

Bear Story

Spring is when bears who've been hibernating all winter come out of their dens to start foraging for food. So, if you head to the forests and mountains to hike, fish, or camp you'll want to be sure to look out for bears in your vicinity.

It's a good idea to make lots of noise as you walk through the woods. Talk loudly; rattle metal cups, pots, and canteens; and fasten "Bear Bells" to your shoe strings, zippers, and walking sticks to create extra noise as you walk along. The more noise you make, the better, so you won't startle any bears foraging nearby. Most bears will run away from noise, not toward it.

You should also carry bear spray to deter them if they get too curious. When you are camping, you should store your food in "Bear Safes" or hang it from trees by a rope to avoid attracting them to your campsite.

When you are hiking in bear country, it's helpful to know if you are likely to encounter regular black or brown bears, or grizzlies. The grizzlies are much larger, more aggressive, and very difficult to deal with, if they pursue you. A better strategy is to avoid grizzlies, if possible.

You can sometimes determine if regular bears or grizzlies are near you, by looking for bear tracks. Large bear tracks are likely to be made by a grizzly, if the tracks are more than about six inches in size, and exhibit indentations made by their long claws.

But, an even better method to detect grizzlies is by measuring the size of their skat (manure). The skat for brown or black bears will normally be a pile three to five inches in diameter, while the skat for grizzly bears can exceed six or even ten inches! And, grizzly bear skat may be filled with chewed-up bear bells!