



# THE BEAR FACTS

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During the three years I've been administering recreation residence special use permits, I've received several reports of bears breaking into cabins. On average, I receive three or four reports each summer. Last year was a different story altogether.

Record snowfalls prevented most permit holders in the District from utilizing their cabins until the July Fourth holiday weekend. Even then, a lot of folks had to dig their way through snow drifts to reach their cabins. In late July I began receiving the first of many reports of a bear (or bears) showing an unusual proclivity to enter cabins, raid cupboards, 'fridges, and cause major damage to cabin interiors.

The first reports of major damage came from two cabin owners and a resort owner. He reported a bear was breaking into his gas-house night after night. Perplexed because he only kept gasoline, oil and other non-food items in the structure, I told him all I could think of was that the bear was probably habituated to human food. The bear might be associating all structure with food.

In August and September a bear broke into several cabins, one cabin SIX TIMES!!! In late November I got reports of bear break-in's at ten cabins during the Thanksgiving Day holiday. All of the cabins invaded had been closed and shuttered for the winter. If I had to guess, the cabins collectively sustained over \$50,000 damage, more or less.

The Tuesday following Thanksgiving, I contacted the California Department of Fish & Game. I spoke at length with one of their Wildlife Biologists. Over the following weeks we had several conversations pertaining to "the bear" and its destructive patterns. We reviewed pictures of bear damaged cabins (that a permit holder graciously supplied to me), and looked at hair samples and teeth marks. The latter were supplied by yet another permit holder.

A professional guess was forwarded from Fish and Game that "the bear" was probably a male, owing to the late fall

activity and the kind and amount of damage created. Fish and Game agreed with me that "the bear" had taken a liking to structures, and is likely to resume the destructive behavior in the future. We hope to identify "the bear" and remove it as soon as possible.

Here are some suggestions for preventing bear damage from occurring at your cabin:

- ▲ 1. REMOVE GARBAGE FROM YOUR CABIN EACH EVENING. Place it in a dumpster. Make sure that dumpster lids are properly fastened after dumping your trash.
- ▲ 2. DO NOT SET OUT FOOD FOR WILDLIFE! Putting melon rinds, sweet grain and salt blocks out for deer and other critters will also attract bears and other more aggressive animals. Bears have acutely sensitive noses and can smell food and/or garbage from long distances.
- ▲ 3. DON'T STORE FOOD IN VEHICLES OR IN ICE CHESTS! Bears that are habituated to human food "know" that an ice chest contains food. They are also aware that vehicles often contain food. Some bears will not hesitate to break into a vehicle to "check it out" for food, regardless if they can see food containers or not. Do not store ice chests on porches or decks.
- ▲ 4. When away from your cabin for extended periods, spread Cayenne Pepper around doors and windows. As mentioned before, bears have a great nose and a big appetite. If you "mess up" their sense of smell (as Cayenne Pepper does) that may make them retreat from your cabin. In the best of worlds, the bear might begin associating a bad feeling about structures and give up the breaking and entering business.

(Ed. note: Call/ write NFH if you want a free brochure, "Don't be Bear Careless.")



United States Department of Agriculture  
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**Sierra National Forest**

# Bear Country

## Sierra National Forest

**THIS IS BEAR COUNTRY**

As you visit the Sierra National Forest you will encounter wildlife, especially black bears. Black bears are wonderful to observe in the wild and we hope you will have a chance to see one while visiting the Sierra Nevada.

However, when bears and humans get too close the results can be disastrous— for you or the bear. It is important to remember that bears will change their behavior if they become habituated to humans. This will happen if we crowd them or observe them too closely.

Bears also change their behavior if they obtain human food. They begin to break into cars, tents, and cabins and may become aggressive. If a bear becomes a safety hazard, they sometimes have to be destroyed by wildlife managers. Other habituated and food conditioned bears are killed by cars because they spend more time along roads and campgrounds.

Over the years we have seen an increase in the bear population around campgrounds. This can be attributed to the easily accessible food supply of humans. Also, during years of drought there are less berries, grasses and other vegetation that bears normally feed upon.

Once a bear has been to a campground and has tasted the delights it has to offer, it will remember and return for more.

**FOOD STORAGE GUIDELINES**

We would like your visit to be as enjoyable as possible. The following food storage guidelines

are provided to help protect your camp and protect the bear from learning bad habits.

- Keep you camp area clean at all times.
- Store all food in an ice chest then place the chest in a car trunk or bear box.
- Cover the ice chest with a tarp and keep car windows closed. If a bear sees something that might hold food, they will try to get it.
- Place all garbage in the bear proof garbage dumpster and lock it. This needs to be done every time you complete a meal so nothing is left in your campsite that would attract a bear.

**FOREST REGULATION**

Forest Order # 15-93-01 is in place to facilitate proper storage of food in designated camping areas. If you are found in non-compliance with the Forest Order you will be cited. The Order states:

- In designated camping areas the improper possession, storage or disposal of food items or refuse is a citable offense.

In accordance with the Forest Order, the following definitions apply:

- Food items are defined as food, drink, toiletries, and soaps.
- Refuse is defined as garbage, including empty cans, food wrappers, and dirty and non-disposable cookware and tableware.
- Proper possession and storage is defined as:
  - 1.) In vehicle accessible areas: All food items and refuse must be stored inside a vehicle trunk. If the vehicle does not have a trunk, such items must be placed as low in the vehicle as possible and covered from sight with the vehicle doors and windows closed. All refuse must be placed in disposal receptacles or stored as food.



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2.) In addition to the above, persons with self contained vehicles with built in refrigerators may store food inside those vehicles, provided it is covered from sight and the vehicle doors and windows are closed.

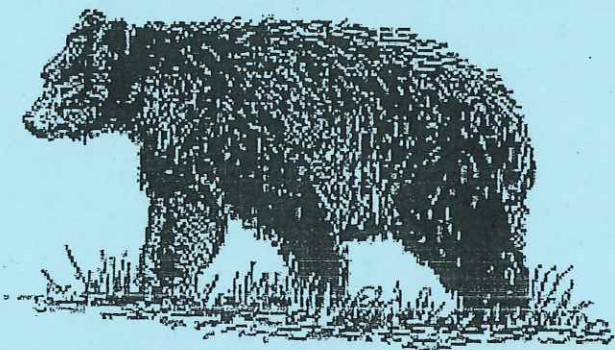
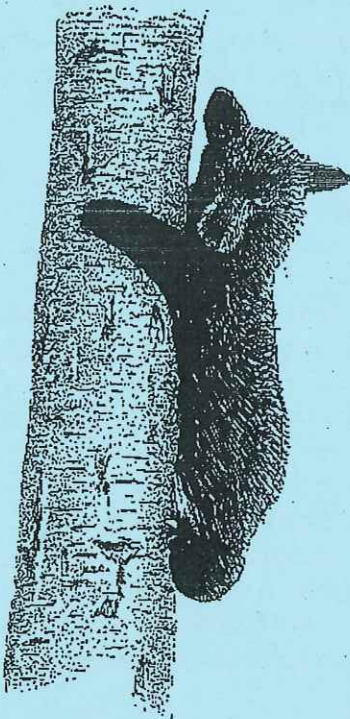
This order applies to ALL campgrounds in the Sierra National Forest.

### BACKPACKING FOOD STORAGE

These are some simple precautions to take before you begin your long awaited trip. You need to secure your vehicle before you start. Below are some tips when parking your vehicle at a trail-head.

Do not leave any food, or items that might resemble food in your vehicle. If you have an ice chest in your vehicle, cover it with a tarp. This includes things in your vehicle that resemble food such as cans of oil. Be sure all windows are tightly closed.

You're on your way up the trail with your pack filled to the brim with clothing, camera, fishing pole, personal items and yes, your food! This food has to last the whole trip. As we know there are no stores in the wilderness. A little precaution in the evening can assure you breakfast in the morning.



Remove all food and items that has an odor from your pack. You can counter balance your food or use a bear canister. A bear canister can be purchased and rented from some Forest Service Offices or purchased from sporting goods stores. Place your pack away from your food.

You may occasionally see a bear ambling through the campground, and that is okay. The mountains are their home. If the bear gets too close, attempt to frighten him from camp.

You can frighten a bear away by making noise. If the bear does not go away and keeps coming towards you, leave the area and notify a ranger. Help keep the bear wild.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

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