

Culture & History

The Salish and Pend d'Oreille name for black bear is nłátmqə? and the word for grizzly is smxé(yčn). In Kooentai, black bear is nupqu and grizzly is kławłta.

To the Salish and Pend d'Oreille, the black bear was considered to be rich in wisdom. In the fall, a the organs of a black bear could be used to predict the weather during the coming winter. Though they were not eaten very often, bear meat was very rich and the oil from the fat could be used for many purposes.

Grizzlies were not hunted. Respected for their strength, the Salish and Pend d'Oreille considered them the chief of the animals. Grizzlies are thought to emerge from hibernation after the first thunder.

The Kootenai ate black bear more often and would roast the carcasses in large pits. They would separate the fat into large strips, which would be dried and hardened. Once the fat was finished hardening, it would be mixed with meat and stored for winter. The intestines would also be dried and boiled.

Grizzlies featured in many Kooentai stories and they were not hunted for their meat due to their spiritual role in their animal stories.

Respectful Distance

When driving through the Bison Range, it is always exciting to see some of our bears as they roam around. No matter how exciting, however, it is important to remember that the bears, like all of the animals on the range, are wild animals and will attack if they feel threatened.

While driving the roads, its important to remain in your vehicle at all time, even while taking pictures. If you want to stop and look at a bear, stop your car at least 300 ft (91 m) away.

However, if you are on the designated walking trails and come across a bear, there are a few things to remember.

First, to avoid surprising a bear, be sure to make a lot of noise while walking. Except in rare cases, bears will hear the noise and move away to avoid you.

If you do surprise a bear. Quietly and slowly back away from the animal, without making direct eye contact, and move to a safe location. Do not shout, as this may make the bear feel threatened. If the bear has cubs, make sure that you are not between them and their mother.

If you are attacked, your options depend on the species. If the bear is a grizzly, it is best to play dead. Drop to your front, cover your neck with your hands, and keep your legs apart so you can't be rolled on your back.

If it is a black bear, do not play dead. First try to get to a safe location, such as your car. If this is not an option, you should fight back by striking at their bear's nose and face.

GRIZZLIES & BLACK BEARS



Smxé(yčn) - Kławłta
Nłátmqə? - Nupqu

If you are interested in learning more about our wildlife, contact us at :

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Interesting Facts

Black bears and grizzlies usually have 2-3 cubs at a time and the cubs will stay with their mothers for up to 2 years. The highest recorded litter size is 5. Larger litters rarely have all cubs survive to adulthood.

Both black bears and grizzlies are omnivores and their diet changes on what is available. Many bears prefer to eat things like roots, berries, grass, and other succulent plants. They will also eat meat, fish, insects, and carrion.

Black bears evolved in high altitude mountainous habitats and are adept at climbing trees. When startled, they may choose to run away or climb a nearby tree to get away from danger, such as domesticated dogs.

Grizzlies evolved in lower altitude river valleys and did not evolve the tree climbing abilities of black bears. When they are startled, they are more likely to stand their ground or charge. They also prefer to travel along waterways such as rivers, creeks, and even irrigation canals.

Both species of bears spend all summer and fall stocking up as much body weight as possible to get ready for their winter hibernation.

How Can you Tell Them Apart?

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Straight nose & brow, no hump, tall pointed ears

Front claws 1.5 in (4cm) long

The average black bear is 4 to 7 ft (1.2 - 2 m) tall. Males usually weigh 126-551 lb (57-250 kg), while females typically weigh 90-375 lb (41-170 kg).

More dish-like face, short, rounded ears, shoulder hump

Though black bears can be black or blue-black, they can also be dark brown, light brown, cinnamon and even white. Grizzlies are usually brown but they can also be black or blond



Front claws 2 - 4 in (5-10 cm) long

Most adult female grizzlies weigh 290-400 lb (130-180 kg), and adult males weigh on average 400-790 lb (180-360 kg). Standing up, a grizzly bear can be up to 8 ft (2.4 m) tall.



Grizzly



Black Bear

(Bearsmart.com, 2022)

Bears: A Visitor Guide