

# **Black Bears & People on the Yakama Reservation**



Photo by S. McCorquodale

Black Bears (*Anah'ui*) are common animals within the forested areas of the Reservation and figure prominently in the stories of the Yakama People. The first warm days of late winter or early spring bring these animals out from their dens in search of food. Black bears are omnivorous and eat both plants and animals. Black bears emerging from their dens are highly attracted to carrion from winter killed deer and elk. They are lean and hungry when they emerge from their dens and are attracted to food from any source including garbage around homes and camp grounds.

Black bears are normally thought of as forest dwelling animals. However, they also inhabit lowland areas along brushy streams. These areas supply ample food in the way of berries, such as elderberries, currents, hawthorn berries, chokecherries and apples from wild apple trees.

## **Bear Facts**

Black bears mature at three years of age. Bears mate in early summer and cubs are born in mid-winter while the female is still in the den. Bears can have one to three or more cubs, but usual litter size is two. Bears can be a nuisance around homes, camps and recreation areas. If you live around bear country, which includes lowland areas on the reservation along creeks in the vicinity of White Swan, Harrah, and Satus you may encounter a bear.

## How to Avoid Conflicts with a bear.

Make your property safe by keeping garbage out of reach and smell of bears. Be sure garbage cans are emptied regularly. Reduce residual odor by periodically cleaning garbage cans using hot water and bleach. Store trash in a closed garage or shed. If a garage or shed is not available, use chain link enclosures with a top. If you have pets, do not store their food or feed them outside. Clean your BBQ grill of grease and store it inside. Do not put fruit or other bear attractants on compost piles. Fish are especially attractive to bears. If possible, clean your fish before you return home. Be sure and cleanup thoroughly and remove fish waste when you process fish near your home. When hunting, hang your game out of reach of bears and, if possible, some distance from your home or camp.



Most BEAR PROBLEMS ARE PEOPLE PROBLEMS. In other words, they are caused by people leaving garbage and other attractants around their property.

### If you meet a bear:

1. **Stay Calm.** In most cases the bear will detect you first and leave.
2. **Stop.** Back away, give plenty of room and don't run!
3. **Speak Softly.** Let the bear know you are human and mean no harm.

Bears will try to identify you, and when they do, usually leave the area. If attacked, curl into a ball and cover your head and neck. When the bear leaves remain still until you are absolutely sure the bear is gone. Bear attacks are rare, only 5 per year in the last 100 years in North America.

Yakama Nation Wildlife Management “Protecting Wildlife Resources for the Future”



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