both black bears and grizzlies can be dangerous to humans. Familiarize yourself with the distinguishing characteristics of the two species so you'll know which one you're dealing with should you encounter a bear. Size and color are not sufficient to make a positive identification. Size is relative and both species range in color from black to blond. More reliable distinguishing features are:

**Head shape:** Grizzly bears have a concave (dished) profile. Black bears have a relatively straight profile from the forehead to the tip of the nose.

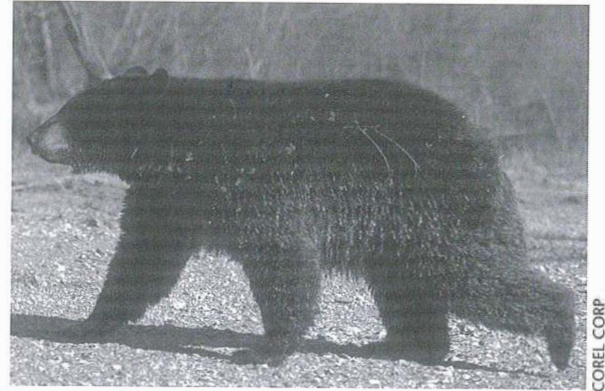
**Ear size and shape:** Grizzly bears have smaller, more rounded ears. The ears of the black bear are larger, more erect and more pointed.

**Shoulder hump:** Grizzly bears have prominent shoulder humps on their backs formed by the powerful muscles of their forelegs. Black bears usually do not have distinctive shoulder humps.

**Claws:** Grizzly bears have long, slightly curved, more obvious claws. Black bears have shorter, more curved claws.

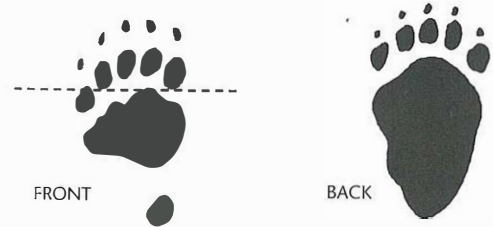
**Front Paw Tracks:** Imagine a straight line drawn from the bottom of the big toe to the little, or fifth, toe. In grizzlies, all the toe prints will be above the line. In black bears, half to all of the fifth toe will be below the line.

## BLACK BEAR

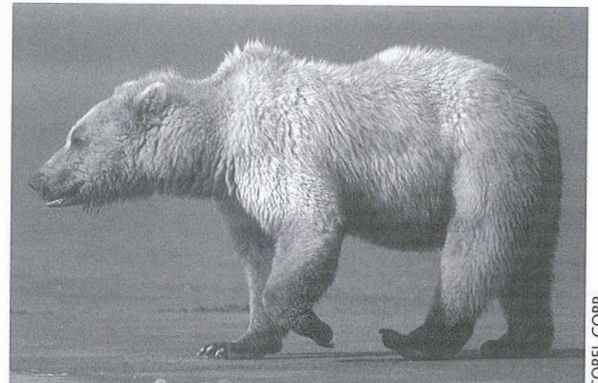


COREL CORP.

### BLACK BEAR TRACKS



## GRIZZLY BEAR



COREL CORP.

### GRIZZLY BEAR TRACKS



## Know what to do if there's a bear in your yard.

**Report all bear sightings and incidents on your property to your state wildlife agency.** If it's a grizzly bear, call immediately.

**If you are certain the bear is a black bear, encourage it to leave.** Bang on pots and pans or make other loud noises. (Boat air horns work well.) As a last resort (and only if you're in a protected position) throw stones or other small objects in the direction of the bear with the intent of driving it away, not hurting it. The more stressful a bear's encounter with you is, the less likely it is to come back.

**If you unexpectedly encounter a bear in your yard, walk, don't run, away.** Move slowly and don't make eye contact. If the bear is a grizzly with cubs, don't get between her and her cubs or threaten the cubs in any way. If the bear charges, stand your ground. Bears commonly "bluff charge," stopping within a few feet. If a grizzly continues to come at you, drop to the ground, curl up in "cannonball" position, head between knees and hands clasped around the back of your neck, and play dead. Playing dead shows the animal you're not a threat. It may leave you alone or paw you and inflict mild injuries.

**Be prepared for close encounters with bears by carrying pepper spray.** Keep a canister of spray (at least eight ounces) on your belt (and near the front and back doors of your house). Sprayed in the face of a charging bear at close range, oil-based pepper sprays containing at least ten percent oleoresin capsicum have been proven to halt attacks. Read the directions and practice firing the canister before you start carrying it. Use the spray only in the event of an attack.

*If we can learn to live with bears, especially the grizzly, and if we can learn to accommodate the needs of bears in their natural environment, then maybe we can also find ways to use the finite resources of our continent and still maintain some of the diversity and natural beauty that were here when Columbus arrived."*

—Stephen Herrero,  
author of "Bear Attacks:  
Their Causes and  
Avoidance" and a  
recognized authority  
on bear behavior