

# WHAT TO DO IF ENCOUNTERING A BEAR?

Cantabrian brown bear population has greatly increased during the last years, which has subsequently increased the odds of encounters between bears and people. Such encounters take place not only because bears approach sometimes to villages, but because we often go deeper and deeper into nature. The odds of getting attacked by a bear is very little (only seven cases with physic contact have been recorded in the last 30 years in the Cantabrian Mountains, and one in the Pyrenees, none with fatal result), however, it is safer to know what we should do in the case of encountering a bear.



## Cautious observers are welcome, disrespectful adventurers are not

The observation of nature is a very enjoyable practice when is carried out in a safe way. For spending a safe journey in nature, observers should be aware of some basic rules in order to respect the environment. In areas with bears or other wild animals, visitors have to follow the paths, avoid going inside areas with dense vegetation, not to follow foot tracks or other signals that indicate the presence of bears in the area, not to approach to carrion, to keep dogs on the leash, and to never throw food waste away.



## Bear avoids us, do the same!

Bears are elusive, and avoid interacting with people. Bear's sense of smell is amazing, and they can be aware of the presence of humans in advance. Bears are particularly dangerous when they are injured or when a female is with her cubs. In the hypothetical case of encountering a female with cubs never interpose between them! Likewise, if a bear is pursued by some dogs or is surprised in its den or eating a carrion the animal might adopt a defensive behaviour. In all these cases: go back very slowly and stay in silence.



## Something very unusual: the bear attacks

There are some bears that are more aggressive with people than others, as for example the Grizzly Bear. Cantabrian brown bears are rarely dangerous. However, in the unlikely case of an attack, one should lie face down or in fetal position at the time that you protect your face and head with your hands and remain immobile.

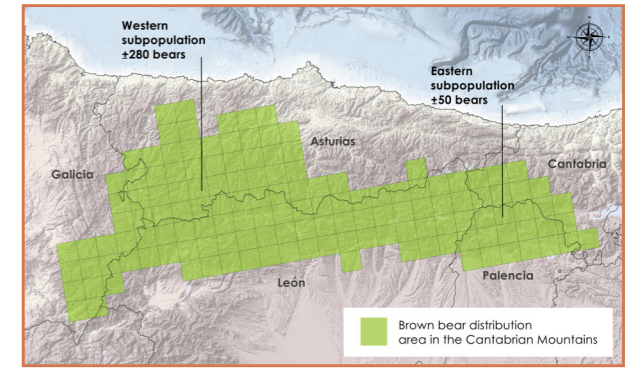


## Let the bear see and listen you, but do not shout or run

If you encounter a bear and the animal has not realised your presence, it is really important to let the bear knows that you are there. Move softly and speak in an assertive voice. These small actions will likely make the bear to change its route. We have to avoid that the bear thinks that we are a danger, so we should not run, shout or threaten the animal.



● Standing up on its hind legs does not necessarily denote an aggressive attitude, but an attempt to identify us.



Distribution area of the cantabrian brown bear and approximately estimated population size.



## If a bear runs toward us; is there danger ahead?

In the case that the bear feels threatened it could do a charge. In that moment you should keep calm, speak softly and avoid moving in an intimidating way. Go back calmly, while keeping visual contact with the bear.



## Enjoy the bears...in the distance

To watch a female bear with her cubs or a male feeding on the fruits of a tree from the opposite hill of a valley, a few hundred of meters away, it is a great achievement for wild watchers. It is strongly suggested that people go watching bears with an official guide.



## Danger, there is a bear in the road!

It is not a likely situation, but in the case that you see a bear running along a road, never chase the bear with the vehicle to get closer to the animal. Instead, stop the vehicle or reduce the speed as much as possible, and wait until the bear has left the road. At any time, turn on the emergency lights.

