

Bear Facts



Black bears belong to the group Ursidae the world's largest living carnivores. However, these so called carnivores are actually omnivores, meaning that they spend much of their time eating vegetation, fruits, nuts, berries, carrion and honey.

Black bears have different colour phases that vary from cinnamon, light brown, dark brown to black. Some black bears also have white fur patches on their breast, between the front legs. Therefore, black bears are not always black.

Females (sows) usually do not have cubs before they are five years old. The average number of cubs per sow is 2 every other year, but some have been known to have up to 6 cubs. Such a large litter of cubs per sow is rare and in such cases, most of the cubs do not survive. Male black bears (boars), are on average 4 years old before they breed.

Cubs will generally stay with their mother for the first year, including the following winter. The bond between mother and cubs is a very strong one and mothers teach their cubs how to search for food and select habitat. She will teach them to be bold and unafraid of people if people sensitize her into believing that humans have food. It is important to remember that a mother bear will do anything to protect her cubs. Therefore, mother bears with cubs pose the greatest risk to people.

The average weight of an adult black bear is between 200-474 pounds, with more than half of its weight comprising of muscle. Consequently, black bears are both large and strong. Do not underestimate their power.

Black bears have excellent hearing and a keen sense of smell. They can both smell us and hear us long before we even begin to notice them. Often when they hear or smell us, they will stand on their hind legs to get a better view as we pass. If this happens to you, back away slowly and leave the area.



Kiyoshi Takahashi

This brochure was produced by the Minnekhada Park Association, a group of local residents concerned about the safety of both humans and bears in Minnekhada Regional Park. We also work on other park issues. You are welcome to join our group when we meet at Minnekhada Lodge, normally every fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:00 pm, except July and August.

For more information about our group and how to get involved, contact GVRD Parks' Community Development Coordinator at 604-520-6442.

MINNEKHADA PARK ASSOCIATION

Please Be Bear Aware



IN MINNEKHADA
REGIONAL PARK



Protect Our Bears



Watching a bear cross a meadow is a magical experience. We have a responsibility to take care of these majestic and intelligent mammals that live in our parks and forests.

BC Parks

- If you see bear cubs, mother bear is always around. Speak so that she knows you are there, but never scream or make sudden loud noises. Back away from the area and do not run. It is very dangerous to surprise mother bears or come between a mother and her cubs inadvertently.
- If a mother bear has pushed her cubs up a tree, you are at risk. This is the first sign that a mother is aware and anxious of your presence. Leave the area immediately.
- If you encounter a bear while in your vehicle, remain inside and do not open your windows. Do not prevent the bear from crossing the road.
- Children should not run or play in areas of dense brush or be unsupervised in bear country. Bears sleep in these types of areas during the daytime.
- **Never let children approach bears.** This is very dangerous. Bears can be unpredictable and dangerous even when they look calm and peaceful.
- **Keep your pets on a leash.** Many encounters with bears have occurred when a dog has brought a chasing bear back to its owner.
- **Do not surprise or startle a bear.** This can be avoided by noise such as talking, singing, whistling or wearing bells. These noises will help alert bears to your presence.

It's easy to forget that these creatures are wild and dangerous when we observe them during peaceful moments of play and foraging. Most bears prefer to avoid human contact. However, by simply watching bears, we help sensitize bears to people. This creates circumstances where people and bears can get hurt. Every year, black bears are killed in the Lower Mainland because they have become sensitized to our pets, our food and garbage, and to us.

We ask you to help stop this by being responsible for your actions in Minnehada Regional Park.

Please be bear aware

- **Travel in groups** of two or more when entering bear habitat.
- **Be alert.** Avoid wearing headphones that may prevent you from observing any bear activity around you.
- **Never approach a bear,** even to take a photograph. If photography is your mission, use a long range telephoto lens.
- **Never attempt to feed a bear.** Feeding bears will sensitize them to humans, making the bears very dangerous. Bears are large, strong and dangerous animals. They are not pets. It is unlawful to feed wildlife.
- **Never leave food or garbage laying around.** Keep it in trash bins, take it with you or leave it in your trunk.
- **Never chase a bear.**

Encounters . . .

- **Do not attempt to outrun a bear.** They can run very fast (50 km/h) uphill and downhill. They are not clumsy.
- **Do not climb trees if you feel threatened.** All bears are excellent tree climbers.
- **If approached by a bear, avoid eye contact.** Do not turn your back to a bear. Instead, back away and continue to speak firmly calling out 'Go Away Bear!'
- If a black bear charges you, yell loudly and firmly "Go Away Bear", "Bad Bear", etc. Wave your arms to make yourself look bigger. Back away from the area quickly, but do not run. **Never play dead with a charging black bear.**
- **After a negative bear encounter,** you must for your own safety **leave the area immediately.** If you meet people, inform them of your experience so they do not enter a dangerous situation unknowingly.