



WGFD

Conserving Wildlife, Serving People

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News Release

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GRIZZLY BEARS CONTINUE TO STAY ACTIVE— HUNTERS NEED TO STAY ALERT

CODY—Mid-November usually marks the official denning period for grizzly bears, but until then, they will remain very active in their search for food—creating challenging conditions for hunters.

On October 3, 2011, two hunters in two separate areas encountered grizzly bears; both suffered minor injuries as a result. In each case, the hunters surprised a bear which then became aggressive.

According to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department, a Casper hunter in the Dubois area chose to “drop and cover” when the bear charged. He was bitten on the buttocks and ankle and the bear left the area. In a second encounter on the same day, an Oregon hunter near Meeteetse surprised a bear and it charged the hunter, knocking him down and biting him on the hand as it ran past. Both incidents were investigated by Game and Fish personnel who determined that both bears were acting naturally. No attempt to capture either bear will be made.

“In most instances, getting too close to a grizzly bear and suddenly surprising it is considered threatening by most adult grizzlies,” said Dennie Hammer, Cody information specialist for the Game and Fish. “When threatened, grizzlies generally exhibit one of three behaviors; grizzlies either run away, bluff charge, or charge with the intent of removing the threat.”

Given their behavior, knowing what to do in an encounter is very important according to Hammer. “Should you encounter a bear while hunting it is important to know bear behavior and to be able to “read” the bear’s body language—if there is time to do so,” Hammer said.

“A bear that hears or smells something that it cannot identify may stand on its hind legs to get a better look and/or smell. This is typically not an aggressive behavior. A bear that runs

toward you with its head up, ears erect, and stiff legged is probably bluff charging. One that has its head down and ears laid back feels threatened enough to charge,” Hammer added.

Hammer stated that in instances where there is not enough time to read the bears behavior or to use a deterrent such as bear spray or a firearm, the only viable option is to “drop and cover.”

“Many people were taught as youngsters to curl into a ball and play dead. This might still work for those limber enough to stay in this position, but we think the drop and cover technique—lying flat on the ground with your fingers interlocked over your neck—is better. And, where a daypack to protect your back—always,” Hammer said.

“However frightful this might seem, lying quietly and still is not threatening to the bear and most bears quickly determine that the threat is gone and they leave the area,” Hammer said.

To improve the odds of minimizing hunter-bear conflicts, Hammer suggests the following;

- Carry a bear deterrent and know how to use it. Many aggressive bears have been deterred through the use of bear spray and all hunters should carry it where it can be reached and know how and when to use it.
- Hunters should hunt with a partner and keep relatively close together.
- When using calls, pay close attention to your surroundings, not just the area within which the hunted species is located.
- Continuously watch for bear sign which includes tracks, scats, and diggings and for the bears themselves.
- Retrieve game animals as quickly as possible and watch for approaching bears when field dressing and quartering.
- If game must be left on the ground overnight, separate the carcass from the entrails when field dressing and place the carcass in an area that can be viewed from a distance.
- When retrieving game, make lots of noise; use binoculars to search the area for bears and to determine if the game has been disturbed by bears prior to walking in on the carcass.
- Bears often daybed near food sources.
- If a bear has claimed your carcass, leave the scene and report the incident to the Wyoming Game and Fish Department.

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