



Time for Nature



People and grizzly bears love Lake Louise Banff National Park of Canada

The spectacular mountains and valleys of Banff National Park of Canada attract some three million visitors a year. About half of them make the trek to Lake Louise. However, this beautiful area is also an important for the park's grizzly bears.

There are few places in North America where so many people and grizzly bears share the same space. Parks Canada is working to help bears and people share the landscape.



Lake Louise's spectacular beauty attracts plenty of visitors. © Parks Canada, H. Dempsey, 1981.

There's lots of traffic

Surrounded by rugged mountains, the Bow Valley, where Lake Louise sits, is an important travel corridor for grizzlies and other wildlife. But valleys also provide ideal locations for roads, railways and towns.

Some bears find it hard to avoid people, while others become increasingly comfortable being close to us. These bears are more likely to die a human-caused death. Since 2000, seven grizzlies have been killed on the highway and railway near Lake Louise. Bears that could be a safety threat have had to be destroyed.

A nursery for bears

The greater Lake Louise area is one of three places within Banff that supports a concentration of female grizzlies. The bears reproduce slowly; so slowly that if more than one bear a year in the park dies as a result of people, there will be more deaths than births that year! The population will decline. Females and their young are key to the future of Banff's bear population. Protecting these bears is a priority, but it is also vital to protect park visitors.



The Lake Louise area gets some heavy traffic. © Parks Canada, L. Halverson.

Can Parks Canada help people and bears coexist?

To improve conditions for people and bears in the Lake Louise area, Parks Canada is taking action including:

- Establishing a public transportation system to reduce congestion around attractions such as upper Lake Louise and Moraine Lake



- Piloting a shuttle service for hikers through important grizzly bear habitat en route to the Skoki Valley to reduce disturbance to foraging bears
- Adjusting trails and a backcountry campground to avoid important bear habitat and reduce bear-human encounters

Good fences – and passes - make good neighbours

These changes alone are not enough to protect grizzlies. Grizzlies and other animals crossing the busy Trans Canada Highway are at risk of being killed. By 2007, another section of the highway will be twinned in the park. The upgrade includes fencing and wildlife overpasses and underpasses to keep wildlife and habitats connected, and prevent road-kill.

Parks Canada is considering including the Village of Lake Louise inside the highway fencing. This would help keep bears off the highway and out of the village. And that's good for both people and bears.

For more information visit www.pc.gc.ca/banff



Bear boards keep bears from entering an area. They are uncomfortable but do not harm the animal.
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