

*To learn more about black bears, ask a Park Ranger, attend a campfire program about bears at the amphitheater or visit the black bear exhibit at the park Visitor Center.*

# BEAR AWARE

at

## MUELLER STATE PARK

### THIS IS BEAR COUNTRY

Mueller State Park is in the heart of black bear country. Conifer and aspen forests, mountain meadows, rugged terrain, along with creeks and ponds, provide ideal habitat for one of Colorado's largest predators.

Black bears are often seen in the park during spring, summer and autumn. For many people, seeing a black bear in the wild is a thrilling and memorable experience. Unless they learn to associate humans with food, bears are generally shy and wary, avoiding people as much as possible.

### ABOUT BLACK BEARS

- Smallest of the North American bears, the black bear measures 5 to 6 feet from head to tail and 3 to 3.5 feet high at the shoulder. Bears in Colorado weigh from 150 to 350 pounds.
- Black bears possess a sense of smell about 100 times greater than humans. Bears are able

to smell food cooking in the outdoors up to a mile away.

- Bears possess an excellent sense of hearing. Bears can often hear you coming long before you know they are in the area.
- Bears have similar eyesight to that of humans. Bears do not rely on their eyesight nearly as much as they do on their sense of hearing and their sense of smell.
- Bears may look clumsy, but can actually run about 30 MPH.
- Black bears come in different color phases such as black, brown, cinnamon and blond. Most black bears in Colorado are brown. This may serve as protective coloration to absorb less solar heat under the hot sun. A bear's color may change from one year to the next.

### AN EATING MACHINE

The black bear is a full time professional consumer. Except for winter, bears spend their waking hours occupied with food intake. Black bears are omnivorous and are able to take advantage of a wide variety of food items.

Bears seek out the most digestible and highly nutritious foods in season, which includes fruits and vegetables. A black bear's diet is made up of 90% plant material. In spring before berries ripen bears will feed on tender grass shoots and newly emerging plants.

In Autumn bears go into a feeding frenzy. Their goal is to put on enough fat to survive sleeping through the winter. In autumn, bears will feed up to 20 hours per day, take in 20,000 calories per day and may add as much as 30% of their total body weight.

### A LONG NAP

Bears enter a den generally between the 3rd week of October and the first week of November.

During hibernation, a bear will not eat, drink, urinate or defecate. Bodily functions are absorbed by fat. A bear's metabolic rate may drop as much as 50% during winter, while it's heart rate drops 8

to 10 beats per minute. Body temperature will remain near normal (just below 100 degrees Fahrenheit).

Bears generally leave their den in late March to early April.

### CAMPING AND BEARS AT MUELLER STATE PARK

Messy campsites attract bears! All campers at Mueller State Park share in the responsibility of keeping a clean campsite. Bears in the campground spell trouble for you, your neighbor and others camping at the park. It also may mean an untimely death for the bear.

In order to avoid problems with black bears in your campsite please observe the following:

- CAMP in designated campsites only. Backcountry camping is prohibited.
- ALL FOOD AND FOOD CONTAINERS must be stored inside a closed, hard-sided vehicle.\* This includes canned food, all beverages, pet food, coolers and water containers.
- ALL COOKING UTENSILS must be stored inside a closed, hard-sided vehicle. This includes coffee pots, stoves, silverware, dishes, pots, pans, etc.
- DO NOT BRING food, cosmetics or other toiletries into your tent or pop-up camper.
- DO NOT SLEEP in the same clothes you cook in. Change into clean clothes and store cooking clothes inside a closed, hard-sided vehicle.
- DO NOT PUT OUT HUMMINGBIRD FEEDERS. The sweet smell of the nectar solution attracts bears.
- IMMEDIATELY DISPOSE OF ALL TRASH in dumpsters or bear proof trash containers.
- REPORT all bear sightings to a Park Ranger.

**\* A hard side vehicle is the trunk or interior of a car, the interior of a truck cab or sports utility vehicle or the interior of a motor home or hard sided trailer. A hard sided vehicle is not the inside of a pop up camper or tent.**

## **HIKING AT MUELLER STATE PARK**

Most hikers never see a bear, but remember that all of Mueller State Park is bear country. To avoid a bear encounter while hiking, please follow a few precautions.

- Knowledge is the best defense.
- Hiking at dusk or dawn increases your chances of observing wildlife, but also may increase your risk of encountering a black bear.
- Use extra caution in places of limited visibility such as approaching a creek, entering a dense forest or an area where the trail bends.
- Don't hike alone in bear country.
- Inform yourself about where you are hiking. Take a trail map. Sign in and out at the trail register.
- Make sure children stay close by at all times.
- Remember that all pets are prohibited on trails and in the backcountry.
- There is no substitute for alertness. Be familiar with trail conditions, recent bear sign such as tracks, scat, etc.
- Stay away from cubs and sows with cubs.
- Always keep a safe distance from all wildlife.
- Stay on designated trails.

## **IF YOU ENCOUNTER A BLACK BEAR**

Remember, preventing an encounter is the highest priority. If you encounter a black bear at Mueller State Park, the following suggestions may help:

- STAY CALM! Panic is your greatest enemy.
- LEAVE the area if the bear has not detected you. Do not move in for a close up photograph.
- STOP! If the bear does detect you, back away slowly while facing the bear. Give the bear

plenty of room to escape. If possible, alter your route to avoid the bear.

- SPEAK softly or not at all. This may reassure the animal that you mean no harm. Do not shout to scare it away.
- **NEVER RUN!!!** Always walk calmly away. Bears may look clumsy, but they can out run a human with ease. Running away may trigger the bear's predatory instinct to give chase.
- STAND your ground if charged. Most of the time the bear is bluffing.
- IF ATTACKED - fight back.