



SWAN VALLEY BEAR NEWS



This Hunting Season Don't Forget Your Bear Spray

While packing gear for a weekend hunt, it is easy to forget to add bear spray to the pile near your rifle and hunting pack. Despite the fall season's cooler temperatures and potential snow, bears are still active throughout most of general rifle season. Bear spray can be a valuable tool for self-defense against an aggressive bear encounter.

There is much debate about the efficacy of firearms vs. bear spray for self-defense. Bear spray is often left at home by hunters who opt to carry a fire arm instead. However, bear spray can better "cover the spread" of risk when considering the diverse circumstances under which a bear encounter can occur.

The majority of bear encounters are defensive and an attack can occur in a split second, especially during hunting season where hunters are moving stealthily and trying not to alert wildlife, including bears, to their presence. Thick forest vegetation can also contribute to surprising a hidden bear and reaction time may be dramatically reduced due to the difficulty in seeing a charging bear until the last second.

When worn accessibly, bear spray offers a lightweight, quick and easy to use shotgun-style blast that can hit a target with little aim or preparation time. Bear Spray contains pepper-oils called "capsaicin's" that inflame mucus membranes and are thousands of times more powerful than the hottest habanero peppers.

Research has shown that bear spray is a very effective defense when involved in an aggressive bear encounter. Smith et al. (2006) examined bear spray incidents in Alaska and found that bear spray was effective 92% of the time and 98% of the users remained uninjured. In a similar study, Smith et al. (2012) found that those who use firearms in self-defense against bears suffered relatively higher injury rates in an attack.

Hunters can easily become familiar with using bear spray. Practice quickly removing the safety on a bear spray canister. Bear spray can be test fired by quickly depressing the trigger in an appropriate place. The can is easy to carry while hunting or recreating in bear country.

"Inert" cans of bear spray (pressurized cans that do not have pepper) are available for you to practice with at Swan Ecosystem Center.

Cited: Smith et al. 2006. Efficacy of Bear Deterrent Spray in Alaska. Journal of Wildlife Management.

Smith et al. 2012. Efficacy of Firearms for Bear Deterrence



A Condon resident practices with inert bear spray at the 2011 Swan Valley Bear Fair at the Hungry Bear Steakhouse.

Photo by Erika Edgely.

The SWAN VALLEY BEAR NEWS is published as a cooperative effort of the Living With Wildlife Foundation; Northwest Connections; Swan Ecosystem Center; Swan Valley residents; Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, and Flathead National Forest.

THE BEARS NEED YOUR HELP

Swan Valley Bear News is funded in large part by private donations. To donate, please send a check earmarked "Bears" to Swan Ecosystem Center, 6887 Highway 83, Condon, MT 59826. To donate by credit card, contact us at 406.754.3137.

Visit our Swan Valley Bear Resources link at SwanEcosystemCenter.org



Vital Ground Supports Swan Valley Bear Resources

Swan Valley Bear Resources (SVBR) is the proud recipient of the Vital Ground Foundation's first ever "Community Bear Aware Grant." The Foundation presented \$5,000 to Maria Mantas of Swan Ecosystem Center and Melanie Parker of Northwest Connections in August at the Shintangle fundraiser event.

Gary Wolfe, Executive Director of the Vital Ground Foundation spoke to the Foundation's support of SVBR; "With the significant investment Vital Ground has made in habitat conservation over the past 10 years in the Swan Valley, we believe supporting programs that will help rural communities safely co-exist with grizzly bears is an excellent way to protect that investment."

The Vital Ground Foundation works cooperatively with landowners, local communities, and state and federal agencies. Based in Missoula, Vital Ground addresses the issue of habitat fragmentation head-on by permanently protecting crucial lands for the benefit of grizzly bears and other wide-ranging wildlife.

SVBR is a collaborative effort between Swan Ecosystem Center, Northwest Connections and the US Forest Service to provide resources and local level knowledge toward helping local residents coexist with bears in the Swan Valley. Among the many resources available to Swan Valley residents, the organization manages a bear-resistant garbage container loaner program, helps supply expertise, funding, materials and labor for electric fencing, and hosts public events where the public can meet and get up-to-date information from agency biologists about living with bears.

"Swan Valley Bear Resources was formed 6 years ago in response to an alarming trend in grizzly bear mortality," said Melanie Parker. "Pooling resources across multiple organizations and agencies to promote education, reduce bear attractants, and minimize conflicts with livestock, we made great strides in protecting grizzly bears."

To date, SVBR has been able to supply 196 bear-resistant garbage containers within the Swan Valley. The containers are available free for loan with a small donation recommended. Residents also have the option to buy the containers if they choose. Money from purchased and donations is used to purchase additional containers for the community loaner program.

SVBR will continue to offer site specific consultations for interested residents on how to manage bear attractants on their property or that are interested in



Gary Wolfe (center) presents \$5,000 to Maria Mantas (right) and Melanie Parker (left) for SVBR outreach and activities.

Photo by Rita Wolfe

electric fencing. SVBR goals for the summer of 2015 are to help support three local fencing projects, maintain education and outreach, and to host a public educational outreach.

If you are interested in information about bears, about living with bears, electric fencing, a bear-resistant loaner container, or becoming involved in SVBR, contact Swan Ecosystem Center (406.754.3137).

Bear Troubles? Whom to Call

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Erik Wenum

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Emergencies

Dial **911** if you live in Seeley Lake or Condon

If you live in Swan Lake dial **886-2324**