

Setting up your camp

A good camp site is one that is:

- well away from:
 - bear feeding areas such as berry patches
 - wildlife trails and recent signs of bear activity (tracks, scat, claw marks on trees, rub trees)
 - bear dens
 - places with previous bear problems because bears are likely to return
 - garbage left by a previous camper
 - gut piles;
- in areas with good visibility so that bears can easily spot you and you can easily spot bears (avoid shrubby areas); and
- in quiet areas without loud natural noise such as rivers or streams so that you can hear an approaching bear and the bear can hear you.

Design your camp so that:

- sleeping tents are located at least 100m upwind from cooking areas, food storage areas and latrines. Keep your backpacks, sleeping bags, tents and clothes free of food smells; and
- tents are well spaced in a straight line or a semi-circle. Do not place in a circle. The straight-line spacing gives bears an escape path.



The PCMB wishes all harvesters a safe and successful hunt

Back centre panel photo of caribou courtesy of Peter Mather © 2010

Front cover photo of Robert Alexie courtesy of Sharon Keaton

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Think safety first

*Safe Camping
for Caribou
Hunters*



Food and waste

Proper control of bear attractants will minimize the chance of a bear visiting your camp.

Store food in a vehicle or hard-sided trailer if available, in a bear resistant container downwind of the sleeping area, or in a food cache or sealable plastic bags suspended between 2 trees at least 15 feet off the ground and 3 feet from a tree trunk.

Plan meals carefully so that you have few leftovers and waste. Eat leftovers as soon as possible.

Grease attracts bears. Plan non-greasy meals during your trip. Clean the stove, tables, and dishes after every meal to reduce food smells. Burn grease in a hot fire. Store unused grease in an airtight container with your food.

Do not bury your garbage — bears will dig it up. Either burn your garbage and pack out unburned items (like tins) or pack out all garbage. Store garbage in airtight containers with your food.

Dispose of waste water from dishes and cooking in a well-drained area down slope of your camp or dump it in a pit dug well away from camp. Ensure you refill the pit with soil when you are finished with it. Always keep a clean camp. Remember that other people may use your campsite after you leave.

Bringing meat into camp

Take your meat home right away. If you need to stay at your camp, hang the unfrozen meat with your food out of the reach of bears. Stack frozen meat at least 100m from camp. Cover the frozen meat securely to discourage small scavengers from contaminating it. Foxes will often urinate on meat to “claim” it.

Stash blood-soaked clothing in a plastic bag and put with your food, never in your tent. Clean your hands thoroughly to remove all blood.

Do not drag a freshly killed carcass into camp. This leaves a scent trail for bears to follow. Remember that field dressing carcasses in a campground is prohibited. Scraps will attract bears long after you leave.

Responding to a bear in camp

If a bear approaches your camp, get all campers together and make sure they know where the bear is. Help the bear identify you as human by talking calmly and waving your arms slowly above your head. Bears will often leave the area once they identify you as human.

If the bear continues to move toward camp, stay calm. Your response to the approaching bear depends on whether it appears defensive or non-defensive.

Defensive bears will look stressed or agitated. They will be defending something — food, cubs, or their personal space. With a defensive bear, try to appear non-threatening, speak calmly, slowly retreat if the bear stops advancing; stand your ground if the bear keeps approaching; and fall on the ground and play dead if the bear attacks. Non-defensive bears will look curious and be intent on you with their head and ears up. In this case, speak in a firm voice and move out of the bear’s path. Stop and stand your ground if it follows you; shout, act aggressively. Firing a rifle may frighten a bear away, but not always. The noise of a skidoo can scare away a bear that is just curious. Start the machine and rev it up. You may need to drive around in circles to scare off the bear. Never chase the bear with a skidoo — this harassment is illegal. If the bear attacks, fight back.

Never use food to lure a bear away from camp.

When a bear is in camp and no one is in immediate danger, try to scare the bear away. Act quickly if people are in immediate danger (such as the bear is attempting to enter an occupied tent). Leaving the camp may be your best course of action.

If a bear returns to your camp, you may be in a very dangerous situation and should protect yourself by all means. If you have a vehicle and can safely leave, do so. If you cannot leave camp, cannot scare the bear away, and the bear threatens your life or property, you may be required to shoot the bear in defense of life or property.

If you need to shoot a bear

Use a firearm as a last resort for dealing with a bear. Before using a firearm on a bear, ensure it is adequate for dealing with bears. It should be 30 caliber or larger or a 12-gauge shotgun with rifled slugs.

If a bear suddenly and aggressively attacks you, use your gun to defend yourself. Aim to kill a charging bear on your first shot. Aim just below the head at the top of the chest on a grizzly — you’re aiming for the heart. Do not aim for the head — head shots do not always stop a bear. Keep shooting until the bear drops. Once you have killed a bear, be aware that the blood scent in the air can attract more bears.

If you have only wounded a bear, you must make a reasonable effort to kill it if you can safely pursue it. Be aware that a wounded bear can be extremely dangerous to yourself or other people in the area.

Do not kill a bear just because it has claimed your meat cache or it is on your gut pile. Leave it alone. It is not worth risking your own safety or that of the bear.

If you have to shoot a bear, you must report it and turn in the hide and skull to wildlife authorities as soon as possible.

REPORT ANY BEAR ENCOUNTERS TO THE LOCAL WILDLIFE AUTHORITIES

