



Camp Chief Hector YMCA Wildlife Management Policy

Vision

Camp Chief Hector YMCA envisions communities safely co-existing with wildlife and ecosystems with increased sustainability and diversity.

Mission

Camp Chief Hector YMCA co-exists with wildlife and healthy ecosystems as an integral part of its experience, according to the following priorities:

1. Compliance with applicable laws and regulations
2. Safety of campers, staff and families
3. Collaboration with professional wildlife managers
4. Sustainable co-existence of people, wildlife and ecosystems

The Significance of Bear and Cougar Rules

It is a significant mission, to keep people safe from bears and cougars, and to keep bears and cougars safe from people. While attacks are rare, the consequences are well known and are highly traumatic. A single careless act may well lead to a tragic incident involving a camper or a staff member. Additionally a single careless act may force camp's temporary closure for an entire season; it may cause the closure of important outtripping regions; it may lead to discontinued programs and discontinued visits; it may lead to the otherwise avoidable destruction of a bear.

Previously at Camp Chief Hector YMCA, while an attack on a person has not occurred, the destruction of bears has occurred due to the careless acts.

Because of the possible consequences of careless acts, we must each and all of us be accountable for our actions. Support and compliance with the Wildlife Policy and Rules is necessary in all cases, according the details as well as to its spirit and intent. Therefore, failure to support and comply with the Wildlife Policy and Rules, whether through seemingly small acts or through significant failures, would very likely result in a release from employment.

Food and garbage storage at Main-sites

- **All food must be stored securely inside of either Bowfort Lodge, Outtripping Center, Hector Lodge, Health Centers, Old Lodge or Staff Housing (or, at Gray Jay, the Antler Cabin, the Main Lodge or the Casa Grande) – or, if grain for horses, in secure facilities at the horse program areas**
- **All food garbage must be stored securely inside any of the buildings stated above, or in an approved bear-safe garbage dumpster (or, at Gray Jay, the garbage room, secured at night with a lock and an electric fence)**
- **Food may be served temporarily, with permission of a full-time director, in any of Deer Lodge, Eagle Lodge, the Old Lodge or the Family Cabin**
 - **The food must be dispensed from a container which will then carry away food garbage directly after the event (not sometime later that day, not the next day)**
 - **The food must be eaten in the immediate area**



- Any food garbage litter (apple cores, wrappers, peels, etc.) must be gathered up and taken to the garbage with the rest of the garbage from the event
- All smellies (items that may attract bears with their odour, such as lotions, toothpaste, shampoos, etc), for campers and for staff members, must be kept in designated smellies areas

Food, Food-garbage and Smellies storage on Outtrip (refer to Cook-site Rules for references to acceptable practices)

- When unpacking backpacks on an outtrip, food, food-garbage and smellies must be under direct supervision of a camp staff member or it must be in an approved bear-safe container stored at the correct location
- Approved bear-safe containers MUST be clean (not smelly or leaking juice or having un-covered food)
- Approved bear-safe containers from CCH are either 10-litre black or clear-plastic food vaults (NOT food-tubs or Nalgene tubs, etc)
- Approved bear-safe containers from land managers include food lockers (preferred) and food-hangs
- On canoe-trips, CLEAN and lidded-with-hasp-or-straps wannigans and barrels are permitted as food-storage containers – be aware that as these containers are NOT at all bear proof, they must be kept clean and not smelly and free from leaking juices or having un-covered food)
 - In other words, food, food-garbage and smellies can NEVER, not for a minute, be left un-attended and un-secured at a cook-site or tent-site (such as while setting up a camp-site)
 - Similarly, food, food-garbage and smellies in backpacks can NEVER, not for a minute, be left un-attended (for instance, if a group wanted to leave their packs behind while exploring a ridge or scouting a route or locating a camp-site)
- Food-garbage must be carried by staff members – the ONLY exception being if the food-garbage has been organized by a staff member such that it is tidy, not smelly, compressed and contained in not-leaking bags AND contained in a CLEANED white food-tub or Nalgene tub – when unattended, these must be kept in food vaults, food lockers or government-constructed food hangs
- Cook-site clean-up (including dish-washing, dish-rinsing and the re-organization of food, food-garbage and smellies, site-sweep) must be actively accomplished by a staff member (campers may provide help)
- Dishes and cook-site clean-up (see above) MUST be accomplished directly after the meal (not left until later)
- Cook-sites and secured food storage must be minimally 60 meters away from tent sites

Bear and Cougar Education for Staff Members

- Camp Chief Hector YMCA works closely with wildlife management professionals:
 - Alberta Environment managers and officers
 - Provincial Conservation Officers
 - Bow Valley WildSmart
 - National Parks Wardens
 - Bear Conflict Solutions
 - Consultations with bear and wildlife conflict management professionals
- With input from the above organizations, CCH YMCA forms its wildlife education and prevention programs, its training programs, and designs or upgrades its paths, accommodations and food management facilities
- From the above organizations, CCH YMCA receives timely and relevant reports, submits reports and observations, and follows government policies
- All spring, summer and fall staff members must watch “Living in Bear Country” DVD before commencing work with participants, and, for non-program staff within a week of their arrival at camp
- All spring, summer and fall program-related staff members will have a question-and-answer presentation with a regional provincial wildlife manager



Bear and Cougar Education for Campers and Participants

- All education regarding bear and cougar encounter responses **MUST** be given while in possession of an authoritative paper – the CCH-edited BearSmart two-sided sheet, or the BearSmart pamphlet or the Parks Canada Bears & People pamphlet
- The CCH-edited BearSmart two-sided sheet is recommended as the **FIRST** document to share with campers and participants, there-after building upon that knowledge with the other more comprehensive pamphlets
- During OT Plans, the facilitating staff member will use the CCH-edited BearSmart two-sided sheet to recall to campers the most basic preventative and reactive BearSmart actions
- All summer camper groups 13-days and longer must watch the 30-minute “Living in Bear Country” DVD
- All groups on a day hike will cover the “Hazards” material from the Day Hike checklist form
- Pretending to be a bear, or to make “bear noises” or any such behavior, with the intent of surprising others or with the intent of playing a joke on others, is **NEVER** permitted

Travel and Supervision

- While at a main-site, camp-staff directly responsible for campers (whether counselors or resource staff or both), must always know their campers’ whereabouts and must periodically do counts to ensure the entire group is accounted for
- Before groups leave on OT, trail reports are reviewed, including notes regarding bear activity and trail closures due to bear or cougar activity
- While on OT, all campers must **ALWAYS** be **DIRECTLY** supervised by a staff member, except:
 - When a camper is “going to the washroom” – and in this case the staff member must know their direction-distance and approximate time gone (campers are encouraged to go in pairs)
 - When a camper is travelling to and from a cook-site and a tent-site (NOTE: in the case where a group is split between the cook-site and the tent-site, a camp-staff must be at each location)
- Campers are encouraged to travel as a group or, minimally, in pairs
 - Provincial regulations, camp up-dates or, more often, camp staff judgment may dictate a more specific group formation such as traveling as a tighter group, travelling with a staff member at the front (lead) position and (if two staff members) a staff member in the sweep (back) position
 - Conditions that would lead to a specific group formation as described above, or as indicated in the Backpacking Rules (*Outtripping Handbook*), may include:
 - Reduced visibility (dimming light, thick bush, weather, etc.) or reduced sound-travel (increasing the chance of a surprise encounter)
 - Evidence of excellent bear food or habitat
 - Signs indicating “Bear (or Cougar) in Area”
 - Fresh signs of bear activity

Bear Spray

- Camp staff working in any capacity with designated hikes with Camp Chief Hector YMCA programs carry bear spray in the spring, summer, and fall seasons (staff member may be a group leader, a program staff, a support staff, etc., and will in all cases carry bear spray):
 - While on a hike in spring, summer or fall, the bear spray must be holstered and ready to be drawn with ease
- At other times, the bear spray is encouraged to be carried by each staff member, but need not be holstered, but may be carried (for instance) within a day-pack
- Bear spray may only be discharged **IN PRACTICE** with an authoritative professional wildlife manager, such as a Conservation Officer – otherwise, bear spray is **NEVER** to be discharged in practice
- Campers are **NOT** permitted to carry CCH bear spray
- Bear spray must be kept relatively securely from campers, such as in the lid of a day-pack



- All bear spray discharges must be reported as soon as is safe to do so, to a supervisor – if on outtrip, to the OT Assistance Telephone or called in on a radio
- The cost of misplaced bear spray will be paid for by the staff member who has misplaced the bear spray

Reactions to Observations and Encounters

- If a bear or a cougar is sighted, get together as a group and respond according to BearSmart and Parks Canada information (see below: BearSmart)
- If a bear or a cougar is sighted, and the BearSmart or Parks Canada information cannot be recalled with confidence, follow these simple actions:
 - get together as a group
 - back away speaking calmly
- No staff member or participant may approach a bear, or stay within sight of a bear in order to observe it after it has been sighted and a retreat has been initiated
- Radio or call in all cougar sighting, Grizzly bear sightings or Black bear sightings as soon as it is safe to do so, whether traveling on-site, day-hiking, or on outtrip (call OT Assistance Phone, if on OT)
- Fill out and submit a Wildlife Encounter Report Form as soon as possible (same day) following a bear or cougar sighting or encounter – and any other wildlife observation that has risk management implications
- Communicate your animal sighting to a supervisor as soon as possible
- Report the wildlife sighting to Kananaskis EMS Non-Emergency line at 403-591-7755 (if on OT, the OT Staff will do this for you, after you have called your observation in)
- Camp staff are NEVER to engage in “rescue missions” or engage in “aversive conditioning” (trying to scare or disturb a bear) – except during an unanticipated encounter, these actions, if they are to occur, will be taken by professional wildlife managers

Elk/Moose:

In rare situations, Elk and moose can be dangerous to people. As well, these animals are trying to feed in order to reproduce and to have sufficient food to survive the winter. Give them the right of way and stay back at least three bus lengths (30m / 100ft). If you spot an elk or moose put their heads down and paw at the ground, pull back at once and leave the immediate area.

Radio Communication

- 1 – EMS or immediate life threatening assistance
- 2 – First aid support or non life threatening assistance
- 3 – Lost camper/group; a situation requiring support with no first aid

R – Fire

W – Wildlife

➤ Bear/Cougar Sighting:

- your name
- Please switch to channel 2
- code “W” [for wildlife]
- location
- Animal description [one young bear, ear tags, unknown type; etc.]
- Comfort level of group



From: Backpacking Terrain Guidelines:

Lead & Sweep

- Staff members take lead AND sweep;
 - HOWEVER - a camper navigation team (1 or 2 campers) may be up to approximately 10 meters in front of the lead staff, ONLY if there is very little risk of exposure to scree, talus, heights, bear/cougar encounters, rock-fall, river-crossings, snow, ice, thick off-trail travel, or other significant hazards
 - If the possibility of these hazards is moderate-to-high, the staff member will take the lead position
 - Likewise, a camper sweep team (1 or 2 campers) may be up to approximately 10 meters behind the sweep staff member
 - In both of these camper lead/sweep situations, the campers must have already demonstrated the capability to understand the “apprentice” lead/sweep position, as well as the capability to carry out the “apprentice” position
 - The “apprentice” lead and sweep campers must take on the positions willingly and by their own choice; campers will not be coerced/pressured into taking these positions
 - On-site hiking (and off-site hiking with open spaces and excellent visibility), may use any number of modified supervision strategies in order to empower campers while maintaining effective supervision (the group must always be traveling together, and may not become separated by more than 3 bus-lengths (300ft.)

Tent Sites & Sleeping Arrangements

- One staff member must ALWAYS be directly with the group providing direct supervision.
- During overnights, camp staff must make the following sleeping arrangements:
 - Staff members must sleep in tents with campers, splitting themselves up between tents, sleeping separately from each other.
 - If directed by their supervisor due to a group of 9 campers or another limited space situation, staff will sleep sharing on tent ideally situated between the two camper tents, or as close as practical, never further than 6 metres away from a camper tents. In this situation, male and female campers will sleep in gender-specific tents.
- Tents and 2 tarps must always be set-up at each tenting site, whether or not the group plans to use them. If the group sleeps under the stars, the camp staff will sleep directly amongst the campers.
- Tent sites must have some measure of shelter – minimally by landscape or by large boulders (larger-than-tent-size). Additionally, tent sites must not be: (a) directly on a trail; (b) threatened by dead trees or large dead branches; (c) potentially below flood/tide water-line; or (d) in conspicuous bear food sources or along noisy water-courses where a bear could be surprised by the tent sites.
- Campsites must be set up in areas that are permitted by land managers.

Cook-site Arrangement

- One staff member must ALWAYS be supervising and assisting an active cook-site, assisting with organizing, cooking, cleaning, doing dishes, and re-organizing.
- A cook-site must always have its borders defined, whether using a camp-stove, fire-box, or open-fire. The borders must be large enough to permit easy movement within the cook-site for 3 people; the borders must be defined in a way that will be clear to see and understand but that would not create a tripping/falling hazard. A thick line of spruce cones on the ground, for instance, can create a clear boundary without being a tripping hazard.
- The maximum members of the cook-team are three.



- Any person inside the cook-site must be wearing well-covering shoes/boots (NOT Crocs® or sandals, etc).
- Footwear must be worn WITH socks (to absorb the heat of spilled/splattered water, oil or sparks).
- In order to make the cook-site efficient and safety-oriented, another tarp shelter (or suitable area) will be established away from the cook-site, as an area to eat the meal, to socialize, etc.
- Food is NOT served inside the cook-site or under the cook-site tarp. Food is served at least 3 paces from the cook-site perimeter.

Dish-washing and Cook-site Cleanliness

- Dishes must be washed with soapy water, rinsed with water, put to dry, and then organized.
- Group and personal dishes are washed by the wash team (not individually).
- There MUST be a staff member assisting or leading the dish-team; two campers assisting are recommended, plus the staff member.

Bow Valley WildSmart - Cougar Smart Advice

Avoid Encounters

- Cougars generally avoid people
- Travel in groups and keep everyone together
- Cougars can be attracted to children, due to their small size and their erratic movement patterns. Keep watch over your children, especially during dusk and dawn, when cougars are most active
- Make noise to alert cougars of your presence
- Leave the area if you see or smell a dead animal. Cougars usually cover their kills with forest debris

Handling Encounters

- Immediately pick up small children
- Do NOT turn your back on a cougar
- Maintain eye contact with the cougar
- Always leave room for it to escape
- NEVER RUN; it may trigger an attack
- Make yourself appear as big as possible
- Back away slowly

Handling An Attack

- Fight back with anything at hand
- Use bear spray (keep canisters easily accessible and warm in winter to improve effectiveness)

Bow Valley WildSmart - Coyote Smart Advice

Avoiding Encounters

- Never feed coyotes. Attacks are often related to coyotes that have been fed intentionally or unintentionally when food is left out for wildlife
- Store all possible attractants such as garbage and pet food inside or in bear proof bins
- Supervise children on the trail. Small children may be seen as easier prey by coyotes

Handling Encounters

- If a coyote approaches you, make yourself look as large as possible
- Pick up small children
- Shout in a deep voice at the coyote and maintain eye contact



- If the coyote approaches you don't run or turn your back on the coyote, continue to shout, wave your arms and slowly move to safety
- Throw rocks, sticks or other objects

Handling An Attack

- If you are attacked, fight back
- Use bear spray (keep canisters easily accessible and warm in winter to improve effectiveness)

BearSmart: Preventing an Encounter & Response to an Encounter

Preventing an encounter

1. Travel as a group:
 - a. Travel tightly enough that a bear would recognize a single group and not a line of scattered individuals or clumps of individuals
 - b. As the likelihood of a surprise encounter increases (decreased visibility or sound-travel, bear signs, bear food sources abundant), your group will come closer together with staff member moving towards the front
2. Make sufficient noise (bear bells are not sufficient, but singing and laughing and talking and the occasional loud bear yell "Hi, hi, hi!" is often sufficient)
3. Observe and adapt to changes in the environment around you – entering a open area, entering denser vegetation
4. Keep food tidy (in bags, etc) and protected (inside circle of group, if stopped for a break or game)

What to do if you see a bear

1. Bear is far away

- a. Stay close to the people you are with (if available, move slowly to a safe place like a building or vehicle)
- b. Don't let anyone leave the group
- c. Never run from a bear – it might provoke the bear to chase you
- d. Slowly, calmly, move away from the bear – if the bear is unaware or you, do NOT stay to observe the bear





2. The bear is surprised

- The bear may come closer, stand upright to get a better look, or circle around you to smell you better
- The bear may talk to you in its language – popping its teeth, huffing or growling: it is telling you to go away
- DON'T RUN AWAY – move closer to your friends



3. The bear is checking you out

- Help it understand that you are a human
- Slowly wave your arms and speak to the bear calmly
- Leave slowly, staying close to your friends, always facing the bear



4. The bear won't leave you alone

- If you talk to the bear and it still follows you – DON'T RUN AWAY
- Stop moving and follow the directions of the camp staff
 - Defensive attack** (bear is protecting a carcass, protecting its young and/or is surprised by your presence – it attacks because it perceives you as a threat; it may bluff charge – come at the group and then turn away at the last moment): be non-threatening, stay calm, speak calmly and back away; use bear spray when applicable; if the bear spray is not effective and the bear continues its attack “play dead” by lying on front with fingers laced behind head and legs spread; defensive attacks are generally less than two minutes in duration; if the attack lasts longer than this it may be a non-defensive attack – in this case FIGHT BACK



- ii. **Non-defensive attack** (bear is aware of your presence, has time to leave but continues closing distance on you – bear may be curious, indifferent or predatory): use bear spray; speak firmly and stand your ground; DO NOT PLAY DEAD; FIGHT BACK – intimidate the bear, let it know you are not easy prey



Staff Name: _____

Staff Signature: _____