



# Bear Facts

BY LARRY “RED BONE” DULINSKI

**I**t's hard to believe we're less than 60 days until Alaska's bear season comes to life (Bear Hunting season is for 4 months out of the year; April, May, August & September). Another knowledgeable part of being a Backwoodsman is knowing the potential dangers of the mammals, reptiles, insects and any other pesty critters living in your geographical area, and the hazards that they cause to your well-being. Up in my neck of the woods we're not so much plagued with creepy crawlers. Just carnivorous wolves and bears. Along with a plethora of monstrous hoof-stomping moose. Oh yeah, and those dang giant pesky skeeters that will carry a man away deep into the wilderness, everyone's sworn enemy, the mosquito. For these reasons, most people around these parts of the woods, carry large caliber guns with them at all times.

Bear spray is an option, but after years and many studies the effects bear spray has on stopping a charging bear is not as effective as once perceived. Not that I'm against bear spray, I highly recommend that you do your research on how to properly disperse the EPA approved product only. Because a bear spray user has many things to consider. While trying to execute the spray, that may or may not stop

a charging grizzly coming at you 35 miles per hour chomping its teeth and drooling slobber with fire in its eyes with only a fraction of seconds to make the necessary decisions properly, that are needed to save your life.

Here are some things to consider when using an EPA registered bear deterrent pepper spray:

## QUICK ACCESS

One should have an instinctual reflex action in knowing how to reach the canister in a fraction of seconds for quick response.

## DISTANCE

Most experts recommend no further or less than 50 to 60 yards, start spraying in one-second blasts, getting a trail of the spray into the air. Remember to try and save enough spray for the last 10-yard blast.

## WIND

Knowing this bit of information quickly is very crucial in executing the bear spray effectively. If one sprays and the wind is in your face, you just seasoned the bears' dinner.

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In my many years of being an Alaskan Big Game Guide, guiding for bear and my experience in being an oil field bear hazard trainer, there are two factual factors to be aware of when dealing with a bear encounter. If attacked or being mauled by a grizzly or brown bear, roll up and play dead. Protect the belly area and the neck area by folding arms and hands around the back of your neck. Chances are after it gives you a pretty bad beating, it could just as quickly leave you alone once it feels you're no longer a threat.



bear being more timid than the grizzly bear. That's because the bigger more powerful and tenacious grizzly looks upon its smaller cousin as fair game. If a black bear encounters a grizzly, the tendency of the black bear is to run away. But the grizzly is prone to aggressively confront the black bear. Often times running it down and killing it as prey.

Ninety percent of all bear attacks occur when a human stumbles upon a bear. No situation triggers



**Two original, up-close photos of grizzly bears, taken by the author.**

Black bears are a totally different circumstance. It is highly recommended you should fight for your life. In most cases it is a proven statistic that black bear attacks result in the bear eating its victim dead or alive. So, while out in bear country this season here are some things one should consider. Black and grizzly bears may look somewhat similar (except that grizzlies have a big bump on their shoulders, and black bears do not have that bump), but their personalities and instincts vary greatly, with the black

a bears' defensive aggression reaction more quickly than the sudden appearance of a human within fifty yards. If you can avoid startling a bear, you'll prevent most trouble while out in bear country. Life is hard for bears. A bear that is protecting its food is very dangerous when disturbed at their food cache. They're always on the lookout for a large supply of protein such as carrion, which is decaying flesh of dead animals.





**In Alaska, the result of the latest bear hunt by the author.**

Another dangerous situation is when a bear is defending their young. A leading cause of mortality among sub-adult bears is larger bears. A large bore will pounce upon any cub to kill it and eat it. For this reason, a sow bear is one of the most ferocious and dangerous animals that you could encounter out in the wilderness.

A bear that becomes a predatory bear towards humans is very dangerous. We don't see many bears around Alaska like this, thank God! It is a chilling fact that a small percentage of both black and grizzly bears look upon humans as food (mostly in the lower 48 states). A bear can become habituated to lose its fear of humans. This is a fact in many of

the attacks on humans involving bears are caused by some bears becoming accustomed to eating human food from garbage dumps and camping parks and have lost their instinctive fear of humans.

So, when out being a Backwoodsman in bear country, possessing education in bear behavior is key to your safety, and to the bears survival as well. Stay safe, and please pay attention to your surroundings. —*Red Bone*

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