

Bear Procedures – Be Bear Aware

Note: This document is a slight adaptation of the official Philmont Scout Ranch “Bear Procedures” document. Changes for Wood Badge 110 participants have been noted in red italicized font of this style. All other text is as published by the Philmont Scout Ranch as of June 2008.

- Bears have an acute sense of smell. The smell of food or any other odor (except human scent) may attract bears which are curious by nature. Bears are opportunistic feeders. They will investigate any different odor as a food source and take advantage of any easy meal, which may be presented. Bears typically search for food at night, but also roam during the day.

Our Goal = DO NOT REWARD BEARS WITH FOOD

- Hike during day light hours and stay on the trail.
- Hike as a group. Make your presence known (call out).
- Watch for bear signs: scat, claw marks, diggings, logs or stumps torn apart, rocks overturned.
- Always keep a clean camp. Use only designated campsites.
- Upon arriving in camp, place all smellables that are not immediately needed in the bear bag and place all dishes near the sump. As soon as possible hang all food and smellables in bear bags. ***WB110 participants should place their smellables in their vehicle while at the Philmont Training Center (PTC) or in the Quartermaster (QM) Shack while at Rayado Ridge Camp.***
- When participating in program, conservation or side hikes, always have someone stand guard of your backpacks or hang all smellables on the nearest bear cable.

NOTIFICATION:

- A nuisance bear is one that is hard to chase away and returns to your site or has investigated any camp items. At night, if you suspect a nuisance bear, gather the crew, build a small fire (during a fire ban gather the crew together with flashlights), and stay up to keep watch. During the day, notify the nearest staff camp.
- In trail camps: notify all other crews in camp of any bear sightings. Also notify the next staff camp you come to.
- In staff camps: notify staff and any crews in your immediate area of any bear sightings.
- When reporting a bear, be prepared to give as much information as possible: size, color, ear tags, markings and whether or not it has cubs.

TENTS:

- Keep tents grouped in clusters - no isolated tents. ***Wood Badge 110 participant will sleep in Platform Tents which are already set up and placed away from the Bearmuda Triangle.***
- Keep tents away from smellables, backpacks, wooded areas, acorn or berry patches, slopes and animal trails.
- Strive to be more than 50 feet from any point on the **Bearmuda Triangle** (sump, cooking area, bear bag).
- DO NOT STORE DAY-CLOTHES IN THE TENT. Sleep in a set of clothes that are only used for sleeping. Store these clothes in sleeping bags.

SMELLABLES:

- ***For WB-110: At Rayado Ridge Camp, smellables will be stored inside the QM shack. At PTC, smellables can be stored in your vehicle. Bear bags will not be used.***
- DO NOT LEAVE THE AREA OF THE BEARMUDA TRIANGLE WITH ANY SMELLABLES.
- Smellables include: food, candy bars, treats, garbage, soaps, shampoos, deodorants, lotions of any kind, toothbrushes and toothpaste, feminine hygiene products, sunscreen, lip balm, insect repellent, film and cameras, First Aid kits, and SUMP FRISBEE.
- Water bottles if smellables go up, all others go in the fire ring or within the Bearmuda Triangle
- Smellable water bottles that have had any drink mix or were once soda or beverage bottles must be hung.
- Non-smellable water bottles including those with stickers and duct tape must be placed within the Bearmuda Triangle.
- Clothes that have been worn should be placed within the Bearmuda Triangle.
- Vomit: While hiking, move off the trail and kick dirt over vomit. While in camp, clean it up and hang it in the bear bag.
- Use the sump to dispose of dirty dishwater and cooking liquids! Strain food particles from dishwater and put with wet garbage and uneaten food in plastic bags and hang them in a bear bag. Pack everything out. Never burn or bury garbage. When you reach the next staffed camp, consult the staff on what to do with garbage. Never leave your trash or garbage on a porch without a staff member being made aware of it.
- Prepare and cook food in or close to the fire ring.
- When conditions permit, discourage wearing warm clothes or rain gear while cooking.

- Personal Sanitation - Using scented lotions, soaps, deodorants and shampoo may attract the attention of bears. Wash and shower early in the day so that residual smells will dissipate before night. Late in the day, wash with water only! Avoid using hair tonic, perfume and deodorants. Brush your teeth as you usually do. Do not use sunscreen or bug repellent late in the day (after 5:00 pm).
- Bear bags should be hung on the cable that is provided in every camp. The weight of the rope will enable it to be tossed over the cable - a serious injury may result from using a rock. In the Valle Vidal area where there are no bear cables, tie up a couple of handfuls of dirt in a bandanna for a weight to throw over branches or use baseball method to hang your bear bags. If you leave your campsite or pack during the day, hang your food and smellables. Do not leave your packs unattended while you take program, visit conservation sites or take a side hike. ***WB-110 participants will not use bear bags.***

OOPS BAG:

- Use for any last minute or forgotten items such as: sump Frisbee, yum-yum bag, trash, advisor coffee dishes, forgotten pocket items. ***For WB-110 participants, the "OOPS BAG" will be placed in your vehicle while at PTC or the QM Shack while at Raado Ridge Camp.***
- Hang rope and bags as normal, but tie a loop at the midpoint. Use carabineer attached to the loop or the loop as a pulley, and thread the oops rope through it. Leave the oops rope dangling so that the oops bag can be hoisted without dropping the primary bear bag complex.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

- If you have cooked or washed dishes, be sure to rinse thoroughly your hands and arms with clean rinse water to wash away any food particles or smells. Leave clean dishes at the sump.
- Strive to use hand sanitizer before 6:00 p.m. Try to cook early in the evening.
- Keep a flashlight readily available.
- Be diligent at picking up trash EVERYWHERE!
- Packs should be placed in the Bearmuda Triangle well away from tents.
- ***Always have a buddy wherever you go, especially if you need to get up during the night to use the latrine.***
- ***Patrols should approve their cooking location with the WB110 Quartermaster Staff before cooking. It should be well away from tents.***

BEAR ENCOUNTERS:

- Never provoke a bear to act aggressively. Do not throw rocks, use flash bulbs, approach, or go close to a bear. A mother with cubs is very protective and easily provoked. Give all bears a wide berth.
- If a bear approaches your campsite (50-100 yards away), make loud noises (yell, rattle pots and pans, whistle and break sticks) to discourage it from coming closer. Stand upright. Do not kneel or bend over. Wave arms, jackets or other materials. Never risk injury by attempting to save your food or gear. Both can be replaced if necessary.
- If a bear enters your campsite, gather your crew and quickly leave the area until the bear is gone. Contact the staff who may attempt to chase the bear away.
- If you awaken with a bear curiously examining you, do not play dead and do not strike the bear. Talking with a calm tone of voice will let the bear know you are alive and well. If the bear is several feet away, you may be able to slip out of your sleeping bag and retreat. Running may provoke a bear. If possible back away slowly.
- If you are attacked by a black bear, do not play dead, but rather fight with everything you have using rocks, sticks or anything else at hand.
- Never approach or corner a bear.
- Never offer food to a bear.

MOUNTAIN LION ENCOUNTERS:

- Avoid hiking alone, especially between dusk and dawn when lions normally do their hunting. Make plenty of noise while you hike to reduce the chances of surprising a lion.
- Always keep children in sight while hiking, and within arms' reach, in areas that can conceal a lion. Mountain lions seem to be drawn to children.
- Do not approach a lion, especially if it is feeding or with its young. Most lions will avoid confrontation. Give them a way to escape.
- Stay calm and face the lion. Do not run, because this may trigger the lion's instinct to attack. Try to appear larger by raising your hands.
- Pick up small children so they don't panic and run. This will also make you appear larger. Avoid bending over or crouching.
- If the lion acts aggressively, throw rocks, branches, or whatever can be obtained without turning your back or bending over.
- Fight back if attacked. Since a mountain lion usually tries to bite the head or neck, try to remain standing and face the attacking animal. People have successfully fought back with rocks, sticks, or bare hands.
- ***Report any mountain lion sightings to nearest staff camp.***