Hunting Black Bears
in Southeast Alaska, Units 1-5

A guide for all black bear hunters
on what the law requires
and how to make the most of your hunt

Prepared by the Alaska Department of Fish & Game
A note to readers

The information in this booklet will help you prepare for a black bear hunting trip in Southeast Alaska. It is also important to read the statewide hunting regulations. If you do not have a copy of these materials, please go online or contact us directly.

Thank you

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Cover: lower left photo, Courtesy of Steve Bethune and lower right photo, Arnie Hanger

Printed 2013
Begin with the basics

Begin at www.hunt.alaska.gov

The ADF&G website has a wealth of valuable information for hunters, whether it’s your first hunt, or has been a lifelong activity. Begin by visiting the hunting information pages at www.hunt.alaska.gov. From there you will find links to pages that will help you have a more successful and enjoyable hunt, and ensure that your actions keep you within the requirements of the law.

In addition to the hunting information on the website, you will find information about bears by going to the Alaska Bears web page at www.alaskabears.alaska.gov

Video/DVD about bear safety

Staying Safe in Bear Country video: This video will increase your knowledge of bear behavior and help you prevent negative bear encounters and attacks. Copies are available through Distribution Access at: www.distributionaccess.com. You may also borrow copies from ADF&G area offices. Drop by in person or call one of the following area offices.

• Ketchikan: (907) 225-2475
• Petersburg: (907) 772-3801
• Sitka: (907) 747-5449
• Juneau: (907) 465-4265
Black Bears in Alaska

**Distribution**

Black bears (*Ursus americanus*) are the most abundant and widely distributed of the three species of North American bears. They have been recorded in all states except Hawaii. In Alaska, black bears occur over most of the forested areas of the state. They are not found on the Seward Peninsula, on the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta, or north of the Brooks Range. They also are absent from some of the large islands in the Gulf of Alaska, notably Kodiak, Montague, Hinchinbrook and others, and from the Alaska Peninsula beyond the area of Lake Iliamna. In Southeast Alaska, black bears occupy most islands with the exceptions of Admiralty, Baranof, Chichagof, and Kruzof, which are inhabited only by brown bears. Both species occur on the southeastern mainland. Black bears are most often associated with forests, but depending on the season, they may be found from sea level to alpine areas.

**General description**

Black bears are the smallest of the North American bears. Adult bears stand about 29 inches (.73 m) at the shoulders and measure about 60 inches (1.5 m) from nose to tail. The tail is about two inches long. Males are larger than females. An average adult male in spring weighs about 180-200 pounds (81.8 to 90.9 kg). They are considerably lighter when they emerge from winter dormancy and may be 20 percent heavier in the fall when they are fat.

The color of this bear over its entire range varies from jet black to white. A very rare white or creamy phase occurs on Kermode Island and vicinity in coastal British Columbia. Three colors are common in Alaska. Black is the most often encountered color, but brown or cinnamon bears are often seen in Southcentral Alaska and the southeastern mainland. The rare blue (glacier) phase generally occurs on the mainland from Juneau northward and is most common in the Yakutat area. The islands of Southeast Alaska are inhabited primarily by the black color phase. While a few cinnamon and glacier bears have been documented on the islands of Southeast, such occurrences are extremely rare. Black bears typically have a patch of white hair on the fronts of their chests.
Black bears are most easily distinguished from brown bears by their straight facial profile and their claws which are sharply curved and seldom over 1½ inches in length. Positive identification can be made by measuring the upper rear molar which is never more than 1¼ inches long in the black bear and is never less than that in a young brown bear. Black bears have adequate senses of sight and hearing. They do, however, have an outstanding sense of smell.

**Life history**

Mating can take place anytime from May through July. Apart from that time, black bears are usually solitary, except for sows with cubs. The fertilized egg will not implant in the uterus until the fall. The cubs are born in their dens following a gestation period of about seven months. The cubs are born blind, nearly hairless, and weigh under a pound (.4 kg). Upon emerging from the den in May, they may weigh about 5 pounds (2.3 kg) and are covered with fine wooly hair. They are able to follow their mothers quite well. One to four cubs may be born, but two is most common. Cubs generally remain with their mothers through the first winter following birth. Bears mature sexually at 3 to 6 years of age, depending upon their environment. In their more southern ranges they will breed every other year unless a litter is lost early during the first summer, then the sow will breed again that year. In more marginal environments such as northern Alaska, black bears keep their cubs with them an extra year and will breed every third year.

**Food habits**

Black bears are creatures of opportunity when it comes to food. There are, however, certain patterns of food-seeking which they follow. Upon emergence from the den in the spring, freshly sprouted green vegetation is their main food source. However, they will exploit any available source of food. Winter-killed animals are readily eaten, and black bears have been found to be effective predators on newborn moose calves and deer fawns. As summer progresses, feeding shifts to salmon in areas where they are available. In areas where salmon are absent, bears rely primarily on vegetation throughout the year. Berries, especially blueberries, are an important late summer-early-fall food item. Ants, grubs, and other insects help to round out the black bear’s diet. Male black bears will occasionally kill and eat cubs they happen to encounter.

**Winter dormancy**

As with brown bears, black bears spend the winter months in a state of hibernation. This is not a true hibernation, rather it is a state of torpor. Their body temperatures drop, their metabolic rate is reduced, and they sleep for long periods. Bears enter this dormancy period in the fall, after most food items become hard to find. They emerge in the spring when food is again available. Occasionally, in the more southern ranges, bears will emerge from their dens during winter. In the northern part of their range, bears may be dormant.
for as long as seven to eight months. Females with cubs usually emerge later than lone bears. Dens may be found from sea level to alpine areas. They may be located in rock cavities, hollow trees, self-made excavations and even on the open ground.

**Human use**

Black bears are classified as furbearers and were once heavily used as such. Now there is a growing appreciation for them as a meat and trophy animal. In some areas of Alaska, black bears are a traditional subsistence food. Black bears are so common and widely distributed that they often cause damage at homesteads, construction camps, or even in towns and are destroyed as nuisance animals. These defense of life or property (DLP) kills can be minimized or eliminated if garbage and other food items which attract bears to camps or residences are eliminated.

The best bear hunting areas in Southeast Alaska extend from Prince William Sound in the north, southward throughout the Southeast panhandle of Alaska. In this region, spring bears are typically spotted from boats and then stalked on foot as they forage on the beach. During the fall season, bears are typically hunted along streams and river systems that support abundant salmon runs. The pelts of spring black bears make beautiful trophies if taken before they start to rub.

If bear flesh is used for human food, it must be cooked to an internal temperature of 170°F as Alaska bears have been known to have trichinosis. This disease is transmitted by eating infected meat that is not cooked thoroughly.

**Danger to humans**

Bears are extremely powerful animals and potentially dangerous to humans. They are usually highly cautious and secretive and may defend a food cache against all intruders. Every year, bears are found in Alaska’s biggest cities — in downtown Juneau, Anchorage and Fairbanks. Encounters with humans, especially near garbage dumps and fish drying racks, frequently occur. Sows accompanied by cubs should always be treated with caution. A rule of thumb is to never come between or near a mother bear and her young.

Once alerted to the presence of humans, most bears will simply move away to avoid contact with people. They have, however, attacked without apparent provocation. Several persons have been victims of these unprovoked attacks. In general, all bears should be considered potentially dangerous and should be treated with respect. Black bears that appear unafraid of humans and allow people to approach closely should be treated with utmost caution.

Black Bears in Alaska section written by Loyal Johnson as part of the Alaska Department of Fish & Game Wildlife Notebook Series.
Know where to hunt black bears

There are five Game Management Units (GMU) in Southeast Alaska. Black bears are found in all units with the exception of GMU 4 (Admiralty, Baranof and Chichagof islands), where there are only brown/grizzly bears. It is important to know which GMU or subunit you are hunting in and be able to identify drainages and mountain peaks in the areas that you hunt. Large scale maps are included in the hunting regulations booklet with pertinent information for each unit/subunit. Inch-to-a-mile topographic maps are available at some sporting goods stores, book stores, USGS and USFS offices.
Nonresident hunters without a guide must apply for and receive a drawing permit in order to hunt black bears in Units 1-3 in Southeast Alaska. The following maps provide area boundaries for draw permits for nonresident hunters who are not using a registered guide. See p. 11 for more information about drawing permits.
Know the law about hunting black bears in Southeast

**Licenses**

**Youth in Units 1-5**
A hunter who is younger than 10 years of age may hunt black bears only under the direct and immediate supervision of a licensed adult. The youth’s take counts under the supervising adult’s bag limit.

**Residents in Units 1-5**
All resident hunters must have:
- Harvest tickets
- Hunting license (16 or older)
  Permanent licenses for residents who are 60 or older are available from ADF&G licensing at area offices across the region.

**Nonresidents in Units 1-3**
There are only two ways for nonresidents, regardless of age, to hunt black bears in Units 1-3 in Southeast Alaska:

1) **Unguided nonresidents must apply for and receive a black bear drawing permit from ADF&G.**
   Unguided nonresident hunters in units 1-3 must have:
   - Drawing permit
   - Hunting license
   - Locking tag for black bear

2) **Guided nonresidents do not need a black bear drawing permit but they must hire a registered guide.**
   Guided nonresident hunters in Units 1-3 must have:
   - Black bear harvest ticket or drawing permit
   - Hunting license
   - Locking tag for black bear

**Nonresidents in Unit 5**
Guided and unguided nonresident hunters in Unit 5 do not need a drawing permit or a registered guide to hunt black bears in Unit 5. Nonresident hunters in Unit 5, regardless of age, must have:
- Harvest ticket
- Hunting license
- Locking tag for black bear

A nonresident hunting license fee is $85.00 and locking tag for black bear is $225.00.
**Drawing permits**

Drawing hunts require an application fee and are awarded once annually by lottery. The application period extends from November through mid-December for the next regulatory year’s hunts. ADF&G publishes a *Draw Hunt Supplement* that provides information on available drawing hunt opportunities and area boundaries. For more information and to apply for a drawing permit go to [www.hunt.alaska.gov](http://www.hunt.alaska.gov)

**Undersubscribed permits**

When more drawing permits are offered than applications received, undersubscribed drawing permits are sometimes made available through area offices or online at: [www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=huntlicense.undersubscribed](http://www.adfg.alaska.gov/index.cfm?adfg=huntlicense.undersubscribed)

*Remember to carry your hunting license, drawing permit or harvest ticket, and locking tag on your person while hunting. The locking tag must be attached immediately to the animal at the kill site before the animal is transported.*

**Seasons and bag limits**

The black bear hunting season in Units 1, 2, 3 and 5 begins September 1 and runs through June 30. The bag limit for residents is 2 black bears during each regulatory year (July 1- June 30), only one of which may be a blue or glacier bear. The nonresident bag limit is 1 bear. In units 1-5, bears wounded but not recovered by a hunter count as the bag limit for the regulatory year.

**Sealing requirements**

Black bears harvested in Game Management Units 1, 2, 3 and 5 must be sealed within 30 days of the kill. However, nonresident hunters must report the harvest of black bears taken on Kuiu Island in GMU 3 to the Petersburg Area office (907- 772-3801) within 5 days of the kill. Black bears taken by nonresidents on Kuiu Island must also be sealed within 14 days of kill and cannot be removed from the Southeast Region (GMUs 1-5) until it has been sealed. To have a bear sealed, bring the unfrozen hide and skinned out skull to an ADF&G office or an appointed sealing agent to be examined and sealed. The sealing requirements provide the department with information necessary to ensure that black bear populations are managed on a sustainable basis.

**Following are some things to keep in mind with regard to having your bear sealed:**

1. Plan your hunt and travel schedule so that you have adequate time during the work week (Mon. - Fri.) to have your bear sealed. If unable to bring your bear to an ADF&G office to be sealed, contact the nearest ADF&G office to obtain the name and contact information of the
nearest appointed sealing agent who may arrange to seal your bear after hours or on the weekends.

2. The hide must be presented to the sealing agent unfrozen with the following naturally attached: head, paws with claws, and evidence of sex. To expedite the sealing process, place your locking tag through evidence of sex on the bear hide.

3. During the sealing process you will be required to sign the sealing certificate. If you can’t get your bear to a sealing officer, you must complete a temporary sealing form available from ADF&G. You must also make sure that someone takes the bear and the temporary certificate to the sealing officer within the time required.

4. The skull must be skinned out (completely removed from the hide) and unfrozen before being presented for sealing.

5. A small tooth (premolar) will be pulled to determine the age of your bear. To avoid an unnecessary delay, please make sure the skull is not frozen at the time of sealing so a tooth can be easily extracted.

6. Once results are received from the lab, a letter will be sent to you with the information about the age of your bear. If you do not receive a letter from ADF&G after one full year, contact us directly.

7. Black bear hides and skulls may be sold, but they must be sealed prior to sale.

**Meat salvage**

During the spring season (January 1- May 31) hunters are required to salvage all edible meat of black bears harvested in Alaska. Edible meat of black bears includes meat of the front quarters as far as the distal joint of the radius-ulna (knee), hindquarters as far as the distal joint of the tibia-fibula (hock), and that portion of the animal between the front and hindquarters (back straps).

**Violations**

Failure to properly salvage all of the required meat of a big game animal is charged as a class A misdemeanor offense. During the spring season, failure to salvage all of the edible meat may result in a charge of ‘wanton waste’ which carries a maximum fine of $10,000, a maximum jail sentence of up to 1 year, and a potential loss of hunting privileges in the future.

If a bear is wounded during the hunt, whether it is recovered or not, it counts against the bag limit for that regulatory year.

**It is illegal to shoot cubs or a sow accompanied by cubs.**
Know about the spring vs. fall hunts

**Spring hunts**

On Prince of Wales Island and the surrounding archipelago (Game Management Unit 2) the peak of the spring harvest generally occurs during May 1-10. This will vary a little depending on spring green-up, but it is usually close to these dates. The first bears are normally taken in mid to late April. In general, the later in the spring you hunt, the more bears there will be out of the dens. Hunters should look bears over closely no matter when they hunt, as some bears emerge from dens badly rubbed, while others don't rub until late May or even June. This may vary by year and by area. Any bear showing partial brown coloration is probably rubbed. There are no cinnamon colored black bears or brown/grizzly bears in Unit 2.

Most of the conditions that apply to Prince of Wales Island hold true for the Ketchikan and mainland areas in Game Management Unit 1A, 1B and 1C. However the spring harvest peak tends to occur about a week later on the mainland, because spring occurs a little later there than on Prince of Wales Island.

Game Management Unit 3 includes Kuiu, Mitkof, Kupreanof islands and the surrounding archipelago and is the second largest black bear producing GMU in the southeast Panhandle region. On average, approximately 227 black bears area harvested annually in GMU 3. Kuiu and Kupreanof islands, combined, account for approximately 90% of the unit-wide annual harvest.

While a few bears are harvested each year as early as the first week of April in GMU 3, the black bear harvest typically does not begin to increase until the last week of April and tends to peak around mid-May. Usually by June, bear hides are so rubbed that locating one with acceptable hide quality becomes quite a challenge.

For planning purposes, the peak of Southeast Alaska’s spring bear season typically extends from the last week of April through the third week of May. Keep in mind that the timing of the peak season for black bears can vary during any given year and can vary one or more weeks in either direction depending on winter severity and the timing of vegetative green-up in the spring.
**Fall hunts**

Approximately 25% of the annual harvest takes place during the fall season. The fall black bear harvest typically peaks region-wide during the first two weeks of the season (September 1-15) and declines as the season progresses. Hides taken in the early fall (September to mid-October) are generally not as dense or as long-haired as those of early-spring bears. Bears begin to den in mid-October and very few remain out by mid-November. These are usually found along late-run salmon streams.

**Hunting conditions**

During the spring season, hunters typically concentrate their hunting activities along the shoreline and stream mouths where grasses and sedges are most abundant. Green vegetation is usually most abundant along the shoreline in early spring and green-up tends to move inland and upward in elevation as spring progresses.

Fall bear hunts are somewhat more challenging than spring hunts, and are primarily conducted along productive salmon streams where fall bears often congregate to feed on salmon. Fall bears can also be located in younger clear-cuts where the bears can be observed feeding on berries.

The early morning and late evening hours are usually the best times to hunt bears, however, during the fall season bears can be out and about at all hours of the day. Be particularly mindful of wind direction. On streams the wind typically flows downstream in the early morning and late evening and upstream during the mid-day as temperatures increase.
Judging sex and trophy bears

Avoid killing Females

Black bears reproduce at a very low rate. Because females mature late and may only produce a few offspring during their lifetime, the most important factor in maintaining a stable population of bears is minimizing the take of females. Make sure that you are able to accurately identify the sex and size of the bear before shooting. Watch bears long enough to ensure that no cubs are present. Cubs may wander away from their mother or be obscured from view by thick vegetation particularly during the fall season. It is illegal to shoot cubs or females accompanied by cubs.

Select large males

If you see a single bear, use the criteria below to gauge whether it is a large male, a younger bear, or a female. Harvesting a large male may require careful evaluation of several individual bears before a decision is made to shoot. You are likely to see several small bears for each medium-sized bear, and several medium-sized bears for each large male.

Binoculars are a must, and spotting scopes can also be extremely valuable when judging the size and sex of black bears. Good optics are also valuable when evaluating hide quality and looking for rubbed spots on bears. Black bears can appear deceptively large when viewed through magnifying optics, therefore, it important to be patient and wait for opportunities to compare individual bears.

Tips for selecting large male bears

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Large/Adult Male Bears</th>
<th>Small/Young Bears</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stocky legs &amp; massive body</td>
<td>Appear to be ‘all legs’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large rounded head</td>
<td>More streamlined, pointed head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ears appear smaller</td>
<td>Head large in proportion to body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large males taller than 33” at the shoulder</td>
<td>Ears appear closer together</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ears to nose an equilateral triangle</td>
<td>Females and young bears shorter than 33” at the shoulder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slower, more deliberate movements (swagger gait)</td>
<td>Ears to nose a skinny triangle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penis sheath visible in the fall</td>
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</table>
Preventing wounding loss

Successfully managing bear populations requires accurate mortality data. Wounding loss (bears that are struck by a bullet or arrow but not recovered) is one cause of mortality that is difficult to track. In Southeast Alaska, a black or brown bear wounded by a hunter counts against the bag limit for the regulatory year. ‘Wounded’ means there is sign of blood or other indication that the bear has been struck by a bullet or arrow.

Proper caliber  
To assure a quick and humane kill and to reduce the chances of crippling and loss of wounded black and brown bears, .338 magnum, 340, .375 or .458 calibers are recommended. A well placed shot with a 30.06 or larger caliber weapon is usually adequate for black bears. Regardless of which caliber weapon a hunter elects to use, they should practice regularly to ensure proper shot placement.

Proper distance  
Black bears are difficult to kill, seldom drop where they are first struck and often require follow-up shots. **Shooting distance should not exceed 100 yards and shots should be taken with the aid of a rest.** 
To ensure a clean kill, the hunter should wait for the bear to move into the best alignment for optimal shot placement. Make the first shot the best, then use rapid follow-up shots to prevent the animal from reaching dense cover.

Shot placement  
Opinions of the best shot placement for black bears vary. We recommend a shot broadside and center of the shoulder angled slightly forward so the bullet passes through the heart and lungs and exits through the opposite shoulder. This shot placement has a high likelihood of resulting in a quick, clean kill.
Bears are leapers, bounders, and runners. It is rare for a bear to drop dead where it was standing when first struck by a bullet. Upon being hit, most bears will attempt to make it to the nearest available cover. Because of their layers of fat and thick fur, bears seldom bleed excessively even when mortally wounded, which further adds to the difficulty of recovering struck bears. Limiting how far bears move after they are hit is the surest way to ensure a humane kill and a quick recovery. This is why adequate caliber weapons, proper shooting distance, excellent shot placement and rapid follow-up shots are so important.

If a struck bear does manage to make it into cover, wait at least 20 minutes before attempting to track and recover it. If a blood trail is visible, follow it carefully. It is imperative that you mark the bear’s last known location, so you know where to start your search. Begin by looking for a blood trail and signs of broken or disturbed vegetation and scrapes on the ground. This may require getting down on hands and knees! If you can’t find any sign, follow any prominent game trails along the animals escape route or systematically search in a circular pattern, spiraling out from where the bear or sign was last observed. Whatever search method you use, don’t give up if you are reasonably certain the bear was hit. Bears have been found dead over 600 yards away from where they were shot without leaving a blood trail.

This diagram shows the vital organ area of a bear at different angles to the hunter. While all angles provide some view of the vitals, shots taken at many of these angles would likely result in a wounded animal. Hunters will have a greater likelihood of a quick, clean kill by selecting the types of shots emphasized by those images shown with check-marks.
Transporting hides & meat

**Labeling requirements**

All wildlife parts (meat, hide, horns, etc.) that are packaged for transport out of the state of Alaska, or between states, must be clearly marked with the following attached to the outside of the shipping container: name and address of the shipper and consignee, and an accurate list of the packages contents including the number of each species.

**Transporting across US/Canada border**

If you plan to ship or transport any bear parts or products out of the United States, including transporting from Alaska through Canada to the Lower 48, federal regulations require that you complete a Declaration of Importation or Exportation of Fish and Wildlife (Form 3-177). This form is available online at: http://www.fws.gov/le/declaration-form-3-177.html.

The forms are also available from:
- U.S. Customs Office (907) 225-2254
- ADFG Area Offices in Ketchikan, Haines, Tok, Juneau, Petersburg, Wrangell and the Alaska Wildlife Troopers office in Klawock.

Transporting firearms

There are a few restrictions on the transportation and possession of personal firearms in Alaska. State law prohibits the following:
- Fully automatic firearms
- Rifles with a barrel less than 16”
- Shotguns with a barrel less than 18”
- Rifles or shotguns less than 26” in total length

If you are driving and transporting a firearm to or from Alaska to conduct your hunt and you do not have a Canadian firearms license, you will need to report your firearm(s) to US and Canadian Customs at the border. Nonresidents who transport firearms through Canada are required to complete a nonresident Firearms Declaration form, pay a $50 (Canadian) fee, and have the Declaration confirmed by a customs officer. No handguns may be transported through Canada. Once confirmed, the Firearms Declaration form will act as a temporary license and registration while in Canada and is valid for 60 days. **Firearms Declaration** forms are available by calling: 1(800) 731-4000 or online at www.cbsa.gc.ca.
Meat care begins before you leave home

Hunters who harvest black bears specifically for their meat know what other hunters may not; black bear meat can provide a delicious wild game meal. The following tips will help ensure the proper care and preparation of the meat.

Get ready before the hunt

Get your brain in shape. Learn more about butchering and meat care from your local library, butcher, or the ADF&G website.

Get your gear in shape. Collect and test all of the equipment you need for butchering, hauling, and caring for your meat. Here’s a short list to consider: skinning knife, butchering knife, trimming knife, sharpener, bone saw, tarp, heavy-duty game bags, plastic bags, heavy-duty backpack, paper towels, rope, and a first-aid kit.

Get your freezer in shape. Plan in advance how you will get your meat processed, packaged and readied for shipment or transport home. Contact local butcher or meat processing shops or get your equipment ready for home butchering. Be sure you have enough room in your freezer or someone to give the meat to when you return from the field.

Meat care: from the field to your table

Don’t shoot if you can’t pack it all out

Before shooting, determine if you are capable of retrieving all of the meat and getting it back to camp and safely out of the field before it spoils. If you don’t think you can, then don’t shoot!

As the old saying goes, “Once you pull the trigger, the fun stops and the work begins.” There are several ways to gut and butcher big game animals. Whichever method you choose, remember to keep the meat cool, clean, and dry. If you plan to remain in field camp for a few days, it is best to keep the meat on the bone and enclosed in breathable cloth game bags. **Heat and moisture are the two greatest threats to good meat!**

To cool the meat, remove the hide as quickly as possible and get the meat away from the internal organs. Once back at camp hang your meat with a tarp suspended above (but not touching it) to keep the meat dry while it develops a hard crust.

Protect the meat from bacteria and flies

If insects are a problem, once the meat is hanging, remove the game bag and spray the meat with a citric acid mixture. Food-grade citric acid can be purchased at most pharmacies. Mix two ounces of citric acid to one quart of water, and spray the meat until the mixture runs off. The mixture should dry quickly. It will help prevent bacterial growth and...
help to repel blowflies. Finally, return the meat to breathable cloth game bags for transport.

Once you get the meat back to town, you can butcher it yourself, take it to a commercial meat processor, or give it away. If you decide to do it yourself, learn about meat cutting and storage before you get out your knives and freezer paper.

Bear meat requires no aging and tends to spoil more quickly than other big game. Aging does not improve the flavor or tenderness of bear meat and actually tends to dry and toughen it. The steps for freezing or canning of bear meat are similar to those for pork. **It is best to freeze, can or cook the meat within a week after the animal is killed, as the flavor becomes stronger with age.** Take time to strip all fat from the meat and wrap the cuts well to avoid freezer-burn. The freezer life of bear meat is roughly 6 months at -10˚F or 9 months at -20˚F.

Black bear meat can be a carrier of the parasite Trichinella spiralis (which causes the disease trichinosis) and should be prepared with the same concern as when preparing pork. The meat must be cooked thoroughly to ensure that the parasite (if present) is killed. Bear meat is safe if a few simple preparation procedures are followed. First, the recommended cooking temperature for bear is 375°F for 20-25 minutes per pound. For cuts of meat larger than 3 pounds, the time should be doubled. An internal temperature of 137°F kills the parasite, but a suggested safe margin is an internal roasting temperature of 170˚F. A good rule of thumb is to cook the meat until it appears white throughout, with no trace of pink flesh or fluid, especially in the joints and close to the bone. Freezing does NOT render undercooked meat with Trichinella safe for eating. Cooking in a microwave oven may not kill the Trichinella larvae and is, therefore, not recommended.

If you can't use all the meat you harvested, you may give it away. Make sure that you fill out a *Transfer of Possession* form (available in the back of the hunting regulations book), keep a copy for yourself and give a copy to the recipient of the meat. Remember that any meat you plan to give away should be in the same or better condition as any meat you would keep and eat yourself.

**Prepare your meat for the freezer**

**Prepare your meat to serve**

**What you can't use, give away**
Planning your hunt

The key to a successful hunt is careful and thorough planning and preparation. You’ll find excellent hunt planning pages including a complete equipment list in the back of the Hunt Alaska booklet. There are several options for how to set up your trip, just be sure to plan ahead.

Do it yourself or hire a guide

When hunting black bears in Southeast Alaska, you may choose a ‘do it yourself’ hunt, hire a licensed transporter, or employ the services of a registered guide. If you choose a ‘do it yourself’ hunt you must plan well in advance and apply for and receive a draw permit (see p. 11 for more information). The application period for draw permits runs from November through mid-December for the next regulatory year’s hunts.

If you do not receive a draw permit you must hire a registered guide or apply for an undersubscribed permit. When a draw hunt has leftover permits that were not issued, the area biologist in charge of the hunt has the option of issuing the remaining permits later in the year. These undersubscribed hunts are issued on a first come first serve basis.

Licensed transporters may provide transportation services and accommodations only at a personally-owned permanent structure in the field, or on a boat on saltwater. Check the hunting regulations booklet for more information about the services that can be legally provided by licensed transporters.

Another option is to hire a registered guide. If you are interested in hiring a guide, you may purchase a list of registered guides (Roster of Licensees) for $5.00 from the State of Alaska at:

Department of Commerce and Economic Development
Division of Occupational Licensing
phone: (907) 465-2534
e-mail: license@alaska.gov

Transportation

While a number of islands and portions of the mainland in Southeast have extensive road systems, the use of highway vehicles for bear hunting is largely limited to those islands serviced by the Alaska Marine Highway and Inter-Island Ferry Authority. With the exception of Prince of Wales Island, which has an extensive road system and ferry access, most black bear hunting is conducted using boats or float plane charter services to access hunting areas. Skiff rentals are available in many communities. Some of the lodges have skiffs available for their guests. Check with the local Chamber of Commerce offices in the area you plan to hunt for more information about lodges and car and skiff rentals.
Where to stay

It is very feasible to organize and conduct an independent ‘do it yourself’ bear hunt in Southeast Alaska. In addition to tent camping, there are a number of public use cabins available and remote lodges scattered throughout the region.

The vast majority of Southeast Alaska is comprised of public land (Tongass National Forest). The U.S. Forest Service manages more than 180 public use cabins scattered throughout the Tongass National Forest. The cabins are typically located near remote lakes, streams and saltwater shorelines. The cabins are modestly priced and typically accommodate from four to six people. Reservations are required and can be made up to six months in advance.

Most of these public use cabins are located in remote areas that are accessible only by floatplanes, boats or on foot. Skiffs are available at many of the cabins located adjacent to lakes. The Forest Service also maintains several campgrounds and day-use picnic and recreation areas near SE communities. For a complete list of the recreation cabins and to view locations on a map, check website at: www.fs.fed.us/recreation/reservations/.

Cabin and campsite reservations are available through the National Recreation Reservation Service (NRRS). Contact Recreation.gov at www.recreation.gov/ or by calling 1(877) 444-6777.

Contact an air or boat charter company in the town closest to the cabin you plan to use for more information on getting to the cabin. **Be sure to make your travel arrangements well in advance.**
‘Must have’ equipment list

Southeast Alaska is a temperate rainforest making it critical to be prepared for wet weather. Be sure to bring the following:

- Tent (waterproof dome with full coverage fly)
- Tarp for roofing over tent and/or cooking area (16 x 20)
- Rope or heavy twine
- Hip boots & rubber boots (leather boots not recommended)
- Durable rain gear
- Binoculars (water-proof recommended)
- Spotting scope (15, 20 or 45 power) with tripod
- Fiber-filled sleeping bag
- Small cook stove (fires are difficult to start with wet wood)
- Insect repellent and/or head net
- Hunting license, tags, and permit or harvest ticket
- Appropriate caliber rifle or bow

Practice ‘leave-no-trace’ camping

Whether you are staying in a cabin or camping out, all sites should be left as if no one had ever been there before—even if it means cleaning up someone else’s mess. Please...

- Camp, wash, and bury human waste at least 200 ft. from water and trails.
- Leave a clean camp.
- Remove all garbage.
- Burn toilet paper.
- Dismantle fire rings, field tables and all site modifications.
- Try to ‘leave no trace’ of your campsite. Thank you!
Traveling in bear country

Alaska is bear country, and as a hunter you are in the midst of it, especially when you are hunting bears! Following are a few pointers to help avoid unpleasant encounters with bears:

Avoid attracting bears to camping/cabin sites.
- Don’t camp on bear trails or near high use areas such as salmon streams.
- Keep food items and dishes clean to reduce odors around camp.
- Burn trash and food garbage. Pack out unburnable items.
- Store food in bear proof containers or inside cabin.

Avoid surprising a bear.
- Be alert along noisy streams, in thick brush, and when visibility is poor.
- Make noise (sing, clap, talk) when not actively hunting.
- Enter thickets upwind so your smell will warn bears of your approach.
- If you smell decomposing meat while on the trail, STOP! It may be a bear’s food cache. Bears often cover their food with branches or forest litter and sleep nearby between feedings.

If you see a bear – stay calm.
- If a bear does not notice you – quietly leave the area from the same direction you arrived. Keep your eyes on the bear.
- If a bear does notice you – face the bear, wave your arms and talk to it calmly. Try to appear larger by standing close to others in your group.

If a bear approaches you – stand your ground.
- Never run from an approaching bear!

If a bear is surprised at close distance, it may feel threatened and act defensively – especially if it has cubs or food.
- Continue to stand your ground.
- If this bear strikes or bites you – lie on your front, protect your face and neck, and remain still. Once this bear thinks you are no longer a threat it will likely leave.

If a bear approaches you calmly and directly it may be curious, seeking food, or on very rare occasions, predatory.
- Stand your ground and act aggressively.
- Fight back if this bear strikes or bites you!
Southeast Alaska offers some of the most phenomenal bear hunting opportunities anywhere in the state, as well as unique opportunities to view bears, eagles, whales and other wildlife. There are two designated ‘Black Bear Viewing’ sites in Southeast around which hunting is prohibited. These include Anan Creek (located on the south side of Bradfield Canal in GMU 1B) and Margaret Creek (located in Traitor’s Cove on the west side of Revillagigedo Island, in GMU 1A). Remember to follow all hunting laws and respect areas closed to hunting. If you have questions about the boundaries of the closed areas, contact an ADF&G area office. The phone numbers are listed on the first page of this booklet.

Consideration for other wildlife viewers and visitors

It is always the hunter’s responsibility to know and follow what the law requires.

Be informed.
Hunt safe–hunt smart–hunt legal.
The Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) administers all programs and activities free from discrimination based on race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, marital status, pregnancy, parenthood, or disability. The department administers all programs and activities in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972.

If you believe you have been discriminated against in any program, activity, or facility please write:
• ADF&G ADA Coordinator, P.O. Box 115526, Juneau, AK 99811-5526
• U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, MS 2042, Arlington, VA 22203

The department’s ADA Coordinator can be reached via phone at the following numbers:
• VOICE: 907-465-6077
• Statewide Telecommunication Device for the Deaf 1-800-478-3648
• Juneau TDD: 907-465-3646
• FAX: 907-465-6078

For information on alternative formats and questions on this publication, please contact the following: Publications Specialist, ADF&G/Division of Wildlife Conservation, P.O. Box 115526, Juneau, AK 99811-5526, or call 907-465-4176.