

BEAR BEHAVIOR

They're on their best "bear behavior."

For a short time each year, Fish Creek gives us a peek into the world of bears. Although grizzlies and black bears are usually solitary, they tolerate each other as they focus on the abundant salmon. Large and powerful, bears tend to avoid confrontations at Fish Creek. Yet, choice fishing holes are jealously guarded and require bears to mind their manners.



When a bear stands up on its hind legs, it is not an aggressive posture. The bear simply wants to get a better look at you and to look larger.

A Bear's Mood

- Laid-back ears
- + Jaw popping
- + Swaying from side to side on stiff legs
- + Low "woofs" and loud roars
- = LOOK OUT! A confrontation is building!



If you are going to give a bear a piece of your mind, give him plenty of room and make sure you can fly.

A brown bear goes for a swim.



Sticking close to mom.



Brown and black bears make bluff charges to intimidate offenders. During real charges, bears run very fast, foam at the mouth, lay their ears back, and roar loudly.



Danger! Where's mom?

The Rules

Bears quickly adopt a hierarchy or "pecking order" to reduce dangerous fights. Black bears generally give way to grizzlies; sows with cubs abandon fishing holes to adult males. When threatened, sows with cubs will often send their youngsters up the nearest tree to safely wait until the danger passes. Two- and three-year-old bears get pushed around by everyone. The punishment for breaking these rules is often sudden and severe. A thundering swat or a menacing pop of the jaws is usually all it takes to restore order.



More than a dining room

Once the bears' bellies are full of fish, the thickets of alder and willow along Fish Creek are the perfect place for a nap during the mid-day heat. Look around. Trampled grass and broken branches are clues to the location of the bears' bedrooms.



Cubs perfect their sparring technique early for use later.

