

Safe Work Procedure – Wildlife Encounters (for fieldwork)

BEARS

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT: Bear spray
Bear bells
Fox 40 whistle

BEARS BASIC PROCEDURE

- Bears are unpredictable.
- Make lots of noise when working/walking: talk, sing, wear bells.
- Stay alert and be aware of your surroundings look for fresh bear droppings, or recently dug up areas.
- Look out for kills that bears will defend: use your sense of smell-rotten meat or fish; watch for birds circling. Bears are very aggressive when defending kill sites.
- If you encounter a kill – back away.
- Take your garbage with you.
- Carry bear spray – aim at mouth or nose.

BEAR ENCOUNTER

- Try not to over-react-is it a black or a grizzly?
- If you're planning to climb a tree remember black bears can climb trees and grizzlies can climb short distances.
- If it hasn't noticed you back away quietly the way you came. Stay downwind if you can.
- If it has noticed you but doesn't move towards you move quietly upwind so it catches your scent. Don't run. Look big by waving your arms slowly. Speak in a calm firm voice. Don't act like prey. Bears stand on their back legs when trying to catch a scent. Bears can't see well so you can pretend to be big.
- **If it approaches you or charges stand your ground:** bears will often bluff a charge and suddenly back or veer off. Bears will try to scare you by huffing, snorting, panting, hissing, growling, and jaw popping. They will lower their heads and put their ears back. Females can be defending their young and any bear can be defending a kill.

- **If the bear attacks you because it sees you as a threat** (when feeding, protecting its young or because you have surprised it): –
 - Use bear spray and aim at mouth or nose.
 - If it makes contact with you:
 - ◆ Play dead, and
 - ◆ Lie flat on the ground face down, hands clasped behind your neck, and legs spread. (This provides you some protection and makes you harder to flip over.)
 - ◆ Keep your coat, packsack, cruisers vest on it may afford some degree of protection.
 - ◆ Remain in this position for several minutes even if you think that the bear has gone away.

- **If the bear attack continues and goes from defensive to predatory** or the bear's behavior shows it clearly regards you as prey:
 - Don't play dead
 - Fight back by:
 - ◆ Use bear spray and aim at mouth or nose.
 - ◆ Act aggressively.
 - ◆ Defend yourself with whatever is available a stick, an axe (aim for the nose).
 - ◆ Try to act dominant.
 - ◆ Shout, blow your whistle, jump up and down, wave your arms, wave your vest or coat.

After an attack, remain patient. After a few minutes try to determine if the bear is still in the area.

COUGARS

- In cougar country make lots of noise when working/walking: talk, sing, wear bells.
- Avoid cougar kills (cougar cover their kills with dirt and leaves and return later to feed). Be alert for circling birds and other scavengers.)
- Travel in pairs
- Carry a walking stick for defense
- Don't count on your dog for protection – he could lead a cougar back to you
- **If you encounter a cougar:**
 - Don't run- flight may trigger pursuit
 - Don't turn your back always keep the cougar in front of you
 - Maintain eye contact- cougar prefer a surprise attack from the back
- **If the cougar shows interest in you** (staring, crouching, creeping, tail twitching) respond aggressively:
 - Make eye contact
 - make yourself look big
 - Smile and show your teeth –pretend to be a predator
 - Make loud noise
 - Arm yourself with rocks and sticks as weapons

- **If the cougar attacks:**
 - Fight back- convince the cougar that you are the predator and not the prey
 - Yell or shout and make intimidating noises
 - Use anything as a weapon
 - Focus your attack on the cougar's nose, face and eyes.

When the cougar has moved on make your way to assistance as soon as possible. Contact the Conservation Officer Service.

MOOSE

Although they may appear gentle, moose will attack you when they feel threatened and are trying to ensure that you are not dangerous. Since moose weigh upwards of 1,500 pounds getting hit by one is the equivalent of being hit by a car!

Why Moose attack:

- **Early summer with calves.** Cow moose are likely to have their calves alongside them and will attack if you get between them and their calves.
- **Fall mating season.** Bull moose are highly aggressive when they are courting cows in the fall. It may perceive you as a mating threat and chase you away by attacking.
- **If provoked by people or dogs.** If you see a moose do not provoke it by yelling or throwing rocks or sticks at it. If you have a dog a moose will consider it to be a threat –just like a wolf or a coyote which it probably has had to fight off at one time.

How to fight off a moose attack:

- **Remember a moose will charge to ward off a potential threat.** By assuring the bull or cow moose that you are not a threat you can survive an aggressive moose encounter.
- **Signs of an aggressive moose:**
 - Walking in your direction
 - Stomping its feet
 - Peeling its ears back
 - Grunting
 - Throwing its head back and forth
- **How to prevent and survive a moose attack:**
 - **Back away** with your palms facing the moose.
 - **Speak softly and reassuringly** like you would to a little child.
 - **If the moose charges get behind a large tree or rock** to separate your body from the moose. Most moose charges are bluffs.
 - **If the moose attacks you** feign death by curling up in a ball. Protect your neck and arms. If you are wearing a backpack your pack will protect your back.

ADDITIONAL SWP NOTES
