

## Relations between wolves and black bears

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### **Abstract:**

We report black bear (*Ursus americanus*) reactions to wolves (*Canis lupus*) and summarize wolf predation on denning black bears. On August 7, 1989, we watched a black bear detect a wolf, stand up, and immediately lead her cubs ~200 m across a highway to an old white pine. The wolf circled the tree looking up at the family and moved on. Fifty minutes later, the family descended and moved a mile to another large white pine for the night. Another mother chased a wolf away from a tree that held her cubs. Black bears commonly chase lone wolves, but a lone wolf treed a black bear near a wolf den. A black bear killed (but did not eat) a wolf near a wolf den. Black bears are not known to prey on wolves, and wolves seldom prey on hibernating black bears despite the apparent vulnerability of bears in shallow, exposed dens. In visiting 206 dens, we found wolf sign at only 2. One held a dying, gut-shot bear. The other was an exposed den where 6-9 wolves had attacked from 2 sides, killing and eating a 16-year-old mother and her newborn cubs in February 1977, a year of low deer numbers. Signs of fighting in that case included wolf fur, bear fur, part of a wolf tooth, and a pool of blood. Five other reports of predation at dens include packs of 2-10 wolves killing denned bears (one previously wounded) in easily accessible dens with sparse snow cover.