

## End the summer by enjoying Alberta's outdoors safely

*Edmonton...* The Labour Day weekend is a wonderful time to enjoy the wonders and beauty of Alberta's great outdoors. How Albertans use camping and recreation areas this holiday weekend will set the stage for how the landscape gets through the winter, as it will have little time to recover before the first frost.

Labour Day weekend marks the second busiest weekend of the season on Alberta's public lands. This year, the weekend also marks Alberta's 100<sup>th</sup> birthday, with provincial parks and recreation areas offering free camping on September 1, Alberta's official birthday. Visit [www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/freecamping](http://www.cd.gov.ab.ca/parks/freecamping) for more information.

The above-average rainfall this past summer has made the ground softer and more fragile than in past years. Alberta's *Respect the Land* program reminds Albertans to keep motorized vehicles (off-highway vehicles, recreational vehicles and automobiles) away from stream banks, wetlands and wet trails. Outdoor enthusiasts should also be mindful of damage caused to trails, roads and bridges. Please travel with caution and respect other users and any local trail closures. (Visit [www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/land/u\\_rec.html](http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/land/u_rec.html) for more information about recreating on public land and *Respect the Land*.)

September is an active time for wildlife. In late summer and fall, bears constantly search for food to see them through winter hibernation. To reduce human-bear conflicts, keep well away from berry bushes and other dense shrubs near campgrounds, trails, forest openings and road edges. Clean barbecues well after use and store food and garbage properly. Consider carrying bear spray. For more information, visit [www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/fw/bears](http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/fw/bears) or pick up a copy of the *Bear in Mind* brochure at a park office.

Although cougar encounters are rare, supervise children closely and don't let them play alone near wooded areas. In the rare event of a cougar attack, fight back by using rocks or sticks as weapons, or anything at hand. Always allow any animal room to escape. Be alert for animals such as deer, elk and moose on roadways, especially at dawn and dusk.

### **Attached: Backgrounders on Respect the Land and wildlife safety.**

#### **For further information, contact:**

For information about public land and wildlife:  
Communications  
Alberta Sustainable Resource Development  
(780) 427-8636

For more information about free camping:  
Cheryl Robb  
Alberta Community Development  
(780) 427-2206

Dial 310-0000 for toll-free connection.

August 25, 2005

## **Respect the Land**

### **When camping on public land:**

- Ensure camping is permitted in the area. Some areas have restrictions, e.g., public land under grazing leases and some areas within parks or protected areas.
- Limit your stay to fewer than 14 days. Permanent structures and gardens are not permitted.
- Camp at least 30 metres from lakes, rivers and streams to keep banks intact, minimize possibilities of water contamination and reduce encounters with wildlife.
- Dispose of garbage properly. Garbage receptacles are not usually provided on vacant public land. Please take your garbage with you and dispose of it in an appropriate place.
- Do not cut live trees or vegetation.
- Completely extinguish all campfires. Campfires and other human activity account for about 40 per cent of all wildfires in Alberta.
- Respect other campers and wildlife.

### **When traveling by off-highway vehicle or bicycle:**

- Stay on the trail.
- Do not spin or skid.
- Keep out of streams, wetlands and sensitive areas.
- Be respectful; travel quietly; yield to hikers and people on horseback.

Visit [http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/land/u\\_rec.html](http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/land/u_rec.html) for more information about recreation opportunities on public land and *Respect the Land*.

### **Media inquiries:**

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## **Wildlife safety tips**

### **Camping**

- Don't leave children unsupervised in parks or wooded areas.
- Pitch tents away from dense bush, lakeshores, streambanks and animal trails.
- Carry bear spray and know how to use it.

### **Cooking / Eating**

- Never cook or eat in or near your tent.
- Don't keep suntan lotion, insect repellent, deodorant and other scented products in your tent.
- Don't bury or burn food scraps.
- Dispose of waste and barbecue grease in suitable containers in campgrounds.
- Dump dishwater 100 metres downwind from the campsite or in designated drains.
- Clean fish at designated areas/dispose of fish remains in proper garbage containers.

### **Storing Food**

- Always store food out of reach of wildlife, preferably in airtight containers.
- An ideal way to store food is to hang supplies between two trees by means of a rope.
- If necessary, store food in the trunk of a vehicle, not where people sleep.

### **Hiking**

- Never approach or feed wildlife.
- Hike in groups and make noise - talk or use noisemakers - especially in dense bush and near streams.
- Avoid berry patches - berries are a favorite food of bears.

### **Bear encounters**

- Stay calm. Don't run or make sudden moves or noises.
- If a bear sees you, don't stare at it directly. Allow it a chance to retreat.
- Back off slowly toward cover.
- When you reach cover or a safe distance, detour around the animal or leave the area.
- Be ready to use pepper spray if you have it. When a bear is within six metres or so, a couple of short blasts at its face may discourage a charge.
- If a bear attacks, it may be best to drop to the ground on your stomach and play dead. Keep your legs together and try to maintain a face-down position. Protect your head by clasping your hands together behind your neck with your face to the ground.
- On rare occasions, a bear may stalk a person as potential prey. If this happens, fight back. Extend your arms and get up high to appear as large as possible. Use pepper spray, or any weapon such as a rock or sturdy tree branch.

For more information visit [www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/fw/bears](http://www3.gov.ab.ca/srd/fw/bears)

### **Cougar encounters**

- Stay calm and keep the cougar in view. Pick up children immediately. Back away slowly, ensuring that the animal has a clear avenue of escape. Make yourself look as large as possible. Keep the cougar in front of you at all times.
- Never run or turn your back on a cougar. Sudden movement may provoke an attack.

- If a cougar shows interest or follows you, respond aggressively. Maintain eye contact, show your teeth and make loud noise. Arm yourself with rocks or sticks as weapons. Crouch down as little as possible when picking up objects.
- If a cougar attacks, fight back. Convince the cougar you are a threat and not prey. Use anything you can as a weapon. Focus your attack on the cougar's face and eyes.

**To report a problem wildlife encounter, call the Report A Poacher line at 1-800-642-3800, or contact your local Fish and Wildlife district office by calling 310-0000.**

**Media inquiries:**

John Lear

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