



RECREATION INFORMATION

Olympic National Forest

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/olympic>



Black Bear Country

Ursus americanus

Recommended Season

SPRING SUMMER FALL WINTER



Black bears are common to the Olympic Peninsula. They are widespread in the Olympic National Park and are often seen in the Olympic National Forest, primarily in the Wildernesses. They require wild habitat and freedom from human contact to survive as a species. Bears are opportunistic creatures. They have a natural attraction to many kinds of food, including much of the food that is carried and eaten by backpackers, hikers and campers. It is extremely important for Forest and Park visitors to carefully manage their food storage, dirty dishes and garbage so as not encourage a bear to seek them out as alternate food sources. The following guidelines are intended to protect the black bears as well as provide for your safety:

- Never attempt to get close to a bear. They may look tame but can attack without warning. Be alert when hiking and avoid getting between a sow and her cub. (e.g. The sow is above the trail, the cub is below the trail and you're in between).
- When car camping, store all foodstuffs in the trunk of your vehicle. If you don't have a trunk then store unopened food in its containers and cover with a blanket or tarp on the floor of your vehicle. Leave the windows closed and the doors locked. Never leave food unattended and out in the open at a campsite.
- When backpacking where trees are present, hang all food items in a bag, using nylon cord, 10 feet out from the closest tree and up at least 12 feet from the ground. In the Park, use bear wires when available. When trees are not present to hang your food, use special food storing devices (bear canisters). Bear canisters are available from the Park (Port Angeles, WA) but not the Forest.
- Treat your garbage and leftovers the same as you would your food. Pack out all food scraps. Soap, toothpaste and other sweet-smelling toiletries may also attract bears. Avoid odor-tainting your clothing, tent or backpack by storing all food or garbage in tightly sealed plastic bags.
- Maintain a clean camp by washing dishes and cleaning up spilled food immediately after eating.
- If a bear comes into your campsite, knock pots and pans together or blow on a whistle to make a loud noise that will often chase the bear away.