

## SCOPE

This procedure is intended to provide information on Wildlife Encounters that pose a moderate or high-risk hazard.

## HAZARDS

Any animal encounter that poses a health or safety risk to employees working outdoors.

## GENERAL PRECAUTIONS

- Always assume you are working in bear, cougar, and wolf country.
- Be aware of fresh tracks, droppings, berry patches, food sources or fresh kills. Claw marks, torn up stumps/rotten logs, and upturned earth.
- Prevention is the best safety measure.
- It's a good practice to make loud noises while walking in the field (yelling or talking to yourself). Bells and whistles can reduce the risk of surprising any animal.
- Never leave a food or garbage trail.
- Reschedule work in if you feel unsafe or partner up. For high-risk areas plan to work with partners.
- Never approach any wildlife.

## BEAR SAFETY

Bears are the most frequent threatening animal encountered in the field. Black bears are normally shy. Bears will forsake their natural shyness in three situations:

- When their cubs are threatened;
- When they perceive danger;
- When they sense the presence of something edible.

In any of these situations, bears have been known to become threatening and aggressive. Understanding a bear's body language will help you interpret its intentions. In a close encounter, a bear will likely make a loud huffing or blowing sound; this means the bear is nervous or afraid. If it swats or beats the ground with its front paws, it's telling you that you're too close to it, so back away and give it more space. The bear might even bluff a charge to get you to move away from it. These displays don't mean that an attack is imminent. In the extremely rare event of an encounter with a predatory bear, the animal may not give any visual warning of its intentions, pressing closer and closer to you, assessing if it's safe to attack. Never turn and run in such situations. Be aggressive, throw rocks or sticks and make whatever noise you can.

## BEAR ENCOUNTERS

- Try to determine what kind of bear you are dealing with, try not to over-react.
- If the bear has not detected you, move away from it quietly, back the way you came and leave the area. Make sure you are not blocking the bears avenue of escape.
- Watch for any signs of cubs and make sure you never get between a sow and her cubs (danger zone).
- If you think the bear has noticed you, start to make noise by talking loudly and slowly wave your arms.
- If the bear follows, set some piece of equipment down in its path and continue to move slowly away. Don't leave food, except as a last resort. Retreat to your vehicle.
- If a Grizzly Bear charges, and you are convinced it intends to attack, this is the time to lie down and play dead. Grizzly attacks are more often about asserting dominance only and removing the threat, do your best to remain in a ball and try not to struggle or cry out. If the bear no longer sees you as a threat, it will often leave.
- If a black bear attacks you, fight back as hard as you can as these attacks are more likely predatory in nature (the bear is trying to eat you).

## COUGAR SAFETY

- Never approach a cougar as they are unpredictable. Cougars feeding on a kill may be dangerous.
- Always give a cougar an avenue of escape.
- Stay calm. Talk to the cougar in a confident voice.
- Do not run, back away from the cougar slowly. Sudden movement or flight may trigger an instinctive attack.
- Never turn your back on the cougar and do what you can to enlarge your image. Pick up sticks or branches and wave them about.
- If a cougar attacks you, fight back as hard as you can as these attacks are more likely predatory in nature (the cougar is trying to eat you).

## WOLF SAFETY

- Normally wolves are secretive and will run away when they encounter people, but they can become habituated, and approach. It is extremely important to discourage wolves from approaching.
- If a wolf appears and acts unafraid or aggressive:
- Do not allow the wolf to approach any closer than 100 meters.
- Raise your arms and wave them in the air to make yourself appear larger.
- Maintain eye contact with the wolf and avoid running, crouching, or turning your back on the wolf.
- If it continues to approach or engage with you, throwing objects at it and hitting it with anything available are appropriate and generally very successful at deterring the animal. Pepper spray designed for bears is also an effective deterrent for wolves.



### OTHER WILDLIFE

- Other wildlife, such as moose, or deer may also pose a threat to people working outdoors. Always keep in mind the above general precautions while working outdoors.
- Be aware of calving and rutting season as ungulates can be dangerous at these times – Calving Season – May 1 to June 30. Rutting season (varies by spp.) = Sept 1 to mid-Dec.