

DANGEROUS WILDLIFE ENCOUNTER CHECKLIST

Page 1 | Prevention and encounter response

Use this printable field checklist before hiking, hunting, or camping. Wildlife encounters are often avoidable. Species, behavior, and circumstances determine the safest response - there is no universal animal-attack rule.

01 BEFORE YOU GO

- ☐ Research cougars, black bears, grizzlies, moose, and other species in the destination.
- ☐ Check current park alerts, closures, and local wildlife-agency guidance.
- ☐ Know food-storage rules and whether EPA-registered bear spray is recommended and allowed.
- ☐ Share your route and return time; carry accessible emergency communication and first aid.

02 ON THE TRAIL OR AT CAMP

- ☐ Scan the surroundings; take extra care at blind corners, brush, and noisy streams.
- ☐ Keep children nearby and pets controlled; travel together when practical.
- ☐ Give wildlife space. Never approach young animals, carcasses, or animals for photos.
- ☐ Secure food, garbage, pet food, and scented items using approved local methods.

03 COUGAR ENCOUNTER

- ☐ Do not run. Face the cougar, remain upright, and keep it in view.
- ☐ Pick up small children; stay together and make yourself appear larger.
- ☐ Back away slowly while leaving an escape route; do not approach or corner it.
- ☐ If it follows or acts aggressively, be assertive, shout, and use objects to deter it.
- ☐ If attacked: FIGHT BACK. Do not play dead.

IMPORTANT: A cougar moving nearby is not proof it intends to attack. Persistent following or approach warrants caution. Never investigate suspected predator movement.

WILDLIFE RESPONSE QUICK REFERENCE

Page 2 | Bear distinctions, other threats, and aftercare

Identify the species if possible, but also assess the animal's behavior. Bear response changes with defensive versus potentially predatory circumstances. Follow local wildlife-authority instructions.

04 BEAR ENCOUNTER AND ATTACK

- ☐ For any bear encounter: do not run; speak calmly and back away slowly when safe.
- ☐ Keep your backpack on; give the bear space and avoid blocking its route.
- ☐ Use accessible bear spray when appropriate, as trained and according to its label.
- ☐ BLACK BEAR ATTACK: do not play dead; seek safety and FIGHT BACK.
- ☐ DEFENSIVE GRIZZLY ATTACK: if contact occurs, lie face down, protect head/neck, spread legs, stay still; fight back if the attack persists.
- ☐ PREDATORY BEAR ATTACK (either species): do not play dead; FIGHT BACK.

05 OTHER WILDLIFE AND GROUP SAFETY

- ☐ Moose: give wide space; if charged, escape behind a substantial barrier or to safety.
- ☐ Elk and bison: do not approach; obey posted distances and seasonal warnings.
- ☐ Venomous snakebite: seek urgent medical care; no cutting, suction, or tourniquet.
- ☐ Keep children close and the group coordinated; do not scatter during an encounter.

06 AFTER A DANGEROUS ENCOUNTER

- ☐ Move to safety and assess injuries; get medical evaluation for bites or scratches.
- ☐ Call 911 for immediate danger or serious injury when service is available.
- ☐ Report threatening behavior to the park or appropriate wildlife agency.
- ☐ Record location, time, species if known, observed behavior, injuries, and direction of travel.

IMPORTANT: These are quick-reference reminders, not a replacement for current agency guidance, training, or emergency services. Consult the National Park Service and your state or provincial wildlife agency before travel.