



RESPECTING WILDLIFE

GRADE Kindergarten

TOPICS Wildlife, respect, stewardship

CURRICULAR CONNECTIONS

Kindergarten Language Arts

Topic 2.2 – Respond to Texts

- Experience various texts
 - Participates in shared listening, reading, and viewing experiences, using oral, print, and other media texts from a variety of cultural traditions and genres, such as picture books, fairy tales, rhymes, stories, photographs, illustrations and video programs
 - Listens and views attentively
 - Identifies favourite stories and books

READING LIST

- **A Beary, Berry Good Day** by Laurie Schwartz
- **Sometimes I Feel Like a Fox** by Danielle Daniel

OVERVIEW

Students are introduced to the two different bear species that call the Bow Valley home and learn how to tell the difference between black and grizzly bears. Once students are familiar with these creatures they will learn about how to make choices that keep people and wildlife safe.

OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to distinguish between black and grizzly bears
- Students will understand that wildlife require respect and space to survive
- Students will understand that their actions can help to protect bears and other wildlife

KEY TERMS

- **Respect** – acting in a way that shows you care about the feelings and well-being of another person or thing
- **Time Immemorial** – a time going back beyond the memory of any living person
- **Wildlife** – wild animals living in their natural environment

BACKGROUND ESSAY

Whether you are just passing through, have recently moved to the Bow Valley, or your ancestors have lived here since **time immemorial**, many people share a common appreciation and **respect** for this landscape. Every year millions of people travel to the Bow Valley to catch a glimpse of the creatures that call this place home, while a handful get to live here year round. Perhaps the most famous of all the animals that live in the Canadian Rocky Mountains is the bear.

There are two kinds of bears that live in the Bow Valley: black bears and grizzly bears. But how can we tell them apart? Here are a few things that will help you distinguish between the two types of bears:

1. **Hump:** Grizzly bears have a large hump over their shoulders. This gives the bears the strength to dig for food and to dig their dens for the wintertime. Black bears do not have this hump.
2. **Shape:** The rump or bum of the grizzly bear is lower than its shoulders, while the rump of the black bear is higher than the shoulders.
3. **Head:** Grizzly bears have large round heads and dish shaped faces. Black bears on the other hand have smaller heads with a longer snout. The head and snout of a black bear form a straight line.
4. **Ears:** The ears of grizzly bears are short, round and set farther apart from one another. The ears of black bears are longer, pointier and more upright. Picture Mickey Mouse ears!
5. **Claws:** The claws of grizzly bears are much longer than those of black bears (5-10 cm for grizzlies, 3-4 cm for black bears). Grizzlies



use their claws for digging up roots, insects and ground squirrels, while black bears use their claws for climbing trees.

While a lot of people think that colour and size are good ways to distinguish between these two types of bears, these characteristics can be very misleading:

1. **Colour:** Despite what their name might suggest, black bears can come in all sorts of different colours, including black, brown, blonde, cinnamon, slate-blue or even white. Grizzly bears, while often brown, can range in colour from light blonde to black. Grizzly bears often have grey tips on their hairs (this is where the name grizzly comes from), whereas black bears are usually a solid colour.
2. **Size:** Generally speaking, a full grown male grizzly bear will be larger than a full grown male black bear. However juvenile male and adult female grizzlies can be the same size and weight as male black bears. The grizzly bears in the Canadian Rockies tend to be smaller than those living in other regions of North America such as Alaska and Northern British Columbia due to differences in food sources.

DURATION 10-15 minutes

MATERIALS

- Books
- Puppets
- Papers
- Markers

ACTIVITY – STORY READING & RESPONSE

Choose one or two stories from the Kindergarten reading list to read aloud with your class that are related to bears, wildlife, and respect for animals and the environment.

Use the following strategies to engage students further with the texts:

- Stop to make predictions as you read the book
- Check-in to make sure that they understand any new vocabulary
- Look in detail at what is happening in the pictures
- Have students share about ways that the book connects to their own lives
- Have them share with a neighbour about something that they liked or disliked in the book
- Draw pictures of characters from the book
- Act out parts of the book

BACKGROUND ESSAY

In order to continue living near **wildlife** such as bears, there are things that we need to do to keep them safe and to show them respect. Perhaps the number one thing that animals need is space. The amount of space – or distance – that we keep between us and animals depends on what kind of animal it is. We should stay at least 100 metres (10 school bus lengths) away from bears, cougars and wolves and 30 metres (3 school bus lengths) away from elk, deer, moose, and bighorn sheep. If the animal has young babies with it, we should give it even more room.



Another thing that we can do to help protect animals is to not feed them. Animals like human food almost as much as we do – and that includes garbage! There is plenty of delicious food in the forest for these animals to eat, so they do not need to eat our lunch or leftover dinner.

When animals begin to associate humans with food, animals can end up in a lot of trouble. Bears that get into human food might have to be moved to a new home far away from the place they are used to – or worse. By cleaning up our campsite when we go camping, picking up litter that we see on the ground, and not leaving garbage outside our houses, we are protecting wildlife.

There are lots of beautiful hiking and biking trails around the Bow Valley. Being outside in nature exposes us to all sorts of beautiful and fascinating things, from creepy crawly salamanders underneath rocks to baby elk calves just learning how to walk. When we take our dog for a walk around Exshaw, Canmore or Banff, we should keep them on a leash unless we are in a designated off-leash dog area.

Sometimes an area might be closed to give an animal additional space while they finish feeding. Would you like to be disturbed while feasting? Well neither would bears! Obeying the closed area signs means that animals have a better chance of surviving. Together, we can help to keep bears and other wildlife safe and ensure that they can continue to live in the Bow Valley well into the future!

DURATION 20-30 minutes

MATERIALS

- Backpack with hiking gear
- Imitation bear track(s)
- Imitation bear scat
- Bear puppet
- Bear spray & holster
- Cut lengths of string (30m/100m)

ACTIVITY – EXPERIENTIAL BEAR HIKE

Lead students on a short hike near your school. Along the way, model good WildSmart practices and encounter evidence of bears.

1. Before heading out with students, pre-place the bear tracks, scat and puppet at intervals along your intended route.
2. Model good pre-trip practices: check the weather and trail advisories, packing of different items in backpack to keep your group safe (bear spray, layers, food and water)
3. Lead the students along a route. Make the route adventurous by incorporating natural features such as hills, trees, and rocks.
4. Encounter a bear track and lead a discussion of what to do when you see a bear track. Look around for bears or other wildlife in the area, listen for wildlife, make noise, and stay together as a group. Can you tell which direction the bear was headed? How would you modify your route if you were able to determine the bear's direction of travel?



5. Encounter bear scat and lead a discussion of what to do when you see bear scat. Look around for bears or other wildlife in the area, listen for wildlife, make noise and stay together as a group.
6. Encounter a bear (puppet) and lead a discussion of what to do when you encounter a bear:
 - a. **Stop** – Gather your group together and look as large as possible
 - b. **Talk** – Speak in a calm voice. This will let the bear know that you are human and not another bear
 - c. **Walk** – Slowly back up and return to where you came from. In some cases you might need to move off the trail to let the bear pass.
7. Demonstrate the distance that you should stay away from carnivores (bears, cougars and wolves = 100 metres) and ungulates (elk, moose, sheep, deer = 30 metres) by using pre-measured lengths of string.

DURATION 10-15 minutes

MATERIALS

- Large sheet of paper (*optional: draw or print an image of an animal on the paper ahead of time*)
- Markers

ACTIVITY – BEAR PLEDGE

Students will brainstorm ways that they can help to protect wildlife in the Bow Valley based on the story they read and the guided discussion from the bear hike. The students will pledge to follow these actions.

1. With the children, brainstorm ways that they can help to protect wildlife. This can also include things that residents and visitors should do to protect bears and other wildlife.
2. Write the top 1-3 things on the top of the poster. This will be your pledge.
3. Have children sign their names on the page to agree to the pledge. Children can also draw or colour the image on the poster and/or create their own smaller posters.