



GUARD THE GRIZZLY BEAR campaign



Just What Are Your Chances of Getting Mauled by a Grizzly Bear?

On numerous occasions, Idaho's Governor Dirk Kempthorne has called grizzly bears "massive, flesh-eating carnivores." This exaggeration of the public safety risk caused by grizzlies, along with the overwhelming attention the media devotes to bear attacks, has created a great level of panic and hysteria, even among those citizens that normally support endangered species protections. By taking the right precautions and understanding bear behavior, these situations can be avoided.

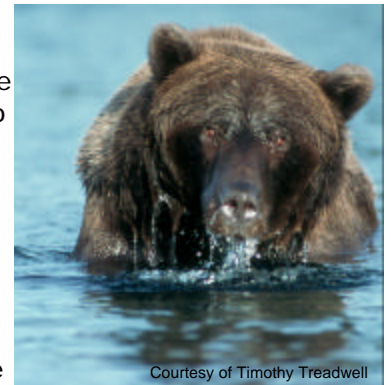
Consider this: Minus grizzlies, the wilderness is a perilous place where a person can slip on a rock, be buried in a rockslide or avalanche, drown, die of hyperthermia, etc. In addition, we face a minute but very real risk of injury or death from an assortment of other wildlife especially moose, bison, cougars, and black bears. According to the Great American Bear, by Jeff Thorne, a person is twelve times as likely to be killed by a bee sting, than by a grizzly bear. Moreover, for every person killed by a grizzly bear, 64 are killed by domestic dogs and over 90,000 by fellow humans.

■ A study conducted in Yellowstone National Park between 1980 and 1994 showed that with more than 600,000 visitor overnights in the back country and hundreds of thousands of day trips, 21 grizzly related injuries were reported.

■ From 1980-2000, over 56 million people visited Yellowstone National Park. During the same period, 29 people were injured by bears. The chance of being injured by a bear while in the park is approximately one in 1.9 million.

■ Grizzly bear-inflicted injuries to humans in developed areas averaged approximately one per year during the 1930's through the 1950's and four per year during the 1960's. Grizzly bear-caused human injuries in developed areas then decreased to one injury every two years (0.5/year) during the 1970's. In the last 20 years (1980-1999), there has been only one grizzly bear-caused human injury within a developed area.

■ Human injuries from grizzly bears in the backcountry, a rare occurrence before 1970, increased to an average of approximately one per year during the 1970's, 1980's, and 1990's. The slight increase in backcountry injuries from the 1970's through the 1990's may be related to the increase in backcountry recreational use in Yellowstone since the early 1970's.



Courtesy of Timothy Treadwell

The top ten causes of human mortality in Yellowstone National Park from 1839-1994 were:

1. Drowning	101
2. Falls	24
3. Airplane Crashes	20
4. Host Springs Burns	19
5. Suicide	16
6. Hypothermia	17
7. Horse drawn carriage	9
8. Indian Battle	7
9. Horses	7
10. Shooting	7

Five people have been killed by grizzly bears during that same time period.

If You Do Encounter a Bear . . .

- Try to remain calm, talk to the bear in a low voice, and slowly back away.
- Stay close to other members of your group.
- Keep your backpack on for added protection.
- If the bear charges, try to remain calm because bears are often bluffing.
- If the grizzly does attack, lie on your stomach with your face to the ground, clasp your hands behind your neck and use your toes and elbows to resist being rolled over.
- Play dead until the bear leaves the area.

The Sierra Club's Campaign to Guard the Grizzly is aimed at protecting the threatened species and its habitat in the lower 48 United States and Canada. The Sierra Club, which was founded more than a century ago by John Muir, is America's oldest, largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization.

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