

Wildlife Aware

PRE EMPLOYMENT TRAINING FOR:



B L U E C O L L A R G R O U P

www.bluecollargroup.ca



ALTHOUGH THIS TRAINING MODULE PROVIDES UP-TO-DATE AND RELEVANT INFORMATION, IT IS IMPORTANT TO CONSIDER THAT EVERY WILDLIFE ENCOUNTER CAN BE DIFFERENT. ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR IS GENERALLY PREDICTABLE, BUT EACH ANIMAL IS UNIQUE. THEY ARE WILD. WE CANNOT KNOW EVERYTHING FOR SURE.

IN ANY ENCOUNTER, IT IS IMPORTANT TO USE YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF ANIMAL BEHAVIOUR, JUDGEMENT, AND EXPERIENCES TO ASSESS THE SITUATION AT HAND.





COUGARS



COUGARS

- Cougar sightings and encounters are rare. However, as human populations increase in rural areas, cougars are more frequently coming in contact with domestic livestock, pets, and people.
- Increased recreational activity has also caused an increase in human encounters with cougars.
- It is important to note that a cougar will normally sense you and leave an area before you realize it is nearby.
- Prevention is the most effective way to minimize cougar encounters.



WORKING IN COUGAR COUNTRY

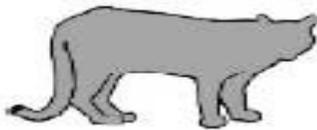
- If possible, never travel alone in the backcountry; keep with a group or use the buddy system.
- Check with your local Parks Board about wildlife sightings in the area you are working.
- Be aware of your surroundings. Learn to recognize signs of cougar activity such as: tracks, scat, and markings.
- Avoid areas where carcasses have been left. Be aware that cougars often cover their kills with forest debris.
- Carry a walking stick and bear spray.
- Make noise to alert cougars of your presence.
- If you come across cougar kittens leave them alone! Immediately leave the area as a mother cougar will aggressively defend her young.



Catskill Mountaineer Track Guide

Mountain Lion: Males: 115-160 lbs (130 ave) 24-30"H x 60-108"L
Female: 75-105 lbs (90 ave) 24-30"H x 60-108"L
Look for a LONG tail

Bobcat: 15-35 lbs (25 ave) 18-24"H (22" ave) x 24-48"L SHORT tail



Mountain Lion



32" - 44"



3" - 5"



Lynx

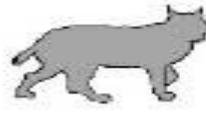


24" - 33"



3 1/2"

3 3/4" - 4 3/4"



Bobcat



22" - 26"



1-3/4" - 2-1/4"

www.catskillmountaineer.com

TRACK RECOGNITION

Cougar tracks have classic feline attributes: they are asymmetrical, they have a curved ridge between heel and toe pads, heel pads are larger than toe pads, the front paw is always larger than the hind paw, and each toe has a retractable claw (for this reason, claws are never seen on cougar tracks).



PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The species name *Felis concolor*, literally means one colour. However, cougars can be several different shades of golden/yellowish brown, depending on where they live.
- Male cougars can reach up to 90 kilograms. Females weigh between 40 and 60 kilograms.
- Because their hind legs are longer than their forelegs, cougars have great leaping power. Their tails can reach 150 centimetres and are used for balance.
- Cougars are fast and can even outrun deer for short distances.
- Their vision is well adapted for hunting. Cougars possess a total vision field of 287 degrees and are well equipped to detect movement of prey. For night vision, cougars have an extra large pupil to gather light. During the daylight hours the pupils contract to a vertical slit or “cat’s eye.”



HABITS AND BEHAVIOUR

- Cougars are crepuscular by nature (most active at sunrise and sunset), but they will hunt at any time.
- Cougar dens can be found on ledges, on steep slopes in hollowed trees, under fallen logs, and in between rocks. They keep their dens clean; free of bones and other litter.
- Cougars have ranges up to 300 square kilometres. They may roam up to 80 kilometres in a single day.
- Cougars mark their territory along trails, under trees and on cliff edges and ridges. They do this by using mounds of scraped and scratched earth, pine needles, and other forest litter that is soaked with urine and scat.
- Cougars can mate any time of the year, but normally mate between March and June. Three months after mating a litter of two to four kittens is born. Kittens weigh as little as 350 grams at birth and are born blind. Kittens are nursed for three months then introduced to meat. They stay with their mothers for up to two years.



HUNTING

- Cougars are efficient predators. Their primary food source is deer, but cougars will also hunt elk, moose, sheep, porcupine, beaver, hares, grouse and occasionally livestock.
- Cougars are opportunists and prefer to hunt easy targets (e.g. weaker prey, small animals/children, pets), although they will hunt healthy animals if they spot a good target (e.g. human crouching down, animal separate from the group).
- People often mistakenly believe that the cougars ambush their prey by leaping from trees, however, that is not the case. Cougars normally hunt by slinking close to the ground in a stalking stance and come within 10 metres of their prey. Once close enough, cougars typically pounce on their prey from the side; dig their claws into the shoulders, neck, and flank; and bite the neck or throat.
- The kill is dragged to a densely sheltered area where the cougar gorges on the meat. After feeding, kills are usually covered with leaves and other material.
- Cougar kills can be distinguished from those of wolves and coyotes by method of attack and feeding characteristics. Cougars prefer to start on the liver, heart, and lungs in the abdominal cavity, while wolves and coyotes feed on the tail end first.



COUGAR ENCOUNTERS

- Never approach a cougar. Although they will normally avoid confrontation, they can be unpredictable.
- Always leave room for a cougar to easily escape.
- DO NOT turn your back on a cougar. Face the cougar and slowly back away.
- DO NOT run or play dead. Try to back away slowly as running or sudden movements may trigger an attack.
- Stay calm. Talk to the cougar in a strong, firm voice.
- Make yourself appear as large as possible by holding your arms, or an object, above your head.



AGGRESSIVE COUGAR

If a cougar shows interest or follows you, respond aggressively:

- Try to appear as if you are the predator rather than the prey.
- Maintain eye contact with the cat, show your teeth, and make loud noises.
- Actions such as shouting, waving a stick, or throwing rocks may help prevent an attack. Crouch down as little as possible when picking things (e.g. sticks or rocks) up off the ground.
- If a cougar does attack, FIGHT BACK! People have survived by using their bare fists, sticks, fishing rods, and rocks! Focus attack on cougar's face and eyes. Try to convince the cougar you are a threat.





BEARS



WORKING IN BEAR COUNTRY

- Never feed or approach bears or other wildlife.
- Reduce or eliminate odours that attract bears.
- Pack out all your garbage. DO NOT leave food in cache garbage. Store garbage with your food, out of reach of bears. DO NOT bury garbage. DO NOT leave “compostables” at the block (e.g. apple cores)
- Carry a walking stick, hunting knife, and bear spray when possible. **Use a shovel as a defense tool.**
- Let bears know you are present by making noises such as talking or singing. Avoid areas where carcasses have been left. Be especially cautious during Summer months when bears will be foraging for berries.
- Watch for bear signs: tracks, droppings, overturned rocks, rotten trees torn apart, clawed, bitten, or rubbed, bear trails, fresh digging, or trampled vegetation.



PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

Both Black bears and Grizzly bears can be blonde, brunette, red or black haired. Grizzlies are normally bigger than black bears, but this is not always the case. They live in the same areas. Both species are fast runners, able swimmers, and can climb trees. So how do you tell them apart??

GRIZZLY

- Have a shoulder hump. This hump is made of muscle that the grizzlies need to be such strong diggers.
- Long, light-coloured, and fairly straight claws. These claws help them rake through the ground to get at roots, bugs, and ground squirrels.
- Small, rounder ears, although juvenile grizzlies may have ears that still stick out a bit.
- On their tracks the toe pads form a straight line and leave claw imprints 2-3" in front of toe pads.

BLACK BEAR

- No shoulder hump and a larger rump. When bear is standing on even ground, you can see that the highest part of its back is the rump
- Claws are shorter, dark-coloured and curved. These claws help them to scale trees to escape danger.
- Longer, pointier ears.
- On their tracks, the toe pads form an arc and leave a little, or no, claw imprints.

Remember that colour and size are not always a good way to tell a bear's species. Always look at a combination of all the bear's features.



Black Bear

Left Front Foot Track

- Claws shorter
- Toes more separated and more curved



Heel pad of front foot often does not show for either species

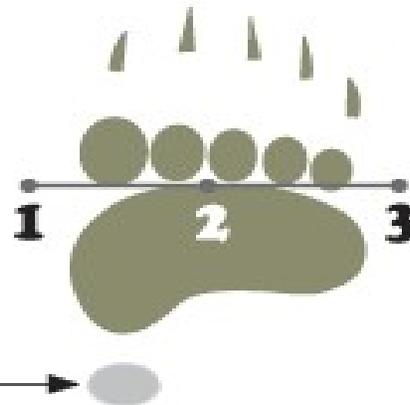
Left Back Foot Track



Grizzly Bear

Left Front Foot Track

- Claws longer
- Toes closer together and less curved



Left Back Foot Track



- Tracks of big grizzlies are larger

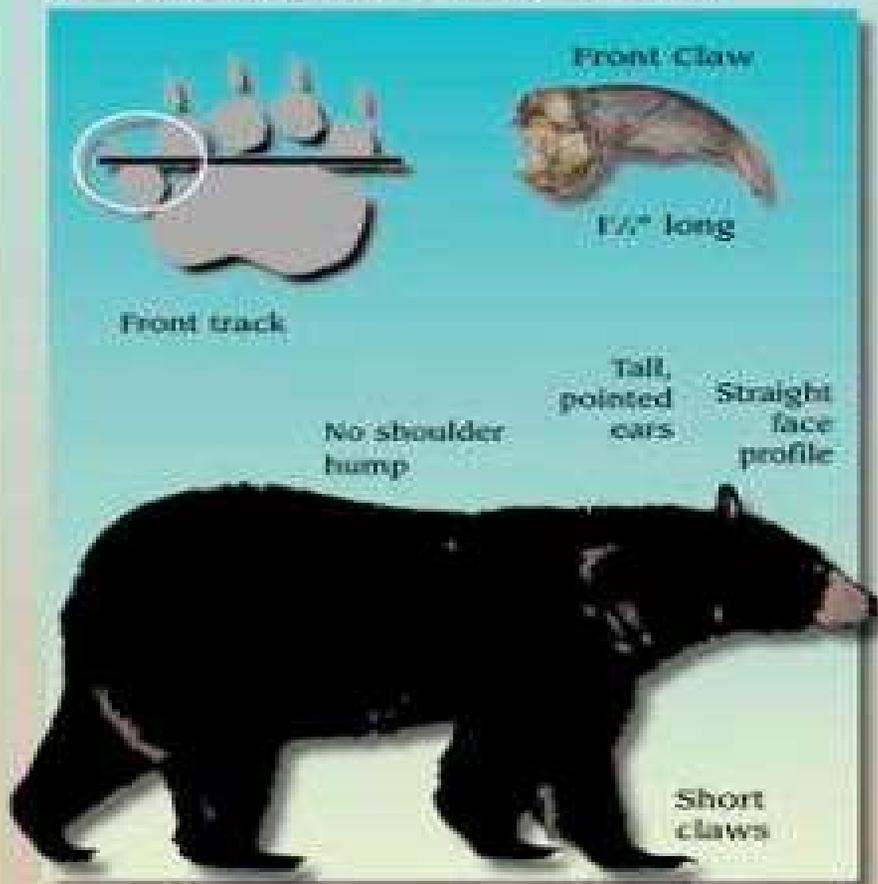
How to Identify

Follow the numbers in each step:

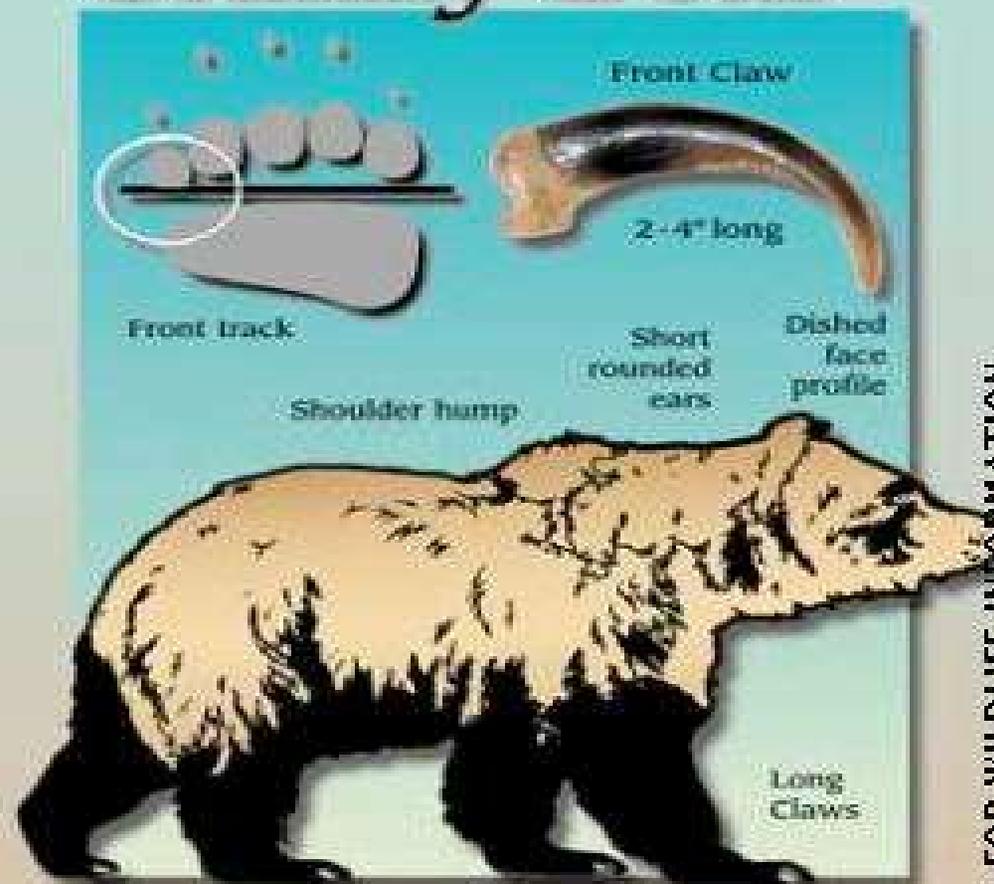
- 1** Find the lowest point of outside (largest) toe
- 2** Find the highest point on front edge of palm pad.
- 3** Connect points 1 and 2; extend this line to the inside of the track.
 - If more than 50% of the inside (smallest) toe is above the line, the track is from a grizzly bear.
 - If more than 50% of the inside (smallest) toe is below the line, the track is from a black bear.
 - If the line bisects the inside toe, claw marks, shape of the palm pad, spacing between toes, other signs must be used in species identification.



Black Bear



Grizzly Bear



Color and Size can be misleading.
Look for a combination of characteristics.

BEAR ENCOUNTERS

- Stop, remain calm, assess the situation. What behaviour is the bear showing (defensive or offensive)
- DO NOT turn and run as this may prompt a chase response.
- DO NOT climb a tree or enter water, as these options will not guarantee your safety.
- If a bear is unaware of you, leave the area calmly and quietly when the bear is not looking in your direction.
- If you decide to take a detour, choose a wide path that will not intersect the bear.
- If the bear becomes aware of you, calmly identify yourself as a human by talking to it in a low voice while waving your arms slowly as you back away to increase your distance.
- AVOID direct eye contact.
- If the bear seems unconcerned, leave the area calmly and quietly.



BEAR ENCOUNTERS

- If the bear is standing up it is usually trying to identify you. Talk softly so it knows what you are.
- If it is snapping its jaws, lowering its head, flattening its ears, growling or making 'woofing' sounds, it is displaying aggression.
- DO NOT run. Move away keeping the bear in view. AVOID direct eye contact. Dropping your pack or a shovel may distract the bear to give you more time.



ATTACKING BEAR

- Your response depends on the species of bear and if it is being **defensive** or **offensive**.
- Bears will sometimes bluff charge then turn away at the last moment as a sign of confrontation.
- While fighting back usually increases the intensity of an attack, it may cause the bear to leave.
- Each incident is unique!



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ATTACKING BEAR – DEFENSIVE

If the bear is aware of you AND showing signs of stress, it is being defensive.

GRIZZLY

- Do nothing to threaten or further upset the bear.
- Play dead. Assume the 'cannonball' position with hands clasped behind the neck and face buried in knees.
- Do not move until the bear leaves the area. Such attacks seldom last beyond a few minutes.

BLACK BEAR

- Playing dead is not appropriate.
- Avoid eye contact.
- Hold onto shovel or tool if needed.
- Try to retreat from the attack.



ATTACKING BEAR - OFFENSIVE

If the bear is approaching you with no signs of stress it is being **offensive**.

A stalking bear's approach will be deliberate and silent. This is the bear that is of the most concern. Its head will be up and ears erect, but displaying no signs of stress.

- If the bear continues to follow you:
 - Stop and stand your ground.
 - Make direct eye contact.
 - Act aggressively to persuade the bear that you are not easy prey.
 - Shout and wave your arms, stomp your feet, elevate yourself onto a log or rock, and raise your jacket to look bigger.
 - DO NOT play dead.
 - If in range, use bear spray.
- If the stalking bear attacks you, fight back with anything at hand! Use your shovel, knife, firearm, rocks, sticks, walking stick, or even bare hands.
 - Strike for the bear's eyes and nose.
 - Kick and yell.
 - Be relentless! You are fighting for your life!



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit:

- <https://wildsafebc.com/>
- <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/environment/plants-animals-ecosystems/wildlife/human-wildlife-conflict/staying-safe-around-wildlife>
- <http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/bcparks/>
- <https://www.alberta.ca/living-with-wildlife.aspx>

OR refer to additional wildlife information in camp.
Ask your camp safety coordinator for more details.

