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BEAR

how to behave in case of
close encounters



PROVINCIA AUTONOMA DI TRENTO

TRENTINO





*This leaflet is based on the guidelines of the **Safety in Bear Country Society** (John Hechtel, Stephen Herrero, Grant McHutchon, Andy McMullen, Jane McMullen, Phil Timpany), validated by 38 of the main experts on such issue by the **IBA (International Association for Bear Research and Management)**.*

*The text has also been evaluated and approved by the **Human-Bear Conflicts Expert Team** of the **IUCN/SSC Bear Specialist Group**.*

Because most European brown bears tend to be fearful of humans, they try to avoid people. However, bears are wild animals and they may display defensive behavior when encountered at close distances, if they are startled, or protecting cubs.

Avoid surprising bears at close range. Be alert for bears. The best way to prevent close encounters with bears is to make noise to alert the bear to your presence by clapping, or talking loudly in forested areas.

How to behave in case of close encounters

IF **THE BEAR IS NOT AWARE OF YOUR PRESENCE**, SILENTLY GO BACK THE WAY YOU CAME, BUT KEEP AN EYE OUT FOR THE BEAR IN CASE IT'S ALSO MOVING.

IF **THE BEAR NOTICES YOUR PRESENCE AND MOVES AWAY FROM YOU** (MOST COMMON CASE), WAIT BEFORE YOU CONTINUE, BUT AVOID MOVING IN THE SAME DIRECTION AS THE BEAR.

IF **THE BEAR NOTICES YOUR PRESENCE AND STANDS UP** TRYING TO IDENTIFY YOU, STAND STILL AND TALK CALMLY.

AS LONG AS **THE BEAR IS STATIONARY**, TRY SLOWLY MOVING AWAY FROM IT, WHILE TALKING IN A CALM TONE.

IF **THE BEAR MOVES TOWARD YOU**, WALKING OR RUNNING, STAND YOUR GROUND, SPEAK IN A CALM VOICE AND GIVE THE BEAR TIME TO FIGURE OUT YOU'RE NOT A THREAT AND TO CALM DOWN.



IF AN ATTACK WITH PHYSICAL CONTACT OCCURS, LAY DOWN WITH YOUR FINGERS INTERLACED ON THE BACK OF YOUR NECK WITH YOUR ARMS PROTECTING YOUR HEAD AND REMAIN COMPLETELY STILL UNTIL THE BEAR CALMS DOWN AND MOVES AWAY. DO NOT RUN AWAY, DO NOT YELL AT THE BEAR AND DO NOT TRY TO HIT THE ANIMAL. IF YOU ARE WEARING A BACKPACK KEEP IT ON; IT IS NOT USEFUL TO PUT IT DOWN TRYING TO DISTRACT THE BEAR. IN FACT, IT MAY PROTECT YOU. DO NOT STAND UP TO LEAVE THE AREA UNTIL YOU ARE SURE THAT THE BEAR HAS MOVED AWAY.

A few words about bear spray

In the rare case of a bear attack, or when a bear appears aggressive and is close by, bear spray is an effective tool for deterring aggressive bears. **Bear spray** is an aerosol containing a capsaicin (pepper) deterrent that is under pressure and when sprayed at a bear's face/eyes has been successfully used to stop or reduce attacks (maximum range of 8-9 meters). In Italy it is currently forbidden by law to purchase and use bear spray and those for personal defence are not suitable. The Autonomous Province of Trento is working to change the law, and make the possession and use of bear spray in bear range possible.

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