

Working Safely in the Mountains

- **Communication is Key.** Let others know where you are going (work or recreation) and **use the Sign-out book** located in the entrance of the Science Lab Building. When electronic devices are not feasible (cell phones), an effective contact system must be established (i.e. check-in procedures, periodic site visits, length of time a worker may be out of contact with a supervisor/PI/group leader)
- **Safety in Numbers.** Go with at least one other person- the larger the group, the less likely the chance of a wildlife encounter. Chances are if wildlife hear you coming they will avoid the noise.
- **Stay informed.** Check trail and area closures before planning your route (<https://www.albertaparks.ca/parks/kananaskis/kananaskis-country/advisories-public-safety/trail-reports/>)
- **Be prepared.** Take bear spray, air horn, extra water/food, and clothing for all weather types.

Wildlife Encounters

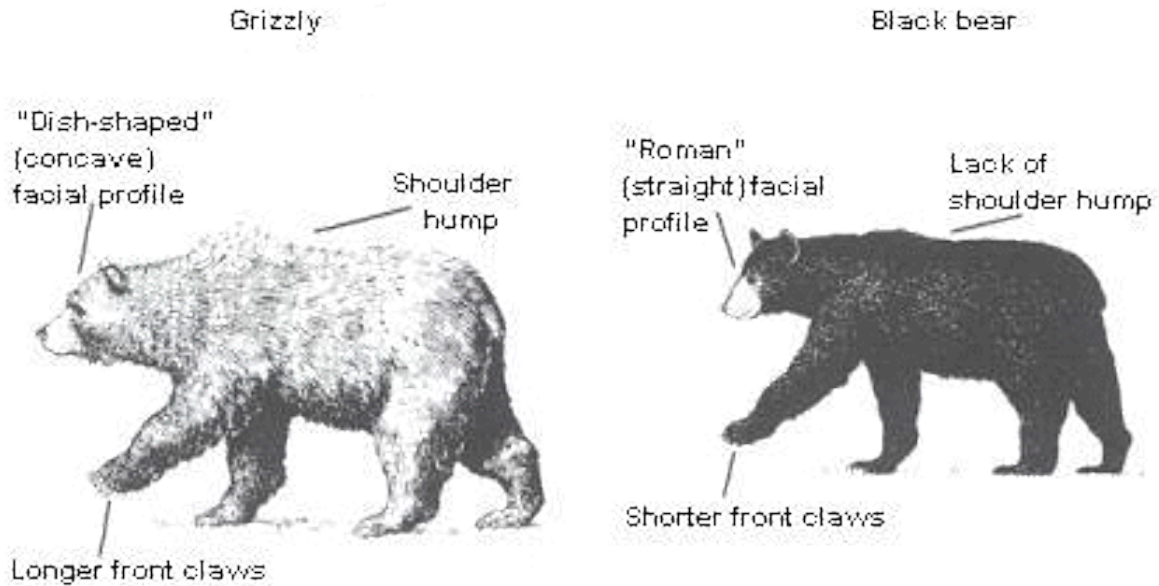
Bears:

Bears are generally not a nuisance here. However, if they smell food (i.e lunches, garbage) they will be attracted. In the field, keep lunches in vehicles if possible or at least in your pack. Don't leave garbage in the field- bring everything back to the Field Station for disposal. Bears (both black and grizzly) are common at the Field Station, so don't leave any bottles, mugs, dishes, garbage outside to attract them.

If you have a bear encounter- first rule is don't run away. **You will Not outrun a bear!** If you have encountered a bear, at a distance, talk to the bear calmly to identify yourself as a human (and to calm yourself down too!). If a surprise encounter occurs, try to give the bear an escape route. If there is a mother bear and cubs, try not to get between them- if you do, again try to back away slowly- if the bear sees that you're not a threat, she probably won't bother you. Her main concern is the safety of her cubs. It is not recommended to climb trees to avoid a bear.

If a bear is displaying aggressive behaviour towards you- try and appear as large as possible- wave your arms above your head- shout. You have to appear more aggressive than the bear. It is common for grizzlies to bluff charge if they are threatened (protecting cubs, food source) - if they decide that you are not a threat, they usually will leave the area. Another option is to play dead (**only with grizzlies**) so that you don't appear as a threat. An aggressive black bear is a very dangerous situation and you must fight back if attacked by a black bear. Use bear spray on an aggressive bear and bear horns/bangers if time allows.

Each encounter is different and you have to react the best way that you can. Aggressive encounters are rare- most encounters are “surprise ones” and the bear is startled and acts defensively.



Cougars:

Cougar sightings are extremely rare. If you should be lucky enough to see one, don't approach them- slowly back away, avoid eye contact so you don't appear as a threat. **Do Not Run!** If a cougar attacks you, don't play dead- you have to fight back the best that you can.

There is safety in numbers, make noise to alert wildlife in the area, don't leave food or garbage outside to attract wildlife. Never feed wildlife.