

### 2.6.2. Bear Wallow Photos



©Stefan Himmer



©Stefan Himmer

These are typical locations for wallows: on the edge of an estuary (top – aerial view) and in an open forest, where an underground spring comes to the surface (bottom). Note the mark tree at the edge of the pool in the forest. The mark trail leading to the wallow in the top photo is the same one shown in the mark trail photo section 2.4.3.





©Stefan Himmer

This adult male grizzly may be cooling off during a hot day or just enjoying a leisurely mud bath. Note the smooth, worn edge of the wallow and the mud and pitch on the mark tree in the background.



## 2.7. Bear Beds

When not feeding or travelling, bears bed down to rest and to seek security and thermal benefits. A bear bed may be just a shallow scrape on the ground or a simple depression at the base of a tree. In other cases bears may go to lengths to dig substantial hollows in duff, sand or rotten logs. Some beds are used only once, but others may be used for several days or even weeks, especially when close to a major food source (Lloyd 1979). Bears may also bed on or near a large carcass.

***BEWARE! If you think there may be a carcass or carrion in the area, don't linger to investigate! Leave as quickly, and as unobtrusively as possible!***

Bear beds are generally oval in shape. A typical black bear bed measures about 80 cm by 75 cm and about 30 cm deep (Stokes 1986). Grizzly bear beds are usually, but not always, bigger than those of black bear, which typically measure about 1 m by 1.3 m and are from about 25 to 60 cm deep (Lloyd 1979). Hamilton and Archibald (1985) reported the average measurement of 75 grizzly beds, in the Kimsquit River valley, were 109 cm long, 95 cm wide, and 25 cm deep.

Bear beds are often found at the bases of large trees, especially spruce and fir, which have dense, lower branches, providing good cover from precipitation and wind. In drier habitat types, bears may make beds in rotten stumps and logs, especially Douglas-fir, which breaks into small chunks and powder when rotten.

Bedding areas provide security and thermal cover (keeping warm or cooling off) when the bears are inactive. Beds are frequently in dense shrub cover, under logs or brush piles, at the base of large trees, or in tall sedge meadows (Lloyd 1979; Hamilton and Archibald 1985; MacHutchon 2000). In very warm weather, bears may bed in cool sites such as alder thickets, at the base of colluvial slopes in areas of cold air drainage, in moist floodplain silt and in dry run-off channels (Hamilton and Archibald 1985). During salmon spawning, bears often bed down within about 50 m of the river, on the upslope side of large trees, in the relatively flat area formed by the tree roots (Lloyd 1979). Also in the salmon season, bears may bed down in more open areas such as gravel and sand bars (pers. obs.). Prior to salmon spawning, the beds may be located further (> 150 m) from the river in mature or old growth forest and often on steep slopes (Lloyd 1979). Bedding on steep slopes adjacent to important feeding areas provides bears with security and cover. On steep slopes bears may be able to detect other bears or humans more easily because of increased sight lines, and also because sounds and smells may be detected from greater distances. This may allow bears to move off before being detected. Often bear bedding areas may be quite large in size (>1-2 ha) especially when good feeding habitat is nearby such as estuaries, large wetland complexes, skunk cabbage swamps, productive avalanche chutes, berry fields and salmon spawning areas. It is not uncommon to find ten or more recent bear beds adjacent to these types of habitats.

Well-used bear beds usually have many scat piles in close proximity (<2-3 m from bed). An accumulation of scats may indicate the length and timing of use of the bed. For example, many sedge scats may indicate spring use; berry scats summer use and scats



with salmon bones fall use. If the site has been used by a family group of bears this is indicated by the number and sizes of beds, and the presence of very small scats with large scats. In the absence of scat and tracks, look for hairs in the bed and on nearby trees, shrubs, boulders, or logs to determine if it is a bear bed. If hairs are not evident, moisten the palm of your hand and gently pat the surface of the bed. Sometimes hairs will then adhere to your wet palm.

Moose and deer also make beds, which can resemble in size and shape, those of bears. However, bear beds tend to be more circular and deeper than ungulate beds. A typical deer bed measures about 90 cm by 45 cm while moose beds measure 1.2 to 1.5 m long by 60 to 90 cm wide (Claridge and Milligan 1992). In general, moose and deer beds are very shallow and may not even be dug out at all. To determine which species used the bed, you must look for corroborative evidence such as scat, tracks, or hair.

### 2.7.1. Bear Bed Characteristics

- Bear beds are generally oval or round in shape.
- A typical black bear bed measures about 80 cm by 75 cm and is around 30 cm deep.
- Grizzly bear beds are usually, but not always, bigger than those of black bears, and measure about 1 m by 1.3 m and are from 25 to 60 cm deep.
- In flat terrain, bear beds can be found at the bases of large trees, which have dense, lower branches, providing good cover from precipitation and wind.
- On steep slopes, bears may bed on the upslope side of large trees, in the relatively flat area formed by the tree roots.
- Bears may make beds in rotten stumps and logs, especially Douglas-fir, which breaks into small chunks and powder when rotten.
- Beds can also be in dense shrub cover, under logs or brush piles, or in tall sedge meadows.
- In very warm weather, bears bed in cool sites such as alder thickets, at the base of colluvial slopes in areas of cold air drainage, in moist floodplain silt and in dry run-off channels.
- During the fall, bears often bed down within 50 m of salmon spawning rivers.
- Also in the fall salmon season, bears may bed down in more open areas such as gravel and sand bars
- Bear bedding areas may be quite large in size (>1-2 ha) especially when good feeding habitat is nearby such as:
  - estuaries;
  - large wetland complexes;
  - skunk cabbage swamps;
  - productive avalanche chutes;



- 
- berry fields;
  - and salmon spawning areas.
  - Well-used bear beds usually have many scat piles in close proximity (<2-3 m from bed).
  - Accumulations of scats may indicate the length and timing of use of the bed. For example:
    - Many sedge scats may indicate spring use;
    - Berry scats summer use;
    - And scats with salmon bones fall use;
  - Large and small beds together may indicate use by a bear family group.
  - In the absence of scat and tracks, look for hairs, in and around the bed, to determine if it is a bear bed.



### 2.7.2. Bear Bed Photos



©Stefan Himmer



©Stefan Himmer

Bears may make beds in rotten stumps and logs, especially Douglas-fir (left), which breaks into small chunks and powder when rotten. As well as providing security cover, beds in moist floodplain silts will keep bears cool (right). This bed even has standing water in it. Note the bear tracks in the silt, identifying this as a grizzly bear bed.

