



Bears of Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve

A summary of human-bear management in 2022-2024

Introduction

Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve (GBNPP, or the “Park”) is home to both black (*Ursus americanus*) and brown bears (*Ursus arctos*). Bears play an important role in the GBNPP ecosystem, offer highly sought-after viewing opportunities for Park visitors, and are culturally significant to the Chookaneidí Clan of the Xunaa Lingít who claim Xóots, the brown bear, as their primary crest.



Photo 1: Brown bear depicted on Eagle Totem Pole at the Xunaa Shuká Hít (Huna Tribal House), with fresh brown bear tracks in snow (NPS Photo/ T. Lewis).

The GBNPP Wildlife Team has monitored bear activity in the frontcountry (Bartlett Cove developed area), and backcountry of GBNPP since 2006. In the frontcountry, the Wildlife Team responds to bear sightings, patrols for unsecured food, keeps people a safe distance from bears, and attempts to move (haze) bears away from people

or buildings. In the backcountry, the Wildlife Team educates visitors on how to stay safe in bear country, records incidents (defined as a human-bear interaction involving conflict such as gear damage) and reported encounters (benign interactions) throughout the Park, analyzes bear sightings from the daily tour boat or “Dayboat”, and advises a collaborative GBNPP Bear Committee in making human-bear management decisions. For more information on the Human-Bear Management Program and research in GBNPP, see [Lewis et al. \(2020\)](#).

Highlights

- In 2022 Park visitation returned to pre-Covid 19 pandemic levels.
- In October 2022, a sick black bear cub in the Bartlett Cove developed area was euthanized and later diagnosed with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI, also known as bird flu).
- In 2022 a brown bear charged a group of hikers and ransacked an unattended campsite, and another brown bear received food from kayakers.
- 2023 was the first year of zero reported human-bear incidents since recording began in 1959.
- In August 2024, a mother black bear lost three cubs in Bartlett Cove. Two of the cub’s carcasses were recovered and sent to wildlife veterinarians. The cause of death of at least one cub was dehydration/electrolyte imbalance.

2022

Frontcountry

The number of visitors to Glacier Bay returned to normal in 2022, following two years of lowered visitation due to the Covid-19 pandemic. For much of the season, Glacier Bay Lodge was open for public use and at full capacity for

overnight guests. The Visitor Information Station (VIS) was also open to all visitors in Bartlett Cove and provided campground, motor vessel, and backcountry users with permits and orientations.



Photo 2: Black bear mother with three cubs who frequented the Bartlett Cove developed area in 2022 (NPS Photo/ T. Lewis).

Reported bear observations in Bartlett Cove included: four different sightings of single black bears, one black bear mother with three cubs of the year (COY), one black bear limping on her back left foot with two cubs of the year, a single brown bear, and one brown bear mother with three COY. Most of the bear sightings involved the black bear with three COY. This family group was most often spotted along the Park road corridor between the Glacier Bay Lodge and the NPS Maintenance Shop. This area provides bears with abundant dandelions, horsetail, and berries in the spring and summer. Early in the spring/summer season the mother was often observed grazing while her cubs stayed in a nearby tree. Later in the summer, the cubs were less skittish and seen grazing with their mother more often. Many visitors enjoyed watching the black bear family from a safe distance, often in the presence of Park staff, sometimes for several hours at a time. The family group occasionally traveled on roads or in parking lots, but they never lingered long enough to make hazing necessary.

Regular bear/food patrols were conducted by the Wildlife Team. There were numerous occasions when the Lodge's kitchen and employee housing bear resistant trash containers were not fully latched, which could have allowed a bear to open bin doors and receive a food reward. On one

occasion the Wildlife Team spotted an unattended and unsecured housekeeping cart with complimentary tea and coffee re-stock for guest rooms and trash bags containing food left outside on the boardwalk adjacent to the lodge guest rooms. The Wildlife Team also saw a bag of apples (collected from a guest room) on top of an unattended housekeeping cart, which offered an opportunity for bears to obtain a food reward. On another occasion the Wildlife Team found a few unopened beverage cans (flavored sparkling water and beer) and one crushed empty beer can on the porch of the lounge/communal recreation area while patrolling the lodge employing housing complex. In both instances, the Team was able to locate a lodge employee and remind them to secure attractants, which they quickly did. On another separate occasion, a lodge employee's car door was left open with unattended food in the backseat; a cooler containing food and a bottle of conditioner was left out; and a box of empty wine bottles was found on an employee's front porch. In cases where no one was present to correct the situation, law enforcement was notified and responded. Photos were taken to document these events, and Park staff notified NPS Concessions staff so that Glacier Bay Lodge management could work to improve compliance with bear safety measures.



Photo 3: Black bear in the Bartlett Cove developed area in September 2022 (NPS Photo/ T. Lewis)

There were two notable bear incidents in Bartlett Cove. In the first case, VIS Rangers received a report that a bear

had damaged a tent in the campground. A witness saw a small black bear lingering in the campground, and later noticed that an unattended tent had claw-shaped tears in the rainfly and a broken pole. The property damage was valued at approximately \$200. In response to this incident, the Park issued an informal advisory to the public. The second bear incident occurred when two Park trail maintenance employees were working on the Bartlett Lake Trail and surprised a brown bear mother with three cubs. The mother showed signs of stress and charged at the staff members, but veered off and ran away without further escalation.

HPAI Diagnosis in Black Bear Cub

On a Friday afternoon in October, the Wildlife Team noticed that a cub was missing from a frequently observed black bear family group with three COY. An hour or so later a single cub was seen wandering around on its own, seemingly stressed and looking for its family. Throughout that weekend there were numerous observations of a single black bear cub lingering along the Park road and having difficulty walking. In addition, the cub was not responsive to visual or verbal cues and at one point was observed having a seizure. Due to safety concerns, a decision was made jointly by the

park and the Alaska Dept. of Fish and Game (ADF&G) Area Biologist to quarantine and euthanize the cub, and to perform a necropsy to look for signs of trauma and test for neurological disorders including rabies or canine distemper.

The virus that causes HPAI (Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza) was detected on both nasal and rectal swabs and in the brain tissue screening. The cub was most likely exposed to and infected with the virus while consuming an infected sick or dead bird, though transmission from a mammal cannot be ruled out. This was only the second documented case of HPAI being detected in a black bear (the first case was in Quebec, Canada). More details can be read here: [Report of Black Bear Cub with Avian Influenza in Glacier Bay National Park \(U.S. National Park Service\) \(nps.gov\)](https://www.nps.gov/glacierbay/learn/management/health/avian-influenza-black-bear-cub.htm)

Backcountry

In 2022, the VIS Rangers issued backcountry permits to 213 groups (686 people). This was a 6% decrease in the number of people issued back country permits from 2021 (728 people). In 2022, there were two reported backcountry bear encounters and three incidents. The three backcountry bear incidents included events when 1) a bear charged a group of people who deployed bear spray, 2) a bear damaged property valued at approx.



Photo 4: Brown bear involved in human-bear conflicts in Fingers Bay on July 12, 2022. (J. Richter Photo)

\$7,000 (same bear as incident 1), and 3) a bear obtained a food reward after approaching a group cooking on the beach.

Incident 1: On July 9, a group from a charter boat was hiking in North Fingers Bay when a brown bear charged them from the vegetation above the intertidal. The guide sprayed the bear from 50 feet away and although it is likely the bear did not receive any of the spray, the bear left the area.

Incident 2: On July 12, a brown bear (later determined to be the same bear) approached a campsite near South Fingers Bay. The campers were nearby but not in their camp. When the campers became aware of the bear's presence, they attempted to deter the bear by making noise. After a few minutes the campers decided to retreat into their kayaks, leaving the bear free to investigate the camp with all their gear. The bear then entered the relinquished camp and destroyed their tents, sleeping pads, sleeping bags, dry bags, and camera equipment over the next several hours. The kayakers were picked up by a charter vessel and used a satellite device to alert Park Law Enforcement (LE) rangers. When the rangers arrived at the scene later that evening, the bear was still present at the campsite so they did not go to shore. LE rangers then returned early the next morning and found that the bear was still on shore near the campsite, but it left the area after hearing the approaching boat motor. An estimated \$7,000 in property damage was reported from this incident. A formal advisory news release was announced following these two separate incidents

advising the public to be vigilant while recreating in that area.

Incident 3: On July 30, a third incident occurred involving a guided kayak group that was camping near the Scidmore Dayboat pick-up/drop-off beach. A couple of the clients were feeling ill and resting in their tents while the other members of their party, along with one guide, remained at camp preparing a meal. The second guide was alone farther down the beach, when a brown bear was spotted between the two parties moving towards the lone guide. The guide who had been cooking got in their kayak and paddled over to aid the second guide, during which time the bear changed direction and moved towards the campsite where the clients and unsecured food remained. The clients attempted yelling and banging pots together as the bear approached, but then they retreated and allowed the bear to approach the cooking area where it consumed smoked salmon that was being prepared for a group meal. The bear did not eat any of the other food that was left out, including noodles and vegetables, or the contents of the open bear resistant food canisters. After the bear ate the salmon it left the area. This event prompted the Park Superintendent to initiate a camping closure within the immediate area for 30 days to prevent this bear from obtaining food from subsequent campers.

In 2022, the Wildlife Team spent eleven nights camping and kayaking in the backcountry and had no negative bear encounters. On one trip in the East Arm, there were two separate instances where they observed brown bears traveling along the intertidal zone feeding on barnacles and gunnel fish while the Team prepared food in the upper intertidal zone. In neither event did the bear pay



Photo 5: Wildlife Team member watching a brown bear eat barnacles in Nunatak Cove, late July 2022. NPS photo/J. Hower.

any attention to the people. Therefore, the Team did not make any attempts to disrupt the bear's natural behavior and were able to enjoy the bear viewing opportunities of watching bears feed on natural food in their wild habitat.

2023

Frontcountry

From a bear management perspective, 2023 was a particularly quiet year in Bartlett Cove. Reported bear sightings included: one black bear mother with two yearlings that were seen in early May; five single adult black bears; separate sightings of one and two yearling black bears; multiple sightings of one black bear female with a limp (likely the same individual with two COY in 2022); and two single brown bear sightings. Most of the bear sightings occurred in June and July, with no reports in August, one report mid-late September, and a single black bear yearling observed around seasonal housing in October.

In July there was one encounter with two black bear yearlings on the Bartlett River Trail. Two visitors were hiking around a blind turn and surprised the yearlings at very close range. In response, the bears quickly fled into the forest. No further action was taken.

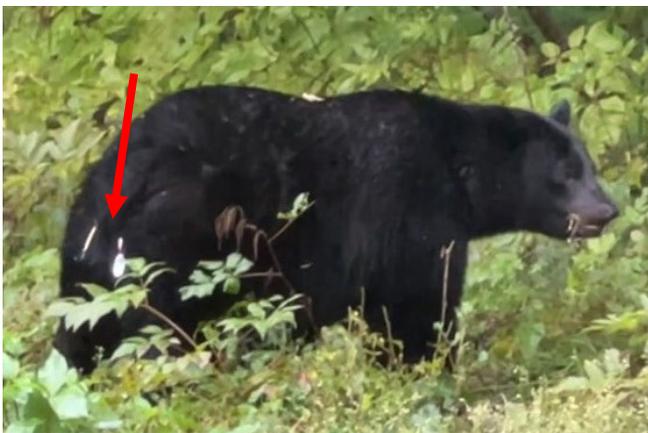


Photo 6: Black bear in Bartlett Cove seen with fishing lures caught in fur near rump in in September, 2022. NPS Photo.

In September, the female black bear with a limp (with no cubs) was observed around Bartlett Cove with two fishing lures hanging from the fur of her rump. Photos were taken by Park Law Enforcement to document the event. It is unknown how the bear became entangled with the fishing

lures. In February, the bear was discovered deceased in Bartlett Cove, identified by fishing lures still present near the hindquarters. Cause of death is unknown.

Backcountry

In the early summer season, there were a few reports of bear carcasses throughout the bay. The first came from a sea kayak guide training trip in the East Arm in late May. The group was paddling in the East Arm when they noticed a decomposing bear carcass (species unknown, pictures show the bear to be lighter in color). In response the Park issued an informal advisory to visitors headed to the East Arm to avoid going to shore near the carcass, due to the safety risk posed by another bear defending the carcass while scavenging. Given that the carcass was low in the intertidal zone and most of the meat was gone when the carcass was first reported, it was determined the safety risk would not last for more than one week and the informal advisory ended at that time.

The second report of a bear carcass came on June 4. The report indicated that the carcass of a young black bear was found on the north side of Geike Inlet. Visitors guessed that the bear had been dead for only a couple of days and sent a photo to Park staff. One week prior, guests and staff aboard a charter vessel had reported seeing a large brown bear kill a black bear cub in Geike Inlet. It is unclear if the cub killed was the same bear as the carcass reported on June 4th. No other information was gathered about these bear carcass sightings.

Lastly, a third carcass was discovered at Russell Cut in early June, although initial reports from visitors and concessions staff identified it as a moose. When the Wildlife Team first arrived in the area, the carcass could not be safely investigated on shore due to the risk of encountering a defensive bear on the relatively fresh carcass. The next visit to the site was in late June, by which time only the bear's stomach and tufts of fur remained. Notably, the Team did not find any bones, which suggests the carcass was heavily scavenged by wolves. No wolf sign was observed at the scene, but at least one wolf had been observed by a charter vessel feeding on the carcass in mid-June. Bear scat found near the carcass did not appear to contain any bear hair, which would have indicated a bear fed on the carcass.

Two backcountry brown bear encounters were reported to GLBA staff in 2023, one in the West Arm and the other in the East Arm. An informal advisory was issued for the encounter in the West Arm, and no action was taken for the encounter in the East Arm.

West Arm Encounter

In June, a group of visitors were in the Ptarmigan Creek area setting up camp and preparing food when a brown bear approached their camp. The visitors quickly consolidated their food and made space on the beach for the bear to pass by. However, as the bear was passing by, it changed direction and attempted to approach the campers' gear. In response, the visitors stood their ground and yelled at the bear at which point the bear stopped approaching their gear and continued past the group further down the beach.

East Arm Encounter

In July, a guided sea kayak group decided to camp at the northern end of Hunter Cove. The encounter occurred after 8pm, when the clients had retired to their tents and only the guides were still up and about. The encounter began when the guides spotted an adult brown bear approaching the camp. The guides started talking to the bear, which did not seem stressed, nor did it seem interested in their bear cans and equipment. The bear continued to approach the campsite vicinity, and the guides escalated their hazing to banging pots and pans and eventually using an air horn. Finally, the bear retreated into the brush behind their tents and followed an established game trail through the alders away from the campsite. The group then decided to gather their belongings and moved their campsite north to Rowlee Point.

2023 was the first year on record that there were zero bear incidents. In 2023, there were 677 total backcountry visitors (256 groups) in Glacier Bay. No bears were reported to have damaged property, obtained food, or had a significant conflict with visitors. Effective visitor education by NPS staff may have played a role in the lack of bear incidents that summer. Continuing to teach best practices for visitor behavior in bear country will

be essential to ensuring that the number of bear incidents remains low in future years. However, it should be noted that there were a higher than usual number of bear mortalities reported (Table 1) and fewer bears observed along the shoreline of Glacier Bay in 2023 compared to recent years (Table 2). In 2023, the Wildlife Team spent at least 20 nights camping in the backcountry with very few bear sightings.

2024

Frontcountry

In 2024 in the Bartlett Cove developed area and Park road corridor, there were more than 20 reported sightings of single black bears, two sightings of lone brown bears, one sighting of a brown bear mother and single cub, and several sightings of a black bear mother with three cubs of the year that appeared in mid-August. This bear lost all three cubs within a week of first being observed.

Photo 7: Black bear female with the distinctive white marking on the chest accompanied by three cubs of the year, seen four days before the cubs fell ill in August 2024 (NPS Photos/S. Tevebaugh).



On August 13th, an adult female black bear with a distinctive asymmetrical white blaze on her chest was first observed at the Glacier Bay headquarters in Bartlett Cove accompanied by three cubs of the year. Over the next several days the family group was observed feeding on devil's club berries and other natural foods in the developed area. All bears appeared healthy, and the mother was quite tolerant of human observers.

On the morning of August 17th, Wildlife Team members were notified that a bear cub was displaying signs of illness on Lagoon Island in Bartlett Cove. When the Wildlife Team arrived on the scene, it became clear that two of bear cubs belonging to the mother with white

blaze were displaying signs of poor health and the third was unaccounted for. One cub was not moving on its own and the mother bear eventually dragged this cub into the grasses above the intertidal zone. The second cub flopped on its side and then eventually lay sprawled and motionless for around 25 minutes before walking into the vegetation and out of sight. Both cubs had also been heard bawling in distress. The mother eventually left the area, and an attempt was made to retrieve the motionless cub, which was assumed dead. On the way to the motionless cub, Park staff encountered the mother bear on the Tlingit Trail at a distance similar to the distance at which she had been monitored earlier in the week (20 yards). However, instead of displaying tolerant behavior, the mother bear lunged toward the Park staff and slapped the ground with both paws indicating defensive behavior. In response, Park staff left the area, closed a portion of the Tlingit Trail, and issued an advisory to alert the public to the presence of the defensive bear.

Later the same day, another attempt was made by boat to retrieve the presumed bear cub carcass. On this attempt the mother bear was not encountered, but the cub was found to be still alive though largely motionless. Sometime between this visit and the following morning, the cub died. The cub carcass was collected on August 18th to allow investigation into the cause of the cubs' illness. Due to little observed bear activity, the informal advisory was lifted.

On August 19th the mother bear was observed in the Bartlett Cove developed area unaccompanied by any cubs. She displayed defensive behaviors toward people on two occasions, one display occurred in the campground while Park Law Enforcement rangers monitored the bear. The other defensive display was toward a Park visitor leaving the Xunaa Shuká Hít (Huna tribal house). In response to the defensive behaviors displayed by the bear, part of a Tlingit Trail was closed again, and another advisory was issued.

On August 22nd a second cub carcass was located in the same area as the first cub. The second cub had likely had died around the same time as the first but the carcass had been heavily scavenged. It is assumed that the third cub also died though its carcass was never located.



Photo 8: Three black bear cubs of the year, seen four days before they fell ill in August 2024 (NPS Photos/S. Tevebaugh).

The necropsy of the first cub determined that he was approximately eight-months old and weighed 18 pounds. The cub was found to be in good body condition but displayed signs of dehydration. Results from tests showed that the bear did not have rabies, avian influenza, or heavy metal poisoning. The cause of death was determined to be dehydration and electrolyte imbalance. It is possible that the cubs died of natural causes but also possible that they were exposed to an unknown toxin that altered their electrolyte ratios. The Wildlife Team and Bear Committee are reviewing Park and Lodge operations to ensure that all potential sources of toxins are secured from consumption by wildlife.

Backcountry

There was one incident of minor property damage by a bear in 2024. On July 29th, a brown bear in Tarr Inlet chewed on a sponge and punctured holes in a tarp that had been left unattended near kayaks. The kayakers saw a bear in the area when they returned but did not see the bear damage their property.

On August 1st, there was a possible encounter with a bear of an unknown species by a group of Park chaperoned teenagers who were camping in Dundas Bay. The encounter happened between a group of three campers sharing a tent and a presumed bear outside the tent. Campers thought they heard a bear sniffing outside the tent and when the animal moved to the other side of the

tent the campers screamed. When one chaperone heard the scream, she grabbed her bear spray and exited her tent, but the animal had already run away. Later it was determined that there were graham crackers inside the tent. No one in the group saw or had physical contact with a bear, no property was damaged, and no food was obtained.

On August 31st, the Wildlife Team received a report and photographs of a brown bear possessing a carcass near the south side entrance to Secret Bay on Young Island. In response an informal advisory was issued which informed visitors of the bear's presence and of the increased risk of the bear displaying defensive behaviors near the carcass. There were no incidents or reported encounters involving the bear defending this carcass.



Photo 8: Wildlife Team monitoring a black bear family outside of Glacier Bay National Park offices in August 2024 (NPS Photo/S. Tevebaugh).

In 2024, the Wildlife Team spent at least 20 nights in the backcountry, with few notable bear sightings. In August the Team encountered one adult male brown bear near the west side of the mouth of Glacier Bay two days in a row. The first day the bear walked by camp feeding on vegetation with only occasional glances at the campers. The second day the Team was waiting at the waterline with kayaks and gear to be picked up by the Park research vessel. The same bear approached along the waterline flipping rocks and feeding on invertebrates, generally ignoring the people. At a distance of about 100 feet, the people stood tall and made themselves known to the bear. The bear continued to move closer and at about 50

feet the Team started yelling at the bear. The bear moved around the Team at the same distance, indicating that his comfortable personal space distance was closer than that of the Wildlife Team (Photo 9). The Team continued to encourage him to pass and as he did, they saw that he was dragging two long tapeworms, one of which dropped in the rocks.

Gustavus

A mother brown bear with at least one yearling cub visited a home in Gustavus a few times over the summer, likely attracted to trash and free-range ducks in the yard. In October she reportedly chased a pet dog and was shot in defense of life and property (DLP) by the owner. Per DLP policy, the bear's hide and skull were salvaged and given to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game. The yearling cub stayed with her mother's body for two days in a neighbor's yard and was finally euthanized by ADF&G staff. The Wildlife Team kept the cub's body to use as an educational tool in community classrooms and presentations. The educational goal will be to connect people with bears and foster interest and concern for bears and bear populations with a strong message that people must prevent bears from accessing our food and garbage because these bears often get killed.

Black and Brown Bear Sightings from Dayboat

National Park Service Interpretation Rangers have recorded the location of individual black and brown bears seen from the daily tour vessel, or Dayboat, since 2010 (Lewis et al. 2020; Table 2). The Dayboat travels approximately the same route every day, and so serves as a transect along the shoreline of Glacier Bay to record bear occurrence and species distribution. In 2022, black and brown bears sightings, bears per day, and the percentage (%) of days with bears observed were about average or slightly above. In 2023, black and brown bears sightings were well below average, as were bears per day and the % of days bears were observed. In 2024, black bear sightings were above average but brown bear sightings and bears per day remained below average. However, the % of days bears were observed fell slightly above average in this year.

Bear Mortalities

Bear mortalities within the park have not been tracked in previous years, mainly because they were so rare. The

Wildlife Team has now begun compiling this information yearly given the number of reported bear mortalities in 2022-2024 and corresponding lower bear sightings and encounters in 2023-2024. Potential threats to bears and causes of death include Avian Influenza, habitat changes, harmful algal toxins (due to bears' reliance on shellfish and warming ocean temperatures), ingestion of toxins from people, other environmental contaminants such as mercury, and hunting (outside of park) and Defense of Life and Property kills. The Wildlife Team has begun testing bear samples for harmful algal toxins and mercury and will continue to collect carcasses to examine for cause of death.

Table 1: Known non-hunting bear mortalities in and around Glacier Bay National Park from 2022-2024.

Species	Location/Cause of Death
2022	
Black – cub of year	Bartlett Cove/Avian Influenza
2023	
Brown	East Arm/Unknown
Black	Geikie/Unknown
Brown - adult	West Arm/Unknown
2024	
Black - adult	Bartlett Cove/Unknown
Black – 3 cubs of year	Bartlett Cove/Dehydration and/or toxins
Brown – Mom and yearling cub	Gustavus/shot in Defense of Life and Property

Education

In 2021 there were five incidents in which bears investigated or damaged kayaks, so in 2022 the VIS Rangers made a point of reminding campers to keep control of their gear, including kayaks. In 2022-2024 there were no incidents where bears damaged kayaks indicating that this proactive education may have been successful, and VIS Rangers should continue to encourage campers to keep their kayaks close by in future seasons. An

additional suggestion for bear education might be to include common bear scenarios campers might experience while in the backcountry and how to respond or not respond in accordance. One of the most critical things that people can do to prevent conflicts with bears is to stay in control of their food and gear. People backing away from bears and allowing the bear to access their equipment or dinner poses a danger for the campers who may need that equipment to survive in the backcountry. It also teaches the bear a bad lesson that people are a potential source of food or other attractants to investigate.

Another important thing for people to understand is that many bears are not afraid of people and may casually travel or forage nearby. The shoreline of Glacier Bay is very important for bears to feed and travel on, so coexistence with people is important. Several visitors left comments on their returned backcountry permits that stated things such as, “the bear didn’t seem frightened after yelling at him” or “bear didn’t seem phased by our yelling.” In these scenarios the bear appeared to be simply traveling through the area and did not deliberately approach the visitors or their gear. It is likely that bears in popular camping areas of Glacier Bay’s backcountry become habituated to humans yelling at them when they are trying to pass on the beach. An unfortunate consequence of this inappropriate human behavior may be that these bears are less likely to respond to warranted hazing efforts. Park bear safety staff should place more emphasis on educating the public about how to behave during different bear scenarios (passing vs. approaching bears). Educational efforts are needed to ensure that intentional hazing remains effective and that bears are not harassed unnecessarily. Park educational efforts and materials should stress to visitors, especially kayak guides, that backcountry visitors are in bears’ natural space and home, and that it is not appropriate to yell at bears UNLESS they are acting aggressively, predatorily, investigating gear and food, or approaching directly within 20 yards.

In both 2023 and 2024, the Wildlife Team gave early-season training to all concessions staff and conducted regular patrols around the Glacier Bay Lodge throughout the summer. This combination fostered a successful season where small issues were immediately addressed and bear safety practices were adhered to.

Bear Safety in Glacier Bay

Overall Bear Safety

- Never approach a bear
- In your kayak or vessel, stay at least 100 yards from bears on the beach
- If the bear is looking at you or otherwise changes its behavior because of you, you are too close!
- Travel in groups
- Pay attention to surroundings
- Carry bear pepper spray as primary deterrent

Cooking and storing food:

- Cook and eat in the intertidal zone
- Wash cooking gear in marine waters
- Keep all food, trash and other scented items in bear cans and store with clean cooking gear in brush or behind rocks away from animal trails
- Be prepared to quickly stow all food into bear cans should a bear suddenly appear

Choosing a campsite:

- Select a site that will allow bears room to pass, even at high tide
- Avoid areas with bear sign, including an abundance of fresh scat, animal trails and chewed or clawed trees
- Avoid active salmon streams

Control your gear:

- Keep gear together - the more spread out your gear is the more difficult it is to defend
- Do not leave any gear unattended except for bear cans and cleaned cooking equipment
- Keep kayaks near tents at night

Encounters

If you see a bear:

- If you are mobile, move to avoid bear without running. Only move if you can carry all of your gear with you
- If you are not mobile, group together with all gear and stand your ground
- Monitor bears' movement

If bear is traveling or eating without focus on you:

- Allow bear to pass without harassment
- Talk to bear calmly if bear is close

If bear approaches with focus on you:

- Stay together with gear and stand your ground
- Be assertive, yell and make noise, wave your arms
- Deploy bear pepper spray if bear approaches within 25 feet
- If bear attacks, fight back

If bear attempts to enter tent:

- Yell and fight back

If you surprise a bear:

- Talk calmly to bear
- Attempt to move away slowly
- If bear charges stand your ground
- Deploy bear pepper spray if bear approaches within 25 feet
- If bear attacks, play dead



Photo 9: Adult male brown bear walking around the Wildlife Team near Pt Carolus near the mouth of Glacier Bay, August 10, 2024. NPS Photo/ T. Lewis)

Table 2: Number of bears observed daily from the Dayboat recorded by Interpretation Rangers from 2010-2024. “Total days” reflects the duration of the Dayboat’s summer season (days spent touring Glacier Bay. “Days recorded” is the number of daily entries staff made throughout the season as sometimes the Dayboat didn’t go out for a day or staff did not fill out the log. “Black bears w/Locs” and “Brown bears w/Locs” (locations) are the number of bears observed with location descriptions in the logbook. “Total black bears” and “Total brown bears” are the total number of each species recorded per day. Sometimes staff would not record the location of bears observed or would just give a total for the day, so this total number includes bear observations with and without location data. “Total bears” is the sum of all black and total brown bears observed.

Year	Total days	Days recorded	Black bears w/ Locs	Total black bears	Brown bears w/ Locs	Total brown bears	Total bears	Bears per day	% days bears obs.
2010	98	68	16	N/A	135	N/A	151	2.2	82
2011	95	81	16	N/A	131	N/A	147	1.8	70
2012	99	76	14	N/A	208	N/A	222	2.9	86
2013	98	89	38	N/A	163	N/A	201	2.3	80
2014	98	88	17	N/A	147	N/A	164	1.9	77
2015	104	59	10	N/A	100	N/A	110	1.9	71
2016	99	71	13	N/A	174	N/A	187	2.6	80
2017	101	91	47	N/A	257	N/A	304	3.3	89
2018	101	N/A	32	N/A	285	N/A	317	N/A	N/A
2019	100	77	11	12	142	175	187	2.4	57
2021	99	97	26	27	282	329	356	3.7	93
2022	99	94	20	21	203	230	251	2.7	83
2023	101	86	15	15	139	145	160	1.9	68
2024	102	96	23	23	166	173	196	2.0	82
Average	99.6	82.5	21.3	19.6	181.9	210.4	210.9	2.4	78.3
Total	1394	1073	298	98	2532	1052	1150		

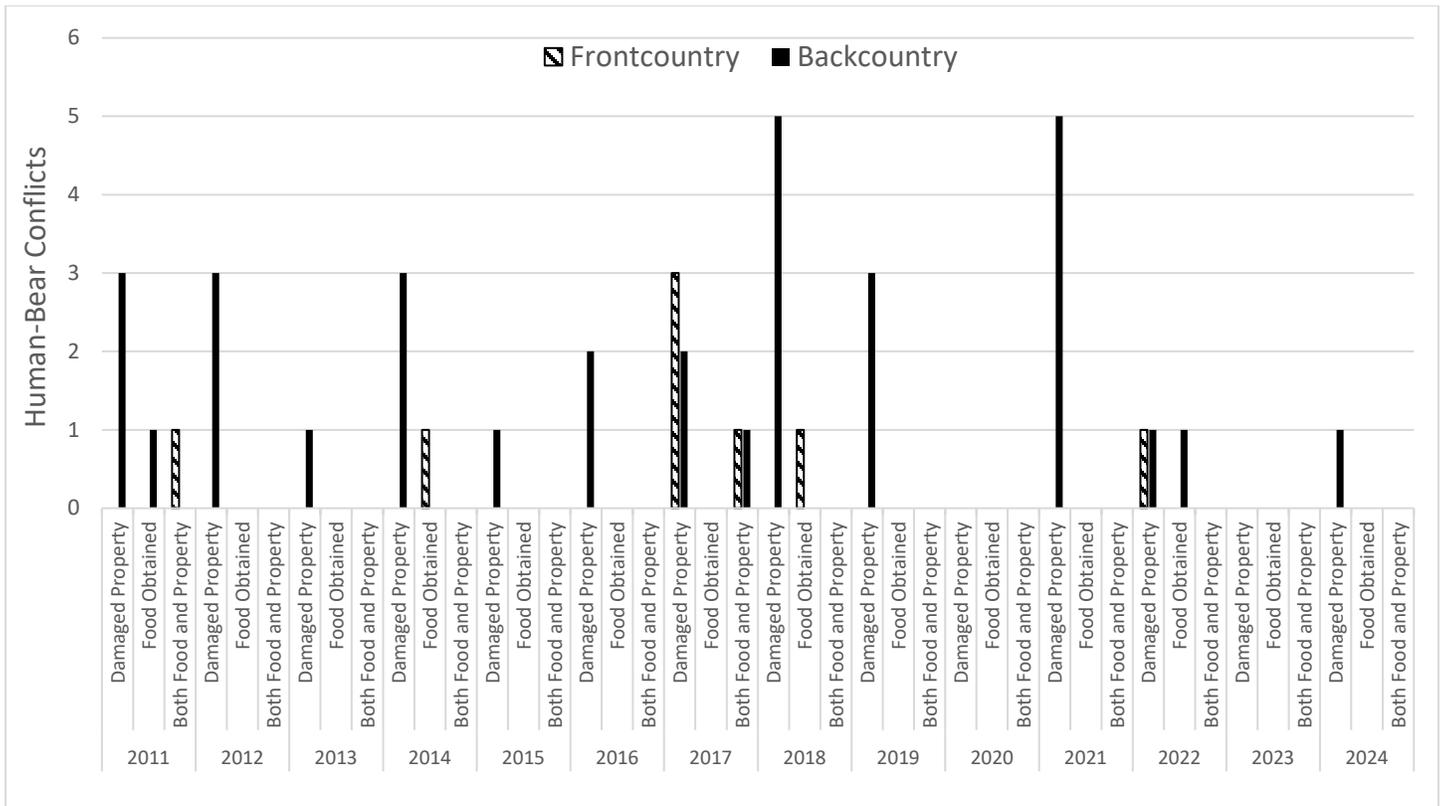


Figure 1. The number of human-bear incidents in which bears damaged property, obtained human food, or both in GBNPP, by year from 2011-2024. This graph does not include incidents in which 1) no property was damaged, 2) no human food obtained, 3) bears obtained fish from nets, or 4) bears were killed.

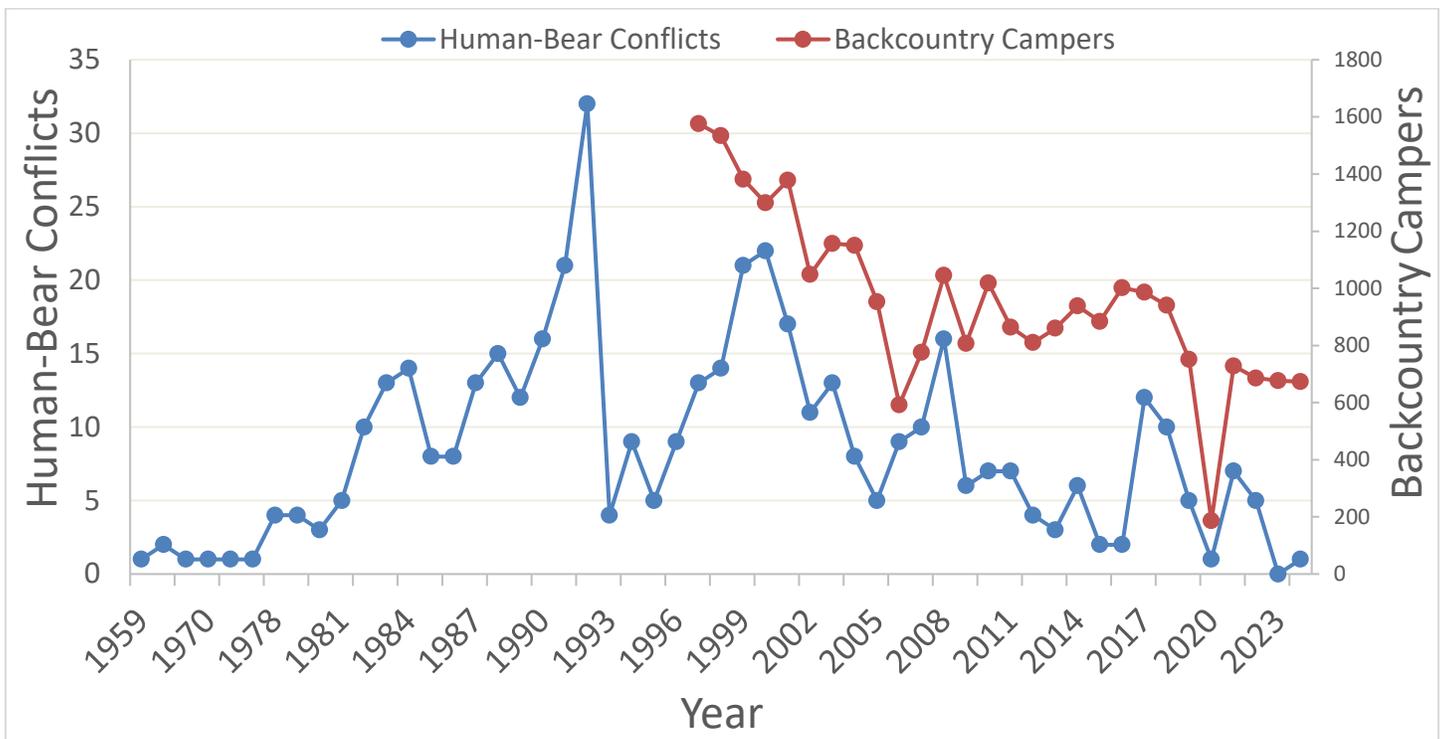


Figure 2. The number of human-bear incidents in Glacier Bay National Park, relative to the number of overnight backcountry visitors, by year from 1959-2024.

Bear Incidents and Encounters in Glacier Bay 2022-2024

Glacier Bay National Park & Preserve
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

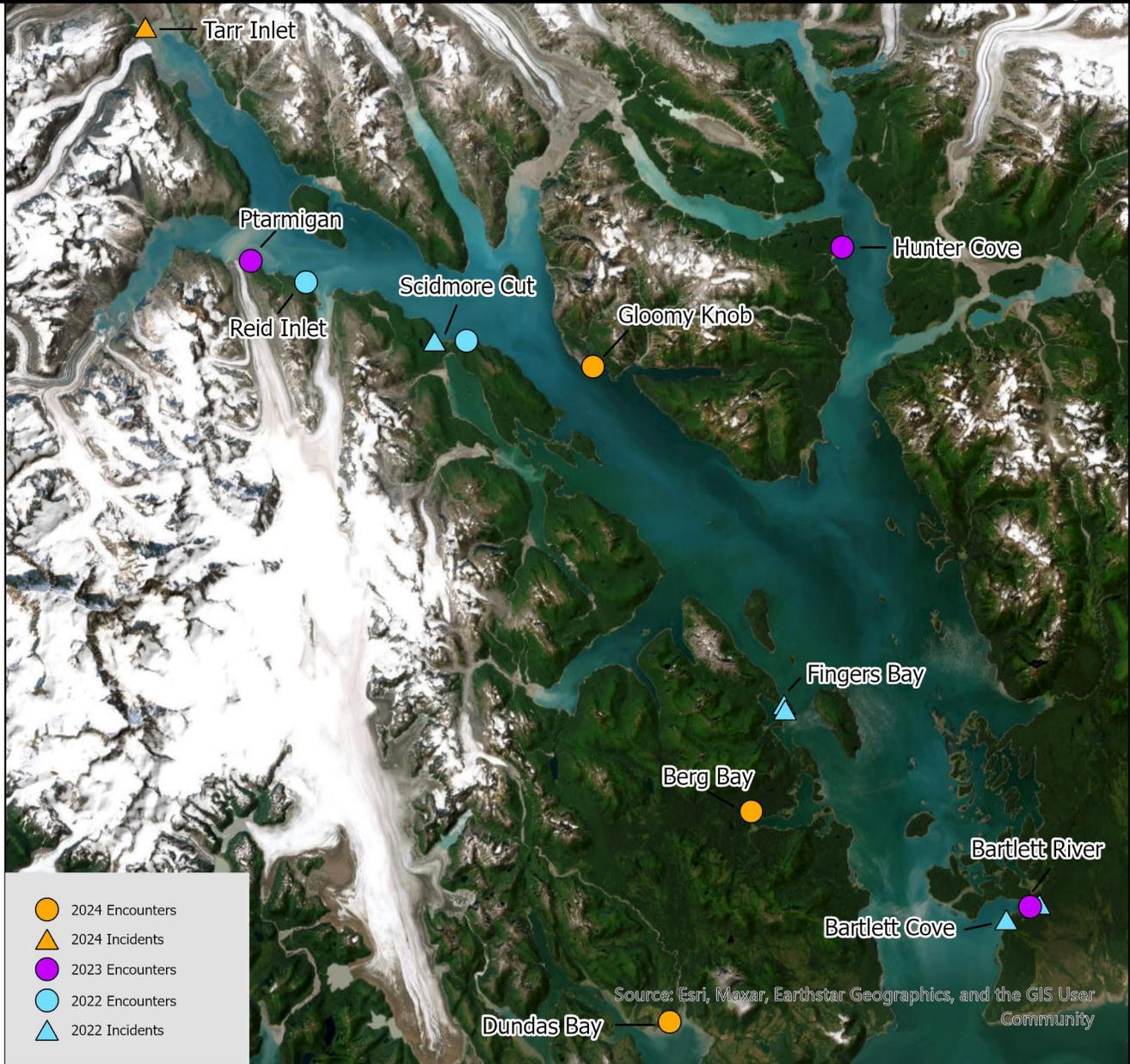


Figure 3. A map of human-bear incidents (i.e. conflicts) and reported encounters in Glacier Bay in 2022 (n = 7), 2023 (n = 3), and 2024 (n=4). The color of the symbol indicates the year that the incident or encounter occurred (red for 2022, purple for 2023, and orange for 2024). Each triangle represents an incident, and each circle represents a reported encounter.

Literature Cited

Lewis, T.M., A.E. Stanek and K.B. Young. 2020. Bears in Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve: Management, monitoring and research 2010-2017. Natural Resource Report NPS/GLBA/NRR—2018/2134. National Park Service, Fort Collins, Colorado. [LINK](#)

Young, K.B. and T.M. Lewis. 2021. Bears of Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve: A summary of bear management in 2020 and 2021. National Park Service Resource Brief, Gustavus, Alaska. [LINK](#)

More Information

Tania Lewis
tania_lewis@nps.gov
907-697-2668
<https://www.nps.gov/glba/learn/nature/bears-at-glacier-bay.htm>

Acknowledgements

We thank GBNPP staff and members of the public for reporting bear sightings and encounters throughout the summer. Special thanks to Law Enforcement Rangers and VIS Rangers for assisting with bear management and monitoring; to Interpretation Rangers for logging bear sightings, to the Alaska Regional Command Center staff for dispatch and helping us stay safe; to peer reviewers of this report; and to bears of Glacier Bay.

Suggested Citation

Lewis, T.M., Beck, L., Hower, J, and Elizarraras, S. 2025. Bears of Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve: A summary of bear management in 2022-2024. National Park Service Resource Brief, Gustavus, Alaska.

Photo 10 (right): Eagle Totem Pole in front of the Xunaa Shuká Hít Tribal House in Bartlett Cove, Glacier Bay. Xóots, or brown bear, is second from the bottom. NPS Photo.

