

News Release

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Service Urges Communities to Be “Bear Aware”

MISSOULA – The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reminds the public to “Be Bear Aware” this spring as bears emerge from winter hibernation. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service, and other state and federal partners are committed to ensuring safe conditions for people and wildlife. To achieve this goal, we need your help.

The most common human-bear conflicts involve unsecured attractants, such as garbage and human food, or surprise encounters. Protect yourself and bears by staying alert and following these guidelines:

- Never approach bears: always stay at least 100 yards (300 feet) away from bears, about the length of a football field
- Never feed, leave food for or make food accessible to bears
- Store food, garbage, barbecue grills and other attractants in hard-sided vehicles or bear-resistant storage boxes
- Carry bear spray, know how to use it, and make sure it is accessible
- Hike or ski in groups of three or more, stay on maintained trails, and make noise
- Avoid hiking at dusk, dawn, or at night
- Do not run if you encounter a bear
- Report bear sightings, encounters and conflicts to your state or tribal wildlife management agency
- Instead of bird feeders, set up bird houses or bird baths, plant native flowers or set up hanging flower baskets for hummingbirds
- Keep chickens and other small livestock properly secured using electric fencing or keeping them inside a closed shed with a door

Bears search for food soon after emerging from hibernation. Grizzly bears may eat deer and elk that died over the winter, newly emerging vegetation, and in some areas, small livestock such as chickens or calves. Human food can attract bears too. Bears may become food conditioned, habituated, or both if human food is available, posing a risk to human and bear safety.

Both food conditioning and habituation often lead to the hazing, relocation or euthanasia of bears by wildlife managers to protect human safety. These actions are generally avoidable if people store attractants properly and do not habituate bears to humans.

It is not only unsafe to approach grizzly bears, it is also illegal. Grizzly bears are protected as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Intentionally approaching a grizzly bear or disrupting its normal behavior of feeding, breeding or sheltering is illegal unless human safety is at risk.

Male grizzly bears can emerge from hibernation in early March. Female grizzly bears with cubs usually emerge in April and early May. Grizzly bears typically den above 6,000 feet in elevation during winter and move to snowless areas at lower elevations each spring to search for food.

For more information on bear-resistant products and bear safety, visit the Interagency Grizzly Bear Committee website: <http://igbconline.org/>.

For information about grizzly bear conservation and biology, visit:
<https://www.fws.gov/mountain-prairie/es/grizzlyBear.php>.

The mission of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is working with others to conserve, protect, and enhance fish, wildlife, plants, and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. For more information on our work and the people who make it happen in the West, visit [our website](#), [connect with us on Instagram](#) [and Facebook](#), [follow us on Twitter](#), [watch our YouTube channel](#), [and download public domain photos from Flickr](#).

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