






# What does a BEAR see in this LANDSCAPE?

- REFUGE  
*a secure home.*
- 50% ROCK & ICE  
*and the precious green space that's left.*
- RUGGED LANDSCAPE  
*to weave and climb through.*
- SEASONAL FOODS  
*in scattered patches.*
- POTENTIAL DEN SITES  
*for the upcoming winter .*
- OTHER BEARS  
*cubs to protect, a mate a mountain range away, rivals.*

## What it takes to survive 365 days a year

*Bears are as individual as the members of your family...and so are their survival strategies. All bears in the mountains face similar challenges each season but each animal survives in its own particular way. What does it take to survive each year?*

SPRING	SUMMER	FALL	WINTER
<p>Bears emerge lean from hibernation, onto a lean landscape.</p> <p>There's snow at high elevations so bears congregate in valley bottoms to find early green-up. Grizzly bears head to sunny, exposed avalanche slopes to dig for roots and bulbs. If they're lucky, bears may find carcasses of winter-killed animals—a critical energy boost, especially for a female nursing cubs.</p>	<p>Males seek out available mates...often travelling great distances.</p> <p>The grizzly male's urge to reproduce is strong but females don't hit breeding age until around 5 years old and it may be another 5-6 years before they're ready to breed again. To secure food and available mates, a male's home range may be as large as greater Vancouver. Black bears also have low reproductive rates when habitat quality is poor.</p>	<p>As snow retreats, plants flourish and bears range widely to find these green pockets.</p> <p>Avalanche slopes remain critical to grizzly bears offering a rich variety of plant food and forest edge that provides cover. Black bears, a forest species, remain largely in the valley bottoms where they find food, and security from grizzly bears.</p>	<p>Bears are devoted mothers.</p> <p>Here in the Rockies, grizzly bear cubs may remain with their mothers for up to 5 years—learning the ropes for survival in the mountains. Female grizzlies aggressively defend their cubs from dominant male bears and other threats. Black bear cubs are ushered up trees for protection from adult black bear males and grizzly bears.</p>
 <p>Dandelion</p>  <p>Field horsetail</p>	 <p>Yellow hedsarum</p>  <p>Spring beauty and glacier lily</p>  <p>Golden-mantled ground squirrel</p>	 <p>Cow parsnip</p>  <p>Ants and other insects</p>  <p>Sow grizzly and young cubs</p>	 <p>Buffaloberry</p>  <p>Black bear den</p>

Bottom line? To survive, bears need space with few human surprises.

## Survival of the species

Bears can live to be 25 years old in the wild. Unfortunately many die human-caused deaths well before this, cutting short their legacy of future offspring. To maintain a population, births must balance deaths. Grizzly bears have the lowest reproductive rate of any mammal in North America.

## The landscape obstacle course

Black and grizzly bears have evolved physical adaptations over millions of years and an intelligence that gives them a fighting chance to make a living here. But times are changing. Rapidly. The growing population of humans, increasing development, resource extraction activities and recreational access are all carving up and eating away wilderness.

Bears need the habitat in the Rocky Mountain national parks more than ever but it's become a kind of obstacle course. Think of what it would be like to travel around the mountain national parks in midsummer, trying to avoid people around towns; campgrounds; highways; railways; busy trail networks... and still find enough food to survive.

It's becoming harder for bears to avoid bumping into people even in our parks. These protected areas are an important part of the remaining habitat for black and grizzly bears in North America.



Sharing the valley with wildlife. The town of Jasper in Jasper National Park.

*We breathe in mountain air like a tonic but bears read it like an invisible map. Their keen sense of smell helps them negotiate the landscape, guiding them to food and away from possible threats.*



## What happens to a bear when it encounters people?

*The first time, the second time, the third time...*

A bear has two options and a coping strategy.

1. **It can alter its path of travel** or abandon an area, displacing it from an important habitat.
2. **It can react aggressively:** this usually only happens when the bear is surprised at close range and feels threatened. Serious human-bear encounters may result in the bear's destruction and loss from the ecosystem.
3. **It becomes habituated:** with frequent, repeated exposure to people, a bear loses its natural wary behaviour and becomes increasingly bolder. It's more likely to enter a campground or townsite where food or garbage may be improperly stored. Research indicates habituated grizzly bears are three times more likely to die a human-caused death.

## NOT JUST ONE THING

### The cumulative effects of humans on bears

growing human population  
resource extraction  
timber harvesting  
road access  
recreation  
resort and housing development  
removal/killing of habituated bears  
road and rail mortality  
poaching  
hunting





## The 3 second decision

Your personal decisions count. It only takes three seconds to consider the impact you may be having on bears and to make a different decision that can help protect bears.

The best thing you can do for bears is to limit their exposure to you. When you spot a roadside bear, consider not stopping (one less person contributing to its habituation). When you're in campgrounds, bear-proof your site and keep it completely attractant-free: take the extra 3 seconds to move the hibachi into the trunk, the dog food bowls into the car or the suntan lotion into the locker.

Before you hit the trail think about the time of year, what the bears are probably doing and how you can give them the room they need to do it. Use official trails only and leave the wild trails to wildlife. Respect temporary and seasonal closures—they're in place to give bears a chance to use critical habitat or habitat linkages undisturbed.

## Learn more about bears and wild spaces!

-  Read *Keep the Wild in Wildlife*, a park guide to sharing habitat. It spells out the steps you can take in more detail: camping, hiking, biking and driving.
-  Visit Park Canada's website for more information and some valuable links. <http://parksCanada.pch.gc.ca/>
-  Talk to Visitor centre staff and Mountain Park Heritage Interpretation Association (MPHIA) certified guides.
-  Friends' retail outlets carry a variety of books on bears and other wildlife.

CONSERVATION isn't just about bears; it's about protecting the whole ecosystem. Wild spaces and wilderness values can survive as long as we strive to be stewards—not consumers—of wildness.

