



## A River Runner's Strategy for Avoiding Bad Encounters with Black Bears

### Introduction

American black bears are seldom seen yet common residents of Utah's river canyons. Despite the name, black bears come in a variety of colors, with black, brown and cinnamon being the most common. Seeing and observing one of these creatures in its native habitat can be a high point on any river trip. A bad encounter with one can ruin your trip and lead to fatal consequences for the bruin. The following tips are offered to reduce your risk of a bad encounter. The main objective is to: **Keep wild bears wild!** The way we accomplish this is to prevent bears from ever associating your activity as a source of food. If a bear gets into your food stocks, you have contributed to its death. **A fed bear is a dead bear.** Allow a bear to get into your *Fig Newtons*, and you probably won't be the person that has to squeeze the trigger, but you killed the bear none the less.

### Camp Site Selection

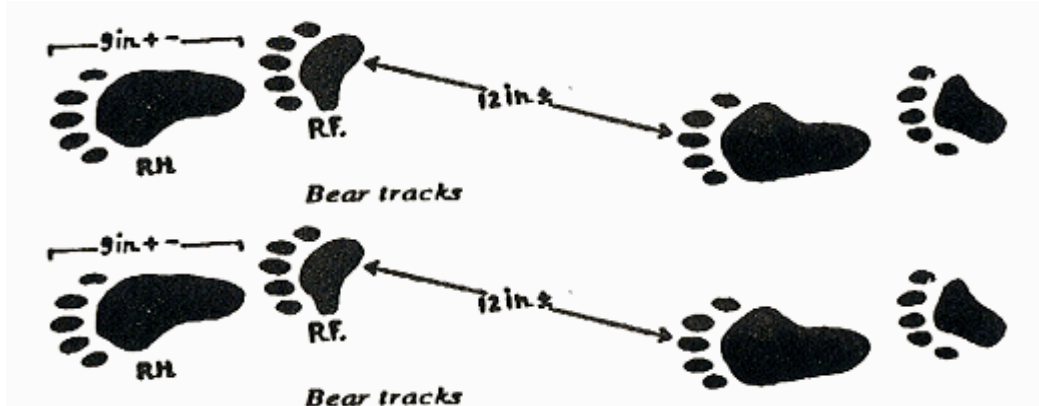
Upon arriving at a campsite, do a quick sweep of the beach and the trails leading into the campsite. Look for recent bear tracks and other signs of bear activity. If you find recent bear sign, either move to a different site or ratchet up your bear awareness and avoidance.

### Food Preparation, Storage and Dealing with Waste

1. Plan on leaving coolers and dry boxes on the boats. Bring to the kitchen only the food you are going to prepare and consume immediately. All coolers and boxes should be latched and strapped down.
2. Return all food and garbage to the boats and secure after meals. Rinse cans and bottles with river water to reduce odors.
3. Set up a dishwashing station as close to the river as possible. Wash dishes after every meal. Strain the dishwater, put food debris in your trash, then disperse dishwater into the river.
4. Wipe down tables and stoves with a bleach solution after every meal.

### Sleeping Area

1. Select an open site - like the beach. DO NOT CAMP ON A TRAIL!



2. Sleep in a tent. Keep the tent and sleeping gear free of food items and food odors. Avoid using scented lotions, perfumes or any other odorous substances.
3. Sleep in clothes different from the ones you wore while eating or preparing meals.
4. Locate sleeping areas away from the kitchen by 100 yards, if possible.
5. Keep tents in close proximity. A large number of snoring people are less likely to be attacked. If an attack happens, a group will be more successful in driving off the bear and rendering aid to the victim.

### Hiking

1. Hike in groups. A person hiking alone is most at risk from a bear attack on the trail.

Make noise, talk loudly, clap hands, especially in dense brush or hiking into the wind.

Do not whistle, it makes you sound like that tasty bear snack, the marmot.

3. Hike mid-day, avoiding dawn and dusk.
4. Avoid natural bear food sources – carcasses of large animals, berry patches, etc.

### ***If you encounter a bear.....***

#### On the River

Quietly observe from your boat. Maintain a safe distance of at least 50 yards. If you are going to close that distance, make noise and let the bear know of your presence.

## On the Trail

1. Stay calm. If the bear is unaware of your presence, quietly leave the area.
2. Mutual respect and retreat is a good strategy for you and the bear. If the bear sees you, let the bear know you are human, talk normally and leave the area. Stand your ground if the bear charges or follows.
3. Never corner a bear or obstruct its escape route.
4. If you see a cub, mama is somewhere close--Retreat.

## In Your Camp

1. Allow the bear to move off.
2. If the bear does not move off: Stand your ground, defend your territory, protect your food! It's time for "tough love." ***A fed bear is a dead bear.***
3. Get your group together. Attempt to drive the bear from camp by making lots of noise. Bang pots, blast an air horn, yell, throw rocks and generally make the bear feel unwelcome.
4. Check to make sure you have done a good job of securing food, garbage and minimizing food odors.

***Keep wild bears wild. Report all bear encounters to the agency administering the river segment.***